

Participation of Women in the Labour Market in Leicester



September 2010

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September 2010

A report prepared for
Leicester and Leicestershire Sub-Regional Support Unit

Summary

This report sets out to identify factors associated with persistently low rates of female labour market participation and employment in Leicester City. **Female economic activity rates in Leicester barely shifted from 65.2 per cent in 1999 to 65.9 per cent in 2009.** This minimal growth occurred within a period, which until the recession of 2008, was characterised by sustained national economic growth. For example, in Great Britain, over the same time period, female economic activity rates rose from 72.5 per cent to 74.2 per cent. The gap between Leicester and the national average has therefore widened over time. **The female employment rate in Leicester is also very low** compared with the national average and has fallen from 59.5 per cent in 1999 to 58.2 per cent in 2009.

A **combination of several factors** which contributes to the situation. These factors are not the same for all women across the city. Different issues are applicable to different sections of the community and in different locations across the city. The main factors broadly fall under the following headings:

- the ethnic composition of the workforce
- economic inactivity due to a preference not to work amongst some women
- concentrations of benefit claimants in particular parts of the city
- poor qualifications or lack of basic skills
- low levels of pay available
- fewer job opportunities especially as a consequence of the decline of the textiles industry

Ethnic composition of the workforce

Leicester has a substantial BME population with 41 per cent of the working age population being non-white. The single largest BME group are Indian and account for 26 per cent of all of those of working age. **The younger age profile of the workforce associated with areas with large Asian populations contributes slightly to lower female participation rates.** Having a large Indian population would also be expected to lower female labour market participation given that this is the case for this group nationally. However, it would not be expected that the impact would be as large as is observed. **Economic activity rates amongst Indian women in Leicester are nine percentage points lower than for Indian**

women nationally and eight percentage points lower than Indian women in the comparator areas. Indications are that lower rates of participation amongst Indian women in Leicester may therefore be a function of **structural weaknesses the local labour market which will also potentially affect white women as well as those from other BME groups.**

Economic inactivity due to a preference not to work

More than **one in three** of all working age women in Leicester are **economically inactive**. This high rate largely reflects greater numbers of women who are **not looking for work and do not want to work**. The primary reason given for not wanting to work is **looking after a home or family** which accounts for 14 per cent of working age women in Leicester and comparator areas compared to just nine per cent in England. Engaging with this group is likely to be very difficult if they do not want to work and many have no interaction with the benefits system or local agencies. **This group represents a challenge for local agencies who may wish to see the employment rate in the area rise.**

Benefit claimants

In total, in August 2009 there were **16,690 working age women in Leicester on out-of-work benefits** equivalent to 18 per cent of all working age women. Of these 7,130 were IB/ESA claimants, 5,550 on Income Support for lone parents and 3,660 unemployed JSA claimants. The evidence suggests that the relatively large number of **Asian women who are economically inactive or unemployed do not necessarily enter the state benefits system**. High rates of female **benefit claimants are in areas where the majority of the population is white** and seldom coincide with those that have large concentrations of non-white or Asian population.

Current welfare reform is likely to tighten eligibility to all out-of-work benefit groups. A subsequent migration from the two larger female inactive benefits groups (IB/ESA and IS for lone parents) towards JSA is to be expected. Many of these claimants face complex **multiple disadvantage in the workforce** and have often had substantial periods of detachment from the workforce. The additional labour supply released into the workforce is likely to increase competition for jobs especially for entry level jobs. **Without adequate intensive support and sufficient numbers of suitable jobs available the numbers on IB/ESA or Income Support for lone parents may decline but the number of claimant and ILO unemployed women are likely to increase.**

Poor qualifications or lack of basic skills

In Leicester **24 per cent of working age women have no qualifications** higher than the 18 per cent in the comparator areas and nearly double the 13 per cent seen nationally. Amongst **non-employed women the rate with no qualifications increases to 38 per cent** in Leicester, 32 per cent in the comparators 26 per cent in England and only 22 per cent in Leicestershire county. The number of young women who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is relatively high compared the rest of the sub-region (8.2 per cent of young women in Leicester compared to only 4.0 per cent in Leicestershire). The need to obtain **sufficient language skills** was also mentioned as crucial for some groups of women to enter the workforce. Overall **increasing skills and qualifications across women in**

Leicester is likely to improve their ability to compete in the workforce for jobs in the area. On a more positive note, just over 1,000 female graduates from the three universities in the sub-region obtained employment in Leicester city.

Low pay

Levels of pay available in Leicester emerged as a factor related to entry to the workforce in both the quantitative and qualitative evidence especially in relation to the replacement costs of childcare. **Rates of pay in Leicester are relatively low for both men and women.** The median gross hourly pay for women who work part-time is £7.11 an hour compared to £7.49 per hour in the East Midlands. For full-time work the differential is even larger at £9.79 per hour in Leicester compared to £10.51 per hour for the East Midlands region. For some women the alternative of looking after a home and family may be a preferable alternative.

Job opportunities

In the ten years leading up the recession (1998-2008), the number of **female employees declined by one per cent in Leicester** whilst nationally female employment grew by nine per cent. This decline is primarily due to the **loss of jobs in the textiles industry** in Leicester which was a traditional employer of both men and women in the area. There were **5,700 fewer female jobs in the textiles sector** in Leicester in 2008, representing **a decline of nearly 70 per cent** on the levels recorded in 1998. Evidence from the qualitative interviews shows that stakeholders feel that Asian women working in this sector may have found it hard to compete for alternative jobs in other sectors.

The hotels, distribution and restaurants sector, a traditional employer of women, is also relatively weak in Leicester. Levels of self-employment amongst women in Leicester are also low. **Female employment in Leicester is dominated by public sector jobs.** There are **37,500 female jobs in the public sector** which accounts for 46 per cent of all female jobs in the area. This reliance on jobs within public administration, education or health is potentially problematic given the current Government plans to shed 600,000 public sector jobs by 2015. Nationally, this equates to just over eight per cent of all public sector jobs and **if a comparable reduction was seen in Leicester this potentially could mean the loss of 3,100 female jobs.**

Ultimately, **those in better health, with better skills and qualifications** will be in the best position to compete for and obtain the jobs available. However, **competition for jobs is likely to increase** as people lose their jobs in the public sector and those on inactive benefits are moved towards active jobsearch as they move over to JSA. **Of prime importance will be the private sector's ability to generate alternative employment opportunities and increase the overall demand for labour in the area.** If this was done, and the jobs created were attractive to economically inactive women in terms of pay and conditions, then some inactive women who are not reliant on benefits may also be encouraged to take part in the labour market.

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1. Context

Nationally, growing numbers of women are taking part in the labour force¹. Female economic activity rates grew from the end of the early 1980s recession until the period up to the most recent recession in the autumn of 2009. Labour Force Survey (LFS) data for Great Britain indicates that economic activity rates amongst women of working age (16-59 year olds) - that is for women who actively participate in the workforce either by being employed or unemployed and looking for work - increased from 66.3 per cent in the spring of 1984 to 74.1 per cent by Spring 2009, a growth of 7.8 percentage points over the twenty-five year period. By the beginning of autumn in 2009 the national female economic activity rates peaked at 74.9 per cent, some 8.6 percentage points higher than the levels seen in 1984. Female economic activity rates have since fallen back slightly during the recession and by the March to May period of 2010 stood at 74.0 per cent.

As well as social and demographic trends contributing to this growth in female participation in the labour market it can also be explained in part by a major restructuring of the British economy. This has involved a long term decline in male manual jobs in heavy industry and manufacturing and a gradual shift towards service sector employment, a substantial proportion of which entails part-time working requiring interpersonal skills.

The growth in female participation rates in the labour market has therefore occurred alongside a long-term decline of male economic activity rates over the same period. Large numbers of men became entirely detached from the labour market and this process has been well documented². The LFS indicates that 88.1 per cent of working age men were economically active in the spring of 1984 but by spring 2009 this had fallen to 83.4 per cent, a decline of 4.7 percentage points. Male economic activity rates have continued to fall to an all time low of 82.3 per cent in three month period ending in April 2010. The latest figures available for the March to May 2010 period shows a small recovery to 82.6 per cent.

Consequently, male and female activity rates have been converging, with the gap between them more than halving from nearly 22 percentage points in 1984 to just over 8 percentage points at the beginning of 2010. Although it should be noted that as the female economic

¹ Gregg, P. and Wadsworth, J. (1998) *Unemployment and Non-Employment: Unpacking Economic Inactivity*, Employment Policy Institute Economic Report, vol 12 no 6, London;

Gutiérrez-Domenech, M. and Bell, B. (2004) *Female labour force participation in the United Kingdom: evolving characteristics or changing behaviour?*, Bank of England, London.

² Alcock, P., Beatty, C., Fothergill, S., Macmillan, R. and Yeandle, S. (2003) *Work to Welfare: how men become detached from the labour market*, CUP, Cambridge;

Beatty, C., Fothergill, S., Gore, T. and Powell, R. (2007) *The real level of unemployment*, Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University; Gregg and Wadsworth, *ibid*.

activity rates have fallen slightly from January to by May 2010, the gap between male and female economic activity rates increased marginally to nearly 9 percentage points. The growth in female participation in the labour force shows that the British economy has successfully drawn on its potential labour reserve of economically inactive women - those who are neither employed nor unemployed. As the figures show, just a quarter of all women fall into this category at present. This group is dominated by those who look after a home or family³.

These national trends in increased female labour market participation have, in the main, been seen right across Britain. Figures from the LFS on the **East Midlands region** confirm the growth in female economic activity rates, the decline in male participation and the convergence between male and female economic activity rates. Although starting from a position almost identical to the national average in the early 1980s, the East Midlands has in fact seen more rapid expansion of female participation rates and a lesser degree of labour market detachment amongst men. Female economic activity rates in the East Midlands stood at 77 per cent in January 2010, 2.7 percentage points higher than the national average. Female economic activity rates have fallen in the East Midlands over the first half of this year (75.2 per cent by May 2010) and this decline has been more rapid than that seen nationally narrowing the gap between the two (now 1.2 percentage points).

However, these figures for the East Midlands region do hide substantial variations within the region. There is a particularly stark contrast between the **Leicester City area and the wider Leicestershire sub-region**. The Local Area Labour Force Survey data for 1999⁴ and Annual Population Survey data for 2009⁵ show that although female economic activity rates in Leicestershire County have fallen slightly since the recession, high female participation rates still prevail in the area (80.7 per cent in 1999 and 78.5 per cent in 2009). In contrast, Leicester City has had consistently lower female economic activity rates than in both Leicestershire County and GB (65.2 per cent of working age women in 1999 to 65.9 per cent in 2009).

The employment rate amongst working age women in Leicester is also very low compared with figures for GB and the rest of the sub-region, and has fallen over time (59.5 per cent in 1999 decreasing to 58.2 per cent in 2009). In Leicestershire County the employment rate has fallen faster, albeit from a far higher base, over the same period (76.4 per cent in 1999 and 73.5 per cent in 2009).

There are therefore large numbers of working age women claiming out-of-work DWP benefits in Leicestershire sub-region as a whole. By August 2009 this figure had risen to 31,820 working age women. These claimants fall into both the economically inactive groups such as those on Incapacity Benefit, Employment Support Allowance or Income Support for lone parents as well as those actively seeking work and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance. These groups will have different issues facing them in either re-attaching to the labour market or gaining a foothold in gainful employment.

As the sub-regional Economic Assessment points out, the relatively low levels of labour market participation and employment amongst working age women in Leicester may be due to a number of factors. These include: a high proportion of residents from minority ethnic

³ Bivand, P. (2005) 'Who are the economically inactive?', *Working Brief*, Issue 160, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, London.

⁴ March 1999-February 2000

⁵ October 2008-September 2009

groups; the decline of the textiles industry in the sub-region, which has traditionally been a source of female employment; and issues around the levels of pay available which may prove to be a disincentive for women to take up employment.

This research therefore offers a valuable opportunity to build on the work already undertaken for the sub-regional Economic Assessment. The study offers an opportunity to investigate further the issues which underpin the low levels of female economic activity and employment amongst women in Leicester City. It also enables an examination of the characteristics of these groups of women and allows consideration of the spatial patterns, both within Leicester and across the sub-region, and comparison with other relevant comparator areas.

The aim of the research is therefore to understand more about the potential female workforce in Leicester City and especially the characteristics of those who are not in employment whether this takes the form of unemployment or economically inactivity. Understanding the type of female employment opportunities available in Leicester may help explain why there are low levels of labour market engagement in the area.

The study draws on a range of quantitative data but also includes evidence from a range of interviews with service providers in the city. The data sources utilised include mid-year population estimates, DWP benefits data, the Annual Population Survey, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, data on employees by industrial sector available from the Annual Business Inquiry and information on wage levels available to women in Leicester.

2. Characteristics of working age women in Leicester

Introduction

This chapter mainly draws on a wide range of data from the Annual Population Survey (APS) in order to understand more about women of working age in Leicester who participate in the workforce, those who are unemployed and those who are economically inactive. Of special interest are the differences in patterns of participation and economic status by different ethnic groups. This helps us consider the extent to which labour market trends in Leicester reflect patterns seen amongst women in other localities with large Asian populations or to what extent they may reflect aspects of the structure of the labour market in Leicester itself.

In order to understand female labour market participation in Leicester a range of benchmarks are used. These include the combined data for districts within Leicestershire, the East Midlands region as a whole and the national figures for England. In addition, a 'pooled comparator' benchmark has been created by combining data for a set of twelve districts. As ethnicity is thought to be one of the factors related to low participation rates in Leicester this has been a key variable in deciding upon which areas to include within the pooled comparator data. The twelve comparator areas are all within the top twenty districts nationally with the highest percentage of working age population which are Indian or the top twenty with large Asian populations. The extent to which the areas had a degree of female manufacturing jobs was also considered during the selection of areas due to the existence of female jobs in the textiles sector in Leicester. The final set of pooled comparator areas matches well to Leicester in terms of both female economic activity rates in 2009 (66 per cent in both) and female employment rates (58 per cent in the comparators compared to 60 per cent in Leicester). A full profile of the twelve comparator areas and Leicester is included in Table A.1 in the Statistical Appendix at the end of this report.

Due to the tight boundaries around Leicester City itself, data is also presented in the tables for a combined functional area of Greater Leicester. This includes Blaby, Oadby and Wigston as well as Leicester City itself. It should also be noted that throughout this report working age refers to 16-59 year old females and 16-64 year old males.

Before exploring the APS data in depth, a profile of the underlying age structure and ethnic breakdown of the areas are considered using information from ONS mid-year population estimates.

Demographics - Mid-year population estimates

Table 2.1 provides the ONS mid-year population estimates for 2008. These indicate that there are 92,900 working age females in Leicester. This figure rises to 136,100 females if the Greater Leicester area is considered as a whole. There is a higher proportion of working age females in Leicester (62.5 per cent) than nationally (58.1 per cent). The pooled comparator areas also have a proportionally larger working age population (60.0 per cent) and this is on a par with the level seen in the Greater Leicester (60.5 per cent). Leicestershire and the East Midlands are more similar to the national figure.

The larger share of the total population that is of working age in Leicester reflects the younger age profile of female residents in the area than is seen nationally. Only 17 per cent of females in Leicester are aged over 60 compared to 24 per cent in England or the East Midlands and 25 per cent in Leicestershire. Some 15 per cent of the female population are aged 18 to 24 compared to only nine per cent of the female population in Leicestershire, the East Midlands or nationally. A younger age profile can also be seen in the pooled comparator areas which have a very similar age structure as Greater Leicester.

It is worth noting that whilst there is also a slightly higher proportion of the male population that is of working age in Leicester (67.9 per cent) than nationally (66.2 per cent), the variation across all the areas considered is relatively limited and less marked than that seen amongst women.

Table 2.1: Working age population estimates, 2008

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
Males						
Working age	99,100	147,400	1,268,900	212,800	1,449,100	16,751,000
Total	146,000	220,200	1,902,900	320,900	2,194,200	25,318,800
Working age %	67.9	66.9	66.7	66.3	66.0	66.2
Females						
Working age	92,900	136,100	1,152,900	187,200	1,293,600	15,186,500
Total	148,700	225,100	1,923,000	324,900	2,238,800	26,127,500
Working age %	62.5	60.5	60.0	57.6	57.8	58.1
All						
Working age	192,000	283,500	2,421,800	399,900	2,742,700	31,937,600
Total	294,700	445,300	3,825,900	645,800	4,433,000	51,446,200
Working age %	65.2	63.7	63.3	61.9	61.9	62.1

Source: 2008 Mid-year population estimates, Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.

The 2009 mid-year population estimates were released at the end of June 2010 after this element of analysis was completed. A cross-check of the 2009 estimates released so far indicates that whilst quinary age groups are available at present, an estimate for the working age population has not been released as yet. Therefore, the 2008 data continues to be used here. The 2009 data show that the total population for Leicester is estimated at 304,700 a growth of 3.4 per cent from 2008 estimates. The 2009 total mid-year population estimates comprise 54,200 females and 150,500 males. The proportion of working age

population in the areas is unlikely to have changed much from the estimates for the previous year.

Table 2.2 provides an ethnic breakdown of the working age population in Leicester and the range of benchmark areas considered. The data is based on ONS experimental statistics for mid-year population estimates in 2007. This provides the most up to date mid-year estimates by ethnicity available at the time of writing this report. ONS has plans to release updated estimates by ethnicity for mid-2008 in October 2010, with mid-2009 estimates following by the end of the year.

Table 2.2: Working age population by ethnic group, 2007

	percentage of working age population					
	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
White	59	68	66	91	90	87
Asian or Asian British	31	24	22	6	6	6
Black or Black British	5	4	6	1	2	3
Chinese or Other	2	2	3	1	1	2
Mixed	2	2	2	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2007 Mid-year population estimates by ethnic group, Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.

Table 2.2 shows the contrast between Leicester City and Leicestershire county in terms of ethnicity. Nearly a third of the working age population in Leicester are Asian whilst Leicestershire is on par with the East Midlands and national average with just over one in twenty being Asian. The comparator areas which were chosen on the basis of being some of the districts throughout the country with the largest Asian populations are very similar to the ethnicity profile of Greater Leicester.

Table 2.3 gives a breakdown of the ethnic groups contained within the Asian category. The largest ethnic minority group in Leicester are Indian and account for 26 per cent of the population. This is the highest level seen across any district in Great Britain. Only Harrow (25 per cent), Hounslow and Brent (both 20 per cent) have Indian populations of a similar scale. All of these three districts are included in the pooled comparator areas. It is worth noting that Oadby and Wigston is ranked tenth of all GB districts with 12 per cent of its working age population being Indian.

Table 2.3: Working age population for Asian ethnic groups, 2007

	percentage of working age population					
	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
Indian	26	20	11	4	4	3
Pakistani	2	2	8	1	1	2
Bangladeshi	1	1	1	0	0	1
Other Asian	2	2	2	1	0	1
Asian or Asian British	31	24	22	6	6	6

Source: 2007 Mid-year population estimates by ethnic group, Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.

The Annual Population Survey

The Annual Population Survey (APS)⁶ is a major government survey which aims to provide local authority level estimates for a range of topics including labour market participation, employment, education, health and ethnicity. The survey combines various elements of the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) in order to maximise sample sizes within each local authority area.

The APS samples over 50,000 households in the UK each quarter. Combined annual files include information for approximately 350,000 individuals within these households. The overall sample includes information on all household members not just those of working age. For the purposes of this study only the working age respondents in England are considered. This equates to data on approximately 145,000 to 150,000 individuals per year of whom between 70-75,000 are working age women.

Although the APS is a very large data set, once the data for individual local authorities is considered then sample sizes can become relatively small. This is especially the case when further analysed for particular sub groups. Smaller sample sizes increase sampling variability and reliability of estimates. This is especially the case when estimates for ethnic groups are considered due to design effects associated with clustering of individuals by ethnic group within households⁷.

Hence for the purposes of this study three annual APS files have been combined to increase sample sizes. The files cover the periods from April to March 2006/2007, 2007/2008 and 2008/2009. All three of these files have been weighted in line with the latest ONS 2009 mid-year population estimates. The majority of the APS data presented here is therefore for a three year average covering this period. ONS guidelines have been followed in respect to appropriate thresholds for reliability of data based on sample sizes and only findings for subgroups which adhere to these guidelines are presented here. Cells in tables based on

⁶ All APS data has been accessed via Special Access Licence from the UK Data Archive. The datasets are deposited by the Office for National Statistics, Social and Vital Statistics Division and are Crown Copyright material reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland.

⁷ ONS Labour Force Survey User Guide - Volume 6: Local Area Data, pp4-5

small sample sizes and therefore subject to greater sampling variability have been greyed out.

