

Why Do the Wives of Unemployed Men Have Such Low Employment Rates?

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Why do the Wives of Unemployed Men Have Such Low Employment Rates?

by

Anthony King, Bruce Bradbury
and Marilyn McHugh



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW SOUTH WALES

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Foreword

Unemployment has been a persistent problem in Australian society for the last two decades. Over this period it has come to be recognised that employment patterns also have an important family dimension. In particular, when one member of a married couple is unemployed, the likelihood of the other spouse being employed is significantly lower than average. Such patterns intensify the impact of unemployment on living standards.

Against this background, in 1993 the Department of Social Security commissioned the Social Policy Research Centre to conduct a study into the labour market circumstances of the wives of unemployed men. A key goal of the study was to disentangle the many different reasons for the observed associations between spouse's employment patterns. Since the commencement of this study the 1994 *White Paper on Employment and Growth* has been released, proposing a number of important policy changes affecting this group. In particular, income tests for social security payments were altered to make part-time employment more attractive. However, as this report makes clear, income tests are only one of many factors influencing the employment patterns of women married to unemployed men.

The survey on which this publication is based was undertaken by experienced interviewers from the Centre in late 1993. The individual accounts gained in these interviews is set in the context of data from Labour Force Surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and also administrative data from the Department of Social Security. It is the labour force histories and the attitudes of the women themselves that are the main part of the report. The hope is that the information gained from them will assist in developing the wide range of policies that will be required in order to provide effective labour market assistance to this group.

This is an extremely long report, dealing with a broad range of complex inter-related issues. Those who wish to glean its main findings are referred to the first section, which summarises the main conclusions of the research and can be read in isolation from the remaining material.

Peter Saunders
Director

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This research report presents the views of the authors and does not represent any official position on the part of the Social Policy Research Centre or the Department of Social Security.

Contents

Foreword	i
Acknowledgements	ii
List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	vii
1 Introduction and Summary of Findings	1
2 Background and Methodology	19
3 Evidence from the Labour Force and Related Surveys	27
4 Evidence from DSS Panel Data	40
5 The Interview Survey	65
6 Demographic Profile of the Women in the Survey	75
7 Labour Force Histories	97
8 The Labour Force Decision: Reasons and Characteristics	126
9 The Labour Force Decision: Attitudes and Roles	149
10 Looking for Work	169
11 The Women's Impressions	176
12 Conclusions	182
References	184

List of Tables

3.1:	Highest Educational Qualification of Married Women Aged 21-49 by Husbands' Education Level: 1990	28
3.2:	Employment Rates of Married Women Aged 21-49 by Education Level and Husbands' Labour Force Status: 1990	28
3.3:	Regional Unemployment Rates for the Three Months to February 1994	31
3.4:	Sydney Unemployment Rates for the Three Months to February 1994	33
3.5:	Labour Force Status of Married Women Aged 20-59 by Husbands' Labour Force Status and Duration of Unemployment: 1991	35
3.6:	Wives' Labour Force Status by Husbands' Labour Force Status by Wives' Age: 1991	37
3.7:	Wives' Labour Force Status by Husbands' Labour Force Status by Presence of Dependants 0-14: 1991	38
3.8:	Labour Force Status of Wives With No Dependants by Husbands' Labour Force Status by Wives' Age: 1991	39
4.1:	DSS Panel: Sample Composition	43
4.2:	DSS Panel: Sample Characteristics in June 1991	44
4.3:	DSS Panel: Reasons for Benefit Termination	50
4.4:	Apparent Reasons for Benefit Termination: Married Men Receiving Unemployment Benefit During 1989/90 and Not in September-December 1990	50
4.5:	DSS Panel: Wives' Employment Rates in June 1991	61
5.1:	Survey Response	72
6.1:	Survey Sample: Age Characteristics by Group	76
6.2:	Survey Sample: Duration Living with Current Partner by Group	77
6.3:	Survey Sample: Migrant Characteristics by Group	78
6.4:	Survey Sample: Children at Home by Group	80
6.5:	Survey Sample: Education Characteristics of Women by Group	82

6.6:	Survey Sample: Education Characteristics of Couples by Group	83
6.7:	Survey Sample, Groups 2 and 3: Women's Paid Employment by Group	85
6.8:	Survey Sample: Men's Paid Employment by Group	87
6.9:	Survey Sample: Employment Status of Couples by Group	88
6.10:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Status of Couples by Group	90
6.11:	Survey Sample: Responsibility for Household Tasks by Group	91
6.12:	Survey Sample: Couples' Reported Social Security Incomes by Group	93
6.13:	Survey Sample: Housing Circumstances by Group	94
6.14:	Survey Sample: Transport Characteristics by Group	96
7.1:	Survey Sample: Time Since Last Held a Job for Three Months or More, by Group	98
7.2:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Activities of Women and Partners Since Woman Left School, by Group	100
7.3:	Survey Sample: Main Source of Income for Women and Partners Since Woman Left School, by Group	105
7.4:	Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Status Just Prior to Partner Receiving Unemployment Allowance and at Time of Interview, by Group	109
7.5:	Survey Sample: Anticipated and Actual Durations of Receipt of Unemployment Allowance, by Group	111
7.6:	Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Responses to Partners' Unemployment, by Selected Characteristics	113
8.1:	Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Participation Status by Group and Paid Work Status	128
8.2:	Survey Sample: Reasons Women Not Looking for Some/More Work by Group	131
8.3:	Survey Sample: Awareness of Income Support Provisions by Labour Force Participation	144
8.4:	Survey Sample: Use of Concessions by Women's Labour Force Participation	146

9.1:	Survey Sample: Reasons and Main Reason Why Women Consider Their Having Work is Important, by Labour Force Participation	152
9.2:	Survey Sample: Management of Couples' Finances, by Labour Force Participation	161
9.3:	Survey Sample: Management of Couples' Finances, by Group	161
9.4:	Survey Sample: Degree of Agreement with General Statements About Women and Work, by Labour Force Participation	164
9.5:	Survey Sample: Degree of Agreement with General Statements about Women and Work, by Age and Country of Birth	166
9.6:	Survey Sample: Opinions on Appropriate Labour Force Roles for Women Under Certain Circumstances, by Labour Force Participation	167
9.7:	Survey Sample: Opinions on Appropriate Labour Force Roles for Women Under Certain Circumstances, by Age and Country of Birth	168
11.1:	Survey Sample: Suggested Areas of Increased Government Assistance	178

List of Figures

2.1:	Employment Rates for Married Women: 1979 to 1993	20
4.1:	DSS Panel: Initial Distribution of Income Components	46
4.2:	Married Male Unemployment Rate: 1990 to 1994	48
4.3:	Married Female Employment Rate: 1990 to 1994	48
4.4:	DSS Panel: Husbands' Employment Rates by Uncompleted Duration and Date	52
4.5:	DSS Panel: Mean Unearned Incomes by Uncompleted Duration and Date	54
4.6:	DSS Panel: Wives' Employment Rates by Uncompleted Duration and Date	55
4.7:	DSS Panel: Mean Wages of Wives by Uncompleted Duration and Date	56
4.8:	DSS Panel: Wives' Employment Rates by Completed Duration and Date	58
4.9:	DSS Panel: Initial, Average and Final Earnings of Women in All Samples	59
4.10:	DSS Panel: Employment Rate of Women in All Samples by Date and Age	63
4.11:	DSS Panel: Employment Rate of Women in All Samples by Date and Husbands' Country of Birth	64
6.1:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Status of Women by Group	89
6.2:	Survey Sample: Couples' Ability to Raise \$500 or \$1,500 in a Financial Emergency	94
7.1:	Survey Sample: Median Time Since Woman Last Held a Job for Three Months or More	99
7.2:	Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Women's Time in Labour Market Activities Since Leaving School, by Group	103
7.3:	Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Partner's Time in Labour Market Activities Since Woman Left School, by Group	104

7.4:	Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Partner's Time Since Woman Left School According to His Main Source of Income, by Group	106
7.5:	Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Women's Time According to Main Source of Income Since Leaving School, by Group	107
7.6:	Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Status Just Prior to Partner Receiving Unemployment Allowance and at Time of Interview	109
7.7:	Survey Sample: Change in Women's Labour Force Status Since Partner Started Receiving Unemployment Allowance, by Group	110
7.8:	Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Responses to Partners' Unemployment, by Group	112
7.9:	Survey Sample: Impact of Partner's Unemployment on Selected Aspects of Couple's Circumstances	116
8.1:	Survey Sample: Women's Job Search and Earnings Status	130
8.2:	Survey Sample: Reasons Women Not Looking for Some/More Work	132
8.3:	Survey Sample: Main Reason Women Not Looking for Some/More Work	134
8.4:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Age of Youngest Child	136
8.5:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Age	138
8.6:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Educational Attainment	139
8.7:	Survey Sample: Perception of Usefulness of Job Training	140
8.8:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Years Out of Labour Force Since Leaving School	142
8.9:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Housing Tenure	142
8.10:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Woman's Need for an Interpreter	147
8.11:	Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Transport Access	148
9.1:	Survey Sample: Is Having Paid Work Important to You?	150

9.2:	Survey Sample: Reasons and Main Reason Why Women Consider Their Having Paid Work is Important	151
9.3:	Survey Sample: Women's and Partners' Views on Importance of Paid Employment for the Women	154
9.4:	Survey Sample: Women's Opinions on Distribution of Paid Work Within the Couple	155
9.5:	Survey Sample: Women's and Partners' Views on Distribution of Paid Work Within the Couple	157
9.6:	Survey Sample: Women's Opinions on Responsibility for Household Work	157
9.7:	Survey Sample: Women's and Partners' Opinions on Responsibility for Household Work	159
9.8:	Survey Sample: Who Would Decide What To Do With an Extra \$50/Week	162
9.9:	Survey Sample: Use of Family Payment	163
10.1:	Survey Sample: Women Looking for Some or More Work	170
10.2:	Survey Sample: Women's Job Search Activities in the Past Four Weeks	172
10.3:	Survey Sample: Reasons Women Having Difficulty Finding Work	173
11.1:	Survey Sample: Perception of Reasonableness of the Income Test	177
11.2:	Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Response if Partner Got a Job, Where Partner has No Paid Work but is Looking for Work	181

1 Introduction and Summary of Findings

1.1 Rationale

The rise in the employment rate for married women has been one of the most dramatic changes in the Australian labour market over recent decades. This trend has, however, not been evident in the case of women whose partners are unemployed. Employment rates for these women have remained low. The particular interest of this report, which was commissioned by the Department of Social Security (DSS), is with the labour force positions of women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowances. Why do women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowances have such low employment rates?

The operation of social security means tests is conventionally advanced as the explanation why women with unemployed partners have not enjoyed the increases in labour market participation experienced by married women in general. Means-testing is undoubtedly an important factor, though one which has perhaps been taken too readily as the single simple explanation. Previous research, both in Australia and overseas, indicates the potential significance of other factors: for example, the correspondence between the labour market characteristics, such as skills, of the two partners in a couple; and values concerning work roles within couples. The suggestion is that a range of factors come into play, with their relative importance varying between women and over time. One factor may be important for some women but not for others while, as the duration of a partner's unemployment increases, different factors may assume greater importance.

This study has been undertaken at a time of imminent dramatic change in relevant aspects of the Australian social security system. At present, the system remains largely founded on a single male breadwinner model and, moreover, on full-time work, despite the increasing prevalence of part-time work, particularly for married women, having been another important change in the Australian labour market over recent decades. This characterisation of the Australian social security system is very clear in the case of the eligibility and entitlement rules for unemployment allowances. This, however, is all set to change, following the work of the Committee on Employment Opportunities (1993) and the subsequent announcements in the May 1994 *White Paper on Employment and Growth* (Australia, Prime Minister, 1994). With the main changes to come into effect from July 1995, women whose partners are unemployed will face very different conditions regarding their eligibility and entitlement for income support and, also, in their access to labour market assistance.

An important motivation for these social security changes has been a concern with the low employment rates of women whose partners receive unemployment allowances. In this regard, the effectiveness of the changes will clearly depend on the extent to which it is in fact aspects of the social security system and labour market

assistance which can be held responsible for these women's low rates of employment. This study promises to throw some light on the question and, indeed, the commissioning of this research by the Department of Social Security can be seen to stem from the same concern which underpinned the policy changes announced in the *White Paper*.

The question of why women with partners receiving unemployment allowances have such low employment rates is addressed here with analysis of information from three data sources. These provide perspectives on different aspects of the question and also reflect an increasing intensity of focus. The first is the analysis of labour force data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on unemployed men and their partners. The second examines a longitudinal dataset including couples where the man is receiving an unemployment allowance, which was constructed from DSS administrative data. The third source of information is an exploratory survey undertaken specifically for this study, involving personal interviews with 75 women whose partners were, or had recently been, receiving unemployment allowance.

1.2 Background and Methodology

The background to this study lies in trends in married women's labour force participation and their relationship with the income support system. It is dealt with in greater detail in Section 2 of the Report, and summarised here.

Since 1979, the employment rate of women whose husbands are employed has increased from around 50 per cent to around 65 per cent. Over the same period, the employment rate for women whose husbands are unemployed has changed little, remaining at around 20 per cent. By 1993, women whose husbands were employed were three times more likely to be employed themselves than were women whose husbands were unemployed.

An account of the relevant social security provisions prevailing at the time of the study highlights the joint eligibility and entitlement conditions for unemployment allowance for couples, the steep withdrawal rate, the method of payment, the value of supplementary allowances and concessions, and provisions to encourage employment.

The operation of social security means tests is conventionally advanced as the explanation why women with unemployed partners have not enjoyed the increases in labour market participation experienced by married women in general. Means-testing is undoubtedly an important factor, though one which has perhaps been taken too readily as the single simple explanation.

Previous research, both in Australia and overseas, indicates the potential significance of other factors: for example, the correspondence between the labour market characteristics, such as skills, of partners; and values concerning work roles within couples. The suggestion is that a range of factors come into play, with their relative importance varying between women and over time. One factor may be important for

some women but not for others while, as the duration of a partner's unemployment increases, different factors may assume greater importance.

From the literature, three main hypotheses can be advanced for the low employment rates of women married to unemployed men, compared to the employment rates of other married women with similar demographic characteristics.

- These women tend to have personal and other characteristics that decrease their likelihood of employment.
- Income tests make it uneconomic for women to continue, or begin, working when their husband is receiving unemployment allowance.
- Social roles may be such that it is considered unacceptable for the wife to be in paid work while the husband is not.

These hypotheses need to be considered in the context of reasons why those women might seek to increase their employment. In particular, the loss of household income associated with the unemployment of one member will often act as a strong incentive for a spouse to attempt to supplement family income. The fact that women with unemployed husbands are observed to have less employment presumably implies that this incentive is more than offset by one or more of the hypotheses listed above.

In general, the question to be addressed concerns identification of the range of factors which contribute to the low employment rates of women whose husbands are receiving unemployment allowance, and of the relative importance of the different factors between groups of women and over time. The question is addressed in this study with analysis of information from three data sources. These provide perspectives on different aspects of the question and also reflect an increasing intensity of focus.

- The first is the analysis of labour force data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on unemployed men and their partners.
- The second examines a longitudinal dataset including couples where the man is receiving an unemployment allowance, which was constructed from DSS administrative data.
- The third source of information is an exploratory survey undertaken specifically for this study, involving personal interviews with 75 women whose partners were, or had recently been, receiving unemployment allowance.

The organisation of this Summary follows the structure of the report in which the analysis of ABS data is presented in Section 3, the analysis of DSS data in Section 4, and the survey data in Sections 5 to 11, with broad conclusions included in Section 12.

1.3 Evidence from the Labour Force and Related Surveys

How much of the association between wives' and husbands' employment status is due to common characteristics, and how much is due to direct causal influences? The analysis in Section 3 begins by considering the influence of the associated characteristics of education, and region. The key conclusions are summarised here.

- Measured educational qualifications explain about one seventh of the gap in employment rates between women with unemployed husbands and all women.
- Age distributions are responsible for a much smaller fraction of this gap.
- Whilst ideal data for this analysis were not available to the researchers, it appears that common geographic location of husbands and wives is responsible for only a very small fraction of their employment correlations.

However, many characteristics that husbands and wives have in common cannot be measured in such a simple fashion. Data from the 1991 ABS Labour Force Survey were used to examine the employment patterns of women whose husbands had just become unemployed. Since employment patterns usually take some time to alter, this provides a strong indication of the employment pattern of women whose husbands are likely to become unemployed, and can thus be used as an indicator of the importance of common characteristics. The main conclusions of this analysis are that:

- In 1991 the employment rate for women with employed husbands was 65 per cent, whilst for women with unemployed husbands it was 28 per cent. For women whose husbands had just become unemployed, however, the employment rate was 40 per cent. In other words, two thirds of the lower employment rate of women with unemployed husbands existed at the beginning of their husbands' unemployment spell. It is unlikely that this was due to a direct effect of their husbands' unemployment, and so we can ascribe at least two thirds of the employment rate gap to varying characteristics.
- This should be seen as a minimum estimate of the effect of characteristic variations. This is because some part of the drop in employment rates between wives with newly unemployed husbands and all wives with unemployed husbands may be due to the fact that men with better employment prospects leave unemployment first - and their wives may be similarly more advantaged in the labour market. This issue is addressed further in Section 4.
- A similar pattern is evident when the population is disaggregated by age and presence of dependent children.

1.4 Evidence from DSS Panel Data

This section presents results from an analysis of longitudinal DSS administrative data. The data were collected for adult married men who started to receive UB in the

six weeks prior to 17 June 1991, had working age wives and did not have dependent children aged under six. Information about this sample was selected from the DSS database at six monthly intervals up until January 1994. The key conclusions from this analysis are:

- In the initial sample, 22.2 per cent of wives had some earned income. For these women the mean earned income was \$154 per week.
- There was no evidence of any clustering of earned income amounts around the income test thresholds.
- The labour market environment for married women appeared to be reasonably stable over the two and a half year period of the study.
- Very few married couples receiving unemployment allowances leave benefit because of the employment of the wife.
- Within each category of husbands' unemployment duration, the trends over time in wives' employment rates are quite flat - particularly when compared with the large variations in employment rates **between** the different duration groups.
- There is some indication that women might increase their employment in the first months after their husbands becomes unemployed, but after two and a half years they have employment rates very similar to (or slightly less than) the employment rates when their husbands became unemployed. Overall, there is some indication of a fall in the average earnings of women who do have some employment.
- There appear to be some variations in wives' employment patterns over time in different age and birthplace groups. Young women tend to decrease, then increase their employment, whilst the reverse pattern applies for older women. Women born in Australia or East and South-East Asia tend to have a constant or possibly increasing employment rate, whilst other women tend to have a decrease in their employment rate. However, these conclusions should be considered tentative.

These results, together with those of the previous section, suggest that most of the differences in employment rates can be ascribed to the different characteristics of the different groups of women, and that the **net** effect of direct effects is relatively small. However direct effects could operate in both directions, a small net effect is possibly the outcome of large disincentive effects of the Social Security income test being offset by equally large incentive effects from the need to supplement family incomes.

1.5 The Interview Survey

The survey comprised interviews with 75 women whose husbands were, or recently had been, receiving unemployment allowance. The intention of the survey was to be

exploratory and to investigate the range of factors which condition these women's labour force decisions. As such, the survey was designed to cover women in different circumstances, rather than to provide a statistically representative sample.

The sample was designed to include three groups of women.

- Group 1. Women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowance (either JSA or NSA) and where the women have no paid work;
- Group 2. Women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowance (either JSA or NSA) and where the women do have some paid work; and
- Group 3. Women whose partners were recently receiving unemployment allowance (either JSA or NSA), but where the payment has been cancelled due to the woman finding full-time employment.

Further, the sample design sought to eliminate or reduce the play in the sample of two established factors which condition the labour force activity of married women: namely, the presence of very young children and the woman's age. The sample was restricted to women living in metropolitan Sydney.

Serious problems with the manner in which the sample was drawn did, however, introduce some unwanted features. In particular, almost all the women selected had dependent children and most were aged in their forties. Furthermore, the actual definition of Group 3 was different to that which was intended.

The survey involved face-to-face interviews with the women using a questionnaire which sought information on numerous facets of the current circumstances of women and their partners, their recent and longer-term labour force histories, and their attitudes towards work. Interviewing was undertaken in November and December 1993 by three experienced interviewers from the Centre. The survey achieved a response rate of 49.0 per cent after taking account of cases which were found to be out-of-scope.

The resulting sample numbers, and the terminology used to refer to the three subgroups, were as follows:

Group 1 - No Earnings	36 cases
Group 2 - Some Earnings	25 cases
Group 3 - Cancelled	14 cases

1.6 Profile of the Three Groups of Married Women

The key features of the sample are outlined below.

Household Demographics

- The women in Groups 1 and 2 were mainly in their forties; those in Group 3 were mainly in their thirties.
-

- There was very little age difference between men and women in the couples; men tended to be just slightly older.
- The women were predominantly in long-term relationships with their current partners.
- About half of the sample were born overseas in non-English-speaking countries. Most of these women had over 20 years of residence in Australia, the main exception being those in Group 3 who were much more recent arrivals.
- There was a strong correlation between the migrant status of women and their partners.
- All but six of the couples had dependent children living at home, that is, children under 15 or full-time students aged 15-20.
- None of the women in Groups 1 and 2 had children under six years old, while most of the women in Group 3 did.
- Over a fifth of the women, including a third of those in Group 1, reported an illness or disability which affected their ability to work in paid employment.

Education, Training and Employment

- The women in Group 1 had notably low levels of formal education and training, the levels for the women in Group 2 were slightly higher, but still low, while those for the women in Group 3 were markedly higher. Age differences were possibly important here.
 - There was a close correlation between the levels of educational attainment achieved by males and females within couples.
 - Very few of the women, or their partners, were currently engaged in any form of education or training.
 - The women in Group 2, with some earnings, held jobs which were typically casual and part-time, and which had mainly been found through friends and relatives or by directly approaching the employer.
 - In comparison, the paid work of the women in Group 3 was less often casual, and tended to be for longer hours and higher wage rates.
 - Among the 36 women in Group 1 without any paid work, a minority of 15 were looking for work while a majority of 21 were out of the labour force.
 - In Groups 1 and 2, where men were receiving unemployment allowances, very few of the men had any paid work.
-

- Unpaid household work was largely undertaken by the woman, even when she had paid work and her partner had none. Having paid work, at least part-time paid work, appears to have little effect on the woman's contribution to household tasks.
- About a quarter of the women in the sample reported doing voluntary work, with quite varied degrees of intensity.

Incomes

- Very few women reported that they or their partner had any income from other than social security and/or paid work.
- About half of all the women, including the majority of the women in Group 1, said that they would be unable to raise \$500 in a week for a financial emergency. This was regarded as an indicator of financial vulnerability.

Housing, Transport and Telephones

- About half the women were in households which were either home owners or purchasers, a quarter were private renters, and a quarter were public renters. Group 1 stood out as having high proportions of outright owners and public renters, while Group 3 was notable for low proportions in these two housing tenures.
- Reflecting the composition of housing tenure, average housing costs were lowest for Group 1, somewhat higher for Group 2, and markedly higher for Group 3.
- A significant number of the women were defined as having poor access to transport, including a third of the women in Group 1 and in Group 3.
- All of the women lived in households with a telephone.

The Emerging Picture

While the main purpose of Section 6 is descriptive, to set the scene for the discussion in following sections, there are already some indications of the factors behind the low employment rates of women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowances. Most striking are the low levels of educational attainment and training, and the close correlations between characteristics of partners, in terms of age, migrant status, and educational attainment.

1.7 Labour Force Histories

There were very few, but still some, women in the sample who had never held a job for three months or more. The great majority had at some time held a full-time job

which lasted for at least three months. For many, though, this was some time ago. About half of the women in Group 1 had not had a three-month full-time job for at least 15 years, and the history of full-time work was only slightly more recent for the women in Group 2. In contrast, few of the male partners had not held a full-time job lasting three months or more in the past five years.

On average, women in Group 1 had spent 59 per cent of their time since leaving school being out of the labour force and 38 per cent in paid employment. The proportions were reversed for the women in Group 2 with the greater part of their time, 56 per cent, spent in employment and only 42 per cent out of the labour force. For the women in both Groups, caring for children was the overwhelming reason for being out of the labour force, and considerably more time had been spent in full-time than in part-time employment. Partners' labour force histories, on the other hand, were dominated by full-time work with no marked difference in the pattern between Groups.

The picture of women's histories in terms of main sources of income corresponds closely to their and their partners' labour force histories. On average, for around 80 per cent of their time since leaving school, the women in each of the three groups have had wages as their main source of income: predominantly their own wages for the women in Groups 2 and 3, but with partners' wages slightly more important than the women's in Group 1. The sample thus does not include women who have spent substantial periods of their adult lives dependent on social security incomes, but they have spent substantial periods dependent on partners' wages.

Turning to the more recent history, over half the women said that, when their partner first started getting unemployment allowance, they had no idea how long the situation would last. For the great majority of those who did have an idea, the actual duration of receipt of unemployment allowance had exceeded the expected duration.

Comparison of the women's labour force status just before their partner became unemployed and at the time of interview shows a marked increase in the extent of the women's labour force participation over the period. This increase was not, however, widespread. Labour force status was unchanged for most of the women in the sample, with 24 women increasing their activity, including moves from being out of the labour force to being unemployed, and seven decreasing their labour force activity.

It is important to appreciate here that these survey results do not purport to, and indeed are unable to, provide an indication of the behaviour of the wives of unemployed men in general. The survey results are importantly conditioned by the sample design and their purpose, rather, is to identify and illustrate different types of response.

Forty three of the 72 women (the three who had partnered after their partners became unemployed are excluded) made no labour force response directly attributable to their partners' unemployment, 24 increased their labour force activity, and five had

mixed responses. None of the women reported decreasing their labour force activity in response to their partner's unemployment.

What characteristics are associated with a higher propensity for women to have increased, or attempted to increase, their labour force activity in response to their partner's unemployment? Four characteristics stood out: the woman's age, her labour force status at the time her partner became unemployed, the duration of the partner's unemployment, and housing tenure.

- The woman's age was the most prominent characteristic, with women under 40 much more likely to have increased their labour force activity than were women over 40 years old.
- A greater proportion of women who were not employed when their partner became unemployed, than those with some paid work, responded with an increase in labour force activity, possibly reflecting greater scope to increase activity.
- Increases in activity were more prevalent among those women whose partner had been unemployed for two years or more, perhaps simply reflecting the greater time available for a response, or maybe indicating recognition that their partners' unemployment was not going to be a brief episode in their lives.
- Increases in activity were very infrequent among outright home owners, suggesting that higher housing costs may play a role in women's responses to their partners' unemployment, though the close association between age and housing tenure needs to be borne in mind.

In about half the cases where women's responses were increased labour force activity, this did not translate into any sustained increase in hours worked. For example, they started looking for work but found none. The cases of mixed responses referred mainly to women starting to look for work, then stopping when unable to find any work. There was just one case where the woman's initial response to her partner's unemployment was to reduce her own labour force activity, before increasing it again.

With regard to other effects of their partners' unemployment which may have conditioned women's labour market responses:

- some change to their housing arrangements was reported by 22 of the women, mainly in terms of difficulties meeting their housing costs and not to the extent, as yet, of deciding or being forced to move;
 - effects on car situations were related by 45 of the women, relating mainly to difficulty meeting the running costs (petrol, maintenance, registration) of a car, but involving the loss of a car in nine cases; and
-

- effects on children's schooling arrangements were mentioned by 21 women, particularly concerning difficulty meeting the costs of excursions, uniforms and public school fees.

Some case studies describing the diversity of experiences of the women are presented. Attention is concentrated on the women's responses to their husbands' and their own unemployment.

1.8 The Labour Force Decision: Reasons and Characteristics

In Section 8, the women in Groups 1 and 2 are classified according to the intensity of their labour force participation, with distinction between those in the full-time labour force, the part-time labour force, and those not in the labour force. This forms the basis for an examination of the association of various characteristics with the intensity of the women's labour force participation. Because of their very different age structure and child characteristics, the women in Group 3 were excluded from consideration.

The examination began with consideration of women's stated reasons why they were not looking for some or more paid work. Seven types of reason were identified and these were, in decreasing order of importance, the main reason:

- caring responsibilities (primarily concerning children);
- own ill-health or disability;
- discouragement;
- contentment with current paid work;
- prospective work;
- financial disincentives; and
- other constraints.

The picture was dominated by the first two of these reasons, which together accounted for the main reason in 20 out of the 36 cases. Discouragement was also relatively important for the women in Group 1, while contentment with current paid work and prospective work were also relatively important for the women in Group 2. Financial disincentives, a reference to social security provisions, appeared as a middle-order factor among all reasons mentioned, but translated into the main reason why women were not endeavouring to increase their labour force participation in only two cases.

Although analysis of the reasons why women are not seeking to increase their labour force participation appears to provide a clear picture, comparison of various characteristics with women's intensities of labour force participation serves more to indicate the diversities and complexities of the women's situations.

This sample is not of a size or nature which would support systematic multivariate analysis and the consideration of the association between single characteristics and the intensity of labour force participation not surprisingly presents a somewhat

blurred picture. Bearing in mind the limitations of univariate analysis, the associations between particular characteristics and the intensity of labour force participation are summarised below.

There is an apparently strong association between a low degree of labour force participation and:

- a low level of educational attainment (measured either by the age they left school or highest year of secondary schooling attended);
- a high proportion of time spent out of the labour force since leaving school; and
- outright home-ownership.

There is the suggestion of an association between a low degree of labour force participation and:

- the presence of dependent children (sample numbers do not allow any firmer statement);
- the age of youngest child;
- an illness or disability affecting the ability to undertake paid employment;
- older age;
- English-language difficulty, as indicated by the need for an interpreter; and
- poor transport access.

Among the aspects showing no association with the intensity of the woman's labour force participation were:

- knowledge of, and familiarity with, social security provisions; and
- the use of concessions.

1.9 The Labour Force Decision: Attitudes and Roles

The Importance of Paid Work

Most of the women thought that paid work was important, with the proportions saying so increasing with their intensity of labour force participation. The reasons for attributing importance to paid work were dominated by financial considerations, with other factors such as self-esteem, social contact and maintenance of work skills frequently mentioned as reasons but seldom as the main reason. The more a woman saw paid work as financially important, the more likely she was to be in the labour force and the more likely to have, or to be seeking, full-time work.

Disadvantages with paid work were identified by two groups of women in particular:

- women under 40 with part-time labour force participation, many of whom thought paid work was important, but encountered difficulties with child care; and,
- women who thought that paid work was not important; most of these cited difficulties with child care or other domestic work.

While the women's and their partners' views on the importance of paid work were in accord in most cases, there was a substantial minority of cases where the woman attributed importance but believed that her partner did not. This was quite a heterogeneous group of women.

Paid Work Roles

Over two thirds of the women thought that both they and their partner should have paid work; a view which was particularly prevalent among those women who were in the labour force, but also held by about half of the women who were out of the labour force. This suggests the importance of constraints in the labour force decisions of women in this latter group. The women saw their partners as only slightly less frequently thinking that both should have paid work than they did themselves.

In the minority of cases where the woman thought that only one member of the couple should have paid work, in most cases it was the male who was nominated for this role and mainly on the basis that the woman had household responsibilities: either because that was the way things should be, or the way things were. The perception of partners' views was of a slightly more frequent belief that only the male should have paid work, and mainly because of a belief that this represented the appropriate roles within a couple.

Household Work

With regard to unpaid household work, the woman was seen to have a key responsibility in all cases; the variation was between whether it was the woman's sole responsibility or should be shared. The extent to which it was believed that the partner should share some of the responsibility increased with increasing intensity of the woman's labour force participation. There was an additional association with the woman's age, with older women, irrespective of their degree of labour force participation, being more likely to nominate themselves as solely responsible for household work.

Income Sharing

In the great majority of cases, the woman had some role, either as joint manager or sole manager, in management of the couple's finances. There was, nevertheless, a

suggestion that sole management by the woman becomes less prevalent, and joint management correspondingly more frequent, as the woman's intensity of labour force participation increases. Joint management was particularly associated with the cases where the woman had earnings. Maybe financial management is less of a privilege, and more just another household task. There was, however, a close correspondence between the responses on management of household finances and questions about who would decide how to spend extra money: a question of financial control.

A majority of women in the sample reported both joint management and joint decision-making with regard to additional money, irrespective of who received it. A second group reported woman's management of the couple's finances and joint decision-making. There was no apparent variation in the indicator of financial control according to the woman's degree of labour force participation.

Family Payment is money which is paid directly to the female partner in couples. In most cases, money from Family Payments was combined with other income, rather than used for specific purposes, though the prevalence of the latter increased as the couple's income increased.

General Attitudes

Those women who were out of the labour force were more likely than others to believe that 'men are not happy to see their wives go out to work' and that 'women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work'. Independent of labour force status, this was also the case with older women and those women in couples where both partners were born in non-English-speaking countries.

The perception of the availability of jobs which allowed combining paid and domestic work appeared to increase with the intensity of women's labour force participation.

There was a fairly broad consensus about the appropriate labour force activity of women at different stages of the life course, defined according to the presence and age of dependent children. Besides the responses of 'it's up to them', the common pattern of responses was:

- full-time paid work after marrying and before there are any children;
- no paid work or part-time paid work when there is a child under school age;
- part-time paid work after the youngest child starts school; and
- full-time paid work after the children leave home.

There was no marked variation in this pattern according to the woman's labour force participation or migrant status, though some difference according to age, with a far

higher proportion of the women over 40 years old than of those under 40 thinking that a woman should have no paid work when there is a child under school age.

1.10 Looking for Work

Women's Job Search

A minority of women in the sample, 22 out of the 61 women in couples receiving unemployment allowance, were looking for some or more work: 15 looking for some work, and seven looking for more work.

- Roughly equal numbers of women were looking for full-time and for part-time work, the latter mostly substantial part-time work.
- For those who were able to give a figure for their reservation wage, the median was an after-tax hourly rate of \$7.50: not ambitious compared to the corresponding figure of \$10 received by those women in the sample with paid work.
- Reservation wages were estimated in a number of ways, including with reference to needs, the 'going rate', previous earnings, and the level of unemployment allowance.
- While the women had used a range of job search methods, few (only eight out of the 22) were registered as unemployed with the CES. Some women were not aware that they could register, while others appeared to believe that other methods of job search were more promising.
- Most of the women thought that their chances of finding some or more work in the next six months were 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Most of the women looking for some or more work were aged 40 years or older and almost all mentioned their age as a reason why they were having difficulty finding work, with 11 nominating it as the main reason. A perception that there were no jobs available was the next most frequently mentioned reason.

While skill or education level was mentioned as a reason for difficulty finding work by about half the women, it was the main reason for none. Still, 14 out of the 22 women thought that job training would be useful for them.

Partner's Reservation Wages

Do unemployed men's reservation wages vary according to the activity of their partner? The data to address this question has its shortcomings, with valid responses received from only half the women, and a need to remember that we have only the woman's estimate of her partner's reservation wages. Bearing these qualifications in mind, there was a suggestion of slightly higher reservation wages for men whose

partners had no earnings: median after-tax hourly rates of \$8.60 for men whose partners had no earnings and \$8.00 for those whose partners had earnings. The main impression from the data on males' reservation wages, however, was not how high they were, or how different they were, but how low they were.

As with women's reservation wages, the bases for calculation of the men's reservation wages included reference to needs, the 'going rate', previous earnings, and the rate of unemployment allowance. In the men's case, however, reference to needs was far more common suggesting that reservation wages would vary according to the partner's earnings.

Couples' Job Search Experience

There was some correlation between aspects of the partners' job search experiences in those couples where both were looking for some or more work.