The research team tested combining five annual APS files but found this made limited differences for many of the sample sizes for many of the smaller sub groups. Where appropriate the combined five year averages have been deployed where this allows additional aspects of the analysis to be carried out.

The following section presents some basic socio-demographics for the working age female respondents in Leicester and the benchmark areas from the combined three year APS data.

Demographics - Annual Population Survey 2006-2009

Table 2.4 and 2.5 indicate that the ethnic profile of the working age females recorded in the APS is very similar to that seen earlier in the 2007 mid year population estimates by ethnic group reported in Table 2.2 and 2.3. Cells in the tables which are greyed out indicate that these are based on small samples the data has been suppressed.

Table 2.4: Broad ethnic breakdown of working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
White	56	67	61	94	91	87
Asian or Asian British	35	26	24	5	5	6
Black or Black British	4	3	8		2	3
Chinese or other	4	3	5		1	3
Mixed		1	2		1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

Table 2.5: Ethnic breakdown for Asian or Asian British working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
Indian	31	23	11	4	4	3
Pakistani			9		1	2
Bangladeshi			1			1
Other Asian			3		<0.5	1
Asian or Asian British	35	26	24	5	5	6

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

Table 2.6: Age breakdown for working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
16-19	12	11	9	8	9	9
20-39	49	47	51	43	44	46
40-49	21	22	23	25	25	25
50-59	19	20	18	23	22	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

Table 2.6 shows the younger age profile of residents in areas with large ethnic minority populations. Some 61 per cent of working age women in Leicester and 60 per cent in comparator areas are aged under 40 compared to 51 per cent in Leicestershire and 55 per cent nationally.

Economic status of working age women

The age structure of the workforce contributes to the overall rate of labour market participation in an area as considerable variations in participation rates by age exist. Lower levels of participation, due to stays in full-time education, are the norm for both younger men and women. However, many women of child bearing age also experience spells out of the labour market due to childbirth and subsequent childcare responsibilities. The likelihood of women with small children returning to work may in turn be influenced by a number of factors including the wage levels available, the availability of affordable childcare and the number of suitable job opportunities available within the local labour market. Some of these issues are discussed further in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 of this report.

Table 2.7: Economic activity rates of working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
16-19	48	50	40	54	58	54
20-39	67	72	65	83	78	74
40-49	72	78	75	87	83	80
50-59	65	70	67	75	72	72
Total	65	71	66	80	76	74

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

Table 2.7 presents female economic activity rates by age for Leicester and the comparator areas. Whilst there are lower participation rates amongst 16-19 year old women in Leicester and Greater Leicester than nationally, the rates are somewhat higher than those seen in the

comparator areas. Lower participation rates amongst this group are however potentially a good thing if it reflects a greater tendency to stay on at school post compulsory school age.

Given that Table 2.6 indicates that Leicester has a larger share of its female workforce in the 16-19 year old age group, then this is likely to contribute to lowering the overall female economic activity rate in the area. In the main, the female economic activity rates for the other age groups tend to be quite similar to those seen in the comparator areas but are about seven percentage points adrift the national rates for these age groups.

Table 2.8 provides details of the economic status of women in Leicester. The low employment rate amongst working age women in Leicester of only 58 per cent lags far behind that seen nationally, in the East Midlands or Leicestershire county. It is however similar to that seen in the comparator areas which also have a large Asian population. On a more positive note, if the functional Greater Leicester area is considered then the employment rate, although still behind the levels seen nationally, is more favourable.

Table 2.8: Economic status of working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
In employment	58	65	60	76	72	70
ILO unemployed	7	5	5	3	4	4
Inactive	35	29	34	20	24	26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

Table 2.8 indicates that over a third of working age women in both Leicester and the comparator areas are economically inactive. It is important to understand to what extent these women are not active in the workforce through choice and to what extent they would like to engage in the workforce. This is explored later in Table 2.10.

Table 2.8 shows that ILO unemployment in Leicester at seven per cent of working age women is more than double the three per cent seen in Leicestershire. The rate is also slightly higher than the comparator areas. However, if Greater Leicester is considered then the rates are the same as for the comparator areas and which in turn are very similar to those seen nationally or in the East Midlands region. The APS estimates that approximately 6,350 working age women in Leicester are unemployed under the ILO definition. The equivalent figure for Greater Leicester is 7,400.

The ILO unemployed are not necessarily benefit claimants but those who are unemployed, looking and available for work. Traditionally ILO unemployment tends to be noticeably higher than claimant unemployment and this is more-so for women than men. In part this reflects eligibility rules where a woman may be unable to claim for means tested benefits in

their own right if they have a partner in work⁸. The average number of women JSA claimants for the same period is 2,350 or 2.5 per cent of working age women.

ILO unemployment amongst women therefore accounts for a far larger group than those claiming unemployment related benefits. Table 2.9 shows the ratio between ILO and claimant unemployed in Leicester and each of benchmark areas. On average there are 2.7 ILO unemployed women for every claimant in Leicester. The ratio is similar to that seen in the comparator areas and nationally. In Leicestershire however the ratio of 3.6 is far higher. This is in part a function of the very low claimant unemployment rates but may also reflect women who are unemployed and seeking work may have sufficient household income via their family to be more choosy about what type of work they are looking for.

Table 2.9: Ratio of ILO to claimant unemployment, working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
ILO unemployment rate	6.9	5.5	5.3	3.3	4.2	4.0
JSA claimant rate	2.5	2.0	2.1	0.9	1.3	1.4
Ratio	2.7	2.7	2.5	3.6	3.1	2.9

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright; DWP benefits data JSA claimants average for Spring 2006 to Spring 2009

The APS data allows a full breakdown of economic status including reasons why respondents say they are economically inactive. The detailed breakdown available leads to issues with disclosure due to the small sample sizes for some groups. Therefore Table 2.10 reports the larger groups within the inactive category which are above threshold levels but also combines smaller groups together into a catch all 'other reasons' category⁹.

It is worth note that Table 2.10 also highlights that only two per cent of working age women in Leicester are self-employed. This rate is relatively low compared to levels seen in the comparator areas of four per cent or nationally of five per cent. In Leicestershire the rates are three times that seen in Leicester with 6 per cent of women being self employed. However, because the numbers in this group are relatively small it is hard to be able to say much more about this group of women from the APS data.

⁸ Sufficient NI contributions made in the period leading up to unemployment mean JSA can be claimed for six months before it becomes means tested only.

⁹ This group includes those who are early retired, temporarily sick or injured, believe no job is available, not yet looking for work, doesn't need a job, gave no reason or other reason.

Table 2.10: Economic status of working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
Economically active	65	71	66	80	76	74
Employee*	56	62	57	71	67	64
Self-employed	2	3	4	6	5	5
ILO unemployed	7	5	5	3	4	4
Inactive	35	29	34	20	24	26
Inact, seeking, unavailable	1	1	1	1	1	1
Inact, not seeking, would like a job	7	7	6	4	5	6
looking after family/home	4	3	3	2	2	3
long term sick/disabled	2	2	1		1	1
student			1		1	1
other reasons	1	1	1		1	1
Inact, not seeking, not like a job	27	22	27	15	18	20
looking after family/home	14	11	14	6	8	9
long term sick/disabled	4	3	4	2	3	3
student	6	6	6	4	4	5
other reasons	3	2	3	4	3	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

Note: Cells highlighted in grey and with italics are below reliable threshold sizes and should be treated with caution.

ILO unemployment accounts for a relatively small portion of all women who are not in employment. Table 2.10 indicates that it is the economically inactive group which accounts for more than one in three of all working age women in Leicester and the comparator areas. This compares with only one in four women in England who are economically inactive. There are however relatively small differences in the rates of those who are inactive, not seeking work but would like a job across all the areas. Leicester with seven per cent of working age women in this group is on par with the national average (six per cent) whilst in Leicestershire four per cent fall into this group.

The most notable difference amongst the inactive groups is for those **who are not looking for work and do not want to work**. In Leicester and the comparator areas this accounts for 27 per cent of working age women whereas nationally the figure falls to 20 per cent and falls to as low as 15 per cent of women in Leicestershire. This represents a far greater challenge for local agencies who may wish to see the employment rate in the area rise. Engaging with this group is likely to be very difficult if they do not want to work and for many looking after the family or home is stated as the primary reason for not wanting to work. Many within this group will not be seeking support, training or help from local agencies and are unlikely interact with the majority of agencies which may provide such services.

Although a large proportion of those who are economically inactive say they don't want a job it is worth considering to what extent this might reflect their ability to compete in the workforce. Table 2.11 considers lack of formal qualifications amongst all working age women who are either ILO unemployed or economically inactive. This shows clearly that a much higher proportion of this group in Leicester have no qualifications compared to the comparable group in the comparator areas or nationally. The issue of qualifications is considered further in Chapter 6.

Table 2.11: Lack of qualifications amongst non-employed women

	% of non-employed women with no qualifications
Leicester	38
Greater Leicester	35
Leicestershire	22
Comparator areas	32
East Midlands	27
England	26

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown Copyright.

3. Economic status of working age ethnic minority women

Evidence from the Annual Population Survey

The previous chapter focuses on the general characteristics and economic status of working age women in Leicester. The demographics highlight that the large BME population within Leicester is primarily, although not exclusively, Asian. More specifically, the largest single ethnic group recorded by the APS are residents who report their ethnic group as being Indian. Whilst there is much evidence about the much lower labour market participation rates amongst women of Bangladeshi or Pakistani origin (Barrett, 2010) this is not necessarily the case amongst Indian women nationally (Lindley *et al.*, 2004).

Table 3.1: Economic activity rates of working age women, by ethnicity 2004-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	England
White	72	76	73	76
Asian or Asian British	56	57	49	50
Indian	58	60	66	67
Pakistani/Bangladeshi*	35	36	35	38
Black or Black British	59	58	64	67
Other**	48	50	55	60
Total	65	70	66	73

Source: APS, 2004/05-2008/09, Crown copyright.

*The small group classified as 'other Asian' have also been included in this group

**This includes those classified as Mixed, Chinese, or Other

Table 3.1 illustrates economic activity rates for working age women for separate ethnic groups. The rates for the Asian group as a whole are given as well as broken down for Indian residents and a combined rate for the Bangladeshi, Pakistani and other Asian groups. Even after combining the three annual APS files this still does not provide sample sizes large enough to give reliable figures for the working age females in Leicester for any sub-groups other than for whites or Indians. Therefore the data presented in Table 3.1 combines five annual data files

covering the period from 2004-2009. This is likely to give a very good indication of the rates seen in the latter three year period as only small differences in the underlying economic activity rates across the areas are found if the three year average or five year average are compared¹⁰.

The first point worth note in Table 3.1 is that the economic activity rates for white women in Leicester (72 per cent) are similar to those in the comparator areas (73 per cent) although they lag slightly behind the national average of 76 per cent. When the functional area of Greater Leicester is considered then the rates for white women are on par with the national average.

Nationally, economic activity rates for the Asian group as a whole tends to be much lower than those seen amongst whites (50 per cent compared to 76 per cent). At first glance, the higher participation rate for Asian women in Leicester (56 per cent) may seem like positive news. However, once the figures are split further into rates for Indians compared with all other Asian groups then the opposite appears true. Table 2.3 earlier indicated that the overall economic activity rate nationally for Asians is weighted towards the Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups as these groups make up just over half of the entire Asian group. Table 3.1 also shows clearly that participation rates amongst Bangladeshi and Pakistani women are consistently low. Indeed, very little variation can be seen for this group across the areas considered. Therefore this group contributes more to the lower economic activity rate seen amongst Asian women in England.

In Leicester, by far the largest ethnic minority group are women who give their ethnic group as Indian. Nationally, the economic activity rate for Indian women tends to be much closer to that for white women (67 per cent compared to 76 per cent). In the comparator areas the economic activity rate for Indian women is also very similar to that seen nationally. Hence, all other things being equal one would expect the Leicester economic activity rate to be much closer to the national average. However, the participation rate for Indian women in Leicester is nine percentage points below that seen nationally and eight percentage points lower than the comparator areas. Even if the functional area of Greater Leicester is considered which includes some of the more affluent suburbs with large concentrations of Indian residents then the economic activity rate is still six percentage points lower than in the comparator areas.

The analysis above indicates the importance of considering differences in the economic status of the main ethnic groups in Leicester. Rather than consider the Asian group as a whole, the following tables identify the Indian group separately. This ensures that the data is considered on a more like for like basis with the other benchmark areas. The figures for whites are also identified separately. Due to sample sizes, all other groups are combined into the 'other category'. By using this three-fold classification, the larger sample sizes available for these sub-groups allows us to return to using the most recent three years of APS data from 2006 to 2009.

Where sample sizes are slightly below threshold levels then these have been greyed out and put in italics and should be treated with a degree of caution. Higher threshold levels are in place for all tables disaggregated by ethnicity and so the figures are still included if they are close to the threshold level. Where the sample sizes fall to the minimum needed for the variables which are not disaggregated by ethnicity then the cells in the table have been suppressed and are marked with an asterisk.

¹⁰ The APS working age female economic activity rates for 2004-2009 and 2006-2009 are: England 73.3% and 73.6%; Pooled comparators 65.8% and 65.6%; Greater Leicester 70.1% and 70.6%; Leicester 64.6% and 65.2%.

Table 3.2 for the 2006-2009 time period shows how much lower the economic activity rates are amongst Indian women in Leicester compared with England (as in the earlier table covering the 2004-2009 period). The comparator areas are on par with the national levels and the East Midlands region is only slightly behind. In Leicestershire, the sample sizes upon which activity rates for Indian women are based are just below the release threshold, however indications are they are of a similar magnitude as those amongst white women in the county.

Table 3.2: Economic activity rates of working age women, by ethnicity 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
White	73	78	73	80	78	76
Indian	58	60	67		64	67
Other	46	45	48		58	55
Total	65	71	66	80	76	74

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown copyright.

The other point worth noting from Table 3.2 is that when all the 'other' ethnic groups are combined their economic activity rates are very low. This is also the case in Greater Leicester and the comparator areas. Table 3.1 earlier indicates that economic activity rates for the Pakistani/Bangladeshi element of this group are similar across all the areas. Therefore the lower rate for this group as a whole may be to do with those classified as black or in other ethnic groups. This potentially may reflect lower levels of labour market engagement amongst some of the newer immigrant populations in the Leicester area.

Table 3.3: Employment rates of working age women, by ethnicity, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
White	68	73	69	77	74	72
Indian	50	52	62		57	62
Other	37	37	40		51	49
Total	58	65	60	76	72	70

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown copyright.

Table 3.4: ILO unemployment rates as a percentage of working age women, by ethnicity, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
White		4	4		4	4
Indian			5	*		5
Other			7	*	7	7
Total	7	5	5		4	4

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown copyright.

Tables 3.3 and 3.4 breaks down the economically active group into those who are in employment and those ILO unemployed. There is a very low employment rate for Indian women in Leicester compared to the other benchmark areas including the comparator areas which are on par with the national average. The employment rate for Indian women in Leicestershire far exceeds the national average and is similar to the employment rate for white women in Leicestershire. Potentially, this may reflect the very tight city boundaries of Leicester and these differences may in part be a reflection of residential sorting. Therefore, better qualified Indian women with stronger labour market attachment may be more able to, or likely to move out into Leicestershire over time.

Policy evidence review

Given that there is evidence that the low economic activity rates seen amongst BME women in Leicester is substantially lower than might be expected for these groups either nationally or in comparator areas, the following section identifies and reviews some of the existing evidence relating to the integration of BME women (and men) into the labour market in the UK. The evidence is drawn primarily from national government evaluations but also includes findings from academic studies and policy evidence. The review is by no means exhaustive and focuses in particular on:

- identifying the *current key issues* with regard to the labour market engagement of BME women nationally
- highlighting *existing evidence on interventions* aimed at integrating and involving BME women in the labour market with a focus on identifying the *principles of effective intervention* from successful projects and initiatives

The quantitative evidence base with regard to the labour market participation of BME women in Leicester is relatively sound due to recent research, including this Report. However, in terms of responding to the needs of such a diverse population with multiple and varying needs it is likely that any response needs to be flexible, targeted and sustained. Such a response also requires a sound understanding of the differing experiences and circumstances of the diverse groups of women currently disengaged from the local labour market in Leicester, which requires a more qualitative understanding of various support needs.

With this in mind, barriers to employment are not the focus of this section. Rather, attention is paid to evidence on interventions and the principles of effective intervention from national programmes. It should be noted however that any future qualitative research should also pay attention to more localised initiatives in terms of identifying best practice and harnessing existing successful approaches towards engagement.

BME diversity and labour market disadvantage

It is well acknowledged that BME groups in the UK occupy a less favourable labour market position than their White British counterparts. As this evidence base has developed it has been shown that there is a great degree of diversity among BME populations in terms of the degree of disadvantage experienced. For instance, while the Chinese population appears to now match the national average in terms of economic activity rates other BME groups are still severely disadvantaged. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are the most disadvantaged groups in labour market terms while Indian and African Caribbean groups occupy a 'middle ground' (Owen *et al*, 2000). This is of particular relevance for Leicester given the relative concentration of Indian households within the district. Indeed, existing evidence suggests that the demographic and family characteristics of Indian women are more in line with White women on some indicators. For instance, in 2002 women with no children accounted for 66 per cent of all female Indians in the UK compared to 46 per cent of Pakistani women and 38 per cent of Bangladeshi women - the corresponding figure for White women being 69 per cent (Lindley *et al.*, 2004).

The local context of labour market disadvantage among women is particularly important as women, more so than men, rely on local labour markets for employment (Buckner *et al*, 2007) and tend to be less willing to travel long distances to access work opportunities. BME populations are also often clustered around particular localities and neighbourhoods which then implicates the local economy as a factor influencing relative labour market engagement. This, in turn, suggests the need for localised responses and interventions which pay attention to differences *within* districts. The *Fair Cities Pilot* discussed below being one such initiative.

Existing evidence and interventions

Nationally there have been three large scale programmes aimed at increasing the labour market engagement of ethnic minority women. These are:

- The Fair Cities Pilots
- Ethnic Minority Outreach
- Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM)

Fair Cities Pilots

The *Fair Cities Pilots* began in 2004 and represent an ambitious and experimental programme aimed at increasing the number of disadvantaged BME residents in employment through the use of a demand-led approach. The programme achieved a total of 1,003 job entries across the three pilot areas of Bradford, Brent and Birmingham, with a total spend of £9.23m. The

programme involves an employer-led approach in which interventions are tailored to the specific needs and requirements of employers, as informed by vacancies, as opposed to the provision of a generic support package aimed at enabling individuals to compete in the open labour market. In this sense the programme was designed to marry the needs of disadvantaged BME residents with the needs of local businesses based on local responses and autonomy.

On the whole the *Fair Cities Pilots* did not live up to expectations (Atkinson *et al.*, 2008). The evaluation cites a number of key problems with such an approach to BME labour market engagement including:

- inherent difficulties in attracting SMEs onto the programme - pilots were dominated by relatively large organisations
- pipelines (courses and routes into employment built through the pilots) were short, small and inefficient with less vacancies filled than expected
- hiring rates among individuals involved in the pilots were relatively low, as was employment sustainability related to a lack of post-employment support and mismatching beneficiaries to posts
- high costs associated with the delivery of the programme compared with similar initiatives

The evaluation states that: '*the many and varied objectives have simply been too ambitious...A more restricted set of objectives might have been more appropriate and provided a sharper focus around which to prioritise delivery*' (Atkinson *et al.*, p.6).

There were however, aspects of the programme that were deemed "successful" within the evaluation and these included:

- focus on ethnic minority beneficiaries
- strong employer leadership from Pilot boards drawing on local employers as well as statutory and community organisations
- successful employer engagement on some levels though the engagement of SMEs was poor
- relative success in providing jobs of quality which could transform the lives of individuals

Ethnic Minority Outreach (EMO)

The Ethnic Minority Outreach pilots ran in five areas which together account for almost 50 per cent of all BME residents in England: East Midlands; Greater London; Greater Manchester; West Midlands Metropolitan County; and West Yorkshire. EMO engaged 882 employers and some 11,545 programme participants across the five areas. The pilots began in April 2002 and focuses on three aspects of engagement and provision in responding to the diverse range of needs ethnic minorities disengaged from the labour market. These are:

- outreach based provision
- employer focused provision
- positive action training

For projects utilising the first and third aspects of provision they engaged with almost 4,000 participants. 58 per cent were Asian or Asian British, 44 per cent Indian and 24 per cent Black

or Black British (Barnes *et al.*, 2005). The evaluation identified three broad groups with differing support needs:

- **those furthest from the labour market** - including new arrivals to the UK with ESOL needs and individuals with no work experience
- **those closest to the labour market** - comprising individuals with current or recent work experience
- **an intermediate group** - a heterogeneous group.