- For 11 of the 21 couples, their main reasons for difficulty finding work were the same: their age in eight cases, and the perception of no available jobs in three cases.
- For 13 of the 21 couples, their prospects of finding work within the next six months were seen as 'poor' or 'very poor' for both the woman and man.

1.11 The Women's Impressions

Further perspectives on the women's labour force decisions were obtained through considering their responses to more direct questions about particular aspects. The women were asked whether they thought the income test applying to receipt of unemployment allowances was reasonable. About half of the women who answered the question thought that the income test was reasonable, some were not sure, and a sizeable minority thought that it should be relaxed. There was a suggestion that concern with the income test increases with the degree of women's labour force participation.

The women were asked what sort of extra help they thought that the government should give to women in their situations who were looking for work. Issues of training, job creation and child care stood out, with each mentioned by about a third of the women who answered the question. Other issues, mentioned with lesser frequency, included: assistance with job search, the level of income support, discrimination, the treatment of married women as individuals, and the encouragement of working arrangements which are suitable for women with family responsibilities.

In response to a direct hypothetical question about whether they would change their work situation if their partners found work, over two thirds of the women said they would make no change. The minority who thought that there would be a change was

evenly divided between those who said they would increase and those who said they would decrease their labour force activity.

1.12 Conclusions

The main conclusions from the analyses of ABS and DSS data are that:

- variations in the characteristics of married women, distinguished according to the employment status of their partner, are sufficient to explain almost all of the variation in employment rates between these groups of women;
- it is not possible, however, to be conclusive about which particular characteristics are the most important in this result. Similarities in the education level and age of the partners in a couple play a part, but only a small part. Surprisingly, regional characteristics seem to be even less important; and
- to the extent that direct effects of the husband's unemployment on the wife's labour force are important, they appear to largely offset each other. These direct effects would include such matters as disincentives caused by income-testing, the incentive provided by the need to supplement family income, and the so-called 'bruised machismo' effect. The fact that the net impact of the various possible direct effects appears to be only slight does not imply that any single effect is unimportant. For example, income-testing may be important in influencing wives' employment but be offset by the need to supplement family incomes. If so, change in effective marginal tax rates would be expected to have some effect on the employment rate of these women.

The results from the interview survey throw some further light on the question, but it must be remembered that the survey was not based on a representative sample and that the manner in which the sample was drawn led to a sample which predominantly included women who were at least 40 years old and women who had dependent children.

One of the functions of the survey results is to illustrate and elaborate the various influences on the women's labour force behaviour. The survey also provided further evidence regarding the association between the characteristics of husbands and wives. In general, the survey revealed a diversity of women's experiences in terms of the factors influencing their labour market behaviour. Moreover, the picture is very much one of tendencies rather than deterministic relationships. Possibly the strongest relationship suggested is that between a woman's current labour force status and the total time spent out of the labour force since leaving school. That said, some broad conclusions about the relative importance of different factors for this sample of women (predominantly women in their forties with dependent children) can be advanced.

- The picture is dominated by the women's role caring for children, the women's own ill-health or disability, and by labour market discouragement.
-

- Financial disincentives appear to play only a minor role, and there is little evidence of operation of the 'bruised machismo' effect.

What does the study suggest regarding the likely impact of the White Paper reforms on the situations of women whose husbands are receiving unemployment allowance? For a start, it should be noted that most of the women in the survey sample would qualify for either Parenting Allowance or Partner Allowance on the grounds of their dependent children or their age and labour market attachment and, thereby, would not be moved onto unemployment allowance with its associated access to labour market assistance. This is despite the fact that a number of the women were unsuccessfully seeking to increase their paid employment. The point is that eligibility for Parenting Allowance or Partner Allowance should not be taken to imply the absence of a need or desire for labour market assistance.

More generally, the study suggests, through the apparent greater importance of labour market disadvantage than of disincentives related to social security provisions, that the elements of the White Paper reforms with the greatest potential to assist these women are the enhancements and extensions of labour market assistance, rather than the changes to social security provisions alone.

The research reported here was in fact part of a larger study which also looked at the situations of women whose partners were receiving Disability Support Pension. A discussion of the corresponding results for this group of women can be found in King and McHugh (1995).

2 Background and Methodology

The background to this study lies in trends in married women's labour force participation and their relationship with the income support system. Key aspects of these trends and of the income support system are presented below, before a review of previous research with a bearing on the question of why the wives of unemployed men have such low employment rates. This leads to a specification of the research questions for this study and an outline of the methodology used to address these questions.

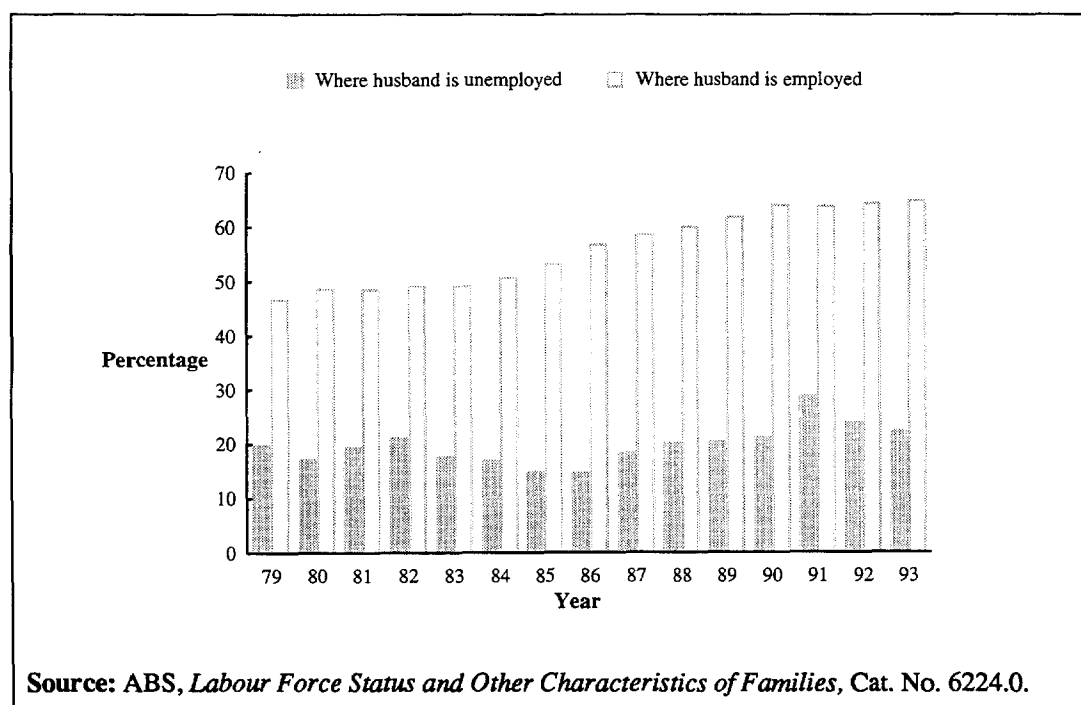
2.1 Labour Force Trends

A number of useful and recent accounts of trends in the labour force participation and employment rates of married women, with particular reference to their relationship with income support, are available (Committee on Employment Opportunities, 1993; Department of Social Security, 1993; McClelland, 1994; Wilson, 1994). There is no need to reproduce that material here, though a statistical picture of trends in the employment rates of women according to the employment status of partners would fill a gap in the accounts mentioned above and is of particular pertinence to the current study. Such a picture is presented in Figure 2.1 for the years from 1979 to 1993.

On top of the overall cyclical pattern of employment growth, with recessions in the early 1980s and early 1990s, the figure shows firstly the increasing employment rate of married women where their husbands are employed: from around 50 per cent in the late 1970s to around 65 per cent by the early 1990s. In comparison, the employment rate for women whose husbands are unemployed has changed little over the period, hovering around 20 per cent. By 1993, the respective employment rates were 65 per cent for women whose husbands were employed and just 23 per cent for women whose husbands were unemployed. Expressed differently, women whose husbands were employed were three times more likely to be employed themselves than were women whose husbands were unemployed.

2.2 Social Security Provisions

During the course of this study, there have been announcements of considerable changes to the income support provisions applying to the wives of unemployed men. The provisions faced by women in these circumstances after July 1995 will be very different to those faced at the time of the study. A description of both sets of provisions is useful for the purposes of the study; the current provisions provide the context for the empirical analysis undertaken, while the impending provisions provide the context for any policy implications from the study. Accordingly, the

Figure 2.1: Employment Rates for Married Women: 1979 to 1993

provisions pertaining to the time to which the empirical analysis of the study relates are described below, while the prospective changes are discussed in the final section of the report.

Eligibility for and Entitlement to Allowance

In 1993, the system of income support for women married to unemployed men was characterised by joint treatment of the couple for the purposes of both eligibility and entitlement. Thus, a married woman was entitled to income support simply by dint of her partner receiving unemployment allowance¹. Her partner received a married rate of unemployment allowance, with the actual entitlement determined with reference to the joint income and assets of the couple². Only one member of the couple needed to meet the activity test by demonstrating that they were available for and actively seeking full-time work, including by registering as unemployed with the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES).

1 The term 'unemployment allowance' is used here, and below, to refer collectively to the two specific payments of Job Search Allowance (JSA), for people unemployed for less than 12 months, and Newstart Allowance (NSA), for people unemployed for 12 months or more.

2 The exception to these conditions of payment, where either member of the couple was under 21 years old and there were no children, is described later in this section.

In late 1993, the maximum married rate of unemployment allowance was \$527.40 per fortnight for a couple where both partners were at least 21 years old or where the couple had a child. Actual entitlement was then determined according to the application of income and assets tests. The basic income test allowed joint other income of up to \$60 per fortnight with no effect on entitlement, a reduction in allowance of 50 cents in the dollar for fortnightly income between \$60 and \$140, and a dollar for dollar withdrawal of allowance for other income in excess of \$140 per fortnight. Thus, entitlement to the married rate of unemployment allowance would begin to be withdrawn with other income above \$60 per fortnight and completely disappear when other income exceeded \$627 per fortnight. Where earnings constituted part of other income, however, the income test was applied slightly differently.

A special earnings disregard for income in the form of wages allowed each member of a couple to have earnings of up to \$50 per fortnight which would not be considered income for the purpose of the income test. Thus where other income included earnings, the entitlement to unemployment allowance would not begin to reduce until other income reached \$110 per fortnight, if only one member of the couple had earnings, or \$160 per fortnight if both had earnings. The level of other income at which the entitlement disappeared was correspondingly higher where other income included earnings: \$677 per fortnight with one earner, and \$727 per fortnight with two earners.

The income test was thus characterised by: disregard of a small amount of earnings, a 100 per cent effective marginal tax rate for much of the range over which entitlement was withdrawn, and by no distinction according to which member of the couple received other income, except in the case of the earnings disregard.

There was one exception to this picture of jointly assessed eligibility for unemployment allowance, with different provisions applying to couples who had no children and where one or both members of the couple was under 21 years old. In these cases, one partner's eligibility for unemployment allowance did not automatically confer eligibility for income support on the other partner. Rather, the latter partner needed to qualify for income support in their own right; for example, by demonstrating that they were actively seeking and available for full-time work. The special provisions for this small group of couples where one or both members was unemployed provided a taste of the major reforms that were to be announced in 1994.

Other Payments

Attached to an entitlement to unemployment allowance are automatic entitlements to Basic Family Payment (BFP) and Additional Family Payment (AFP), where the couple have eligible children, and to Rent Assistance in the case of private renters and depending on the amount of rent paid. In addition, practically all unemployment allowance recipients are entitled to a Health Care Card and thereby to the concessions that are linked to holding a Health Care Card. The value of income

support for a couple where at least one member is unemployed can thus be considerably more than the base rate of payment. In late 1993 for example, a couple with two children, aged 10 years and 13 years, and paying over \$220 in private rent would, in addition to the \$527.40 per fortnight in unemployment allowance, have received: \$41.80 in BFP, \$149.30 in AFP, and \$74.80 in Rent Assistance. Their total level of income support, at \$793.30 per fortnight, would be 50 per cent higher than the base rate of payment. Moreover, there is the value of concessions the couple might make use of, including, for example, the value to them of concession fares on public transport and cheap prescriptions.

The Method of Payment

The method of payment of income support varies according to which payment components are received. The base rate of unemployment allowance is always paid to the member of the couple whose unemployment has qualified the couple for payment; that is, to the man in the case of a couple where the man is unemployed. BFP and AFP, where applicable, are paid to the primary caregiver, which is usually deemed to be the female member of a couple, and combined in a single family payment. Where Rent Assistance is payable, it is combined with any family payment, and thus paid typically to the woman in such cases, or combined with the base payment of unemployment allowance when there is no family payment. With payments made directly into bank accounts, the actual division of payments between the members of couples will, of course, depend on the extent that they request payment into joint bank accounts.

Provisions to Encourage Employment

There are a number of provisions which were either designed to, or have the effect of, lessening the impact of the loss of unemployment allowance when other income is increased through earnings.

- Eligibility for BFP does not cease till family income is in excess of well over \$2000 per fortnight.
 - Eligibility for AFP extends to low-income earners with family incomes up to around \$1000 per fortnight, depending on the number and ages of children.
 - Someone receiving unemployment allowance who takes up full-time employment, and who has been registered with the CES as unemployed for at least 12 months, qualifies for a once-off Employment Entry Payment of \$100.
 - Someone receiving unemployment allowance can go off the payment and have a temporary job for up to 13 weeks without having to serve the waiting period again.
-

- Someone who has received unemployment allowance for at least 12 months before going off the payment to take up employment, retains their Health Care Card for 6 months from the date of their employment.

2.3 Previous Research

The observed absence of the wives of unemployed men to share the increases in employment rates experienced by married women in general has attracted the curiosity of a number of researchers over the past ten years or so, both in Australia and overseas; the United Kingdom research is of particular relevance given the similarities in the income support system. Indeed, this development in labour market structure is not a purely Australian phenomenon, with similar patterns evident in the United Kingdom, Canada, The Netherlands, France and the USA (Ultee, Dessens and Jansen, 1988; Davies, Elias and Penn, 1992). In the latter country, however, there has been evidence in the past of an opposite trend - with husband's unemployment apparently inducing married women to become 'additional workers' - or at least additional job seekers (Scherer, 1978). This has been explained as due to the income effect of the loss of family income associated with the husband entering unemployment. What factors might operate to more than offset this income effect and lead to wives being subtracted rather than added workers?

It is convenient to group potential explanations into two categories, 'direct effects' (or state-dependence) and 'characteristic variations' (or heterogeneity). Direct effects are those influences which would not exist if the husband were not unemployed. One such factor is the 'price effect' of the income support system. In countries like Australia and the UK where most unemployment assistance is targeted according to family incomes, there will often be only a small reward from low-wage or part-time work since any increase in earnings by the unemployed man or his wife will lead to reductions in benefit payments. Though the Australian income test is not as strict as that in the UK, there is still a very strong disincentive for wives to work part-time (Pech, 1991). Whilst the Australian income test will be substantially liberalised in 1995, effective marginal tax rates will still be over 80 per cent for wide income ranges. Whilst there is little research which has focused on the particular population of interest here, more general research on both unemployment payments and on married women's labour supply suggests that these economic factors will have at least some behavioural impact (see for example Layard, Nickell and Jackman, 1991, and Killingsworth, 1983).

Another direct effect arises from traditional gender roles which may lead to the wife giving up, or not taking up, a job when the husband is unemployed. This 'bruised machismo effect' as Irwin and Morris (1993) describe it, stems from the wife's acquiescence to (or support for) the husband's desire to be the breadwinner of the family. Whilst it may be considered acceptable for the wife to be working when the husband is also doing so, the combination of her employment and his unemployment may be too much of a deviation from traditional gender roles.

Finally, we may note that a high proportion of jobs are obtained via informal contacts with employers and other workers. As Cass (1994) notes, the unemployment of one family member may thus reduce the opportunities for other members to gain employment.

Whilst all these direct effects are plausible, there is another set of equally plausible explanations which revolve around the association between the labour market **characteristics** of husbands and wives. One key characteristic shared between husbands and wives is the region in which they live. Regional variations in labour demand are thus one explanation for the observed associations in husband and wife employment. In addition, assortative mating means that husbands and wives will tend to have similar age, education and skill levels. More generally, social class homogamy means that spouses will often share a wide range of characteristics such as social contacts and attitudes.

Because of the difficulties of observing independent variation in all these factors (and indeed measuring some of them at all) the empirical research on wives' employment has been largely inconclusive. Data limitations have meant that research typically focuses on only a sub-set of the explanations listed above, and as a consequence has been unable to identify the relative importance of different explanations. One exception is the analysis of Davies, Elias and Penn (1992). They utilise a dataset containing extensive retrospective information on husbands' and wives' labour force histories, collected in six regions of the UK. This panel dataset permits them to estimate statistical models which control for the heterogeneity of characteristics. Their main conclusion is that just over a third of the employment rate gap between wives with unemployed husbands and wives with employed husbands is due to direct effects, whilst the remainder of the gap is due to measured and unmeasured variations in characteristics. There also appears to be a substantial association between the changes in benefit entitlements when the husband had been unemployed for 12 months, and decreases in their wife's employment probability at that point - suggesting that a good deal of the direct effect is due to the 'price effect' described above. The existence of a direct effect in the UK is further supported by cohort studies of unemployed men which have found a small but significant fall in wives' employment over spells of husbands' unemployment (Garman, Redmond and Lonsdale, 1992).

The previous research includes some intensive interview surveys designed specifically to investigate the labour market behaviour of the wives of men receiving unemployment benefits; notable examples being the work in the United Kingdom by McLaughlin, Millar and Cooke (1989) and Jordan et al. (1992). For Australia, relevant survey research was undertaken by Donnelly and McClelland (1988) who considered the situation of wives as part of a more general study of the barriers to employment faced by unemployed couples. While noting the likely importance of a lack of skills in demand and geographical variations in job opportunities, which they were unable to assess, Donnelly and McClelland identified two main factors behind these women's low employment rate:

firstly, allocation to the woman of a role in which she cares for children, manages the household and, those responsibilities permitting, supplements the family's earnings but normally does not become the primary or sole earner and, secondly, the disincentives created by benefit income tests. (Donnelly and McClelland, 1988: 83)

Previous Australian research has thus produced results in line with those from overseas research. Overall, the research can be summarised as showing that the explanation for the low employment rates of women married to men receiving unemployment benefits is much more complicated than being simply due to the effect of disincentives provided by means-testing and eligibility rules in the income support system. While income support provisions do tend to emerge as one important factor, there are a number of other factors which come into play.

2.4 The Research Questions

From the literature, three main hypotheses can be advanced for the low employment rates of women married to unemployed men, compared to the employment rates of other married women with similar demographic characteristics.

- These women tend to have personal and other characteristics that decrease their likelihood of employment. For example, the wives of unemployed men are more likely to be in regions of low labour demand than are wives generally. Alternately, assortative mating may mean that men with low skill levels may have wives who also have low skill levels, and are hence less likely to be employed.
- Income tests make it uneconomic for women to continue, or begin, working when their husband is receiving unemployment allowance.
- Social roles may be such that it is considered unacceptable for the wife to be in paid work while the husband is not.

It is reasonable to expect that the relative importance of these factors will vary between population groups. For example, income test disincentives are likely to be of less importance where the husband's expected duration of unemployment is short. Social roles are likely to be different for women of different ages and cultural backgrounds. The relative importance of factors may also vary with time, measured in terms of the duration of unemployment. In general, the question to be addressed concerns identification of the range of factors which contribute to the low employment rates of women whose husbands are receiving unemployment allowance, and of the relative importance of the different factors between groups of women and over time.

2.5 Methodology

The key to identifying the range and relative importance of the possible influences is the ability to isolate any variation in one factor independent of the others. As ever, however, the ideal data source which would allow this neither exists nor can be feasibly established and, instead, we combine evidence from three different data sources to approach the question:

- labour force data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on unemployed men and their partners;
- a longitudinal dataset, constructed from DSS administrative data, including couples where the man is receiving unemployment allowance; and
- an exploratory survey, undertaken specifically for this study, involving personal interviews with 75 women whose partners were, or had recently been, receiving unemployment allowance.

The analysis of each of these elements of the empirical work provides perspectives on different aspects of the question, and also entails a progressively increasing intensity of focus on the situations of the wives of men receiving unemployment allowance. Further details of the three components of the study are provided alongside the presentation and discussion of the results.

3 Evidence from the Labour Force and Related Surveys

3.1 Introduction

One potential explanation for the lower employment rates of wives of unemployed men is that they have personal characteristics which decrease their labour market opportunities. For example, husband and wife education levels tend to be correlated, and education is one predictor of labour market outcomes. In addition, demand for labour varies significantly by region: a characteristic that husband and wife share by definition. Associations such as these imply that the employment rates of women married to unemployed men should be lower, independent of any direct effect of their husbands' unemployment on their behaviour. This section begins by considering the extent to which observed differences in characteristics such as these might be responsible for wives' employment patterns.

3.2 Education and Age

Some evidence on the association between the educational qualifications of husband and wife and the association with employment is shown in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 using data from the 1990 ABS Income Distribution Survey. The first of these tables illustrates the strong association between husband's and wife's educational attainment. For example, of all married women aged 21-49, 9.3 per cent have a bachelor degree. But this rises to 39.2 per cent for those whose husband also has a degree.

Table 3.2 shows how the employment rates of married women vary with their own qualifications and their husbands' labour force status. In 1990, 66.3 per cent of married women aged 21 to 49 were employed. However only 28.2 per cent of those with unemployed husbands were employed. Though some of the cell sizes become quite small, it is clear that within this group, the educational level of the wife has a strong influence on her employment probability. For example, three quarters of those women with a degree and an unemployed husband were employed, whilst only one fifth of similar women with no qualifications were employed.

This table, together with Table 3.1, can be used to calculate what the employment rate of the wives of unemployed men would be if they had the same distribution of qualifications as married women generally. This calculation produces an employment rate of 33.6 per cent,³ somewhat higher than the 28.2 per cent actual

3 This percentage is the weighted average of the employment rates in the 'husband unemployed' column of Table 3.2, where the weights are the percentages in the last column of Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Highest Educational Qualification of Married Women Aged 21-49 by Husbands' Education Level: 1990

Wife's Highest Qualification	Husband's Highest Qualification				Total
	No qualifications	Completed school	Certificate	Degree	
	Percentage				
No qualifications	62.6	38.2	43.3	13.4	44.3
Completed school	10.5	19.4	12.8	8.9	12.2
Certificate	24.4	35.3	39.1	38.5	34.2
Degree	2.5	7.1	4.7	39.2	9.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Calculated from ABS, *1990 Income Distribution Survey*, Unit Record File.

Table 3.2: Employment Rates of Married Women Aged 21-49 by Education Level and Husbands' Labour Force Status: 1990

Wife's Highest Qualification	Husband's Labour Force Status			Total
	Not in Labour Force	Employed	Unemployed	
	Percentage of Wives Employed			
No Qualifications	22.5	63.3	19.9	58.7
Completed School	52.9	68.7	27.9	65.4
Certificate	41.0	74.9	42.2	72.7
Degree	78.1	80.1	74.6	80.0
Total	34.1	69.6	28.2	66.3

Source: Calculated from ABS, *1990 Income Distribution Survey*, Unit Record File.

employment rate, but still well below the average employment rate of 66.3 per cent. In other words, this simple four-category definition of educational qualifications explains about one seventh of the gap in employment rates between women with unemployed husbands and all women.

If the same calculation is carried out with respect to age groups, even less of the employment rate difference is explained. If the wives of unemployed men had the same age distribution as married women generally, their employment rate would increase only marginally to 29.6 per cent.

3.3 Region

When considering the impact of regional variations on unemployment and participation patterns, it is important to distinguish three quite separate factors. The first is the impact of different levels of economic growth and hence demand for labour across Australia. A region of low labour demand will include more than its share of unemployed men, and their wives will also find it more difficult to find work. This will imply a lower employment rate for the wives of unemployed men than for the wives of employed men. The appropriate region to use in examining this demand influence should usually be quite large and defined by feasible commuting distances. For example, the 'natural labour markets' defined by DEET typically include cities as a single labour market (DEET, 1993).

A second regional association with unemployment reflects a causal relationship in the opposite direction. People with low earning capacity are more likely to be unemployed and can often only live in cheaper areas. If husbands and wives tend to have similar skill levels then this relationship will also produce an association between husband and wife employment rates. This association, however, ultimately reflects personal characteristics, and whilst it may be relevant for some regional policies (such as where to site labour market services) the regional dimension of this association does not assist in identifying the underlying cause.

The third regional influence is particular to multiple worker households and reflects aspects of both the first two. It follows from the fact that the families of men with low earning capacity may be forced to live in cheaper areas, and these areas may have relatively poor transport facilities. This may in turn make work more difficult for wives, particularly if they have to rely on public transport. This is thus a particular example of the general principle that lower levels of household resources may limit women's ability to find employment.

Whilst both the first and third of these explanations are relevant to an understanding of wives' employment patterns, it is empirically difficult to separate them from the reverse causality in the second explanation. Here, two illustrative calculations are undertaken to try to provide lower and upper bounds on the influence of regional factors.

Broad Regional Influences

A lower bound can be obtained by considering the first explanation only, and focusing on broad labour market regions. Table 3.3 shows male and female unemployment rates in different regions across Australia. Whilst the non-capital city regions of this table are larger than the natural labour markets defined by DEET, the small population share for these regions means that this is probably not an important deviation from the natural labour market concept. A more important limitation is that data restrictions mean that it is necessary to consider the unemployment rather than the employment rate (because the retired population cannot be excluded) and it is necessary to consider all men and women rather than just those married and of workforce age. Hence these results should be considered broadly indicative only.

The first column of the table shows the distribution of the Australian civilian population (aged 15 and over) across the different regions of Australia (e.g. 21.36 per cent of the population lives in Sydney). The second column shows the male unemployment rate in each region, whilst the third shows the distribution of unemployed men across Australia (e.g. 19.7 per cent of unemployed men live in Sydney). The final column shows the female unemployment rate in each region.

The overall average unemployment rate for women in the three months to February 1994 was 10.7 per cent. If the male to female sex ratio and the participation rate were constant across regions, this number could be calculated as the weighted average of unemployment rates in each region, where the weights are the share of the population in each region. This result of this calculation is shown at the foot of the table as 10.8 per cent - very close to the actual average unemployment rate.

Whilst this number is not of any particular interest, it can serve as the introduction to a more interesting calculation. How much would the unemployment rate of women increase if, holding their within-region unemployment rate constant, they were distributed around the country in accordance with the distribution of male unemployment (instead of in line with the overall population)? This unemployment rate is calculated as a weighted average of female unemployment rates, where the weights are the distribution of male unemployment in each region. For example, the Richmond/Tweed/Mid-North Coast region of NSW contains 3.71 per cent of unemployed men, but only 2.29 per cent of the Australian population. This calculation would assume that 3.71 per cent of women come from this region. Since regions such as this with higher concentrations of male unemployed tend also to have higher female unemployment rates, this counterfactual calculation leads to a higher average female unemployment rate of 11.1 per cent.

Why is this counterfactual calculation interesting? Because it mimics the effect of regional labour demand on the unemployment of wives of unemployed men. This is because the wives of unemployed men have, by definition, the same regional distribution as do their husbands, whereas the wives of employed men have a distribution very similar to that of all married women. Ideally this calculation should

Table 3.3: Regional Unemployment Rates for the Three Months to February 1994

Region	Distribution of Civilian Population Aged 15+	Male Unemployment Rate	Distribution of Male Unemployment	Female Unemployment Rate
Percentages				
Sydney	21.36	10.6	19.67	8.9
Hunter	3.07	16.1	3.99	13.1
Illawarra	2.24	16.0	2.99	14.4
South Eastern NSW	1.00	0.1	0.60	11.8
Richmond/Tweed/Mid-North Coast	2.29	20.3	3.71	14.3
Northern/North-Western/Central West NSW	2.57	9.2	1.95	9.8
Murray and Murrumbidgee (NSW)	1.31	8.5	0.94	8.2
Rest of NSW	0.09	13.9	0.10	11.7
Melbourne	18.23	12.3	19.50	12.6
Barwon-Western	1.96	13.8	2.27	12.5
Central Highlands-Wimmera	1.05	12.5	1.08	15.3
Loddon-Campaspe-Mallee	1.50	14.2	1.83	10.0
Goulburn-Ovens-Murray (VIC)	1.39	6.7	0.85	10.7
Gippsland	1.28	16.1	1.82	15.2
Brisbane	8.19	10.3	7.49	9.7
South and East Moreton	1.78	11.9	1.82	10.3
North and West Moreton	1.38	13.5	1.52	14.8
Wide Bay - Burnett	1.17	15.2	1.45	12.3
Mackay - Fitzroy - Central West	1.63	12.1	1.72	10.5
Darling Downs - South West	1.26	7.3	0.86	9.2
Northern - North West QLD	1.05	9.0	0.84	13.0
Far North Qld	1.17	9.2	1.00	8.5
Adelaide	6.23	12.9	6.79	11.1
Southern and Eastern SA	1.30	9.2	1.03	10.3
Northern and Western SA	0.89	12.4	0.96	9.1
Perth	7.05	10.3	6.50	10.0
Lower Western WA	1.31	8.1	0.95	8.3
Rest of Western Australia	1.18	6.5	0.77	7.6
Hobart	1.06	14.3	1.27	9.3
Southern Tasmania	0.23	0.0	0.25	9.0
Northern Tasmania	0.75	12.0	0.80	10.6
Mersey - Lyell	0.58	14.9	0.73	15.1
Northern Territory	0.84	7.9	0.55	9.5
Australian Capital Territory	1.67	8.6	1.38	8.3
Total	100.0	11.5	100.0	10.7
Average female unemployment rate weighted by population distribution				10.8
Average female unemployment rate weighted by male unemployment distribution				11.1

Source: DEET, 1994, *Australian Regional Labour Markets*, Number 54.

be undertaken with the (non-retired) married population only and also include data on full- and part-time employment rates. But in the absence of such data, the results shown here are still of interest.

The basic conclusion from this calculation can be summarised as follows. Overall, the unemployment rate of women is 10.7 per cent. If women had the same population distribution as unemployed men, this would rise to 11.1 per cent. This is a very small increase - less than half of a percentage point, or under four per cent of the actual unemployment rate. This can be compared with the unemployment rates that can be calculated from Table 3.5 (below). In 1991, the overall unemployment rate for working age married women was six per cent. For those whose husband had just become unemployed, the unemployment rate was 20 per cent - a gap of 14 percentage points.

Small Area Patterns

Whilst an examination of broad regions thus provides a (low) lower bound to the effect of geography, much smaller regions are required if we wish to calculate an upper bound. Since an analysis at a small area level is likely to mainly reflect the second (reverse causality) rather than the third (family interactions) explanation we should expect the true causal effect to be significantly below the measured effect. Nonetheless an illustrative calculation is quite useful.

Table 3.4 shows the same information as in Table 3.3, but this time only for 12 regions within the Sydney labour market. Overall, 8.9 per cent of the female workforce was unemployed. This would rise to 10.1 per cent if women had the same geographic distribution as did unemployed men. Whilst this increase of 1.2 percentage points due to the within-region distribution of unemployment is much greater than the increase calculated above for larger regions, it is still more than an order of magnitude smaller than the unemployment rate difference between women married to recently unemployed men, and all married women.

Since the discussion of reverse causality above suggests that the increase calculated in Table 3.4 should be considered an upper bound for the effect of region on family employment associations, we can conclude with a fair degree of certainty that regional effects can only play a very small part in explaining the association between husband and wife unemployment rates.

To find an explanation for the association between husband and wives employment patterns, it is necessary to look elsewhere.

3.4 Employment Rates when the Husband Enters Unemployment

In general husbands and wives will be similar in more labour market characteristics than can be identified in data collections such as the Labour Force Survey. Our

Table 3.4: Sydney Unemployment Rates for the Three Months to February 1994

Region	Distribution of Civilian Population Aged 15+	Male Unemployment Rate	Distribution of Male Unemployment	Female Unemployment Rate
Percentages				
Inner and Inner Western	10.98	8.9	8.94	6.5
Eastern Suburbs	6.73	12.7	7.76	7.6
St. George-Sutherland	11.59	8.3	9.34	6.6
Canterbury-Bankstown	8.13	13.9	10.68	9.4
South-Western	13.05	14.4	18.39	14.9
Central Western	6.46	18.0	10.22	13.3
Outer Western	6.99	10.1	6.92	10.9
Blacktown-Baulkham Hills	8.76	10.7	9.19	9.3
Lower Northern	7.58	5.8	4.11	3.8
Hornsby-Ku-ring-gai	6.95	7.2	4.77	6.9
Northern Beaches	6.26	4.7	2.92	5.6
Gosford-Wyong	6.54	12.0	6.76	14.3
Total	100.0	10.6	100.0	8.9
Average Female Unemployment Rate Weighted by Population Distribution				9.2
Average Female Unemployment Rate Weighted by Male Unemployment Distribution				10.1

Source: DEET, 1994, *Australian Regional Labour Markets* Number 54.

particular interest here, moreover, is primarily to distinguish those causes of low employment rates which are directly associated with the experience of unemployment, from those which would exist independent of whether the husband actually became unemployed. The most direct way to separate out the latter influence is to **describe the employment patterns of women whose husband is about to become unemployed.** Unless the unemployment is anticipated, any of the direct effects of husbands' unemployment, such as the effect of income tests or social attitudes, will not be an explanation for their low employment rate.

Whilst there are not data available which permit exactly this sample to be selected, it is possible to get quite close. In the Labour Force Survey conducted by the ABS, both husband and wife labour force data are collected, and unemployed people are asked how long they have been looking for work. It is thus possible to identify those women whose husband has just become unemployed, and to examine their labour force participation. If these wives have low levels of employment, we can conclude

that characteristics are a major reason for the differential employment rates noted in Section 2.

One caveat is that this is not quite the desired sample specified above. If the wives have already reduced their employment as a result of their husbands unemployment (or their anticipation of this unemployment) then the magnitude of the characteristics effect will be overstated. However, the extent of this is likely to be small. Whilst forthcoming retrenchment may be anticipated, the likely duration of unemployment cannot. If there is a chance that the husband may find another job it would be unlikely for a women to give up her job in the short term. It is only after the husband has been unemployed for some period, and the likelihood of him finding a job has diminished that the experience of unemployment is likely to have a direct effect on the wives employment.

The key results from the Labour Force Survey are presented in Table 3.5. This shows the labour force status of married women aged 20 to 59, disaggregated by their husbands' labour force status. In order to maintain a sufficient sample size for the short duration categories of husband's unemployment, the table includes data from all 12 of the Labour Force Surveys of 1991. Sample size considerations were also the reason for the choice of the year 1991, as this was a year of high inflows into unemployment.

Just as in Table 3.2, women with husbands who are either unemployed or not in the labour force have much lower employment rates than women with employed husbands. This applies for both full- and part-time employment. For women with husbands not in the labour force, their lower employment rate is partly a reflection of joint retirement decisions. Though this table only describes women aged under 60, many of these women have husbands over retirement age.

If characteristics were an explanation for the higher unemployment rate of wives of unemployed men, we should find the employment rate of wives whose husbands had just become unemployed to be lower than that for wives of employed husbands. Table 3.5 shows that this is indeed the case, with an employment rate of only 40 per cent for wives whose husband was unemployed for under two weeks, compared to 65 per cent of wives with employed husbands. However, the employment rate for all women with unemployed husbands is lower still, at 28 per cent. That is, the average employment rate of wives falls with duration of unemployment of their husband.