Those in the first group made tangible but limited progress; individuals in the second group moved closer to the labour market with many securing employment; and the third group showed the least progress as they were already relatively well skilled and motivated. Other noteworthy findings from the evaluation included:

- those furthest from the labour market were severely disadvantaged by their lack of English skills
- Indian and Pakistani women made up the largest groups who had no previous contact with Jobcentre Plus
- the programme had a major impact on increasing awareness of employment and training opportunities, especially among Indian and Pakistani women
- Language and outreach skills of programme workers were said to be crucial in engaging with Indian and Pakistani women

Partners Outreach for Ethnic Minorities (POEM)

POEM began in March 2007 and is a programme ultimately aimed at moving severely disadvantaged ethnic minorities into employment and was specifically designed to support economically inactive individuals of working age who are neither in contact with Jobcentre Plus nor claiming benefits. The aim and rationale of the programme was to:

'Support was to be targeted towards non-working partners in low-income families, from ethnic groups who faced particular barriers to employment and who were living in areas of high disadvantage and high ethnic minority population. Although POEM was directed towards all ethnic minority groups, the Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali communities were its target groups, with a particular focus on women from those communities, as they have some of the lowest rates of economic activity in the UK' (Aston et al., 2009, p.1).

Leicester was included as one of the ten designated areas to deliver the project given the high BME population in the district. In terms of the activities and support involved there was no set model and there was considerable variation from one area to the next. The evaluation cites five main areas of activity across all providers (Aston *et al.*, 2009):

- flexible, one-to-one support;
- pre-application preparation, including CV writing, job search advice, help completing application forms, interview skills training, help with overseas qualification recognition and confidence building activities;
- English language and basic skills assessments;
- work experience and self-employment advice;

- group sessions on, for example, interview techniques, confidence building, talks and training focused on entry to a specific industry and basic IT training.

It is interesting to note that virtually all of these activities were identified by stakeholders (see Chapter 7) as key areas of support required to assist ethnic minority women in Leicester into employment. Moreover, these activities were said to lead to key impacts on clients over their "journey" towards employment including:

- greater confidence
- broadened horizons
- positive experiences in terms of training and preparing for work

These are all outcomes which stakeholders identified as key to enabling ethnic minority women in Leicester to secure employment with confidence the most often cited requirement, sometimes linked to command of the English language.

In terms of outcomes and impacts:

- POEM achieved 80 per cent of targeted starts in the pilot year
- there were 1,016 job entries achieved during the first year of POEM
- clients attained greater confidence and motivation
- there was increased awareness of employment and training opportunities
- clear improvements in job search, application and interview skills
- improved English language skills

Summary

Of the three programmes summarised here, albeit briefly, the POEM initiative appears to be the most successful and also the most closely aligned to the support needs set out by stakeholders in Leicester (see Chapter 7). The relative success of the EMO project in outreach work with Indian and Pakistani women also provides a positive example of engaging with these groups, which are often deemed some of the hardest to reach from a labour market perspective. Follow-up qualitative research should seek to add to this evidence base by exploring more localised approaches to engagement in areas with high BME populations and support in order to develop a comprehensive evidence base of what works for different BME groups.

4

4. Female employment in Leicester

The following section looks at the type of employment held by women in Leicester. Full-time and part-time work, the industrial structure of female jobs and wage levels will be considered. This will help shed light on the type of job opportunities available in Leicester and whether these differ to patterns seen in other places. Of particular interest is the role that the textile industry plays which has been a traditional employer of women in the area.

Full-time and part-time work

Table 4.1 presents a breakdown of full-time versus part-time work amongst working age women in Leicester and the benchmark areas. The 60:40 split in favour of full-time work in Leicester is similar to that seen nationally.

Table 4.1: Full-time and part-time work, working age women,

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
Full-time	60	61	65	58	57	59
Part-time	40	39	35	42	43	41
did not want full-time job	27	29	26	35	34	31
student	8	6	5	4	5	5
could not find full-time job	4	3	3	2	3	3
other	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown copyright.

Wage levels

One of the issues which may impact upon the likelihood of women's entry to the labour market is the type of jobs and wage levels available in the area.

The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) collects data on earnings from a one per cent sample of employee jobs taken from HM Revenues and Customs (HMRC) PAYE records. The data is available via NOMIS at local authority level split by sex and full-time or part-time work. Table 4.2 and 4.3 present the median gross weekly pay and hourly pay of residents in Leicester and the benchmark areas. The median¹¹ is used rather than the mean as this is the ONS's preferred measure of average earnings.

Table 4.2: Median gross weekly pay, pounds, 2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Leicestershire	Comparator areas	East Midlands	England
Females						
part-time	139	134	152	153	149	155
full-time	363	391	411	426	393	431
all	294	295	289	334	288	312
Males						
part-time	125	n/a	111	n/a	141	144
full-time	410	461	541	508	504	539
all	376	422	497	470	469	498

Source: ASHE 2009

Table 4.3: Median gross hourly pay, pounds, 2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Leicestershire	Comparator areas	East Midlands	England
Females						
part-time	7.11	7.26	7.40	7.70	7.49	7.89
full-time	9.79	10.64	11.01	11.47	10.51	11.52
all	8.66	9.16	9.20	9.98	8.96	9.77
Males						
part-time	7.33	n/a	7.55	n/a	7.52	7.81
full-time	10.11	11.34	13.27	12.67	12.22	13.29
all	9.57	10.81	12.61	11.97	11.68	12.69

Source: ASHE 2009

¹¹ The median is the value below which 50 per cent of employees fall. The median is less affected by small numbers of very high earners and the skewed distribution of earnings.

The hourly pay data in table 4.4 shows that the level of pay available to both full-time and part-time workers in Leicester is lower than for employees in Leicestershire and substantially lower than national rates of pay. The same can also be said for male employees in Leicester. Table 4.5 shows that if overtime is excluded for the rates of pay then this reduces the rates of pay available further.

Table 4.5: Median hourly gross pay excluding overtime, pounds, 2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Leicestershire	Comparator areas	East Midlands	England
Females						
part-time	7.06	7.19	7.37	7.78	7.47	7.88
full-time	9.77	10.62	10.95	11.34	10.50	11.50
all	8.65	9.15	9.17	10.00	8.91	9.76
Males						
part-time	7.15	n/a	7.07	n/a	7.50	7.78
full-time	10.08	11.32	13.16	12.53	12.12	13.18
all	9.55	10.80	12.48	11.85	11.61	12.59

Source: ASHE 2009

Industrial structure of female jobs in Leicester

The industrial structure and type of job opportunities available in Leicester are likely to have a bearing on female employment rates. Table 4.6 gives the share of all female employees working in each sector in the city in 2008. This shows that the share of manufacturing jobs in Leicester in 2008 is similar to that seen in Leicestershire and the East Midlands and this tends to be slightly higher than the share of female jobs in this sector in the comparator areas and nationally.

Table 4.6: Female employment by industrial sector, 2008

	% of all employee jobs								Total
	Agri., energy	Manuf.	Constr.	Dist., hotels rests.	Trans & comm.	Banking etc	Public admin etc	Other services	
Leicester	0	8	2	19	2	18	46	5	100
Greater Leicester	1	8	2	22	2	18	42	5	100
Leicestershire	2	8	2	28	5	18	33	5	100
Comparator areas	0	6	2	23	4	20	41	5	100
East Midlands	1	8	2	24	3	16	41	5	100
England	1	5	2	24	3	21	39	5	100

Source: Annual Business Inquiry 2008

The striking difference in Table 4.6 is the low level of jobs in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sector which is a traditional employer of female labour. This is coupled by a strong reliance on public sector jobs in the city although this may reflect the tight city boundaries as figures for Greater Leicester are more in line with the East Midlands and the comparator areas. This heavy reliance on public sector jobs may be problematic for the potential growth of female employment opportunities in Leicester given the current Government proposals for reducing public sector budgets.

Table 4.7: Change in number of employees, 1998-2008

	Total male employees		Total female employees		% change 1998-2008	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	male	female
Leicester	79,700	75,500	81,600	80,800	-5.3	-1.0
Greater Leicester	110,600	109,300	107,900	114,100	-1.1	5.7
Leicestershire	129,600	147,400	108,400	124,100	13.7	14.5
Comparator areas	874,800	857,400	771,500	810,400	-2.0	5.1
East Midlands	884,000	972,400	868,400	918,800	10.0	5.8
England	10,744,300	11,728,600	10,410,700	11,345,100	9.2	9.0

Source: Annual Business Inquiry 1998 and 2008

Table 4.7 shows the change in the number of employees recorded in the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) between 1998 and 2008. There has been a small fall in the numbers of female employees recorded and this has been against a backdrop of strong employment growth nationally for women. Growth in female employees was seen in all the other benchmark areas. However, it should be noted that decline in female employment opportunities has not been as drastic as that seen amongst men in Leicester.

Table 4.8: Change in employees in the textiles industry, 1998-2008

	Total male employees		Total female employees		% change 1998-2008	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	male	female
Leicester	8,200	2,100	8,400	2,700	-74.7	-68.3
Greater Leicester	9,400	2,200	9,700	2,900	-76.1	-70.5
Leicestershire	5,400	900	6,600	1,100	-83.0	-82.9
Comparator areas	13,300	3,000	9,600	2,800	-77.2	-70.6
East Midlands	33,000	7,600	38,000	9,200	-76.9	-75.9
England	131,000	38,300	125,900	36,200	-70.7	-71.2

Source: Annual Business Inquiry 1998 and 2008

Tables 4.8 and 4.9 show the scale of the contraction of the textile industry in Leicester over the ten year period. This has impacted on both male and female employment opportunities in the area. Just over 10 per cent of both males and females were employed in the industry in 1998 this had fallen to 3.3 per cent of women and 2.7 per cent of men by 2008. This is the equivalent of a decline of 6,100 male jobs and 5,700 female jobs in the sector. So whilst the decline in female jobs in this sector has been dramatic it has not been any more extreme than the job loss for men in this sector.

Table 4.9: Change in employees in the textiles industry, 1998-2008

	% of all male employees in textiles		% of all female employees in textiles		percentage point change 1998-2008	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	male	female
Leicester	10.2	2.7	10.3	3.3	7.5	7.0
Greater Leicester	8.5	2.1	9.0	2.5	6.4	6.5
Leicestershire	4.2	0.6	6.1	0.9	3.5	5.2
Comparator areas	1.5	0.4	1.2	0.3	1.2	0.9
East Midlands	3.7	0.8	4.4	1.0	3.0	3.4
England	1.2	0.3	1.2	0.3	0.9	0.9

Source: Annual Business Inquiry 1998 and 2008

5. Working age benefit claimants in Leicester

Introduction

This chapter examines the patterns revealed by an analysis of secondary data on working age welfare benefit claimants. These comprise Jobseeker's Allowance, Incapacity Benefit (and its replacement, the Employment Support Allowance), and Income Support for lone parents. Evidence is presented for both women and men, as a means of drawing out contrasts and similarities in claimant concentrations, and for three different geographical resolutions:

- Leicester City, Greater Leicester and the Leicestershire sub-region;
- Leicester City and its comparator local authority areas;
- a set of smaller divisions (lower super output areas) within Leicester City itself.

Benefit claimants in Leicester and Leicestershire sub-region

In terms of working age benefit claimants there is a clear distinction between Leicester (taken either as the City Council area or as the 'Greater Leicester' urban area) and the rest of the Leicestershire sub-region, with the former having much higher levels than the latter. This pattern holds for both women and men (see Tables 5.1 and 5.2). Indeed, all seven Shire Districts have claimant rates for both women and men that are below the sub-regional, regional and national averages, whatever the benefit. Conversely, Leicester City and Greater Leicester are consistently well above these benchmark averages, again irrespective of the type of benefit.

For women the highest claimant rates are incapacity-related benefits, followed by lone parents on Income Support. For men the rates for JSA and incapacity-related benefits are generally of a similar magnitude, with the exception of North West Leicestershire where the legacy of coal mining still appears to be having an effect on IB/ESA claims.

In total, in August 2009 there were 16,690 working age women in Leicester on out-of-work¹² benefits equivalent to 18 per cent of all working age women. Of these 7,130 were IB/ESA claimants, 5,550 on Income Support for lone parents and 3,660 unemployed JSA claimants.

¹² This group primarily consists of those on JSA, IB/SDA/ESA and Income Support for lone parents. It also includes a small number of claimants classified as on 'other income related benefits' which includes Income support with a disability premium.

Table 5.1: Female benefits claimants in the Leicestershire sub-region, August 2009

	% of working age females				Any Benefits ¹³
	JSA	IB/ESA	IS (LP)	Out of work Benefits	
Harborough	1.7	3.1	1.4	6.3	8.5
Melton	1.7	3.3	2.1	7.2	9.9
Blaby	1.8	3.6	1.8	7.3	10.0
Charnwood	1.9	4.0	2.2	8.3	10.9
Oadby & Wigston	1.9	4.2	2.4	8.6	11.2
Hinckley and Bosworth	1.9	4.2	2.2	8.4	11.5
NW Leicestershire	1.8	5.3	2.4	9.7	13.0
Leicestershire	1.8	4.0	2.1	8.1	10.8
Leicester City	3.9	7.7	6.0	18.0	21.7
Greater Leicester	3.3	6.5	4.7	14.8	18.2
Leicestershire sub-region	2.5	5.2	3.4	11.4	14.4
East Midlands	2.3	5.9	3.5	11.9	15.2
England	2.4	5.9	3.9	12.5	15.5

Source: DWP Benefits data

Table 5.2: Male benefits claimants in the Leicestershire sub-region, August 2009

	% of working age males				Any Benefits
	JSA	IB/ESA	IS (LP)	Out of work Benefits	
Harborough	2.9	3.5	0.1	6.8	8.0
Melton	3.4	3.7	0.1	7.7	9.0
Blaby	3.6	4.1	0.1	8.2	9.6
Charnwood	3.9	4.2	0.1	8.7	9.9
Oadby & Wigston	4.5	4.4	0.1	9.3	10.8
Hinckley and Bosworth	4.2	4.7	0.1	9.6	11.1
NW Leicestershire	4.1	6.1	0.1	11.0	12.7
Leicestershire	3.8	4.4	0.1	8.8	10.2
Leicester City	9.3	9.3	0.2	19.8	21.9
Greater Leicester	7.5	7.6	0.2	16.2	18.0
Leicestershire sub-region	5.5	6.0	0.1	12.3	13.9
East Midlands	5.4	7.3	0.1	13.5	15.2
England	5.5	7.4	0.1	13.8	15.4

Source: DWP Benefits data

¹³ This includes people in work but receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Carers Allowance (CA).

Benefit claimants in Leicester and comparator local authorities

Table 5.3 indicates that Leicester has the fourth highest rate of working age female claimants on out of work benefits compared with the 12 comparator areas. The three areas with higher rates are all in the West Midlands. Greater Leicester compares more favourably, lying only 2.3 percentage points above the England average, and bettered mainly by comparators in the Greater London area. Similar patterns are found for men, with the exception of Blackburn with Darwen having a higher overall claimant rate (see Table 5.4). Overall Greater Leicester's out-of-work benefits rate for both women and men is around three-quarters of those for Sandwell and Wolverhampton, the two comparators with the highest rates.

Across the comparators there are similar patterns to those revealed by the sub-regional analysis above, with women more likely to be on incapacity-related benefits and Income Support (as lone parents). In contrast, men tend to claim JSA and incapacity-related benefits in equal measure, with negligible proportions claiming IS as lone parents. One exception to the norm is Blackburn with Darwen, an area which has substantial numbers of women in the manufacturing sector (12 per cent of female jobs compared to 9 per cent in Leicester). However, it has relatively low levels of JSA claimants, especially amongst both women when compared to other comparator areas and in relation to its overall working age benefits claimant rate. Conversely, its incapacity-related benefits rates for both women and men are much higher than Leicester, and above any of the other comparator areas.

Table 5.3: Female benefits claimants in Leicester and comparator areas, August 2009

	% of working age females				
	JSA	IB/ESA	IS (LP)	Out of work Benefits	Any Benefits
Wolverhampton	4.6	8.1	6.6	19.8	24.0
Sandwell	4.2	7.9	6.3	18.9	23.6
Birmingham	4.2	7.2	6.5	18.3	22.5
Leicester City	3.9	7.7	6.0	18.0	21.7
Blackburn with Darwen	2.5	9.8	5.1	17.7	22.6
Coventry	3.1	6.8	5.4	15.6	18.9
Brent	3.4	6.1	5.6	15.5	18.0
Bradford	2.8	7.0	4.8	15.0	19.2
Greater Leicester	3.3	6.5	4.7	14.8	18.2
Luton	3.1	5.7	5.3	14.3	17.6
Ealing	3.2	5.5	5.1	14.1	16.5
Hounslow	2.6	5.7	5.4	14.0	16.7
Slough	2.8	5.6	5.2	13.9	16.7
Harrow	2.3	4.8	3.8	11.1	13.9
Leicestershire	1.8	4.0	2.1	8.1	10.8
Leicestershire sub-region	2.5	5.2	3.4	11.4	14.4
East Midlands	2.3	5.9	3.5	11.9	15.2
England	2.4	5.9	3.9	12.5	15.5

Source: DWP Benefits data

Table 5.4: Male benefits claimants in Leicester and comparator areas, August 2009

	% of working age males				
	JSA	IB/ESA	IS (LP)	Out of work Benefits	Any Benefits
Sandwell	10.8	10.8	0.2	23.0	25.4
Wolverhampton	11.1	10.4	0.2	22.8	24.8
Birmingham	11.4	9.7	0.2	22.2	24.3
Blackburn with Darwen	7.1	13.5	0.2	21.7	24.3
Leicester City	9.3	9.3	0.2	19.8	21.9
Bradford	7.1	9.0	0.2	17.0	18.8
Coventry	7.8	8.2	0.2	17.0	18.8
Greater Leicester	7.5	7.6	0.2	16.2	18.0
Brent	6.1	7.7	0.2	14.9	16.1
Luton	6.7	7.1	0.1	14.5	15.8
Ealing	5.5	6.6	0.1	12.9	14.0
Slough	5.3	6.6	0.1	12.7	13.9
Hounslow	4.3	6.3	0.2	11.4	12.7
Harrow	3.9	5.2	0.1	9.9	11.2
Leicestershire	3.8	4.4	0.1	8.8	10.2
Greater Leicester	7.5	7.6	0.2	16.2	18.0
Leicestershire sub-region	5.5	6.0	0.1	12.3	13.9
East Midlands	5.4	7.3	0.1	13.5	15.2
England	5.5	7.4	0.1	13.8	15.4

Source: DWP Benefits data

Mapping benefit claimants and ethnicity within Leicester

Unfortunately, the majority of secondary data sets on welfare benefit claimants for small areas do not contain any breakdowns by ethnicity. This means that it is not possible to assess directly the composition of different types of benefit claimant according to ethnic origin¹⁴. However, it is possible to examine any associations between geographical concentrations of different population groups on the one hand, and the spatial distribution of benefit claimants on the other.

In terms of ethnicity the most recent data available for small areas is from the 2001 Census of Population. The smallest area for which these figures can be assembled are known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), with each one equating to an average of 1,500 persons. Figure 5.1 shows the boundaries of the 187 LSOAs that make up the Leicester City Council area, along with the names of the main neighbourhoods within the city.

Figure 5.2 shows the distribution of different population groups across Leicester. It reveals how the Non-white population in general is heavily concentrated in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the city, especially Belgrave, Rushey Mead, Spinney Hills and Stoneygate. People of Asian and Asian-British origin tend to live in the same areas, albeit even more concentrated in

¹⁴ It is possible to get data on JSA claimants by local authority with an ethnic breakdown.

the more inner city neighbourhoods of Belgrave and Spinney Hills. By implication the white population is predominant in the western, north-western and southern segments of the city (Aylestone, Beaumont Leys, Braunstone Park, Eyres Monsell).