This last relationship could be because the longer-term unemployed tend to be those with the poorest labour market characteristics, and the characteristics of their wives are similar or because of the effect of the experience of husbands' unemployment on the labour force participation of wives. In Section 4, longitudinal (panel) data from DSS administrative records is used to disentangle these two effects.

Thus whilst this data cannot tell us whether the experience hypothesis is true or not, it does indicate that at least a large part of the reason for the lower employment rate of wives of unemployed men is due to their characteristics. One way of

Table 3.5: Labour Force Status of Married Women Aged 20-59, by Husbands' Labour Force Status and Duration of Unemployment: 1991^(a)

	Wife's Labour Force Status					
	Employed			Unemployed	NLF ^(b)	Total
	Full-time	Part-time	Total			
Percentages						
Husband's Labour Force Status						
Employed	35	30	65	3	32	100
Unemployed ^(c)	15	12	28	18	55	100
< 2 weeks	22	18	40	10	50	100
2-3 weeks	23	18	40	15	44	100
4-51 weeks	17	14	30	18	52	100
52-103 weeks	12	8	21	21	59	100
104+ weeks	5	6	11	18	72	100
NLF	13	11	24	2	74	100
Total	32	27	59	4	37	100

Note: a) Average of data from the 12 Labour Force Surveys in 1991.
b) NLF is not in labour force.
c) Unemployment durations only for men looking for full-time work.

Source: ABS, 1991, unpublished data from Labour Force Surveys.

summarising this effect is to note that the employment rate of wives of unemployed men is 37 percentage points lower than that of wives of employed men. The employment rate of wives whose husbands have just become unemployed, however, is only 25 percentage points lower. Hence characteristics appear to be responsible for two thirds of the employment rate difference (25/37). The same conclusion applies if attention is restricted to full-time employment.

Indeed, this should be seen as a minimum estimate of the effect of characteristics on average outcomes. This is because some part of the drop in employment rates between wives with newly unemployed husbands and all wives with unemployed husbands may be due to the fact that men with better employment prospects leave unemployment first - and their wives may be similarly more advantaged in the labour market. This issue is addressed further in Section 4.

However, whilst this result suggests that characteristics acquired prior to the spell of husband's unemployment are indeed very important in determining the labour market outcomes of married women, it is important to recognise the breadth of

characteristics that this includes. As noted above, factors such as education, region and age may be important, as may other unmeasured labour market characteristics common to husband and wife. Other factors including attitudes to employment, are considered further in Sections 8, 9 and 10.

Here it is important to note that experiences during previous spells of unemployment could conceivably be important influences on behaviour. In this case the clear distinction between the characteristics and experience hypotheses breaks down as the experience of unemployment in one period may then become a characteristic in a later period. For example, a woman may give up her job after her husband has been unemployed for a period of time because the income test means that the effort is not worth it. Her husband may then find another job, but she may take some time to return to work. Before she does, the husband may become unemployed again, and the family may be recorded in Table 3.5 as a couple with short-term unemployed husband and not working wife. To fully assess whether this sort of explanation is an empirically important explanation of the pattern shown in the table requires (at the least) more detailed data on flows into and out of unemployment than is currently available. However, it is most likely that this sort of effect would be only small. This is because evidence suggests that the direct effect of unemployment experience on wives employment is only relatively small (Section 4). This effect will be further attenuated by the duration of time between unemployment spells, so that unemployment flows will have to be very high indeed for this to be considered an important component of the lower entry employment rate observed in Table 3.5.

Finally, it is well known that employment rates for women vary significantly with age and presence of dependent children. It is therefore important to consider whether the relationships observed in Table 3.5 for all women, also apply women of different ages, and those with and without children present.

3.5 Disaggregation by Age and Presence of Dependent Children

Table 3.6 describes the labour force participation patterns for two age groups of married women, whilst Table 3.7 repeats this analysis for women with and without dependent children. Table 3.8 describes the situation of older and younger women without children separately. Approximate sample sizes are also included in the table so as to permit an evaluation of the likely significance of any employment rate differences.⁴

4 An approximate standard error of a proportion, p , is given by $s = \sqrt{p(1-p)/n}$ where n is the sample size. Two proportions, p_1 and p_2 , based on independent samples will be significantly different at the approximate five per cent level when $|(p_1 - p_2) / \sqrt{(s_1^2 + s_2^2)}| > 1.96$. This assumes that individual people only appear once in each table. Since the LFS employs an eight month rotating sample, this will not be the case for the larger groups. It is unlikely, however, that people will appear more than once in the short duration unemployment group.

Table 3.6: Wives' Labour Force Status by Husbands' Labour Force Status by Wives' Age: 1991^(a)

		Husband's Labour Force Status			
		Unemployed ^(b)		Employed	Total
		< 4 weeks	Any duration		
Percentages					
Wives aged 20-34					
Wife's Labour Force Status					
Employed					
Full time	23	14	35	33	
Part time	14	9	26	25	
Total	37	23	61	58	
Unemployed	15	19	4	5	
Not in Labour Force	48	58	35	37	
Total	100	100	100	100	
Approx. sample size	65	521	6257	6778	
Wives aged 35-59					
Wife's Labour Force Status					
Employed					
Full time	22	17	35	34	
Part time	23	16	33	32	
Total	44	33	67	66	
Unemployed	11	16	3	3	
Not in Labour Force	44	51	30	31	
Total	100	100	100	100	
Approx. sample size	60	521	9800	10321	

Note: a) Average of data from the 12 Labour Force Surveys in 1991.
b) Unemployment durations only for men looking for full-time work.

Source: ABS, 1991, unpublished data from Labour Force Surveys.

Though participation and employment patterns vary significantly with age and (particularly) with the presence of dependants, the same general patterns of difference between women with employed and unemployed husbands hold for all these sub-groups. The proportionate fall in employment for women with recently unemployed husbands appears to be somewhat greater for women with children (Table 3.7) but this could easily be an artifact of the small sample size. Similarly the smallest fall in employment is among young women without children, but this is based on only around 12 women.

Table 3.7: Wives' Labour Force Status by Husbands' Labour Force Status by Presence of Dependants 0-14: 1991^(a)

	Husband's Labour Force Status			
	Unemployed ^(b)		Employed	Total
	< 4 weeks	Any duration		
Percentages				
Wives without dependants				
Wife's Labour Force Status				
Employed				
Full time	35	24	49	47
Part time	17	12	25	24
Total	53	36	73	71
Unemployed	12	19	3	4
Not in Labour Force	35	44	24	25
Total	100	100	100	100
Approx. sample size	50	393	7134	7527
Wives with dependants				
Wife's Labour Force Status				
Employed				
Full time	13	10	24	23
Part time	19	13	35	33
Total	32	22	58	56
Unemployed	14	17	3	4
Not in Labour Force	54	61	38	40
Total	100	100	100	100
Approx. sample size	70	649	8922	9572
Note:	a) Average of data from the 12 Labour Force Surveys in 1991.			
	b) Unemployment durations only for men looking for full-time work.			
Source:	ABS, 1991, unpublished data from Labour Force Surveys.			

Table 3.8: Labour Force Status of Wives With No Dependants by Husbands' Labour Force Status by Wives' Age: 1991^(a)

	Husband's Labour Force Status			
	Unemployed ^(b)		Employed	Total
	< 4 weeks	Any duration		
Percentages				
Wives aged 20-34				
Wife's Labour Force Status				
Employed				
Full time	54	38	75	72
Part time	11	8	12	12
Total	65	47	87	85
Unemployed	16	31	4	5
Not in Labour Force	19	23	9	10
Total	100	100	100	100
Approx. sample size	19	117	1907	2025
Wives aged 35-39				
Wife's Labour Force Status				
Employed				
Full time	24	18	39	38
Part time	21	14	29	28
Total	46	32	68	66
Unemployed	10	15	2	3
Not in Labour Force	44	53	30	31
Total	100	100	100	100
Approx. sample size	31	275	5227	5503

Note: a) Average of data from the 12 Labour Force Surveys in 1991.
b) Unemployment durations only for men looking for full-time work.

Source: ABS, 1991, unpublished data from Labour Force Surveys.

4 Evidence from DSS Panel Data

4.1 Introduction

Whilst the analysis of ABS labour market data in the previous section suggests that the main reason for the lower employment rate of wives of unemployed men is that they have different characteristics from other wives, by no means all of the difference can be explained in this way. In particular, it was shown that the average employment rate of all wives of unemployed men is significantly below that of wives whose husbands have just entered unemployment. For the population used in that analysis, these two employment rates were 28 and 40 per cent respectively.

Logically, there are three possible reasons for this association between duration of husbands' unemployment and wives' labour force status. The first is simply that husbands' and wives' labour market characteristics tend to be associated in a non-causal fashion. Assortative mating may mean that husbands who are likely to have the longest duration of unemployment will also tend to have wives with lower skill and employment levels. This can be referred to as a **sorting or heterogeneity effect**.

Second, employment of the wife may influence the husbands' job search effort - for example if the wife is employed the husband may be more likely to withdraw from job search because of lesser income needs (or because they are not eligible for income support and hence not required to satisfy the work test). This is probably the least likely of the three possibilities.

Finally, there may be some direct effect of the husband's unemployment on the wife's employment. There are a number of potential explanations for this, and the two chief hypotheses were introduced in Section 2. First is the possibility that the high effective marginal tax rates associated with income tests lead to the wife deciding that (particularly part-time) employment is not worth it. This should be set against the tendency for the drop in household income associated with the husband's unemployment to **encourage** the wife to seek (or retain) employment. The second hypothesis is that perceptions of the different social roles of husbands and wives mean that many women decide (perhaps as the result of some implicit pressure from their husbands) that working is not appropriate for them whilst their husbands are unemployed.

The main goal of this chapter is to identify whether such a (net) direct effect exists and to provide some estimates of its likely magnitude. Whilst some evidence is also presented on the way in which such an effect differs between age and ethnic groups, a detailed consideration of the relative importance of the income test and social roles hypotheses must wait until Section 8.

Since not all the characteristics that might be relevant for the heterogeneity effect can be measured, the only way in which the direct effect can be isolated is by

following individual women over a period of time. For example, the heterogeneity effect can be controlled for by restricting attention to women whose husbands remain unemployed for two years. The degree of reduction in the employment rates of this sub-sample of women can then be used as an index of the direct influences between husbands unemployment duration and wives' employment. This will include both the effect of husband's unemployment on wives' employment and the reverse, but for reasons to be explained below, we think the former is most likely.

In this chapter, administrative data from the Department of Social Security (DSS) are used to follow the employment patterns of a sample of women whose husband started to receive unemployment benefit in mid-1991. These data, extracted specially for this project, provide a unique opportunity to follow such a sample over an extended period of time (two and a half years).

In comparing the results here with those obtained in the previous chapter, however, it is important to bear in mind the different scopes of the ABS and DSS data on unemployment. To be 'unemployed' as defined by the ABS essentially requires that the person be not working, be looking for work, and be ready and available for work. The recipients of unemployment allowances described in this chapter comprise men who were receiving Unemployment Benefit, Job Search Allowance, or Newstart Allowance. 'Unemployment allowance' is used here as a general term to describe these payments, and the recipients of these allowances are termed 'recipients'. The basic criteria for these allowances is that the person be not in a permanent work arrangement, have a low family income, and be available and looking for work.

Note that not all unemployed men receive unemployment allowances, and not all recipients are unemployed. Important reasons for these discrepancies include, inter alia, the income and assets tests on allowances, and the ability of recipients to undertake part-time or casual employment whilst looking for full-time work. In particular, the income test means that unemployed men who have full-time employed wives will usually not be eligible for unemployment allowances, and hence not included in the DSS data.

4.2 The Data

The data analysed here comprise DSS administrative records⁵ for a sample of married and de facto couples who meet the following criteria.

- The husband commenced receipt of Unemployment Benefit (UB) in the six weeks prior to 17 June, 1991, was aged 21 or over at that date and was still receiving UB, and was below age 65 as at 14 January 1994.

5 This data was supplied to the SPRC under the provisions of the *Social Security Act* (1991) and comprises anonymous records with no personal identifying information such as names or addresses. The SPRC is not permitted to release the data to any third party.

- The wife was aged 21 to 49 in June 1991 and did not qualify for a pension or benefit in her own right in the period June 1991 to January 1994.
- The couple did not have children aged under six in June 1991.
- The relationship remained intact until January 1994 (or until neither member was receiving any allowances).⁶

Couples with young children were excluded from the analysis, as it was expected that the mothers in these families would face particular employment barriers not common to the rest of the sample.

Starting in June 1991, administrative data describing the current situation of the couple was extracted at six monthly intervals up until January 1994. These data were only available when the husband was a current recipient at each of these dates or had been a recipient in the previous 13 weeks.⁷ Most of the analysis here is restricted to cases where the husband was a current recipient and receiving Unemployment Benefit (UB), Job Search Allowance (JSA) or Newstart Allowance (NSA). The latter two payments replaced Unemployment Benefit in July 1991.

The composition of the sample is described in Table 4.1. In all, around 6,700 men started UB in the six weeks prior to 17 June 1991 and were still receiving benefit on that date (and belonged to the population described above). The number of these receiving benefit halves over the next six months, and then halves again over the next two years. The numbers of cases cancelled reflects these high outflows.

Note, however, that the number of men **continuously** unemployed falls significantly faster. Thus only 13.8 of the initial sample received allowances in all of the six samples. Thus, of those men who were receiving an allowance two and half years later, almost half had been off benefit for one or more spells. (The six month interval between samples means that this is a minimum bound). These spells could comprise employment, transfers to other allowances or other reasons for exclusion from allowance receipt. The magnitude of these flows on and off unemployment allowances are likely to increase in the future with the expansion of labour market programs.

Some basic characteristics of the initial sample in June 1991 are described in Table 4.2. This table summarises some key demographic characteristics both for all families in the study, and for those families where the husband would go on to continuously receive unemployment allowances for the next two and a half years.

6 The proportion of couples which dissolved over this period is an interesting statistic in its own right. Of those men who were still on the benefit system in January 1994, 16 per cent were no longer living with the woman who had been their wife or de facto partner two and a half years earlier.

7 The June 1991 sample is restricted to those who were receiving UB on 17 June.

Table 4.1: DSS Panel: Sample Composition

Sample date	Number of current unemployment beneficiaries	Current as percentage of original	Number cancelled in previous 13 weeks ^(a)	Number continuously unemployed up to this date ^(b)	Continuously unemployed as percentage of original
17 June 1991	6726	100.0	not avail.	6726	100.0
15 January 1992	3420	50.8	1017	3420	50.8
3 July 1992	2692	40.0	862	2232	33.2
15 January 1993	2223	33.1	566	1556	23.1
15 July 1993	1894	28.2	571	1134	16.9
14 January 1994	1685	25.1	425	929	13.8

- Notes:**
- a) Includes cases who are current beneficiaries receiving sickness allowance and special benefit, as well as some cases who reapplied for benefit but were rejected.
 - b) That is, receiving unemployment allowances at this date and all of the preceding sample dates.

Source: DSS administrative data.

This table thus presents an interesting comparison of the differing initial characteristics of the short and long duration unemployed.

Those men who would go on to long duration unemployment were older than the average entrant, though only by a mean of two years. A slightly higher proportion of the former group had dependent children. A greater difference can be found in the proportion of each group with earned income. Both husbands and wives in the long duration sample had a lower likelihood of working than did those in the average family beginning allowance receipt.

Regional differences are also particularly marked, reflecting the varying state of the labour market across Australia. Over this period, living in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania increases the chances of going on to long-term allowance receipt, whilst the reverse is true for (particularly) Queensland, Western Australia and (surprisingly) South Australia.

Finally, country of birth is also associated with unemployment duration. Those born in Australia, other English speaking countries and the Americas were a smaller proportion of the long duration sample, whilst those born in Vietnam, the former Yugoslavia, and other countries increased their preponderance. Indeed, 38 per cent of the Vietnamese men who began Unemployment Benefit receipt at this time would continue to receive it for the next two and a half years (compared to 14 per cent for the whole sample).

Table 4.2: DSS Panel: Sample Characteristics in June 1991

	Initial sample	Where husband continuously unemployed for the next 2 ^{1/2} years
Number of families	6726	929
Mean age of husband	39.3	41.2
Mean age of wife	36.4	37.2
Percentage of husbands with earned income	13.2	8.9
Mean earned income of husband when >0 (\$/week)	186.2	183.6
Percentage of wives with earned income	22.2	10.8
Mean earned income of wife when >0 (\$/week)	153.7	135.9
Mean unearned income of family (\$/week)	5.4	4.5
Percentage with dependent children	53.7	56.0
Mean number of children (when present)	1.9	2.0
Mean age of youngest child (when present)	9.7	9.6
State (administrative) percentage%		
NSW	29.4	37.9
Vic	23.4	30.4
Qld	21.6	10.9
WA	13.5	8.3
SA	8.2	7.4
Tas	3.8	5.2
Country of birth of husband, percentage ^(a)		
Australia	63.3	59.1
Former Yugoslavia	2.1	3.9
Vietnam	1.7	4.7
English speaking and Oceania	16.4	10.2
Other Europe	9.6	10.5
Other Africa, Middle East and South Asia	2.8	6.6
Other East and South East Asia	2.2	2.5
Other Americas	1.3	1.2

Notes: a) Percentages add to less than 100 because of exclusion of small number of cases where birthplace could not be identified.

Source: DSS administrative data.

Table 4.2 shows that, in the initial sample, 13.2 per cent of husbands had some earned income in the fortnight recording period. Of those with some income, the mean was \$186 per week. A higher proportion of wives, 22.2 per cent had earned income, and though their mean was somewhat lower at \$154 per week, this higher participation rate meant that their overall contribution to the household's earned income was almost 40 per cent higher than that of their husbands. On average, the families had around \$5 per week in unearned income.

Of the 22.2 per cent of wives who had earned income, 21.1 per cent had incomes that were below \$700 per fortnight. Assuming that those with higher incomes were working full time, the percentage can be compared with Table 3.5, where 18 per cent

of the wives of men unemployed for under four weeks were working part time. Given the standard error associated with the latter estimate (about 3.5 percentage points), the different age range, the exclusion of women with young children from the DSS data, and the different definitions of part-time work, this comparison is quite close.

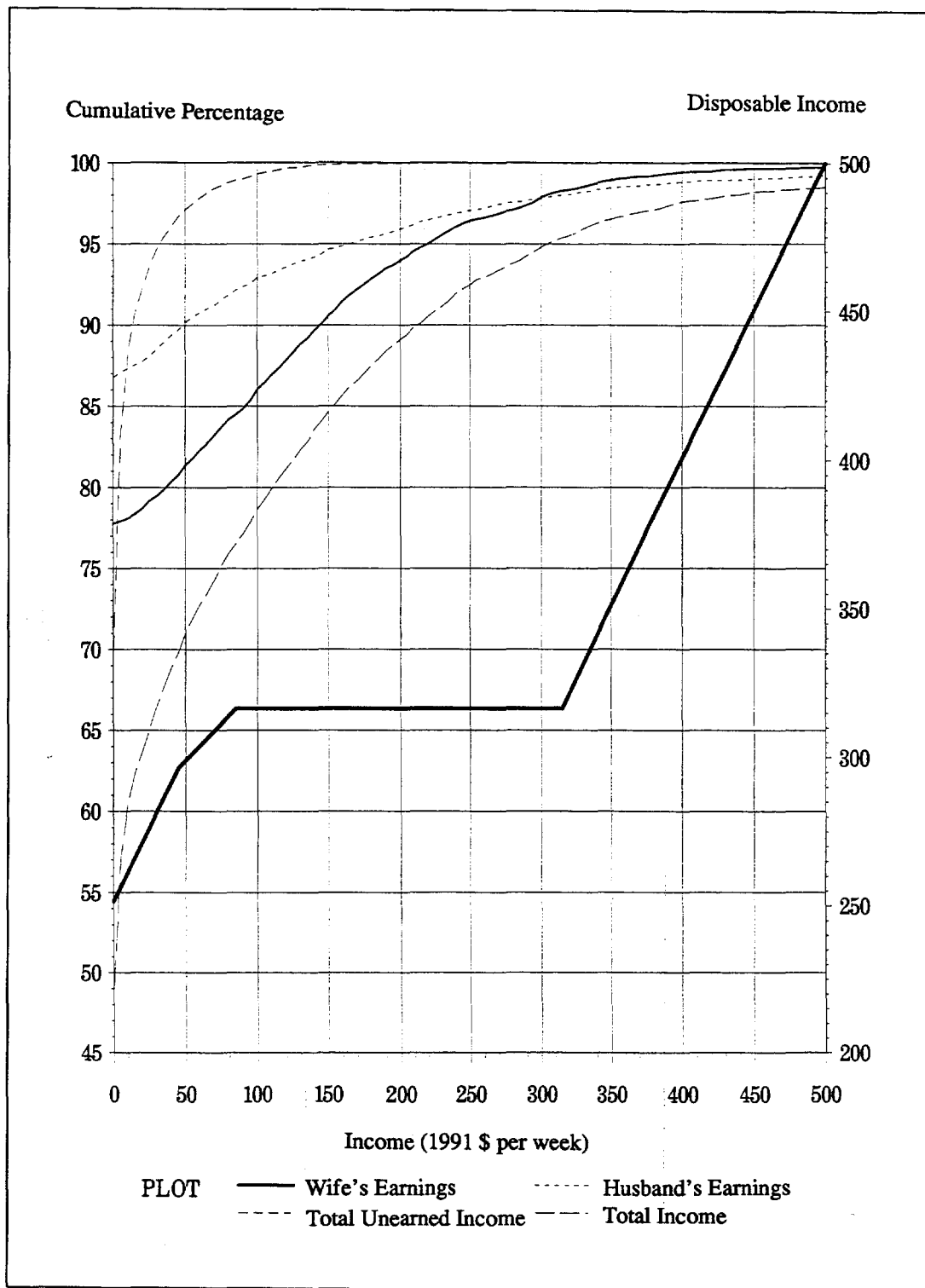
More detail on these income patterns and their relationship to the Social Security income test (of June 1991) is shown in Figure 4.1. Though both incomes and the income test are measured in on a fortnightly basis, for ease of interpretation all estimates here are presented in weekly amounts. The heavy line in this figure shows how disposable income (measured on the right-hand axis) varies with different levels of family earnings. As drawn, this assumes one person receives the earnings, there are no children, and no rent assistance is payable. For simplicity, income tax is ignored. Once private income reaches \$85 per week, benefit is withdrawn dollar for dollar until it reaches zero. The slope of the disposable income curve is thus a measure of the effective marginal tax rate (EMTR) facing recipients at different points in the income distribution. A horizontal curve implies a 100 per cent EMTR, whilst a 45° line implies a zero rate (when the axes are in the same scale). Where there are children or rent assistance, the horizontal segment of the curve extends further to the right.

The other curves in Figure 4.1 present the cumulative income distribution of different family income components. The cumulative distribution shows the percentage of families that have income below the amount shown on the bottom axis. Where the curves join the vertical axis thus indicates the proportion of families with any income from each of the sources described. Where there are many families with a particular income level, the cumulative distribution is steeper, and where there are no families, the curve is horizontal. Thus if families are heavily influenced by the income test, then their income distribution curves will show a similar pattern to the disposable income curve.

Of the four distribution curves in Figure 4.1, only the curve for unearned income shows a strong tendency to follow the disposable income curve, with only four per cent of families having unearned incomes above the free area. This in turn is partly reflected in the curve for total income, where the curve is somewhat steeper below the 100 per cent threshold. In respect of earnings, however, wives' earnings show no great tendency to be clustered below the 100 per cent threshold with the slope (and hence the density) only starting to decline at around \$200 per week. Though the income test is based primarily on total rather than earned income, combinations of income from different sources are unlikely to explain the general loose association between the income test and recorded incomes.

There are several possible explanations for this loose association. First, because benefit is not reduced by earnings below \$45 per week, DSS staff are unlikely to enforce the recording of such earnings. Hence there may be more people with earnings below the free area threshold than are recorded in these statistics. Second,

Figure 4.1: DSS Panel: Initial Distribution of Income Components



people may consider the income test important, but may have little control over the number of hours they work each week. If this is the case we might expect a pattern such as shown in Figure 4.1, but still find that the income test has an impact upon longer-term decisions about whether to continue in part-time or casual jobs. This possibility is considered further below. Finally, the income test may not have much influence on preferred earnings - either because people do not understand it, or because they are making their decisions on the basis of longer term prospects. If the latter is the case, people might continue in a part-time job that leads to very little increase in income in the hope that it might lead to a higher income job in the future.⁸

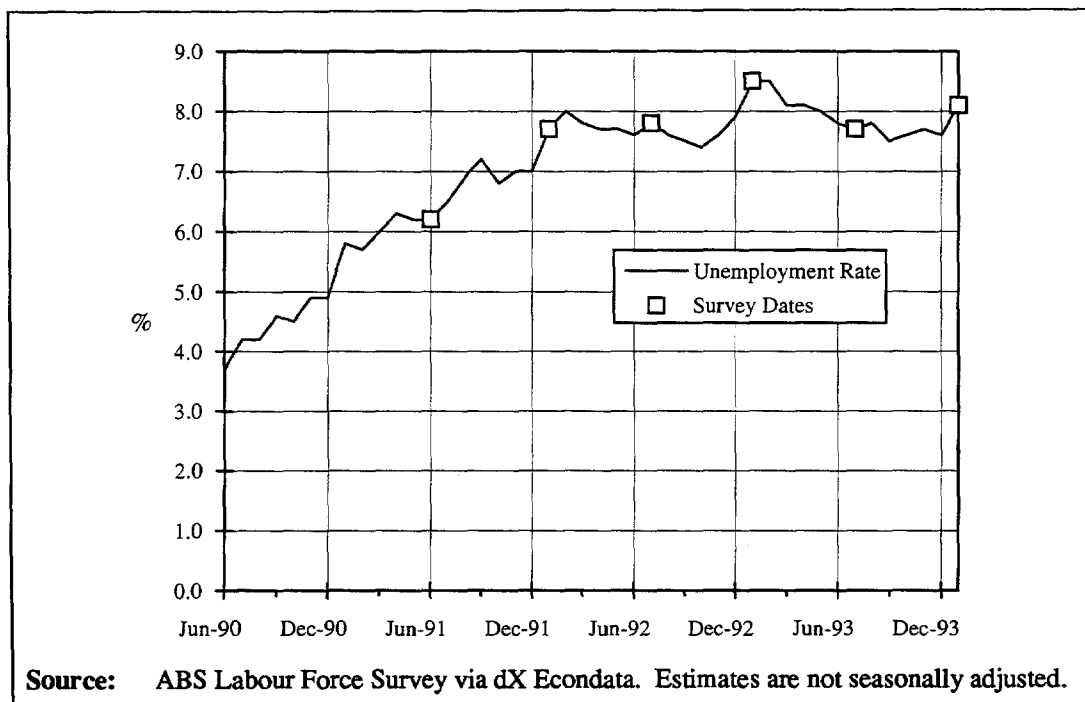
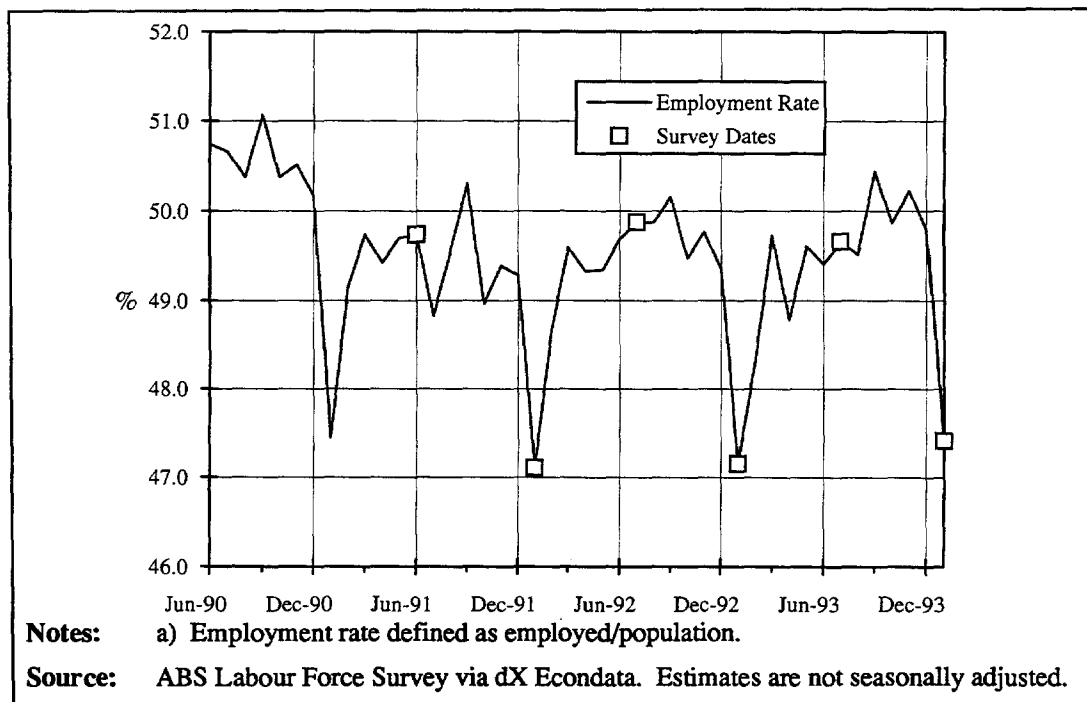
4.3 The Labour Market Environment

In general, the fact that almost 14 per cent of the initial sample continued to need income support for at least two and half years after starting on benefit is a reflection of the period in which the sample was selected. During 1991, unemployment was rising steeply as Australia entered the deepest recession since the second world war (Figure 4.2). Unemployment continued to rise after the men in this sample began to receive benefit, peaking at 8.5 per cent in January 1993. Over the last three surveys, the unemployment rate fell slightly, but was still above eight per cent in January 1994.

What do these economic changes imply for the employment opportunities for the wives of these men? Unfortunately there is no direct information available on the way in which demand for their labour changed over this period. Such job vacancy data as do exist are not sufficiently disaggregated by industry or occupation as to permit identification of demand trends for 'women's labour', and are not disaggregated by full/part-time status. One approach is to examine female employment rates as an indicator of changing demand levels for female labour. These are better than unemployment rates as the distinction between non-participation and unemployment is often indistinct for women.

Employment rates for married women are shown in Figure 4.3. Two interesting features are evident in this figure. First is the extremely high seasonal variability in employment. Every January, two to three per cent of the population of married women withdraw from the labour market. This is presumably due to childcare responsibilities, though seasonal close-downs of some industries employing casual female labour may play a small part. The second interesting feature is the relative constancy in employment rates from 1991 onwards (ignoring seasonal fluctuations). This reflects a combination of a slight rise in unemployment in conjunction with a rise in the participation rate. For married women, the big rise in the unemployment rate was over by April 1991.

8 It should also be recognised that the income data recorded here is **declared** income only. However the non-declaration of some income should produce a closer concordance with the income test, rather than the weak association found here.

Figure 4.2: Married Male Unemployment Rate: 1990 to 1994**Figure 4.3: Married Female Employment Rate^(a): 1990 to 1994**

Whilst the employment rate is only a proxy for labour demand, in the absence of evidence to the contrary this constancy does suggest that the surveys here can be used to examine trends in married women's employment rates independently of general labour demand effects. However the seasonal pattern identified above may be important, as three of the six surveys examined were undertaken in mid-January. This seasonal pattern should be borne in mind when considering the results presented below.

4.4 Reasons for Benefit Exit

Whilst the present study is not concerned with the reasons for exit from benefit *per se*, one reason for benefit exit is of particular relevance. How many men leave unemployment allowances because their wife gains employment (and so excludes them via the income test)? Unfortunately, because the departments' administrative systems are focused upon ensuring correct payment to those entitled to income support, the information available on reasons for benefit exit is incomplete. Table 4.3 summarises the information that is available from this dataset. It describes the reported reasons for benefit exit for those men whose unemployment allowance was cancelled in the 13 weeks prior to the extraction of the survey data from any of the surveys. No cases, however, are included from the initial survey. For just over half the sample, the reason reported is associated with the man returning to employment. For about a quarter of the sample, however, no effective reason is recorded as people are simply excluded from benefit because they fail to return a form or undertake a required activity. In many cases this would be because they have found a job.

The most important feature of this table, however, is the very low proportion of cases that are cancelled because of the wife's income (as might occur if the wife found a full-time job). In all, only 1.6 per cent of cases were cancelled for this reason. Even if this is considered in relation to husbands' employment alone, it comprises only 2.8 per cent of all employment related exits (i.e. $2.8 = 100 \times 1.6 / (1.6 + 56.3)$).⁹

An alternative source of information on reasons for exit is used to produce Table 4.4. This table is generated from the 1990 Income Distribution Survey conducted by the ABS. This survey collected information on incomes during the 1989/90 financial year, as well as incomes received at the time of the survey in September-December 1990. Table 4.4 looks at those couples where the husband had received Unemployment Benefit during the financial year but was not receiving benefit at the time of the survey. The table then shows the employment status of the couple at the time of the survey as a potential explanation for reasons for benefit exit.

9 Additional analysis considered the proportion of exits due to wives employment separately in each of the five surveys after the first. No significant difference between these surveys was found.

Table 4.3: DSS Panel: Reasons for Benefit Termination

Reason percentage with Earnings	Percentage
Husband's employment	56.3
Wife's income	1.6
Transfer to other pension or benefit	3.8
Other	13.5
Unknown/non-compliance	25.2
Number of cases	2947

Source: DSS administrative data.

Table 4.4: Apparent Reasons for Benefit Termination: Married Men Receiving Unemployment Benefit During 1989/90 and Not in September-December 1990

Reason	Percentage
Husband working full time	62.7
Wife working full time	1.8
Both working full time	12.4
Neither working full time	23.0
Total	100.0
Number of cases	217

Source: ABS, 1990 Income Distribution Survey, Unit Record File (unweighted data).

If we exclude those cases where neither husband or wife was working full time, then 16 per cent of cases had both husband and wife working full time, 81 per cent had only the husband working full time, and in just over two per cent of cases was the wife and not the husband working full time. This pattern is similar to that found in earlier research using income survey data from the mid-1980s (Bradbury, Ross and Doyle, 1991). Unfortunately, for those cases where both husband and wife are working, we are unable to ascertain from this data which of them started work first. The most natural assumption to make however, is that the proportion of cases where the wife started work first is similar to the proportion of wives working in single worker families. If this is the case, then this data supports the conclusion above that wife's employment is only a very minor reason for exit from benefit. Hence we can conclude that the influence of wives' employment on husbands unemployment duration is probably only small. Any association between these two factors must

primarily be due to either heterogeneity or an effect of husband's status on the wife's employment.