Figure 5.1: A map of principal neighbourhoods in Leicester City

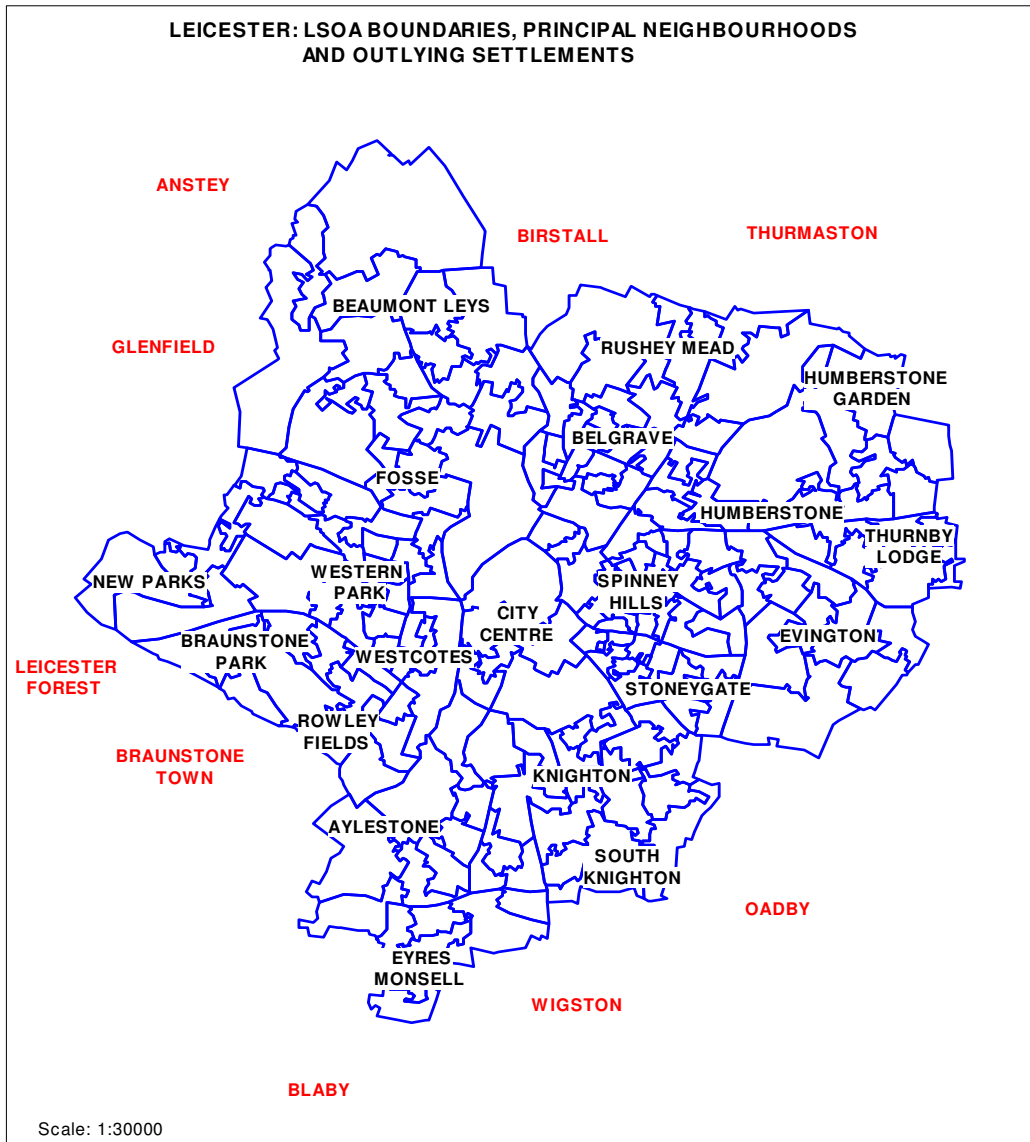
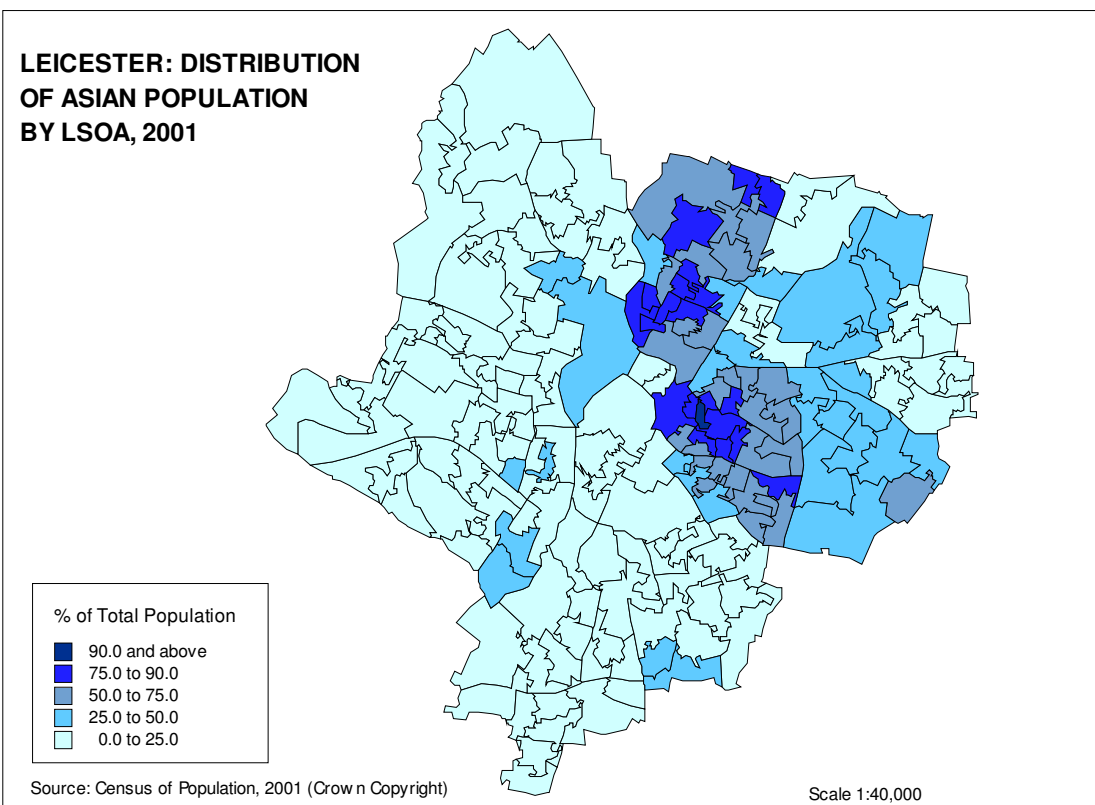
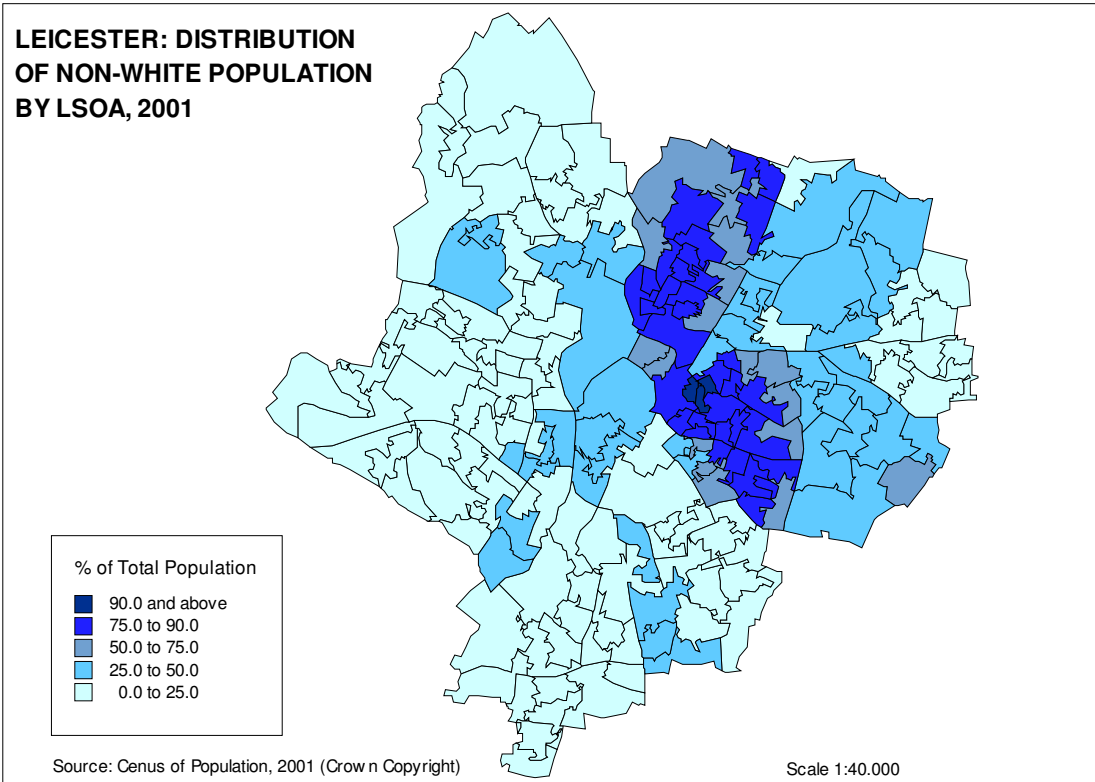


Figure 5.2: Distribution of BME population across Leicester



Benefit claimant patterns within the City of Leicester

This section contains a series of maps showing the distribution of welfare benefit claimants by LSOA for 2001 and 2009, disaggregated by gender. There are separate maps for each of the main state working age benefits: Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB)/Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), and Income Support (IS). Lone parents receiving the latter are also assessed separately. Unfortunately we have been unable to include Employment Support Allowance claimants, since there are no separate figures for women and men.

In terms of Jobseeker's Allowance, there has been a general increase in rates for women across the city between 2001 and 2009 (see Figure 5.3). However, the rates are still relatively low compared to men, with the greatest concentrations (between 6 and 12 per cent of the working age population) being in areas with low to medium presence of non-white population. Rates for men have also shown an increase, no doubt reflecting the effects of the recession, and resulting in the majority of LSOAs now having a rate of 6 per cent or more (Figure 5.4). Again, the worst affected areas tend to be those with low to medium proportions of non-white population, although some parts of the Spinney Hills neighbourhood have rates in excess of 12 per cent.

The scale of incapacity-related claims (IB and SDA) has fallen across the city for both women and men between 2001 and 2009, although isolated pockets of high claimant rates do persist (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6). Again, although some of these are located in areas with high levels of BME population such as Belgrave and Spinney Hills, the majority are to be found in other areas (Beaumont Leys, Braunstone Park, Eyres Monsell, Thurnby Lodge).

A similar pattern is evident with respect to women receiving Income Support, with the main concentrations being the outer estates of Beaumont Leys, Braunstone Park, Eyres Monsell, West Knighton and Western Park (see Figure 5.6). Small parts of Belgrave and Spinney Hills, where there are high concentrations of non-white population, are also badly affected, but in general these areas appear to have relatively lower claimant rates. These areas also have comparatively low lone parent-related Income Support claims by women, with the main concentrations mirroring those for other types of benefit (see Figure 5.7). This is likely to reflect a lower incidence of lone parenthood amongst Asian women, but also the presence of strong family support (and an associated absence of claims) for those who are in this situation.

The overall impression from all these maps is that those areas with high levels of benefit claimants seldom coincide with those that have large concentrations of non-white or Asian population. To test this in a more robust way, a statistical correlation was calculated between the percentage claiming working age benefits and the percentage of the population which is classed as non-white. This produced a correlation coefficient for males of -0.206, and for women of -0.168. This indicates that in Leicester there appears to be a moderate negative association between high concentrations of BME population on the one hand, and high levels of benefit claimants on the other. **This suggests that the relatively large number of Asian women who are economically inactive or unemployed do not necessarily enter the state benefits system.** Figure 5.9 shows the neighbourhoods that have a combination of high levels of working age women claiming benefits (more than 25 per cent of the total) and a high proportion of non-white population (more than 60 per cent of the total). The main concentration is in and around the Spinney Hills area. This map also shows the more extensive areas with a majority of white population and concentrations of female benefits claimants.

Figure 5.3: Distribution of female JSA claimants across Leicester

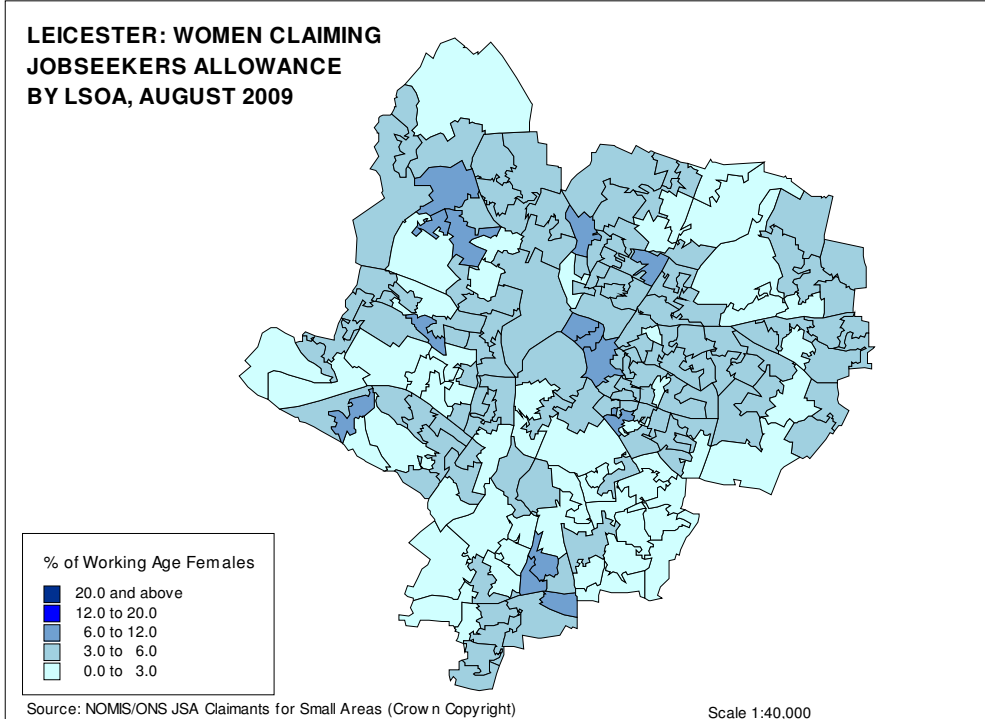
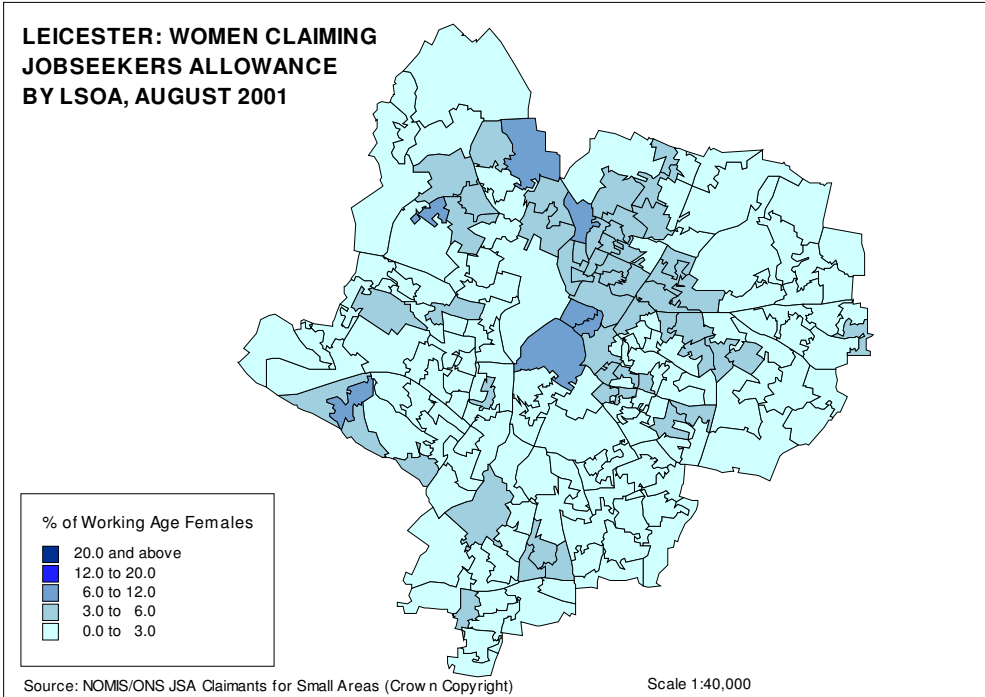


Figure 5.4: Distribution of male JSA claimants across Leicester

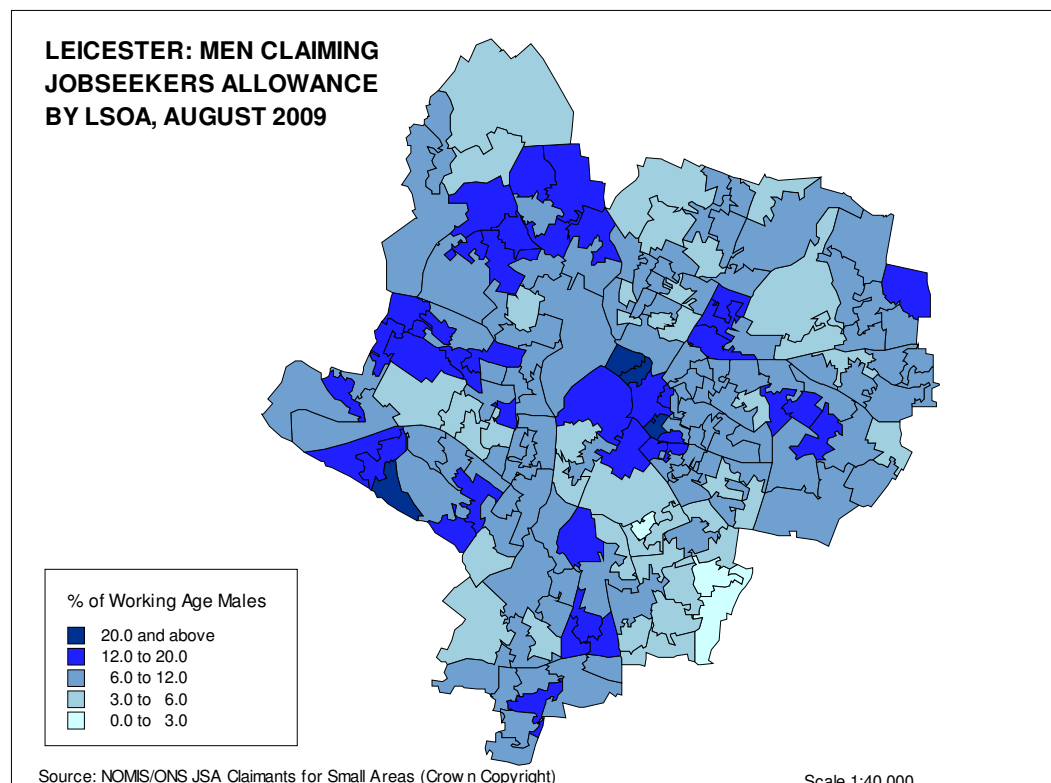
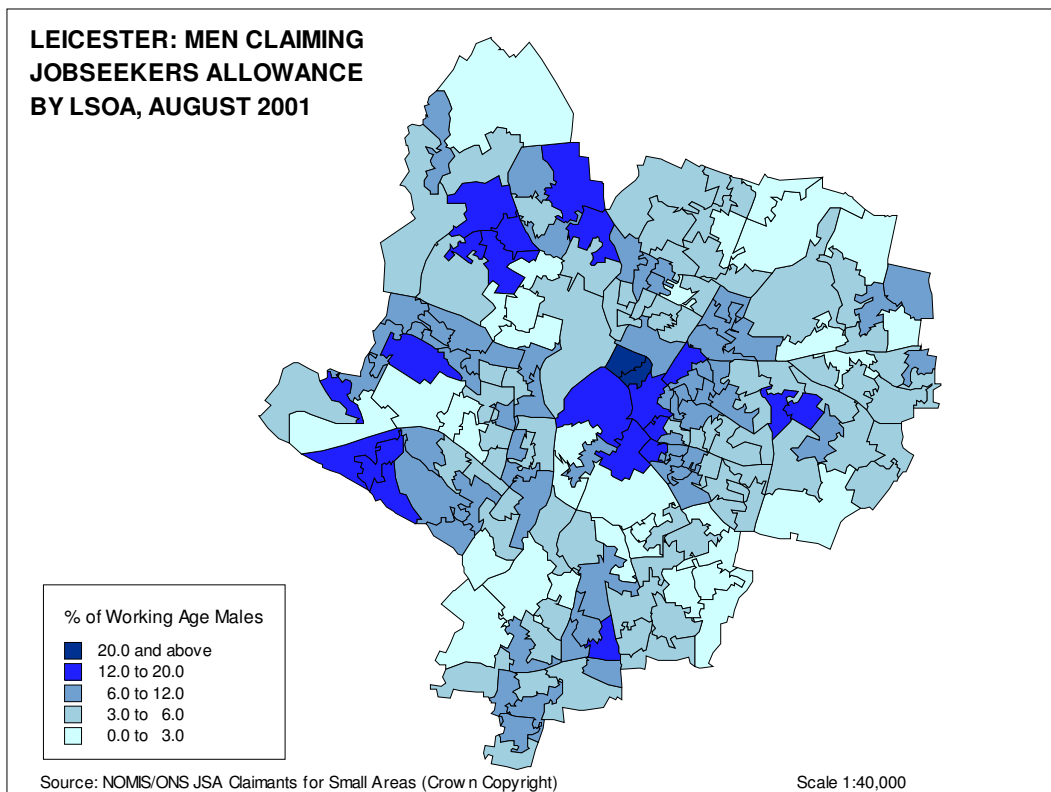