4.5 Part-time and Casual Earnings Trends

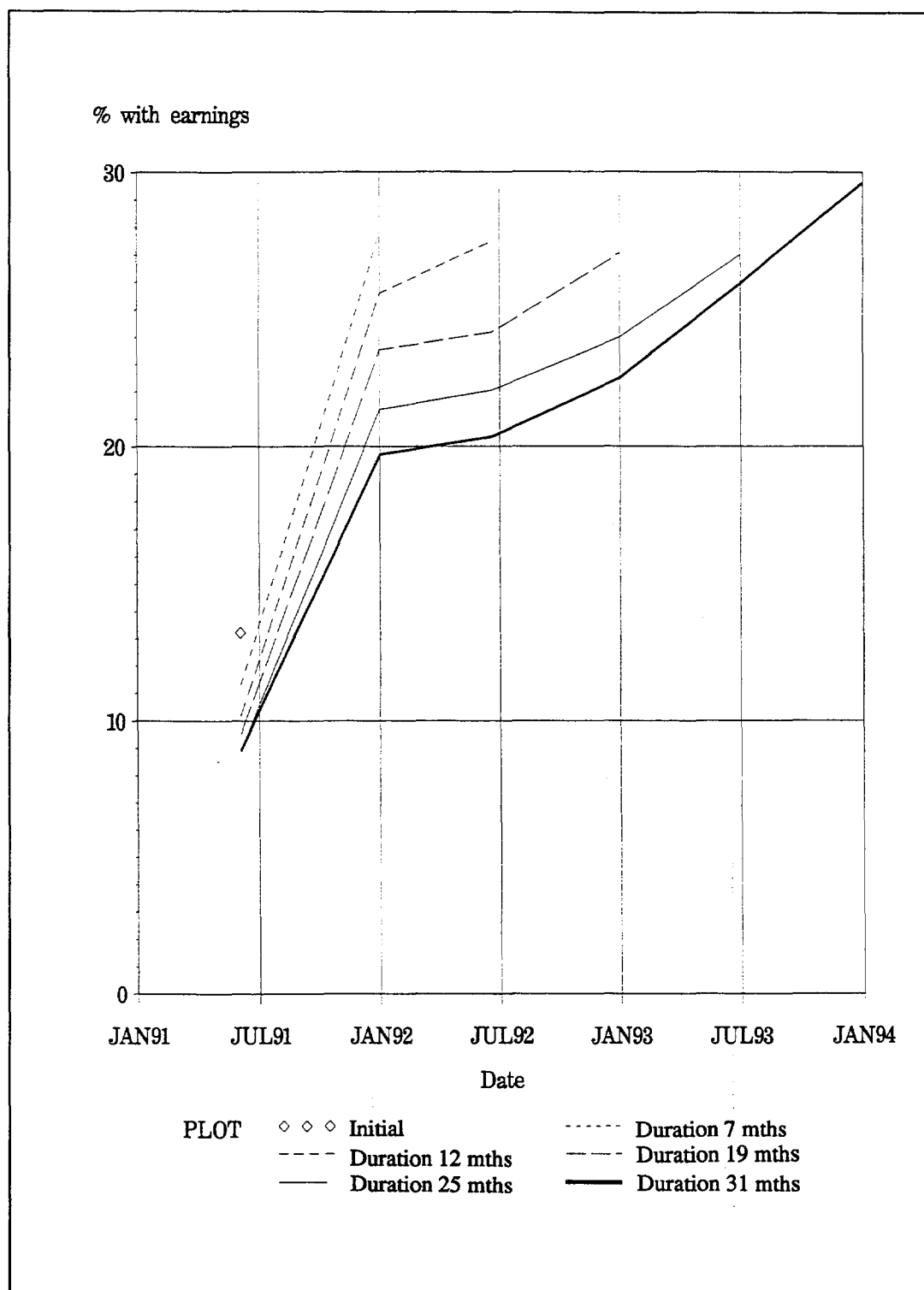
How do the part-time and casual earnings of unemployment recipients and their wives vary over the duration of their unemployment spell? In particular, if there is a direct effect of the experience of the husband's unemployment on the employment behaviour of the wife, we would expect to find her employment diminishing over time. This is partly because of the greater experience of the conditions associated with unemployment (such as the income test, and the new social roles in the family where the husband is working), but also because expectations of exit from unemployment would be likely to diminish with increased duration. Note that the question of interest here is whether the employment rates of individual women diminish over time, rather than on whether women whose husbands have been unemployed for a long period of time have lower employment rates. The latter pattern will also reflect the different characteristics of families with different durations of husbands' unemployment (the heterogeneity effect).

In order to put the observed changes in wives participation in context, it is interesting to begin by considering the casual work patterns of their husbands. Figure 4.4 shows the proportions of husbands with any earned income in each of the surveys, disaggregated by uncompleted duration. The diamond in the figure represents the initial casual employment rate (corresponding to the 13.2 per cent in Table 4.2). The 'Duration 7mths+' line describes the employment rates of those men who were unemployed for at least seven months - that is, receiving benefit in at least the first two surveys. The next line 'Duration 12mths+' comprises the sub-set of these men who were also receiving benefit at the time of the third survey. The remaining lines are defined in an analogous fashion.¹⁰ The final line in bold thus describes the employment rates of those men who were included in all the surveys (the left-hand end of this curve thus corresponds to the 8.9 per cent in Table 4.2).

There are several points of interest in this figure. The first is the association between final benefit duration and casual employment rates that was mentioned earlier. The longer the final duration the lower the employment at each point in time. Whether this reflects the fact that casual work assists exit from benefit, or simply the fact that men with higher skill levels find it easier both to work casually and to find a full-time job, cannot be ascertained from this data. The second point of interest is the significant increase in casual work over time. This occurs in a similar fashion for all duration groups, though it should be recalled that there is significant overlap in the populations for each curve.

The large increase in the first six months of unemployment reflects the fact that most men have lost a previous full-time job just before they went on to benefit. Over the

10 The number of cases underlying each of these curves is shown in Table 4.1.

Figure 4.4: DSS Panel: Husbands' Employment Rates by Uncompleted Duration and Date

next seven months they search for work and a substantial proportion find some casual employment. The fact that this employment continues to increase over the next two years is perhaps of more interest. Indeed, even for those men who were to remain on benefit for the whole of the two and a half year period, who we might regard as the least skilled of the sample, almost 30 per cent were receiving some casual wage income over a two week period in January 1994. Though there is a slight tendency for the average wage of those working to decline over time, this is not sufficient to offset the increase in employment shown in Figure 4.4.¹¹

The picture for unearned incomes is quite the opposite (Figure 4.5). Declining savings means that all duration categories experience a more or less uniform decrease in income over the two and a half years. The increase in incomes for the two longer duration categories in January 1992 may reflect some older workers receiving delayed lump sum redundancy payments. Apart from this, and the higher incomes of those who leave benefit after the first survey, mean unearned incomes are much the same for each of the duration categories.

Whilst these results are of interest, the key question here is how wives' employment fares over time. This is shown in Figure 4.6. Again, the strong association between employment rates and the husband's final duration of unemployment is apparent. One hypothesis for this is that wives with casual work are more likely to find a full-time job, and so remove their family from allowances. But given the evidence in Section 4.4, this is unlikely to provide a significant part of the explanation. More likely is the associative mating/heterogeneity hypothesis — women with greater labour market skills tend to have husbands who are more likely to find a full-time job.¹²

The trends over time, however, are quite different to those for husband's employment. In general, they are quite flat, with points generally lying within a two percentage point band for each duration category. The mean wage of women working, does however fall over time, so that the overall mean wages received does drop significantly for each group after January 1992 (Figure 4.7).

Though the change in wives' employment is much smaller than for husbands, there are some clear trends. For all duration groups, employment increases up to January

11 This decline in wage rate is most marked for the longest duration category, where the mean weekly wage of those working declines from \$198 in June 1991 to \$153 in January 1994. However the increase in employment shown in Figure 4.4 more than offsets this, so that the overall mean wage of husbands increases from \$18 to \$45 per week over this period.

12 Another explanation could be based on the fact that the benefit replacement rate is reduced if the wife is working part-time. This is because the benefit is decreased through the income test on the wife's income. This may provide a greater incentive for the husband to look for full time work. An alternative implication of part-time work however, could be that the additional income from the wife's work would produce an income effect reducing the husband's job search effort. We would speculate that neither of these effects are likely to be particularly important.

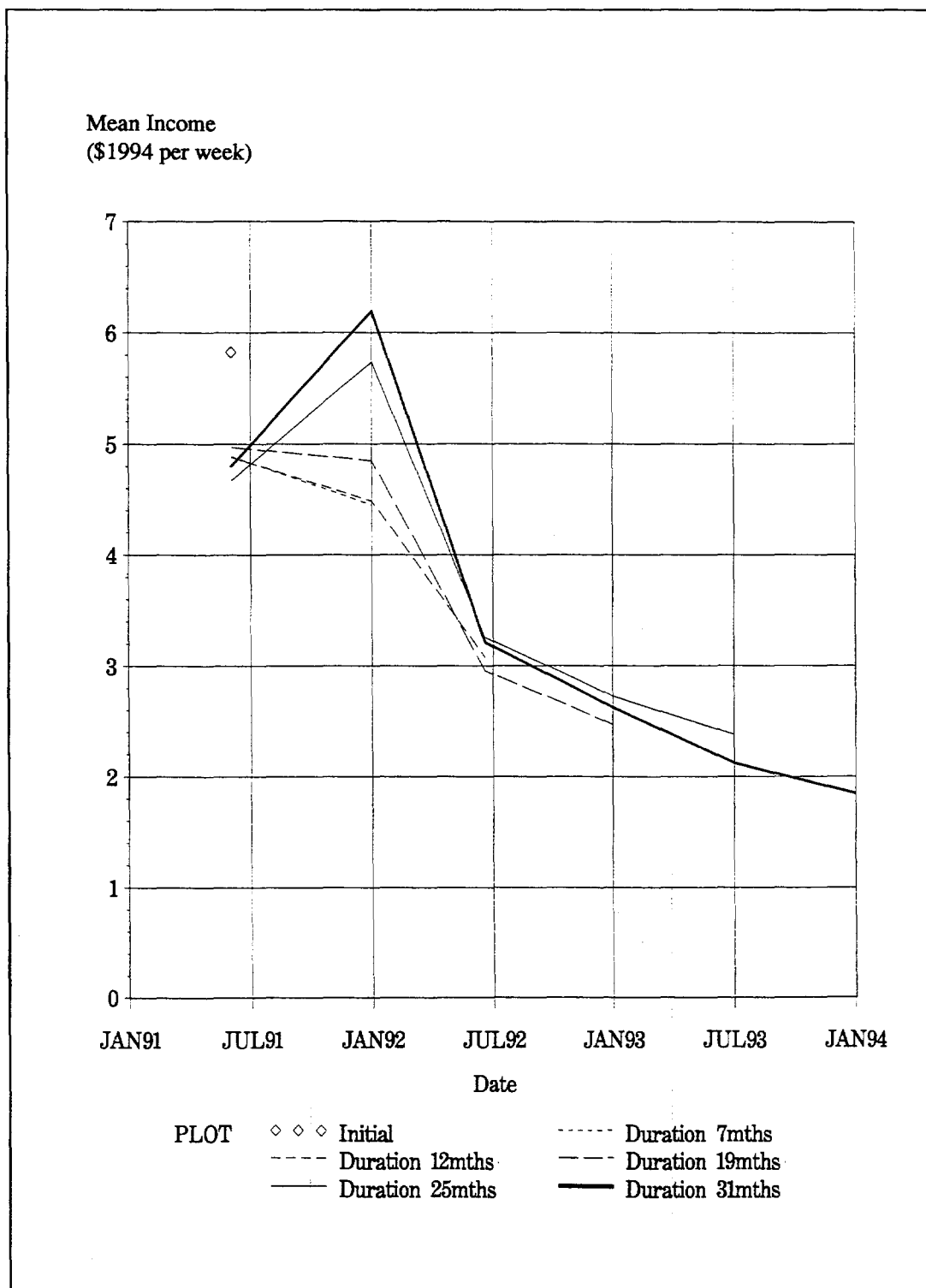
Figure 4.5: DSS Panel: Mean Unearned Incomes by Uncompleted Duration and Date


Figure 4.6: DSS Panel: Wives' Employment Rates by Uncompleted Duration and Date

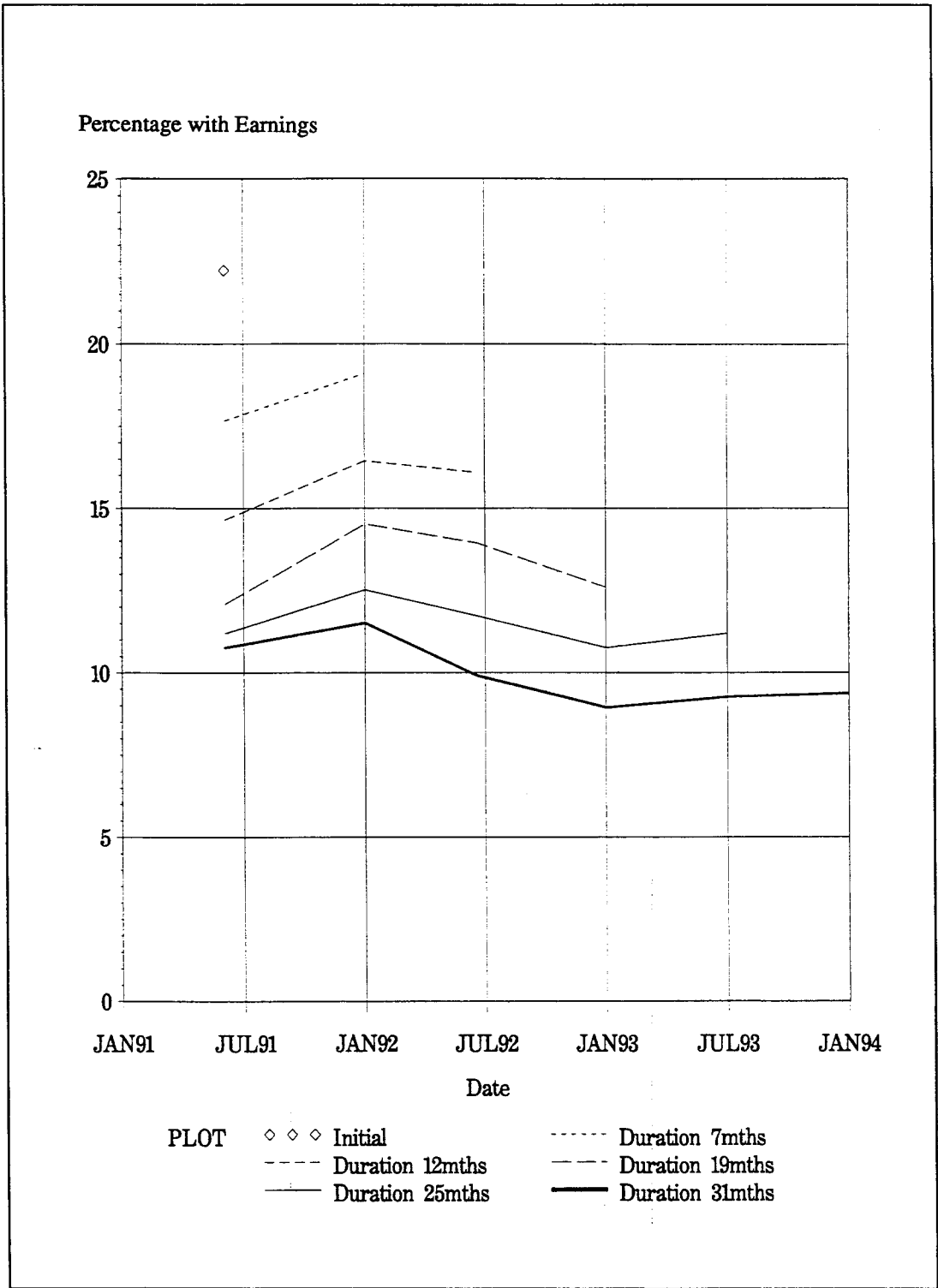
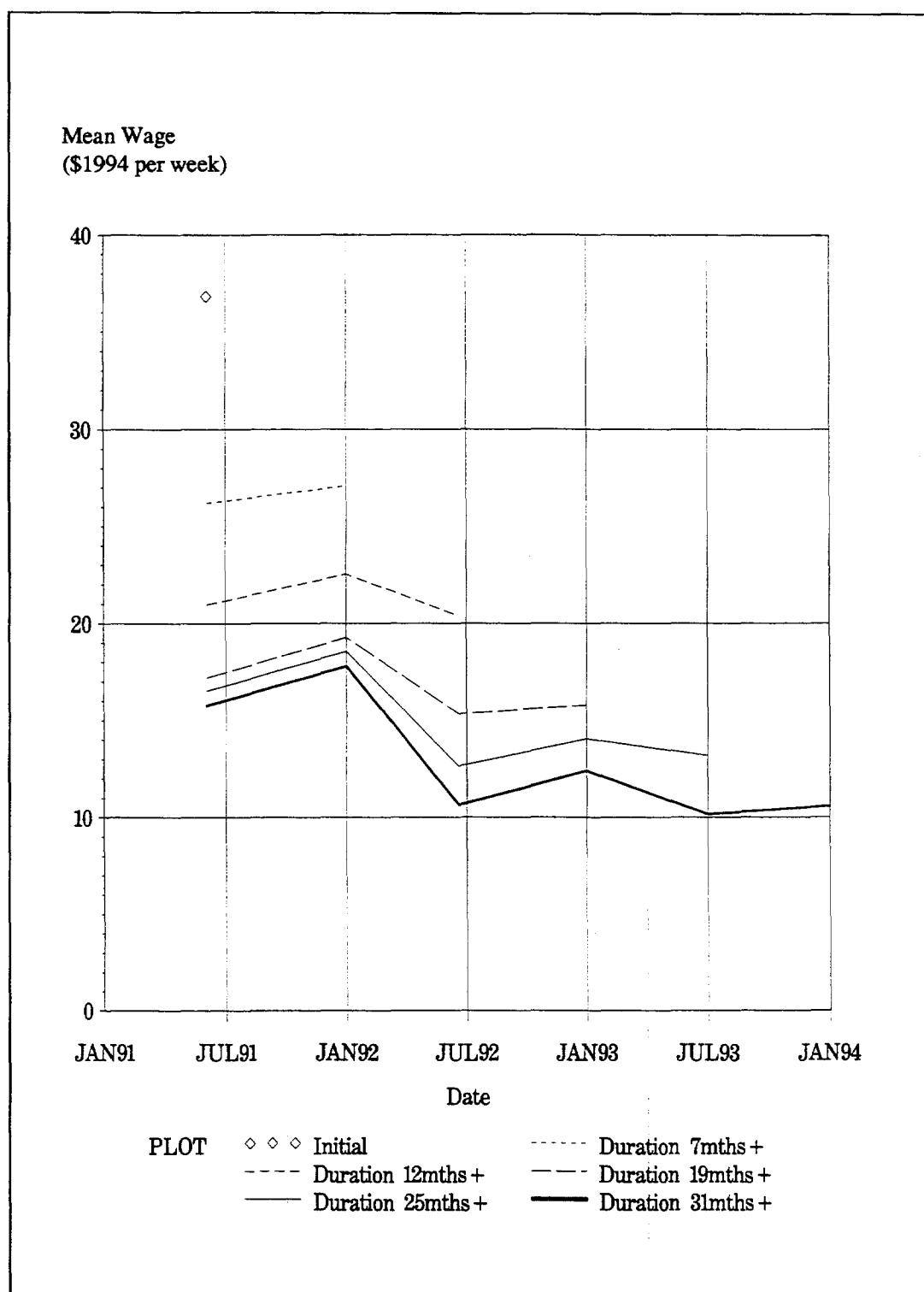


Figure 4.7: DSS Panel: Mean Wages of Wives by Uncompleted Duration and Date

1992, and then decreases, more or less steadily, thereafter. In part the common pattern between these curves reflects the overlapping samples. But Figure 4.8 shows that the initial increase in employment, at least, applies to each duration group separately. That is, the figure shows cases distinguished by the **completed** benefit duration of the husband. For example, the shortest line in Figure 4.6 shows the employment rates for women whose husband stayed on benefit for at least seven months. This thus includes all the women who are included in the longer curves. The corresponding line in Figure 4.8, on the other hand, shows the employment rates for women whose husband was on benefit for at least seven months but less than 12 months.