Figure 5.5: Distribution of female IB/SDA claimants across Leicester

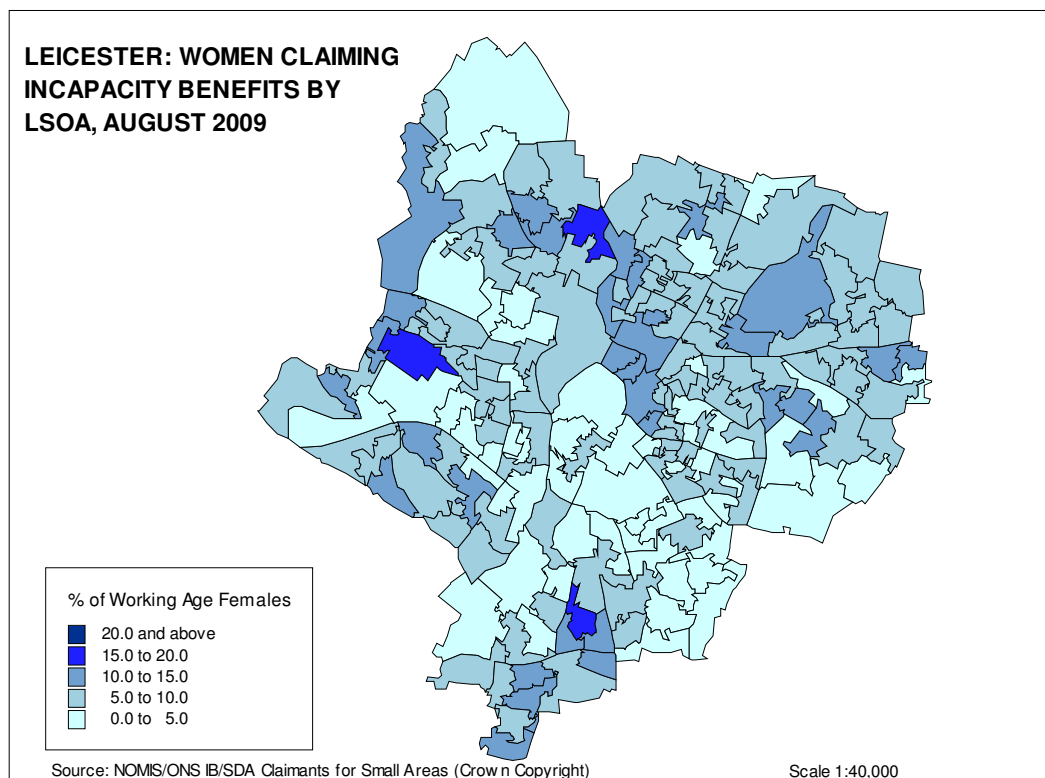
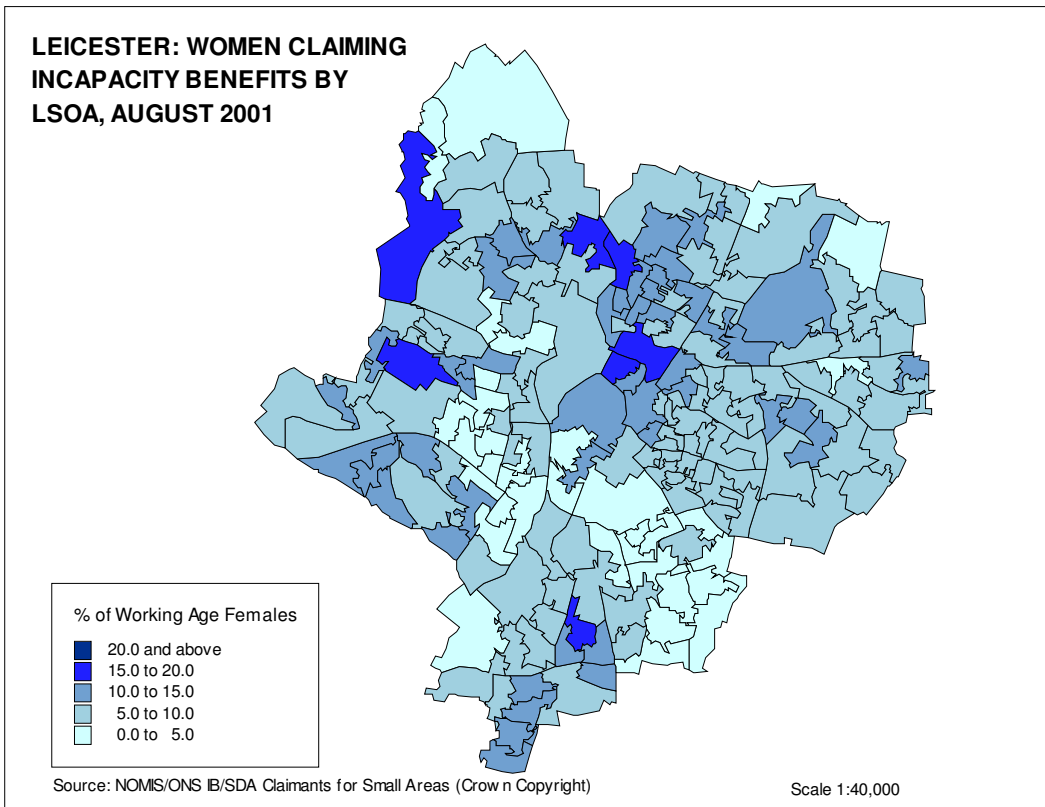


Figure 5.6: Distribution of male IB/SDA claimants across Leicester

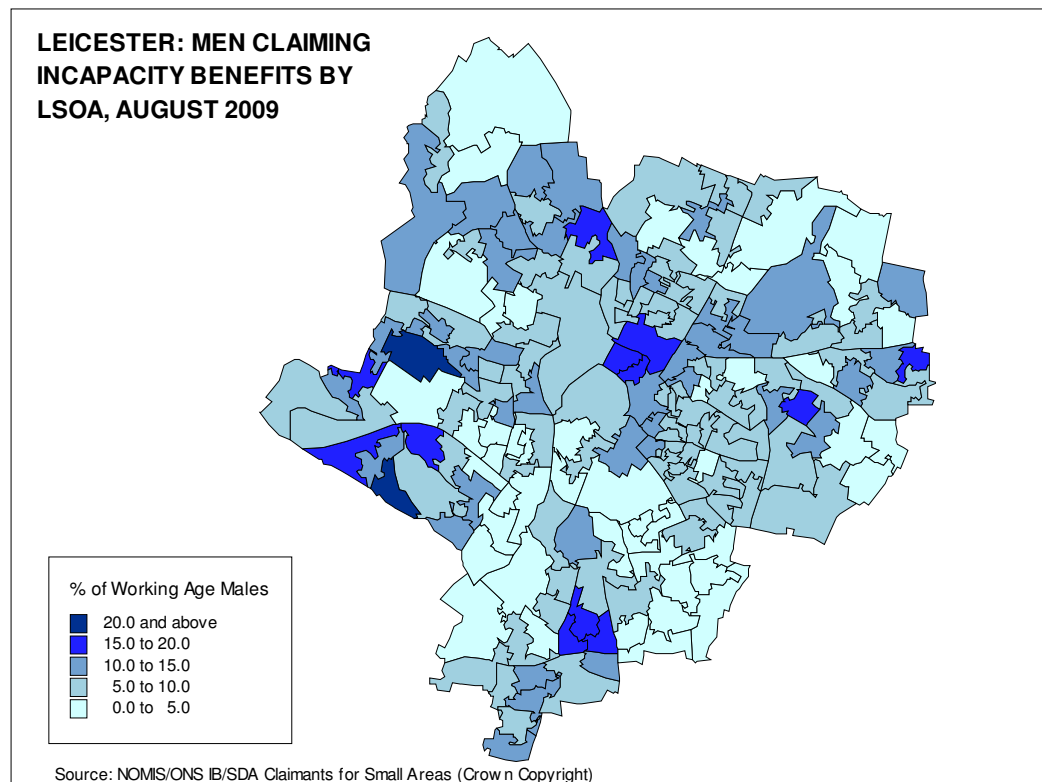
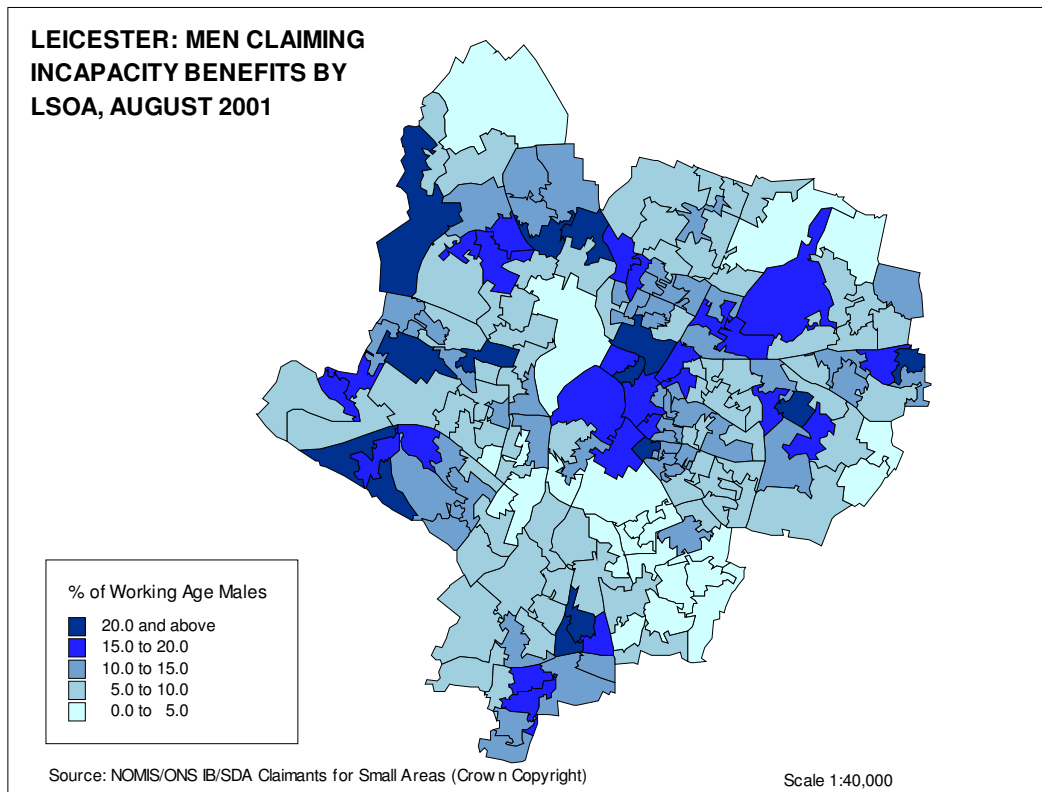


Figure 5.7: Distribution of female Income Support claimants across Leicester

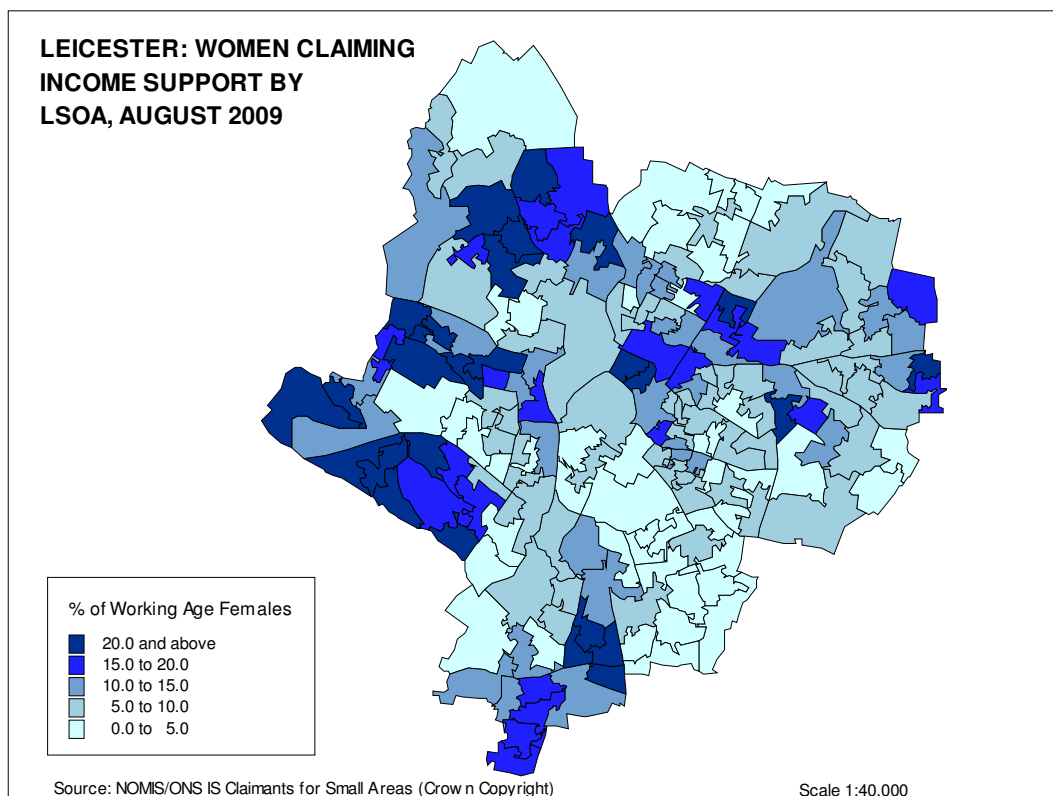
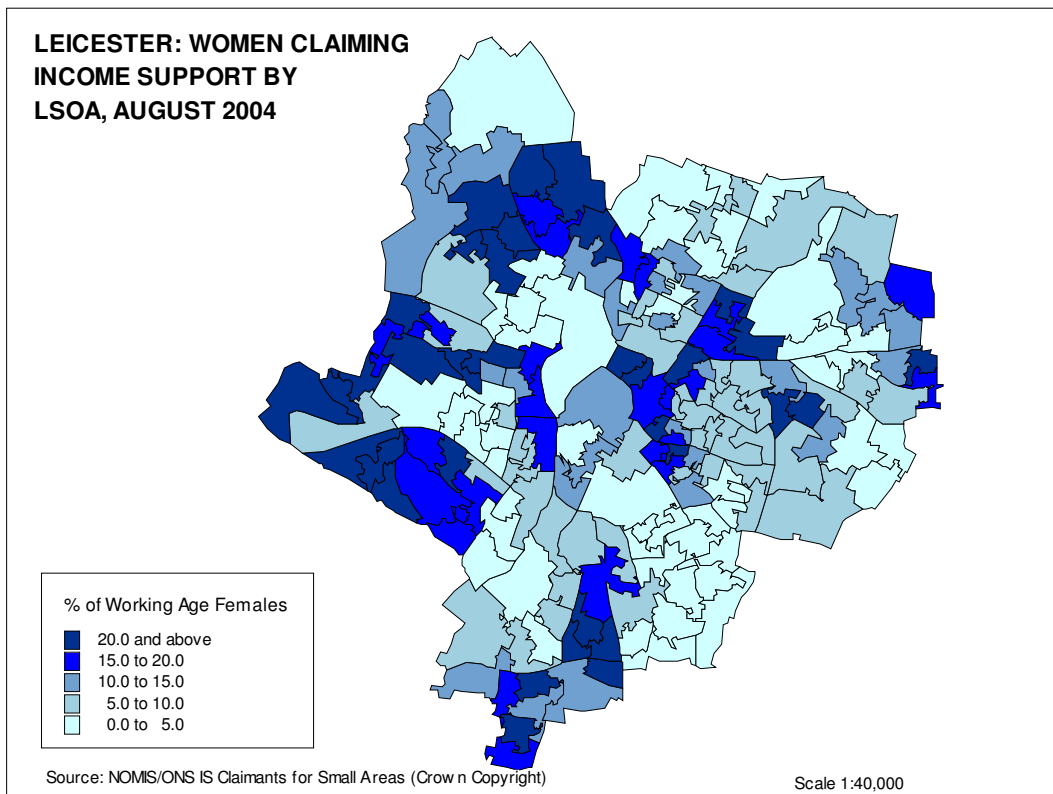


Figure 5.8: Distribution of female lone parents claiming Income Support across Leicester

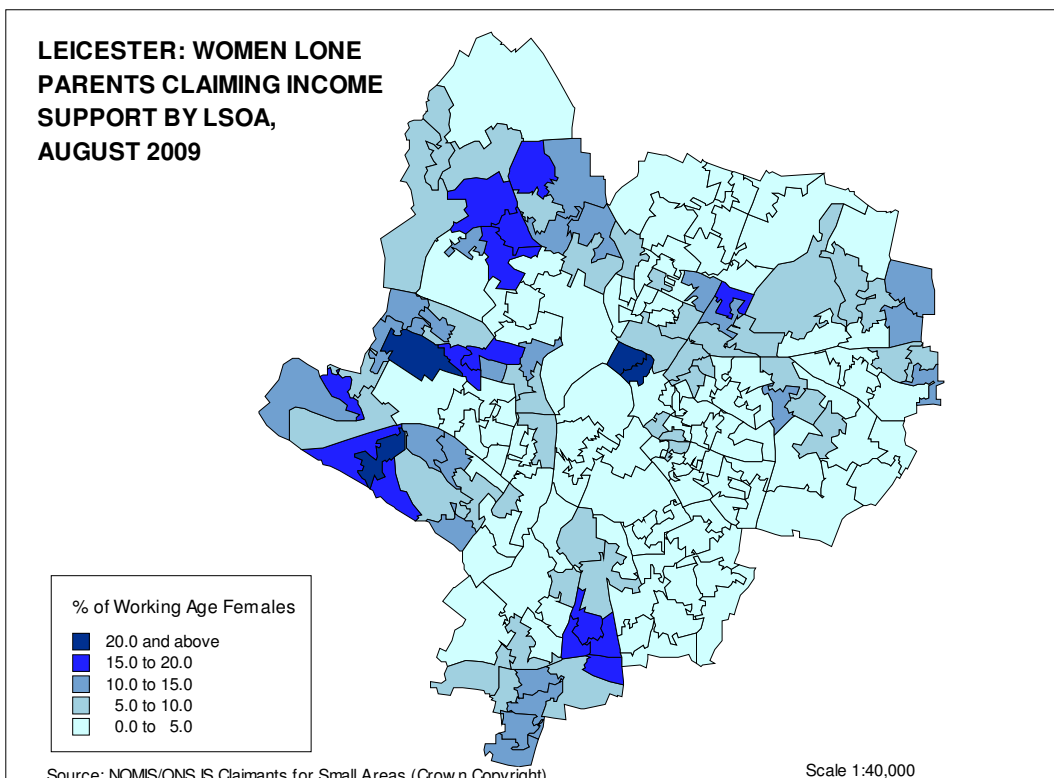
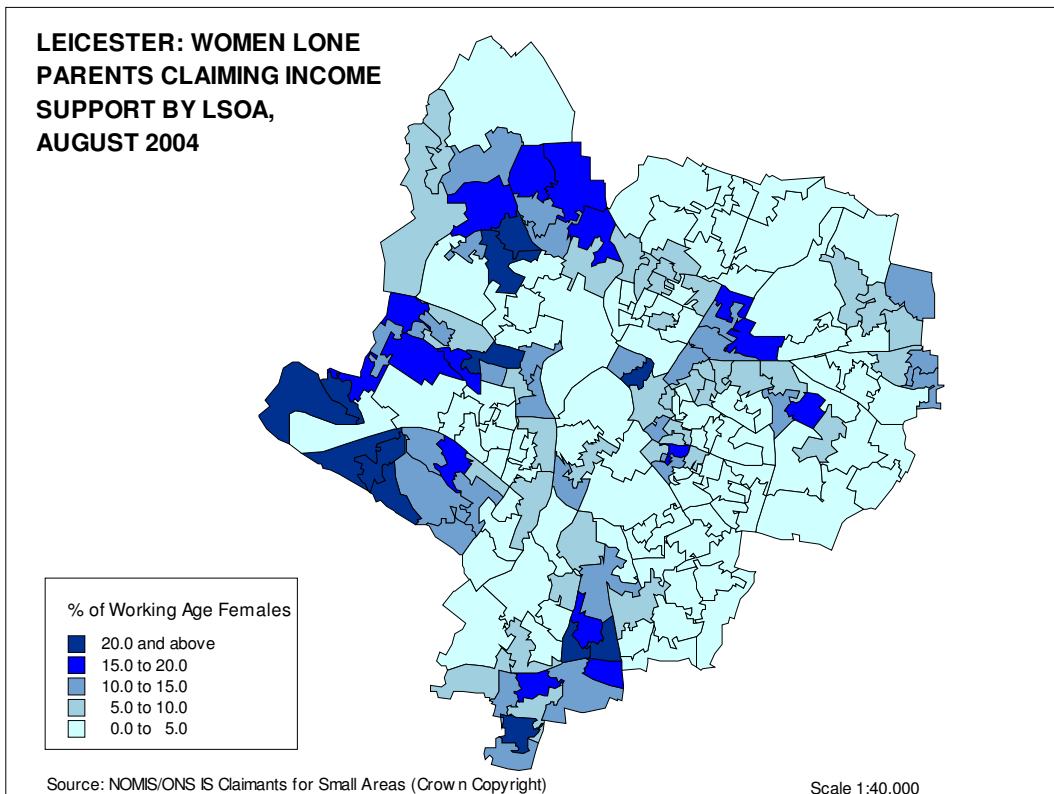
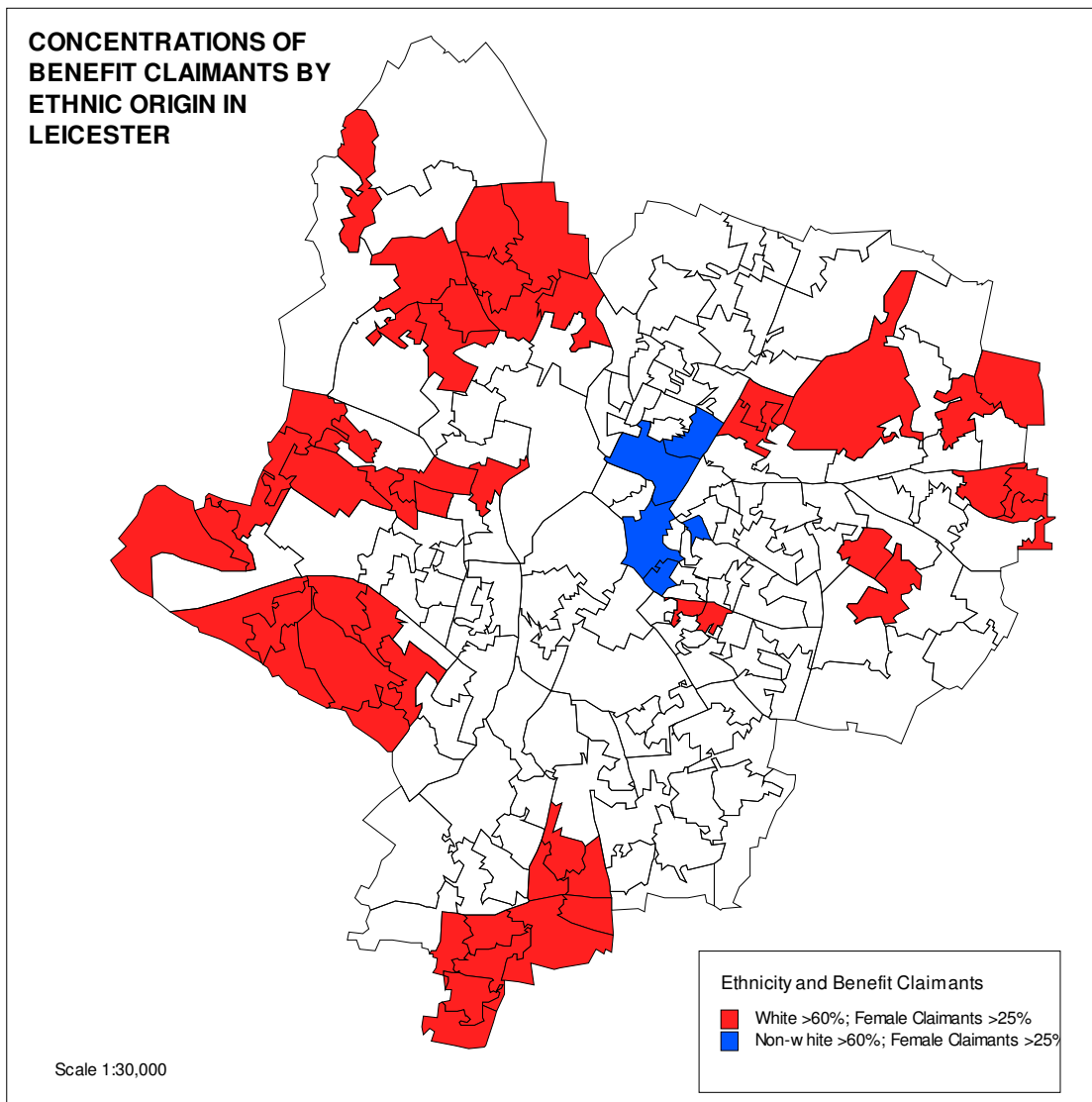


Figure 5.9: Women benefit claimants by ethnic origin in Leicester



6

6. Qualifications, education and training

Qualifications

A key aspect of successful participation in the labour market is the level of skills that people can offer. The main way of measuring this is by formal qualifications achieved. Typically those lacking any of these occupy the weakest position when it comes to job applications. Even unskilled posts tend to require some degree of literacy and numeracy, and qualifications help applicants to demonstrate that they meet the prescribed standard.

The distribution of qualifications amongst working age women in Leicester and other areas is set out in Table 6.1. Almost a quarter of those living in Leicester City have no qualifications at all. This is a much higher figure than the comparator areas, and almost double the county and national rates. While Greater Leicester is closer to the comparators on this score, it is still far in excess of regional and national averages. Conversely, the proportions of working age women in Leicester City who have any UK-based qualifications are lower than the figures for Leicestershire, the East Midlands and England. However, the city actually exceeds these areas in terms of 'other' qualifications, with a level equal to that of the comparators. It is likely that many of these have been obtained by migrants in their home country, and this raises questions about the extent to which these are recognised or accepted by local employers.

Table 6.1: Highest qualification for working age women, 2006-2009

	Leicester	Greater Leicester	Comparator areas	Leicestershire	East Midlands	England
Degree or equivalent	15	15	18	18	17	20
Higher education	7	8	7	10	9	9
GCE A Level or equiv	15	16	16	20	19	19
GCSE grades A-C or equiv	22	24	23	27	28	27
Other qualifications	17	16	17	13	13	12
No qualification	24	20	18	11	14	13
Don't know			1		1	1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: APS, 2006/07-2008/09, Crown copyright.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

In terms of the transition from compulsory schooling to participation in the formal labour market the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is seen as a major concern. Table 6.2 shows the percentage of young women and men who fall into this category in each local authority area. Unfortunately at this stage we do not have equivalent data for the comparator local authorities.

Just under half of NEETs in Leicester City, Greater Leicester and Leicestershire are women, although there is some variation between the smaller shire Districts. Thus, almost two-thirds of NEETs in Melton are female, compared to two-fifths in Charnwood. In line with most of the other indicators used in this report, Leicester City has the highest level of female NEETs, equating to 376 young women. Greater Leicester also exceeds all other local authority areas except Melton. However, their similar percentage scores belie a huge difference in scale, with Melton having 36 NEET young women but Greater Leicester 441. Most areas have experienced a reduction in the overall extent of NEETs over the last five years, with Leicester City falling from 12.4 per cent in April 2005 to 7.8 per cent in April 2010, and Leicestershire County from 6.5 per cent to 4.1 per cent over the same period. Unfortunately there are no figures disaggregated by gender available over this timespan.

Table 6.2: Percentage of young people not in education, employment or training, Leicestershire sub-region, April 2010

	Female		Male		All		% NEETs Female
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Melton	36	6.8	21	3.5	57	5.1	63.2
North West Leicestershire	59	4.9	42	3.1	101	4.0	58.4
Charnwood	103	4.6	109	4.7	212	4.7	48.6
Hinckley and Bosworth	47	3.5	72	5.1	119	4.3	39.5
Blaby	41	3.0	46	3.2	87	3.1	47.1
Harborough	28	2.8	26	2.3	54	2.5	51.9
Oadby and Wigston	26	2.7	26	2.7	50	2.7	48.0
Leicestershire	338	4.0	342	3.7	680	3.8	49.7
Leicester City	376	8.2	387	7.8	763	8.0	49.3
Greater Leicester	441	6.4	459	6.2	900	6.3	49.0
Leicestershire sub-region	714	5.4	729	5.2	1443	5.3	49.5

Source: Connexions Leicestershire

Table 6.3: Percentage of young people in the sub-region not in education, employment or training by LAD, April 2010

	% of each group in sub-region			
	Female NEETs	Female Young People	Male NEETs	Male Young People
Leicester City	52.7	35.0	53.1	35.0
Leicestershire	47.3	65.0	46.9	65.0
Charnwood	14.4	17.0	15.0	16.3
NW Leicestershire	8.3	9.1	5.8	9.5
Hinckley and Bosworth	6.6	10.2	9.9	10.0
Blaby	5.7	10.3	6.3	10.2
Melton	5.0	4.0	2.9	4.2
Harborough	3.9	7.7	3.6	7.9
Oadby & Wigston	3.4	6.7	3.6	6.9
Greater Leicester	61.8	52.0	63.0	52.1
Leicestershire sub-region	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Connexions Leicestershire

The contrasting scale of the NEETs issue between the various areas is highlighted by Table 6.3. This reveals that just over half of women NEETs in the Leicestershire sub-region live in Leicester City, compared with around a third of the population in that age group. This pattern is repeated for Greater Leicester but in more muted fashion (62 per cent of female NEETs compared to 52 per cent of the population). Of all other areas, only Melton has a disproportionate level of female NEETs compared with its population.

A particular concern in relation to NEETs is the extent to which teenage mothers fall into this category. Table 6.4 illustrates that the Leicestershire sub-region is in line with regional and national figures on this score, with around 51 per cent, but that once again Leicester City has a higher 'drop-out' rate (57 per cent). However, on the plus side it does have a slightly above average proportion who are in education, employment or training compared to both the East Midlands and England, but still lower than either the county or the sub-region. This is mainly due to the much lower proportions of teenage mothers classed as 'other'.

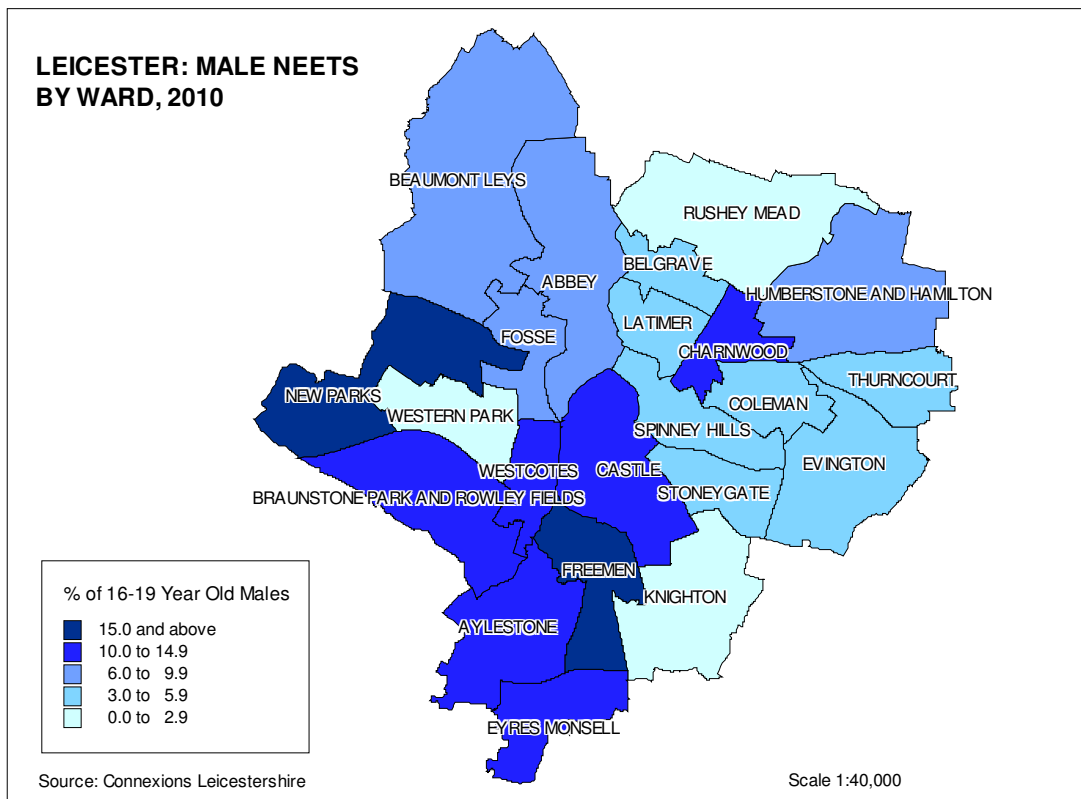
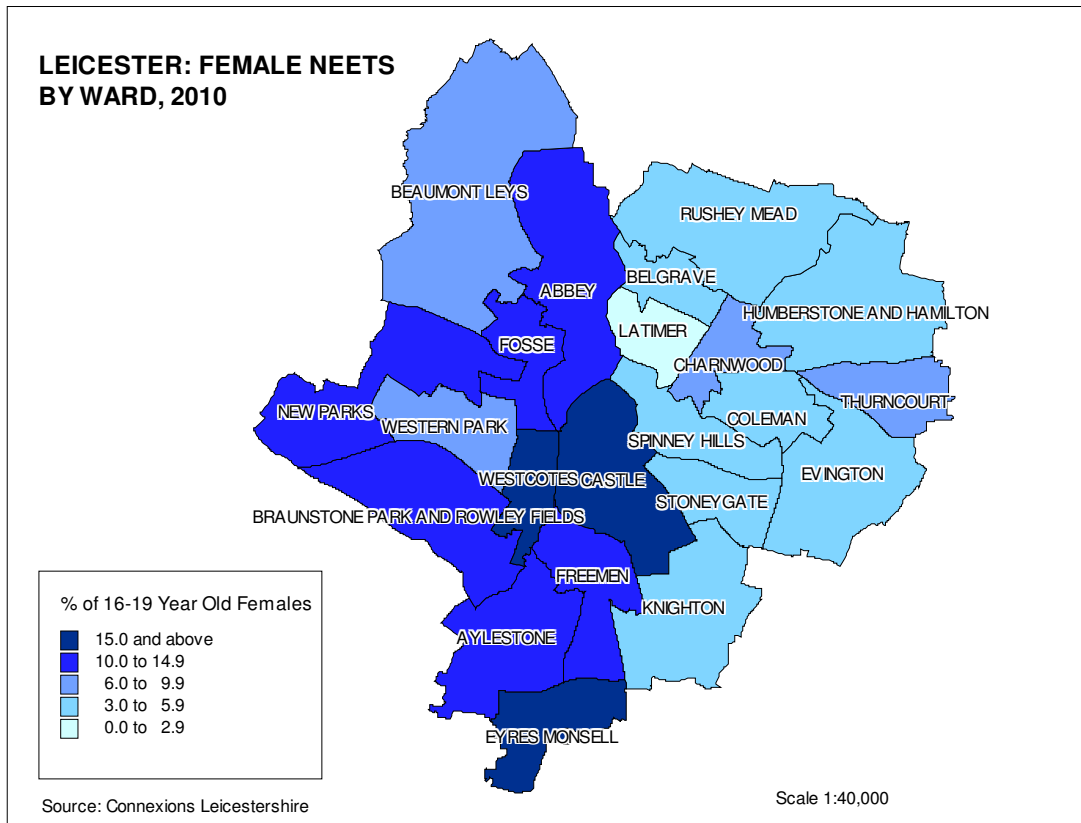
Table 6.4: Teenage mothers who are EET or NEET by district, April 2010

	Percentage of teenage mothers			Total
	% EET	% NEET	% Other	
Leicester City	32.3	57.4	10.3	100
Leicestershire	43.6	50.2	6.2	100
Melton	22.2	70.4	7.4	100
Harborough	33.3	61.9	4.8	100
Charnwood	46.3	50.0	3.8	100
Hinckley and Bosworth	46.7	44.4	8.9	100
NW Leicestershire	50.0	42.9	7.1	100
Oadby and Wigston	54.6	38.6	6.8	100
Blaby	51.7	31.0	17.2	100
Greater Leicester	36.2	53.3	10.5	100
Leicestershire Sub-region	38.5	51.4	10.1	100
East Midlands	31.0	51.0	18.0	100
England	28.0	52.0	20.0	100

Source: Connexions Leicestershire

Finally, Figure 6.1 displays the distribution of female and male NEETs by ward across Leicester City. This indicates that the main concentrations for women are in central and inner city areas (Castle and Westcotes wards) and in Eyres Monsell. The highest levels of male NEETs by contrast are found in the inner city ward of Freeman and the peripheral ward of New Parks. What is striking about both these maps is the stark west/east divide, and the place in the lower ranges of the main non-white and Asian-dominated areas around Belgrave, Latimer and Spinney Hills.

Figure 6.1: Concentration of male and female NEETs across Leicester



Graduate retention in Leicester and Leicestershire

Table 6.5 gives figures for the total number of University leavers by gender and higher education institution. The three Leicestershire Universities are compared to those in Derby and Nottingham in order to provide some context. De Montfort University provides the largest number of graduates at almost 4,400, with Leicester and Loughborough each producing a little less than 3,000 graduates in the 2007/08 academic year. This gives a figure of more than 10,000 graduates when the three institutions are combined, roughly the same as that of the two Nottingham Universities – 10,520. There are more female graduates than male in five of the six Universities, the exception being Loughborough. Across the three Universities in Leicestershire female graduates account for 5,464 of the total, or 54 per cent. Again this is broadly comparable to the equivalent figure (5,681) and proportion (56 per cent) in Nottingham.

Table 6.5: 2007/08 university leavers - Leicestershire and selected East Midlands HE institutions

	Male	Female	Total
De Montfort University	1,748	2,646	4,394
University of Leicester	1,330	1,649	2,979
Loughborough University	1,641	1,169	2,810
LEICS. TOTAL	4,719	5,464	10,183
University of Derby	660	1,155	1,815
University of Nottingham	3,017	3,743	6,760
Nottingham Trent University	1,622	2,138	3,760

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency.

A key factor impacting on the female labour market in Leicester and Leicestershire is the proportion of graduates that stay in these areas on completion of their studies. This is even more relevant in times of economic downturn as the competition for jobs becomes more intense. Table 6.6 gives this information as total numbers and proportions for both males and females by institution. The highest graduate retention rate is among women graduating from De Montfort: 33 per cent take up employment in Leicester or Leicestershire. This figure falls to 21 per cent for female graduates from the University of Leicester and ten per cent for women graduating from Loughborough University. For all three institutions women university leavers outnumber men, both absolutely and proportionately. Overall, a quarter of all female graduates (or 1,342 women) from the three institutions are employed within Leicester or Leicestershire in the year after completing their studies. This is significantly higher than the equivalent for males at just 16 per cent, or 762 men. Thus, female graduates who studied in Leicester appear far more likely to remain in the City of their studies than their male counterparts.

Table 6.6: Leicester / Leicestershire graduate retention by institution, 2007/08 leavers

	Male		Female		Total	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
De Montfort University	461	26	879	33	1,340	30
University of Leicester	186	14	348	21	534	18
Loughborough University	115	7	115	10	230	8
TOTAL	762	16	1,342	25	2,104	21

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency.

It is useful to compare these figures to the equivalents for other Universities in the East Midlands. Table 6.7 gives the corresponding figures for graduate retention in Derby and Nottingham. As with the three Leicestershire Universities women graduates outnumber men and, with the exception of Derby, proportionately more females than males tend to remain in the City of their study. For all three institutions in Derby and Nottingham however, the retention rate for female graduates is significantly below that in Leicester. For whatever reason female graduates from Leicester appear to have a greater attachment to their City of study than both their male counterparts, and females in other University cities in the region. It is unclear exactly what effect this has on the local Leicester and Leicestershire labour markets in terms of competition for jobs but in times of economic hardship it is likely that some graduates may be competing for “lower level” jobs that they would not ordinarily pursue. In a slack labour market employers are able to be more “choosy” about who they employ which could result in local non-graduates being squeezed out of some positions – a trend suggested by one stakeholder. This is however, based on anecdotal evidence and is something which would need to be investigated in any further research as the statistics can only reveal so much about these labour market processes.

Table 6.7: Derby and Nottingham student retention by institution, 2007/08 leavers

	Male		Female		Total	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
University of Derby	119	18	212	18	331	18
University of Nottingham	296	10	564	15	860	13
Nottingham Trent University	196	12	399	19	595	16

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Table 6.8 shows the number of graduates who remain within the City of Leicester by gender, institution and type of activity. A total of 1,609 graduates remained in the City, 1,054 of whom were women – making up 66 per cent of all graduates remaining in Leicester. This is a sizeable proportion and shows that a disproportionate number of graduates working in Leicester on

completion of their studies are female. De Montfort has the highest graduate retention rate and also the largest number of students remaining in the area in absolute terms. The vast majority of graduates work full-time, and almost three-quarters of all female graduates from the three institutions - located in Leicester after their studies - went into full-time employment in the City.

A further 151 women graduates from the three institutions were employed part-time in Leicester, 140 were engaged in part-time work alongside further study and 10 were working voluntarily.

Table 6.8: Activity of university leavers employed in the City of Leicester, by institution, 2007/08

	Male	Female	Total
<i>De Montfort University</i>	388	748	1,136
Full-time paid work only	266	537	803
Part-time paid work only	62	106	168
Voluntary/unpaid work only	3	6	9
Work and further study	57	99	156
<i>University of Leicester</i>	138	269	407
Full-time paid work only	109	190	299
Part-time paid work only	18	39	57
Voluntary/unpaid work only	3	3	6
Work and further study	8	37	45
<i>Loughborough University</i>	29	37	66
Full-time paid work only	19	26	45
Part-time paid work only	2	6	8
Voluntary/unpaid work only	2	1	3
Work and further study	6	4	10
<i>All Leicestershire Universities</i>	555	1,054	1,609
Full-time paid work only	394	753	1,147
Part-time paid work only	82	151	233
Voluntary/unpaid work only	8	10	18
Work and further study	71	140	211

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency.

Similar trends can also be observed when looking at the equivalent figures for graduates taking up employment in the County of Leicestershire (excluding Leicester) (see Table 6.9). Though the numbers are smaller given the absence of concentrated economic opportunities across much of Leicestershire, the trends are broadly similar with the exception of a more equal gender split. Unsurprisingly given its location Loughborough University emerges with the highest rate of graduates going onto employment in the County. These effects are however, less pronounced given the smaller number of graduates and the distribution of employment opportunities across Leicestershire.

Table 6.9: Activity of university leavers employed in Leicestershire, by institution, 2007/08

	Male	Female	Total
<i>De Montfort University</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>204</i>
Full-time paid work only	52	92	144
Part-time paid work only	10	24	34
Voluntary/unpaid work only	0	0	0
Work and further study	11	15	26
<i>University of Leicester</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>79</i>	<i>127</i>
Full-time paid work only	39	59	98
Part-time paid work only	3	7	10
Voluntary/unpaid work only	1	3	4
Work and further study	5	10	15
<i>Loughborough University</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>78</i>	<i>164</i>
Full-time paid work only	60	50	110
Part-time paid work only	10	11	21
Voluntary/unpaid work only	1	3	4
Work and further study	15	14	29
<i>All Leicestershire Universities</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>288</i>	<i>495</i>
Full-time paid work only	151	201	352
Part-time paid work only	23	42	65
Voluntary/unpaid work only	2	6	8
Work and further study	31	39	70

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency.

7. Stakeholder perspectives on female labour market participation in Leicester

Introduction

This section presents findings from the stakeholder interviews conducted as part of this research study. The purpose of these interviews was to gather perspectives on female participation in the labour market, in Leicester and the surrounding area, from those engaged in the provision of services and support. A total of twelve stakeholders were interviewed including:

- Multi Access Centre (MAC) Co-ordinators
- Jobcentre Plus employees
- Voluntary sector policy officers
- Women's centre Managers
- Third sector organisations and
- Stakeholders involved in co-ordinating support at the strategic level.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face on visits to Leicester and, in some cases over the telephone, and lasted between twenty minutes and one hour. All interviewees were assured of anonymity and confidentiality to enable open and frank discussion. Interviews were semi-structured using a generic topic guide and varied from one respondent to the next on account of the various engagements in supporting women into the labour market. Their main focus was on perspectives on the relatively high economic inactivity rate for women in Leicester and the identification of barriers to employment. This inevitably led onto discussions around needs and approaches towards delivery as well as pointers towards further research questions.

The findings from this exercise are divided into key recurring themes which emerged as significant issues from the analysis. These broadly related to the factors and barriers contributing to the low take up of employment for women in Leicester including:

- differing cultural orientations towards female labour market participation
- childcare issues
- the predominance of low wage employment opportunities
- basic skills needs

- the decline of manufacturing sectors traditionally employing large numbers of women
- service delivery and support needs
- engaging with hard-to-reach groups
- engaging with employers and
- areas for further inquiry in understanding female labour market engagement.

The remainder of this section discusses each of these *key issues* in turn, drawing upon evidence from the analysis of stakeholder interviews, before summarising the stakeholder perspectives. It should be noted however, that there was no single overriding factor to emerge as the reason for the female labour market trends in Leicester. Rather, respondents tended to point towards a "*complex bundle of factors*", which were often interrelated and over-lapping.

Cultural diversity and attitudes towards female employment

Almost all respondents stated that the sizeable BME population within Leicester was a contributory factor to the relatively low economic activity rate for women in the city. Some respondents saw it as the primary reason: "*The reason we exist is to help people into work but people may not engage due to cultural reasons...Cultural barriers are the main issues in Leicester*". The respondent cited the Bangladeshi and Somali populations here as examples of cultures in which the expectation is that women won't work but will instead fulfil caring duties. Similarly, another interviewee stated: "*The disparity in employment rates for women can be seen as a symptom of the multicultural nature of Leicester.*"

There was a dominant view that within some BME groups cultural and religious beliefs meant that women were less likely to be engaged with the labour market, or the benefits system. However, this was not always seen as a "problem". Several stakeholders questioned whether this should be viewed as a barrier to work or whether it was more of a lifestyle choice: "*the question is whether these women **want** to work*". As many women were not engaged in services and support and at the same time were not claiming benefits, some stakeholders felt that their non-participation was not an issue. That said one interviewee involved in business support to women in Leicester noted that it can become a problem later in life. For example, she had come into contact with Asian women who are "*looking for something to do once they have raised their children*" but language and confidence issues had presented significant barriers. Several other respondents felt that there was a desire to work across women from all BME groups but the issue was the barriers to doing so.

Moreover, several respondents emphasised the fact that there are very different expectations about women's work depending on cultural background making it very difficult to generalise. This was further complicated by the changing attitudes among second, third and fourth generation women. There was therefore "*a danger in generalising about the BME population of Leicester*" which is extremely diverse. Orientations and attitudes towards female work were different and very much dependent on culture and religion. In a number of cases, Muslim women were said to be more inclined to want to stay at home to work and Sikhs and Hindus less so, though this also came with the caveat that this too was a generalisation, with different attitudes also apparent within the Muslim community. This was said to be a "*big cultural issue*" informed by the way in which women have been brought up so that it becomes normalized -

their roles are primarily domestic. That said, there was some indication that generational change was taking place and that *"those women brought up here [in the UK] may want to work more than those newly arrived"*. Indeed, for a handful of respondents the aversion to female work among some BME groups was now "far less" of an issue than previously.

The lower employment take up among women from some BME groups was also often related to caring responsibilities. It was noted by several respondents that Leicester has a higher proportion of women who are caring for their children or elderly relatives on a full-time basis. The importance of the extended family among some BME groups was crucial here as there is a tendency to care for relatives, both young and elderly, as opposed to using formal childcare facilities and care homes for instance. Indeed, several respondents spoke of the aversion towards formal childcare within some cultures: *"many women simply don't like the idea of someone else looking after their children"*. However, there was said to be more engagement from women whose kids have "flown the nest" and in these cases women tended to move closer towards labour market engagement, a trend which was also driven, in some part, by changes to the benefit system (i.e. changes in eligibility for income support linked to the age of the youngest child). Thus, the stage in the lifecycle was also an apparent issue in engaging women in support services. In this respect the complex relationship between low wages, childcare costs, the benefits system and an aversion to formal childcare was also important and served as a disincentive for some women (the issue of childcare is discussed in more detail below). This was a complex issue and one which several respondents felt needed "unpicking".

Though there was a reported cultural aversion among some groups in terms of "going out to work" (i.e. in the public domain) this could sometimes be addressed through opportunities for home-working and there had been a reported increase in women accessing support for new business start-ups since the recent economic downturn. One interviewee whose role was supporting women who want to start up their own business referred to a number of reasons that service users cited for engaging, across all ethnic groups. She pointed to four common scenarios which were said to be:

- the desire to try something new often related to the stage in the lifecourse (i.e. after raising children)
- a response to redundancy
- the next step after finishing studying and
- a lack of available and suitable jobs.

Typical business ideas were often centred round catering, childcare, tailoring, dress-making and beauty and hair professions, which can be facilitated from the home relatively easily and which respond to local need and demand. For instance within one women's centre a popular training and career option of centre users was now said to be textile work from home but this was also said to be *"very hard work and not very well paid."* However, it was also stated that there is not a great deal of support for self-employment and new business start-ups within the sub-region. The support needs were not necessarily financial as it was suggested that access to finance for start-up costs is available from "within the community" for many BME groups. Rather there were other needs around skills and organisation associated with running a business.

It is also important to note that the ethnic make-up of Leicester is not static and there was a reported need to respond to the challenges presented by new waves of immigration. One respondent engaged in the delivery of pre-employment support noted that the client make-up engaging with the service has changed with more eastern European, Somali and Bangladeshi service users in recent years. Similar trends were also reported in New Parks where the ethnic make-up has changed quite rapidly with more African and Eastern European residents. This has resulted in increased demand for ESOL classes and was said to be a reflection of *"the changing nature of in-migration in Leicester"* and likely to present different service needs.

Childcare

It was clear from the stakeholder interviews that it is often difficult to separate the issue of the aversion towards work from the aversion towards formal childcare. As one respondent stated: *"it's much harder [to engage] with women with kids...for a lot of BME groups, culturally, motherhood is an extremely important part of their lives"*. Add to that the issue of childcare costs and the reported relatively low wage economy in Leicester and some respondents felt that many women were faced with little choice. Many jobs were also not "child friendly" and even though many mothers would wait until their youngest child was school age before seeking employment, there were still issues about childcare during term time and after school in many cases. One respondent reported that a number of children had been withdrawn from local childcare services due to the twin problem of childcare costs and low wage jobs. Childcare costs in the city were not said to be "much different than elsewhere" but combined with low wages the issue was accentuated and meant that women were often "unable to take advantage of opportunities" when they arose.

Low wages

One respondent involved in the provision of pre-employment training stated that user confidence and low aspirations are key issues which tend to guide women towards traditional roles around childcare and midwifery, which are particularly popular but not so well paid. Of the women that do have work histories these were also noted to be primarily in care, clerical and cleaning roles i.e. relatively low income jobs.

Another interviewee also pointed to the low wage economy in Leicester where the dominant industries were reportedly retail and logistics, again relatively low wage sectors. This certainly seems to be borne out by the statistical evidence presented earlier in this Report which suggests that women in Leicester do indeed fair worse in terms of pay than their counterparts in other comparable cities (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3).

For a minority of respondents the issue of low wages was intrinsically linked to attitudes towards leaving benefits. It was noted by some respondents that there is a *"fear of going into the unknown for many women and leaving the certainty of benefits...learning is the start of the journey"*. This "journey" also involved convincing some women that they are in fact better off in work and developing their self-esteem.

Basic skills

One of the major challenges in engaging women in the labour market was said to be the issue of soft skills and particularly confidence and self-esteem, which was linked to command of the English language: *"People may find it difficult to hold down a conversation in English and consequently their confidence is affected"*. If they have never worked before this is compounded so that the lack of qualifications, work experience and language skills combine to make any move into work difficult. Indeed, there was said to be a particular need for ESOL provision within Leicester and it was suggested that the lack of provision can prevent some women from finding work. This was a particular issue for new arrivals to the UK such as refugees and also spouses of British citizens who have to wait up to two years before they are even allowed to access an ESOL course. In many cases these women, a lot of whom are educated to graduate level, choose to start families instead.

Furthermore, for many women - either new arrivals to the UK or women seeking to enter work after raising children - another key barrier was actually knowing what to do in terms of job search and producing CVs etc. This could be quite alien for people new to the UK or who have never worked here before and *"should not be underestimated"*.

The decline of the manufacturing industry

The vast majority of respondents cited the decline of the manufacturing industry in Leicester, and specifically the hosiery, textile and footwear sectors, as contributory factors to low economic activity rates among women. It was reported that over the last ten years hosiery manufacturing has virtually disappeared from Leicester. This sector employed a lot of women from ethnic minority backgrounds. As many of the factories were run by ethnic minority businessmen and roles often did not require a good command of English, these posts were relatively easy to access. Now however, these posts have disappeared and *"some women do not see their experience and skills as transferable"* and have consequently *"dropped out of the labour market"*. This situation had further accentuated the demands for ESOL provision.

Service delivery and support needs

It was suggested that any services and support that the Council offers should be targeted at particular areas due to the fact that the cultural and economic needs of female residents differ from one place to the next within Leicester. When asked specifically about support needs it was often difficult for respondents to cite particular areas as the women that they came into contact with were often *"in very different positions and at different distances from the labour market"*. For many interviewees this pointed to the need for a flexible service involving one-to-one engagement.

There were mixed views however, on the nature of service delivery and in particular as to whether services should be delivered locally. Thus, on the one hand several respondents were quite clear that local delivery was crucial in engaging those women who were harder to reach: *"Some people don't want to come into town and it would be more beneficial to have services and support delivered at the neighbourhood level like through the MAC centres."* This view was supported by the fact that the service user profile reported by respondents was said to largely

reflect the area in which the service was based, which would suggest that people are more willing to engage locally. On the other hand, there were said to be positives and negatives to this local delivery approach. The positives were cited as the ease of access, the confidence to engage and the likely presence of appropriate language skills locally; but it was also noted that some people will need to leave that area to find work and so leaving it to engage with appropriate services could be beneficial in the long-run. Centrally located services were also viewed as more cost effective and beneficial to social integration. Despite these concerns there was a general consensus that the 8 MACs across the City represented good progress in delivery terms given the holistic nature of information, advice and guidance located in deprived areas. In this sense the need for local delivery could be met to an extent but what was needed was "more intensive and improved marketing of these services". Indeed, as one respondent put it "*the MAC is a very good model*" and delivery should "*focus on the local, IT, motivation and support for jobsearch*". Another interviewee felt that the MACs could complement the services delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

There was a degree of consensus around the general principles which could be used to guide the delivery of support. It was widely reported that service provision needs to be:

- **locally focused** in order to instil women with the confidence to take that first step
- **one-to-one** involving the building of relationships **over time**
- **voluntary**, which is "paramount" and
- **flexible** given the complicated lives of many of the women that they engage with.

Several respondents also reported a need to harness and co-ordinate the services and provision being delivered by the voluntary and community sector as some organisations were already delivering "*good culturally sensitive services*". However, it was also noted that such provision can also be seen as "exclusive" with services aimed solely at members of particular ethnic groups, which can have a detrimental impact on social integration. There was therefore a need to build capacity so that these organisations could "*link with mainstream services and perhaps bid for their own contracts*".

This was not straight forward however and one respondent working in the voluntary and community sector lamented the lack of continuation funding which meant successful programmes were often short-term. In the current economic climate, several respondents felt that this situation was likely to get worse before it got better.

Several respondents reported a definite trend of out-migration among some BME populations from within Leicester to the suburban area of Oadby. Oadby was said to be popular among some BME groups as there is an existing BME population there and also good connections to Leicester where family and relatives are based. There was therefore a noticeable shift in BME migration and settlement locally, perhaps related to second and third generation households whom have embraced education and become more affluent. The implications of this for the targeting and provision of services was unclear however, as it was suggested that these households and individuals were "upwardly mobile" and therefore require less support, if any.

Engaging with "hard-to-reach" women

As well as the importance attached to the nature, location and delivery of support there was also a need to pay particular attention to engagement strategies. For many respondents there were distinct differences in terms of levels of engagement: from those women who were very proactive, to those that did not engage at all. In this sense the approach towards engagement needed to be varied with some areas and populations requiring more proactive techniques: *"door knocking or at the school gates"* for instance. This approach was advocated by several respondents in areas of relatively high basic skills and English needs; and where services needed to be sensitive to specific cultural and religious needs.

It was widely reported that if service delivery within Leicester is to engage with the most hard-to-reach women then it needs to be culturally sensitive. For instance, one Women's centre manager noted that its main benefit is an all female environment which provides women with the opportunity to engage which they would not otherwise have: *"they come because it's an all women centre...There's no men and so it's an environment which is culturally acceptable"*. It was also suggested that engagement does not necessarily have to be around work in the first instance but can be *"gradual and basic and become more sophisticated over time"* with an emphasis on tailoring support and building confidence. This perspective was supported by other interviewees who cited the often slow nature of progress with the most difficult to reach. For instance, some women would engage through a desire to get involved in some form of community work and training and this then leads to a greater degree of confidence, and often to aspirations about labour market engagement and securing paid employment. Typically, women would then look for work after this process. There was however, also acknowledgement that some women simply do not know where to turn to access the support services available to them, which again suggests the need for the marketing of services such as the MACs.

Engaging with employers

Many respondents also saw a role for employers in helping to engage more women in employment: *"there's not enough employment out there that works around women and childcare issues"*. One respondent suggested that the benefits of flexible working patterns to employers, as well as employees need "spelling out" as employer engagement is an important aspect. Another suggested avenue was engaging with local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in order to provide *"local opportunities for local people"*. This was considered a "win-win" situation given the preference for local, flexible work among many women coupled with the impact this could have on local entrepreneurship.

Issues for further research

The issues set out in this section are indicative rather than comprehensive but the degree of consistency in the accounts does suggest a level of confidence in the findings. During discussions stakeholders often pointed to particular issues and complexities which were beyond the scope of this research but were deemed important in aiding an understanding of female labour market participation in Leicester. The three most common cited concerns were:

- **Diversity within the BME population** - given the extent of cultural diversity within Leicester it is extremely difficult to generalise about the BME populations in terms of their orientations and aspirations to work. There was a general consensus that more research is required in terms of unpicking the differences between different groups in order to ensure that the appropriate culturally sensitive services are tailored to specific requirements. As one respondent stated: *“There is a need to go deeper in terms of understanding these issues and unpicking differences between different BME groups given the breadth of diversity within the city”*
- **Changing nature of immigration** - linked to the above, the majority of interviewees were of the opinion that the ethnic make-up of the city was changing. This was expressed in terms of the mobility and migratory patterns of existing BME residents and households in Leicester, and also in terms of new arrivals. There were relatively new populations within Leicester - increasingly visible to those involved in service delivery - but little was understood about female aspirations to work within these groups. Specific populations mentioned included Bangladeshi, Eastern European and Somali communities. There was also evidence of out-migration among established BME groups which may also have implications for service delivery.
- **Complexity of the relationship between the cultural aversion to female work and formal childcare** - within some cultures these aversions were reportedly very strong but some respondents maintained that there is a desire to work among many women who are not engaging with the labour market, the benefits system or support services. There was therefore a reported need to understand the processes and factors impacting upon women's decisions to work or not to work, as it was not always a straight forward case of a cultural aversion. This not only needed to pay attention to cultural and religious influences but also to issues around basic skills, language, qualifications, low wages, childcare costs and the benefits system.

8. An assessment

This report sets out to identify factors associated with persistently low rates of female labour market participation and employment in Leicester City. **Female economic activity rates** in Leicester barely shifted from 65.2 per cent in 1999 to 65.9 per cent in 2009. This minimal growth occurred within a period which, until the recession of 2009, was characterised by sustained national economic growth. For example, in Great Britain, over the same time period, female economic activity rates rose from 72.5 per cent to 74.2 per cent. The gap between Leicester and the national average has therefore widened over time. The **female employment rate** in Leicester is also very low compared with the national average and has fallen from 59.5 per cent in 1999 to 58.2 per cent in 2009.

The analysis utilises a range of benchmarks. These include a pooled set of comparator areas with substantial non-white communities. This allows trends in Leicester to be assessed relative to those that might be expected given the ethnic composition of the area. It is clear from the breadth of evidence offered in the report that no single factor provides a simple answer to the question as to why low female participation exists in Leicester. Instead, it is a **combination of several factors** which contributes to the situation. These factors are not the same for all women across the city. Different issues are applicable to different sections of the community and in different locations across the city. The evidence garnered from qualitative interviews with a range of stakeholders involved in the provision of employment services and support for women in Leicester also strongly echo the key issues identified by the data analysis undertaken.

The main factors identified as being associated with low levels of female labour market participation in Leicester can be categorised as follows:

- the ethnic composition of the workforce
- economic inactivity due to a preference not to work amongst some women
- concentrations of benefit claimants in particular parts of the city
- poor qualifications or lack of basic skills
- low levels of pay available
- fewer job opportunities especially as a consequence of the decline of the textiles industry

The remainder of this chapter summarises the evidence concerning each of these issues in turn.

Ethnic composition of the workforce

Leicester has a substantial BME population with 41 per cent of the working age population being non-white. The single largest BME group are Indian and account for 26 per cent of all of those of working age. The non-white population in general is heavily concentrated in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the city, especially Belgrave, Rushey Mead, Spinney Hills and Stoneygate. People of Asian and Asian-British origin tend to live in the same areas, albeit even more concentrated in the more inner city neighbourhoods of Belgrave and Spinney Hills. By implication the white population is predominant in the western, north-western and southern segments of the city (Aylestone, Beaumont Leys, Braunstone Park, Eyres Monsell).

In common with other cities with large BME populations, working age women in Leicester have a relatively young age profile. Some 61 per cent of working age women in Leicester and 60 per cent in comparator areas are aged under 40 compared to 51 per cent in Leicestershire. The **younger age profile contributes slightly to lower female participation rates** as economic inactivity is highest amongst the youngest age group since stays in post-compulsory education are the norm.

Having a large **Asian population in Leicester undoubtedly contributes to the lower levels of participation in the workforce**. Economic activity rates amongst Asian women in Leicester are however lower than might be expected given that the majority of this group are Indian. Nationally, low participation amongst the Asian population largely reflects cultural norms amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi women which make up the majority of the Asian group nationally. However, nationally Indian women tend to have far higher participation rates than the Bangladeshi/Pakistani group and are much closer to participation rates seen amongst white women. Given that Indian women in Leicester account for the majority of the Asian group, it might be expected that the rates of participation for Asians in Leicester, when taken as a whole, would be higher than is seen for this group nationally.

Therefore, whilst having a large Indian population would be expected to lower the participation rates in Leicester compared to predominantly white districts, it would not be expected that the impact would be as large as is observed. **Economic activity rates amongst Indian women in Leicester are nine percentage points lower than Indian women nationally and eight percentage points lower than Indian women in the comparator areas**. Indeed, rates of female participation are much lower for all other BME groups, bar one, in Leicester than in the comparators areas. The exception is the Pakistani and Bangladeshi group which is on par with the consistently very low participation rates across all the benchmark areas considered.

Some of the explanation in the degree of the difference between Leicester and the comparator areas in economic activity rates amongst Indian women could potentially reflect the tendency for other areas with very large Indian populations to be located in outer London suburban districts. Hence, the comparator areas may potentially benefit from stronger levels of female labour demand. However, participation and employment rates for white women in Leicester are on par with those in the comparator areas and East Midlands region remains relatively buoyant. This therefore seems unlikely to account for much in the scale of the difference identified between Indian women in Leicester and the comparator areas. There may however be differences in the

diversity or suitability of types of job available which may explain why some groups of women are less likely than others to compete for the employment opportunities that may be available. For instance, stakeholders reported the decline of the manufacturing industry in Leicester, and specifically the hosiery, textile and footwear sectors, as contributory factors to low economic activity rates among women. Jobs available in these sectors were popular amongst Asian women given a relative skills match, and often they did not require a command of the English language.

Indications are that lower rates of participation amongst Indian women in Leicester may therefore be **a function of structural weaknesses in the local labour market which may also affect white women as well as those from other BME groups**. The reasons include the industrial structure of the local labour market, the type of jobs and levels of pay available to women in Leicester, low levels of skills or qualifications amongst the non-employed, attitudes to childcare and preferences to remain at home and look after their family. These factors are explored further in the remainder of this chapter.

Economic inactivity due to a preference not to work

ILO unemployment accounts for a relatively small portion of all working age women who are not in employment - seven per cent in Leicester, five per cent in comparators and four per cent in England. Claimant unemployment is even lower with female ILO unemployment outstripping the number of claimant unemployed by a ratio of 2.7 to 1. Instead the **largest group of non-employed women in Leicester are the economically inactive who account for more than one in three of all working age women**. This compares with only one in four women in England but is however on a par with the comparator areas. It is important to understand to what extent these women are not active in the workforce through choice and to what extent they would like to engage in the workforce.

Evidence from the APS indicates that the higher rates of economic inactivity in Leicester largely reflect **greater numbers of women who are not looking for work and do not want to work**. In both Leicester and the comparator areas this accounts for 27 per cent of all working age women whereas nationally the comparable figure is just 20 per cent and in Leicestershire only 15 per cent of women fall into this group. The **primary reason given for not wanting to work is looking after a home or family** which accounts for 14 per cent of working age women in Leicester and comparator areas compared to nine per cent in England. The younger age structure in Leicester might once again contribute to this higher level of women looking after a family or home. The interviews with stakeholders also highlight the combination of childcare costs, availability of 'child friendly' employment opportunities, and low wages as factors in lower rates of wanting to work amongst those with children. It was felt that these factors reduced the practical and financial incentive to remain in work and meant women often felt "unable to take advantage of opportunities".

Engaging with this group is likely to be very difficult if they do not want to work. Many within this group will not be seeking support, training or help from local agencies and are unlikely interact with the majority of agencies which may provide such services as many will not be reliant of the benefits system. **This group represents a far greater challenge for local agencies who may wish to see the employment rate in the area rise**. Potentially a better target would be to focus efforts on enabling those who wish to enter work to do so and to enable those on out-of-

work benefits to return to work. For instance, some stakeholders reported a greater level of engagement from BME women later in their working lives - once their children had "flown the nest".

Benefit claimants

In total, in August 2009 there were 16,690 working age women in Leicester on out-of-work¹⁵ benefits equivalent to 18 per cent of all working age women. Of these 7,130 were IB/ESA claimants, 5,550 on Income Support for lone parents and 3,660 unemployed JSA claimants. The largest group of benefit claimants are therefore those with health problems and on incapacity benefits which accounts for 7.7 per cent of working age women in Leicester. This is actually a slight increase over the level seen ten years earlier.

With the exception of some parts of the Belgrave and Spinney Hills area of the city which have high concentrations of non-white residents, the more extensive areas of the city with high rates of female benefit claimants are in areas where the majority of the population is white. The overall impression from the maps produced is that those **areas with high levels of benefit claimants seldom coincide with those that have large concentrations of non-white or Asian population. This suggests that the relatively large number of Asian women who are economically inactive or unemployed do not necessarily enter the state benefits system.**

As the reform of the welfare system continues apace and there is likely to be a tightening of eligibility to all out-of-work benefit groups. One subsequent consequence is likely to be a migration from the two larger inactive benefits groups (IB/ESA and IS for lone parents) towards JSA and the active jobseekers group. This is likely to increase the need and demand for support services to aid individuals to return to work. Many of these claimants face complex multiple disadvantage in the workforce and have often had substantial periods of detachment from the workforce. The additional labour supply released is likely to increase competition for jobs especially for entry level jobs. **Without adequate intensive support and sufficient numbers of suitable jobs available the numbers on IB/ESA or Income Support for lone parents may decline but the number of claimant and ILO unemployed women are likely to increase.**

Poor qualifications or lack of basic skills

The ability to compete for jobs available in Leicester is likely to be compromised for many women due to a lack of sufficient skills or qualifications. This means that better qualified women from the surrounding county of Leicestershire may be able to access more of the jobs, and especially the better paid jobs, available in the city.

In Leicester **24 per cent of working age women have no qualifications** higher than the 18 per cent in the comparator areas and nearly double the 13 per cent seen nationally. Amongst **non-employed women the rate with no qualifications increases to 38 per cent** in Leicester,

¹⁵ This group primarily consists of those on JSA, IB/SDA/ESA and Income Support for lone parents. It also includes a small number of claimants classified as on 'other income related benefits' which includes Income support with a disability premium.

32 per cent in the comparators 26 per cent in England and only 22 per cent in Leicestershire county.

The number of young women who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) is also relatively greater in Leicester City compared with the rest of districts in the sub-region. There are 376 young women or 8.2 per cent of all young women who fall into this category in Leicester. Just over a half of women NEETs in the Leicestershire sub-region live in Leicester City, compared with around a third of the population in that age group. As with the concentrations of benefits claimants across the city the higher concentrations of NEETS tends to be in the more white areas of the city.

As well as lack of qualifications being an issue, stakeholders frequently mentioned the challenges that many faced women in having **sufficient language skills** to engage in the labour market. This was especially an issue for new arrivals to the country. This had a knock on effect for soft skills such as confidence, self-esteem, knowledge of how to go about job search or how to compile a CV. All these factors were linked with the need for some women to obtain a sufficient command of the English Language and accessing suitable ESOL provision to enable this.

On a more positive note there were **over 10,000 graduates from the three Leicestershire Universities** are combined in 2007/08, of which 54 per cent are women. Female graduates who studied in Leicester appear far more likely to remain in the City of their studies than their male counterparts. A quarter of all female graduates employed within Leicester or Leicestershire the year after completing their studies compared to just 16 per cent of men. **In total, just over 1,000 female graduates from the three universities obtaining employment in Leicester city.**

Low pay

Levels of pay available in Leicester are also likely to be a determinant of whether women feel it is worth while entering the workforce. This factor emerged through both the quantitative and qualitative evidence especially in relation to the replacement costs of childcare. **Rates of pay in Leicester are relatively low for both men and women.** The median gross hourly pay for women who work part-time is £7.11 an hour compared to £7.49 per hour in the East Midlands. For full-time work the differential is even larger at £9.79 per hour in Leicester compared to £10.51 per hour for the East Midlands region. For some women the alternative of looking after a home and family may be a preferable alternative.

Job opportunities

Ultimately no matter what provision is in place in Leicester to increase the aspirations for women to work, to improve the employability of non-employed women and up-skill the workforce, labour market participation is going to be function of the level of demand for labour and the number of jobs available.

The number of female employees in Leicester has however remained virtually static during a period of sustained national economic growth. In the ten years leading up the

recession (1998-2008), the number of female employees declined by one per cent in Leicester whilst nationally female employment grew by nine per cent. It also needs to be remembered that it is the total number of jobs in an area, including male jobs which dictates the number of job opportunities available. The number of male jobs in Leicester declined by an even greater extent than for women with a reduction of five per cent over the period. This shortfall in demand for male and female jobs available is only likely to increase competition for the jobs which exist.

The decline in the number of jobs available is undoubtedly primarily due to the **decline of the textiles industry** in Leicester which was a traditional employer of both men and women in the area. The decline of textile jobs over time has hit both male and female employment opportunities particularly hard. In 1998 one in ten of all male and female jobs in Leicester were in the textiles industry. By 2008 this had fallen to just under one in forty of all male jobs and one in thirty of all female jobs available. **The decline in the textiles sector equates to the loss of 5,700 female jobs or nearly 70 per cent of all the female jobs in the textiles industry between 1998 and 2008.** Coupled with this loss in female jobs a further 6,100 male jobs equivalent to three-quarters of all jobs in textiles were also lost in this period.

The textiles industry was also traditionally a large employer of Asians in Leicester. Evidence from the qualitative interviews shows that stakeholders feel that Asian women working in this sector may have found it harder to compete for alternative jobs in other sectors. They may have less transferable skills and have lost a working environment where many co-workers shared a first language. This may therefore contribute to the lower levels of employment seen amongst Indian women compared to the comparator areas.

Alternative sources of 'female' jobs are also less apparent than in many cities. The hotels, distribution and restaurants sector, a traditional employer of women, is particularly weak. Levels of self-employment amongst women in Leicester are also low. **Instead, female employment in Leicester is dominated by public sector jobs. There are 37,500 jobs in the public sector which accounts for 46 per cent of all female jobs in the area.** This reliance on jobs within public administration, education or health is potentially problematic given the current Government plans to shed 600,000 public sector jobs by 2015. **Nationally, this equates to just over eight per cent of all public sector jobs and if a comparable reduction was seen in Leicester this potentially could mean the loss of 3,100 female jobs.** This presents a significant challenge to private sector employers to create enough jobs to offset this potential reduction of the public sector.

Finally, the jobs which are located in Leicester are ultimately not ring fenced for Leicester residents. Labour markets do not operate at a local authority level. Women, and indeed men, in the surrounding areas of Leicestershire are able to commute into the city to compete for the jobs which are located in the city. **Those in better health, with better skills and qualifications will ultimately be in the best position to obtain the jobs available.** However, **competition for jobs is likely to increase** as people lose their jobs in the public sector and those on inactive benefits are moved towards active jobsearch as they move over to JSA. This is likely to increase the demand for support services further to improve the employability of the labour supply available and enable Leicester residents to compete for the jobs available. Ultimately though, up-skilling the workforce will not on its own provide a solution to increasing employment rates amongst women in the city if there are insufficient jobs to go around. **Of prime importance will be the private sector's ability to generate alternative employment opportunities and increase the overall demand for labour in the area.**

9. Areas for further research

This report highlights a number of factors contributing to lower participation rates amongst women in Leicester. It also highlights areas which would be worth further consideration in a second stage of this research project.

- **Further quantitative analysis of the Annual Population Survey**

The first stage of this project has only allowed an initial exploratory examination of the depth and breadth of the data available from this data source. There are many aspects of the data which would be worth further consideration. These include:

- Detailed examination of the **characteristics of Indian working age women** including qualifications, language barriers, distance to work etc; analysis of those in work as well as out of work, types of jobs held by occupation, industry, full-time versus part-time working; preferences for certain types of job compared with other ethnic groups
- An investigation of the characteristics of women **without formal qualifications**, this could be done across all women, by key ethnic groups, by age and for those in work or not in work
- Exploration of women who currently or previously worked in the textiles industry and examination of the scale of home-working
- Given male employment levels in Leicester have also fallen over time, it would also be worth undertaking an in-depth analysis of the male working age group both for those in work and out-of-work, by ethnic group, by age and for those lacking qualifications
- Self-employment - the sample sizes are relatively low for this group but indications are that self-employment is low amongst women in Leicester; examination of the regional or national sample of self-employed women may provide some important insights to this group

- **Further quantitative analysis of DWP benefits data**

- More detailed examination of trends in key benefits over time and characteristics of claimants; this is important to highlight the persistent level of those on certain **non-active benefits** such as Incapacity Benefit; these claimants are likely to be very detached from the labour market and need more intensive support to return to work in relation to health as well as employability
- Reform of the welfare system and tightening of eligibility to benefits such as ESA and Income support for lone parents is likely to lead to **increasing numbers of benefit claimants being shifted to JSA**
- It is possible to examine **on-flows and off-flows to JSA** over time both at district and ward level with respect to age, sex, usual occupation and sought after occupation
- As these JSA claimants will be required to look for work and for many ESA claimants a requirement to prepare for a return to work, there are likely to be **increasing numbers of individuals who will require training and support** to do so

- **Further quantitative analysis of ABI data**

- It is possible to look in more depth at trends though time by sex, full-time and part-time work and by particular industries
- The proposed **reductions to public sector employment** is likely to have a major impact on a city such as Leicester which relies heavily on jobs in the public sector; it would be possible to forecast the likely scale of jobs loss until 2015 as a consequence of current budget cuts

- **A shiftshare analysis of economic activity rates**

- This is a very useful technique to examine what extent of the low labour market participation rates in Leicester might be expected given the ethnic composition of the area
- Allows comparison with rates of participation for similar groups in other benchmark areas either nationally or in pooled comparator areas
- This would help to identify how much of the difference in economic activity may be attributable to the ethnic composition of Leicester as opposed to particular issues with the structure of the local labour market
- It would be possible to do this separately for males

- It would also be possible to do the analysis based on the industrial mix of jobs in the area
- **Explore possibility of further examination of NEETs data for comparator areas and over time**
- **Consider what evidence is available on commuting flows** and the proportion of jobs in Leicester held by Leicester residents compared to those in the wider sub region
- **Analysis of National Insurance (NINo) registrations by in-migrants**
 - **This can include an analysis by country of origin**
 - **Trends over time**

Identify the scale of additional labour supply in relation to the existing population and potential additional competition for jobs available in the area

- **Exploration of characteristics of women in the Leicester NDC area**
 - The team at CRESR hold household survey data and secondary and administrative data for Braunstone NDC area from 2002-2008
 - Includes information on barriers to work, qualifications, benefits etc for working age (predominantly white) women
 - It is also possible to look at transitions of residents over time both into and out of work using longitudinal data held by the team
- **Further in-depth qualitative research using a range of techniques including more in-depth interviews with stakeholders or focus groups with particular groups of female residents**
 - More recent in-coming communities over the past ten years
 - For example the Somali population
 - White women in outlying estates such as Braunstone
 - Lone-parents
 - At schools exploring younger women's attitudes across different ethnic groups to obtaining qualifications, work aspirations, entering benefits system
 - Exploration of Indian women's perceptions of perceived barriers to joining the workforce, preferences to remain economically inactive and issues around childcare
 - Exploration of aspirations and barriers to work for women who previously worked in the textiles industry
 - Home-working in the textiles industry

- There is only limited data on self-employment available from the APS but indications are that levels of self-employment amongst women in Leicester is relatively low; it would be worth following up and identifying perceived barriers about this being a viable employment option
- Employers perspectives on taking on disadvantaged groups in the workforce
- Look at a big city centre retail development and attitudes to recruiting from disadvantaged areas or particular ethnic groups
- Provision to prevent young people from becoming NEET

10. Statistical Appendix

This section contains details of the sample sizes and thresholds used for the data drawn from the Annual Population Survey and details of the characteristics of the areas included in the selection of comparator areas.

The Annual Population Survey data has been accessed via Special Access Licence from the UK Data Archive. The datasets are deposited by the Office for National Statistics, Social and Vital Statistics Division and are Crown Copyright material reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and the Queen's Printer for Scotland.

Table 10.1: Sample sizes three years of combined APS data

	3 years combined		annual average	
	Unweighted	Weighted	Unweighted	Weighted
Leicester	1,877	276,701	626	92,234
Greater Leicester	2,294	405,964	765	135,321
Leicestershire	1,849	560,112	616	186,704
Pooled comparator areas	16,966	3,434,161	5,655	1,144,720
East Midlands	15,668	3,857,316	5,223	1,285,772
England	220,300	45,255,758	73,433	15,085,253

Source: APS 2006/07 to 2008/09

A minimum threshold of a sample size of 25 has been used for all tables which are not broken down by ethnicity. Where economic status variables are broken down by ethnic group the greater design effect associated with ethnic minority groups has been taken account of and a minimum threshold of 60 has been used.

Table 10.2: Profile of Leicester and comparator areas on key variables

	as % of working age females ¹⁶		% of total female jobs ¹⁷		% of total working age population ¹⁸				
	Economic activity rate	Employment rate	Textiles ¹⁹	Manufacturing	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian	Asian Total
Harrow	71	65	0	4	25	3	1	6	34
Leicester	66	58	4	9	26	2	1	2	31
Slough	69	65	0	9	16	12	0	2	31
Brent	69	64	0	8	20	5	1	5	30
Hounslow	73	69	0	2	20	5	1	2	29
Ealing	67	58	0	6	15	4	1	4	24
Luton	66	60	1	6	5	11	5	1	22
Bradford	65	60	1	8	3	16	1	1	21
Birmingham	62	55	0	5	7	11	2	2	21
Blackburn with Darwen	65	59	2	12	10	9	0	1	20
Wolverhampton	68	59	0	6	14	2	0	1	17
Sandwell	67	57	1	11	11	3	1	1	17
Coventry	67	62	0	4	9	2	1	1	13
Pooled comparator areas	66	60	0	6	11	8	1	2	22
Greater Leicester	71	65	3	8	20	2	1	2	24
Leicester/Leicestershire subregion	74	68	2	9	11	1	0	1	14
East Midlands	76	71	1	8	4	1	0	0	6
England	74	69	0	5	3	2	1	1	6

¹⁶ APS Oct 2008-Sep 2009

¹⁷ ABI three year average 2006-2008

¹⁸ Mid-year population estimates 2007 by ethnicity by age by sex

¹⁹ SIC17+18 : Manufacture of textiles+ Manufacture of wearing apparel



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