One possible explanation for the pattern of employment patterns observed, is that it reflects an initial increase in wives' employment due to the income effect of the husband losing his job, but that over time some wives decide that this work is not worth it (for financial or other reasons). Some further information on the initial effect can be gained by noting that the initial sample as at June 1991 contains men whose duration of allowance receipt ranges from a few days to six weeks. Overall, 22.2 per cent of wives in the initial sample had some earned income (see Table 4.2 or Figure 4.6). Of those whose husband had been receiving benefit for under three weeks, 19.4 per cent were working, whilst of those whose husband had been on benefit for three to six weeks, 23.8 per cent were working. It is hard to see how this increase could be a result of sample attrition over the six week period, as one might expect families with wives' earnings to be the first to exit from benefit, and so produce the opposite pattern. It could conceivably reflect some recording phenomenon if for some reason recipients tended to not record their wives' income when they first signed on. In the absence of such an explanation, it seems that the best summary description of wives' employment rates is that they increase significantly over the first eight months of husbands' unemployment, and then slowly fall to a similar level to where they started.¹³

Since the income test is one potential explanation for such a fall in participation, it is of interest to revisit the relationship between wives' incomes and the income test introduced in Figure 4.1. Do the income patterns of wives more closely mirror the income test after they have had greater experience of it? Alternately, do the well spread distributions of wives' income found in Figure 4.1 simply reflect short-term variations in earnings, with longer-term earnings more directly influenced by the income test? Figure 4.9 can be used to address both these questions.

This figure shows the earned income distribution for women whose husbands were receiving unemployment allowances in all six of the surveys. Three distributions are shown using the same representation as in Figure 4.1. The first, shown with short dashes, is the earnings distribution of these women in June 1991. The second,

13 The precise timing of the switch is obviously limited by the use of six month intervals between samples. In principle the analysis reported here could be re-done using quarterly samples (this was the original plan for the study design).

Figure 4.8: DSS Panel: Wives' Employment Rates by Completed Duration and Date

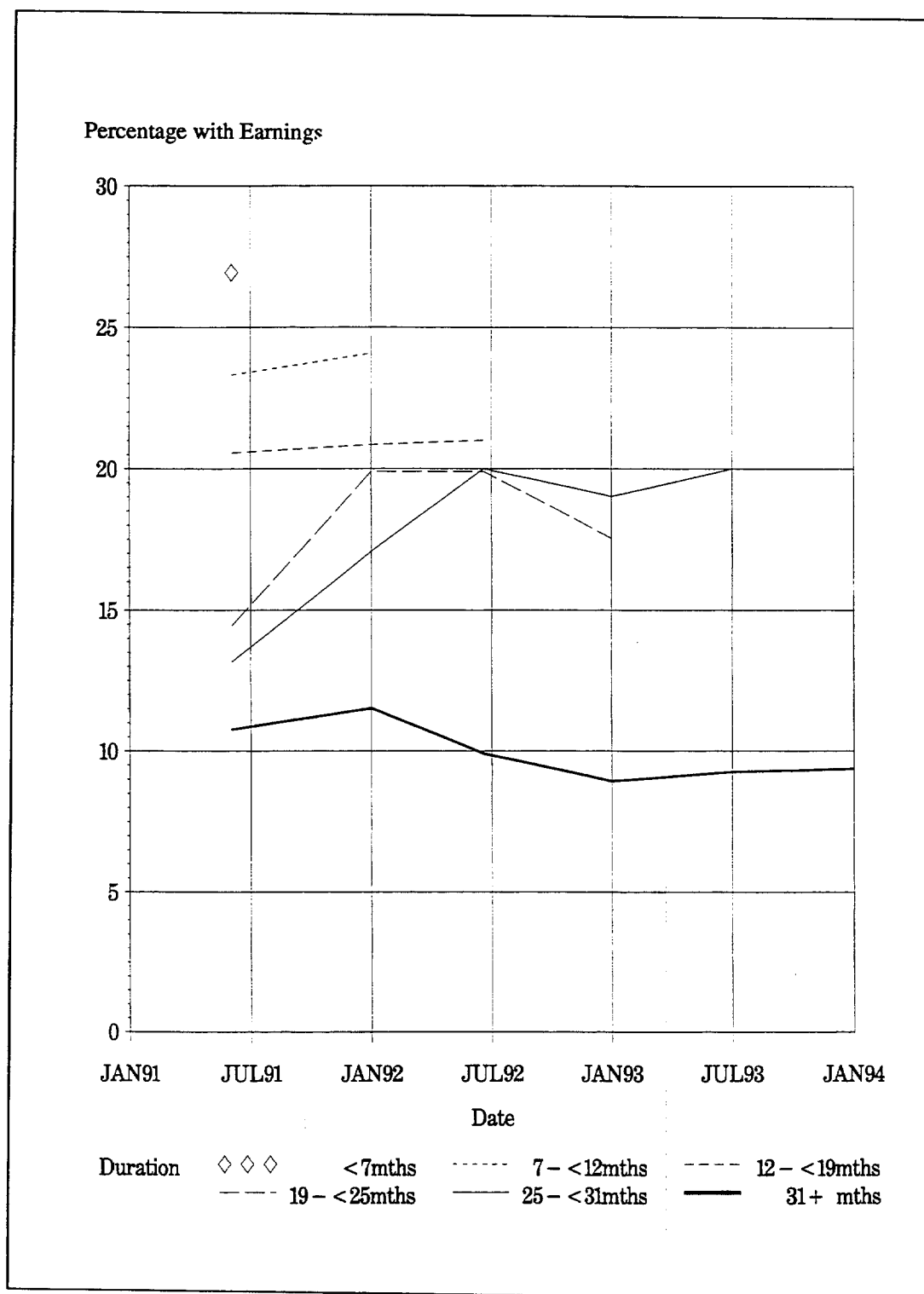
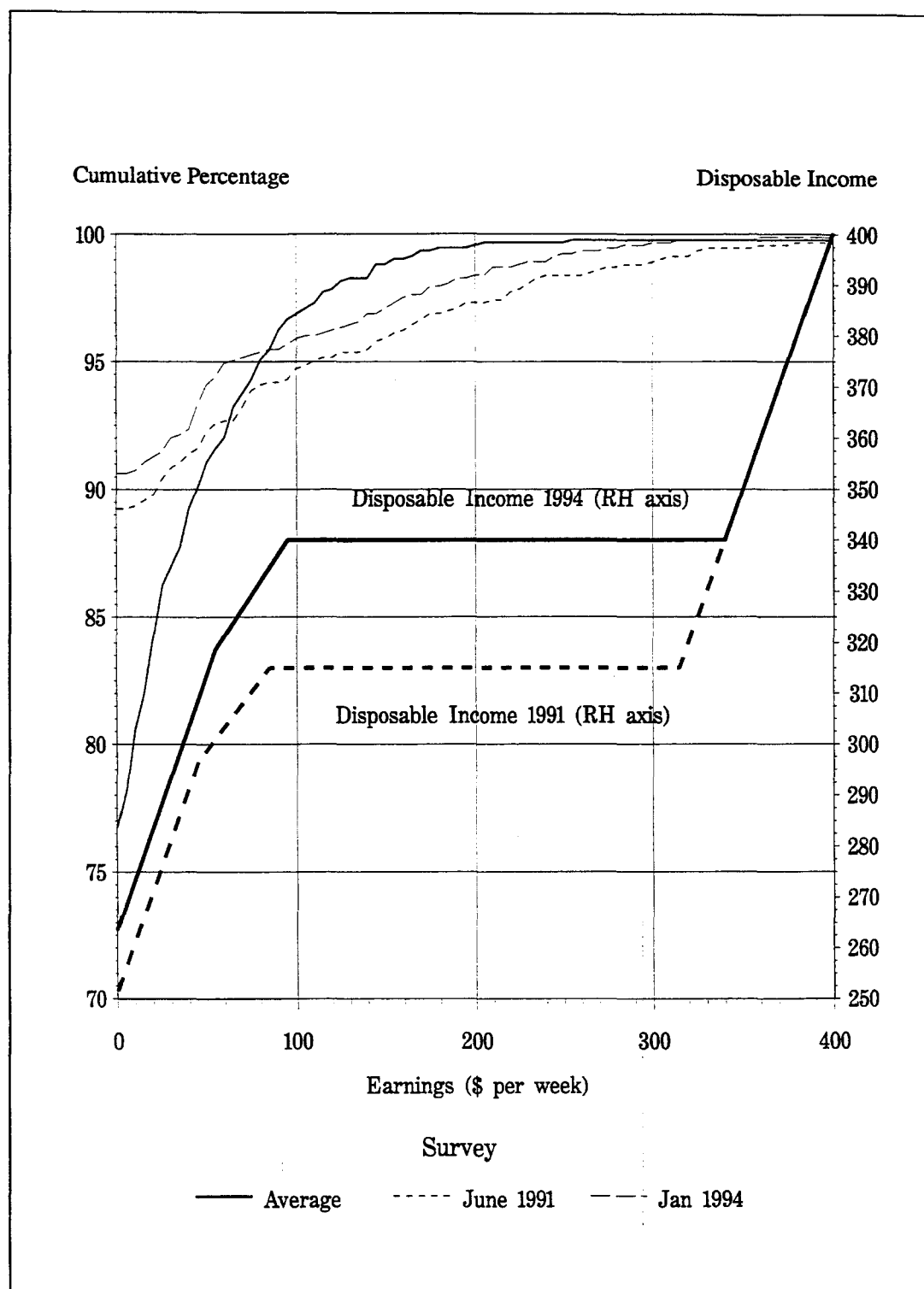


Figure 4.9: DSS Panel: Initial, Average and Final Earnings of Women in All Samples



shown with long dashes is the distribution in January 1994, whilst the third is the distribution of average earnings over the six surveys. To calculate the latter, the earned income of the women in each of the six surveys is added together and then divided by six. As in Figure 4.1 the pattern of disposable incomes implied by the income test is also shown - both for 1991 and for 1994. None of the curves are adjusted for inflation. (Inflation adjusted curves have been calculated. They are very little different to those shown).

In June 1991, some 89 per cent of these women did not have any earned income in the previous fortnight. As Table 4.2 showed, this proportion is significantly higher than for all women whose husbands had just begun to receive benefit. By January 1994, this proportion had increased slightly, to 91 per cent. (See Figures 4.6 or 4.8 for the pattern in the intervening years). Inspecting the curves for 1991 and 1994 there does appear to be some tendency for women in the latter year to be more concentrated around the top of the free area - but overall the distribution is not that different from that in 1991. The distribution of average incomes is, however, very different. Only 73 per cent of women had no earnings at all in any of the six surveys. More interesting perhaps is the very low proportion of women who had earnings averaging over \$100 (just above the beginning of the 100 per cent withdrawal rate). In 1991, for instance, 11 per cent of these women had incomes over \$100 (actually \$200 a fortnight). But only six and a half per cent had incomes that averaged this high, despite the much higher proportion who had some wage income over the six surveys.

There is no simple straightforward interpretation of this pattern. On the one hand it could be interpreted as women trying to work so as to have incomes just below the threshold, but sometimes having to have higher or lower incomes than they might prefer. On the other it could simply reflect many women being quite happy to work in the 100 per cent withdrawal range, but not being always able to find casual or part-time work.

4.6 Variations Across Different Groups

It would be surprising if wives employment rates did not differ across age, fertility and ethnic groups. However, in considering these variations it is important to bear in mind the population under consideration in this chapter. Because attention is restricted to the wives of men who are receiving unemployment allowances, women who are working full time are generally not included. This is because their income is sufficient to preclude benefit under the income test. Hence the employment described here, and elsewhere in this chapter, is primarily part time (plus a small amount of casual full-time employment).

Table 4.5 shows how these employment rates vary across age, fertility and ethnic groups in June 1991, both for the whole sample and for those whose husbands would go on to receive benefit for the next two and a half years. Women without dependants have the lowest employment rate, and women with older children are most likely to be employed. The lower employment rates for women without children is consistent with ABS Labour Force data, and follows from the fact that

Table 4.5: DSS Panel: Wives' Employment Rates in June 1991

	Initial sample	Where husband continuously unemployed for the next 2 ^{1/2} years
With no dependent children	19.5	9.3
With dependent children	24.6	11.9
Youngest aged 6-12	23.7	11.6
Youngest aged 13+	28.3	13.5
Wife aged < 35	19.4	9.0
Wife aged 35+	24.2	11.8
Country of birth of husband		
Australia	24.3	10.7
Former Yugoslavia	18.4	11.1
Vietnam	6.1	2.3
English speaking and Oceania	22.4	13.7
Other Europe	19.5	14.3
Other Africa, Middle East and South Asia	6.9	8.2
Other East and South East Asia	11.5	4.3
Other Americas	18.2	18.2
All	22.2	10.8

Source: DSS administrative data.

such women are generally more likely to work full time if they work at all (see Table 3.5). The same explanation is probably responsible for the higher employment rates of older women. In terms of country of birth, those women with husbands born in Australia have the highest employment rate, and from Vietnam the lowest. Those from English speaking and European countries tend to have high employment, and those from Africa, Middle East and South Asia a relatively low rate. Unlike the situation for age and family composition, these effectively part-time employment rate patterns probably reflect the overall employment rate for different ethnic groups in the community.

In general, whilst wives in the long duration sample have lower employment rates, there is no statistically significant interaction between the sample and the effect of the demographic effects. One possible exception is country of birth. If we single out those women with husbands born in Australia, then being in the long duration sample reduces wives' employment by a greater extent than it does for those born overseas. This interaction is almost significant at the five per cent level. This might suggest that the wives of foreign born husbands who become long-term unemployed are more typical of the wives of all foreign born husbands who enter unemployment.

Whilst these patterns are of some interest in themselves, the main question here is whether the general changes in participation rates over time shown above are mirrored in different demographic sub-groups. Because of the correlations between

different demographic factors and the several different sub-sample, a multivariate approach is the best way to address this question. Unfortunately there is no simple statistical procedure available that permits the full testing of such hypotheses. An exploratory analysis of wives' employment rates has been conducted using the repeated measures categorical data analysis method available through the SAS Catmod procedure. This weighted least squares method, however, requires significant sample sizes in each cell of the cross-classification of the explanatory variables, and so interactions between age and presence of children with country of birth could not be tested. This analysis suggests nonetheless, that for the most part there are no significant employment rate interactions between the demographic variables shown above, the current duration of husbands' unemployment and the ultimate duration of husbands' unemployment. Two possible exceptions occur for those women whose husbands were receiving benefit for the full two and a half years. For these women there were statistically significant differences in their employment rates over time for different age and country of birth categories. These relationships are illustrated in Figures 4.10 and 4.11.

Figure 4.10 shows the employment rates for those women aged under 35, and for those aged 35 or more (slightly more than half the sample are in the latter group). The differences over time are quite striking, and statistically significant at the 1.5 per cent level. The trend over time for these two age groups is roughly opposite. For older women, employment first increases and then decreases to end up at a lower point than initially. For younger women, employment decreases for the first year of their husbands unemployment but then increases, so that by January 1994, more of them were working than in June 1991.

The pattern for selected birthplace groups is shown in Figure 4.11. For women with Australian born husbands, employment probabilities remain essentially constant for the whole of the sample period. For those with husbands born in other English speaking countries or Oceania, and those born in other European or American countries, employment first increases and then decreases. The decrease after the first six months is particularly strong for the English speaking group. For women born in East and South East Asia, employment slightly increases.¹⁴

When the data shown in Figure 4.11 is broken down by age group (not shown), the pattern for the English speaking and European and American groups is broadly similar to that shown in Figure 4.11. The pattern for the Australian born reflects that for the two different age groups shown in Figure 4.10. It is difficult to produce simple but convincing explanations for the patterns shown in either of these figures. The results do seem to illustrate, however, that there is a good deal of heterogeneity in the response of married women to their husbands' unemployment.

14 The statistical procedure used is unable to directly test the five groups shown in Figure 4.11. A test of significant differences in the trend over time for women in three country of birth groups (Australia; English speaking and Oceania and Europe and America; and Africa, the Middle East and Asia) is significant at the two per cent level. Similarly, it is not possible to fit a model that simultaneously fits both age and country of birth to control for the interaction between these two variables. Future SPRC research may explore alternative statistical procedures to better permit the analysis of this type of data.

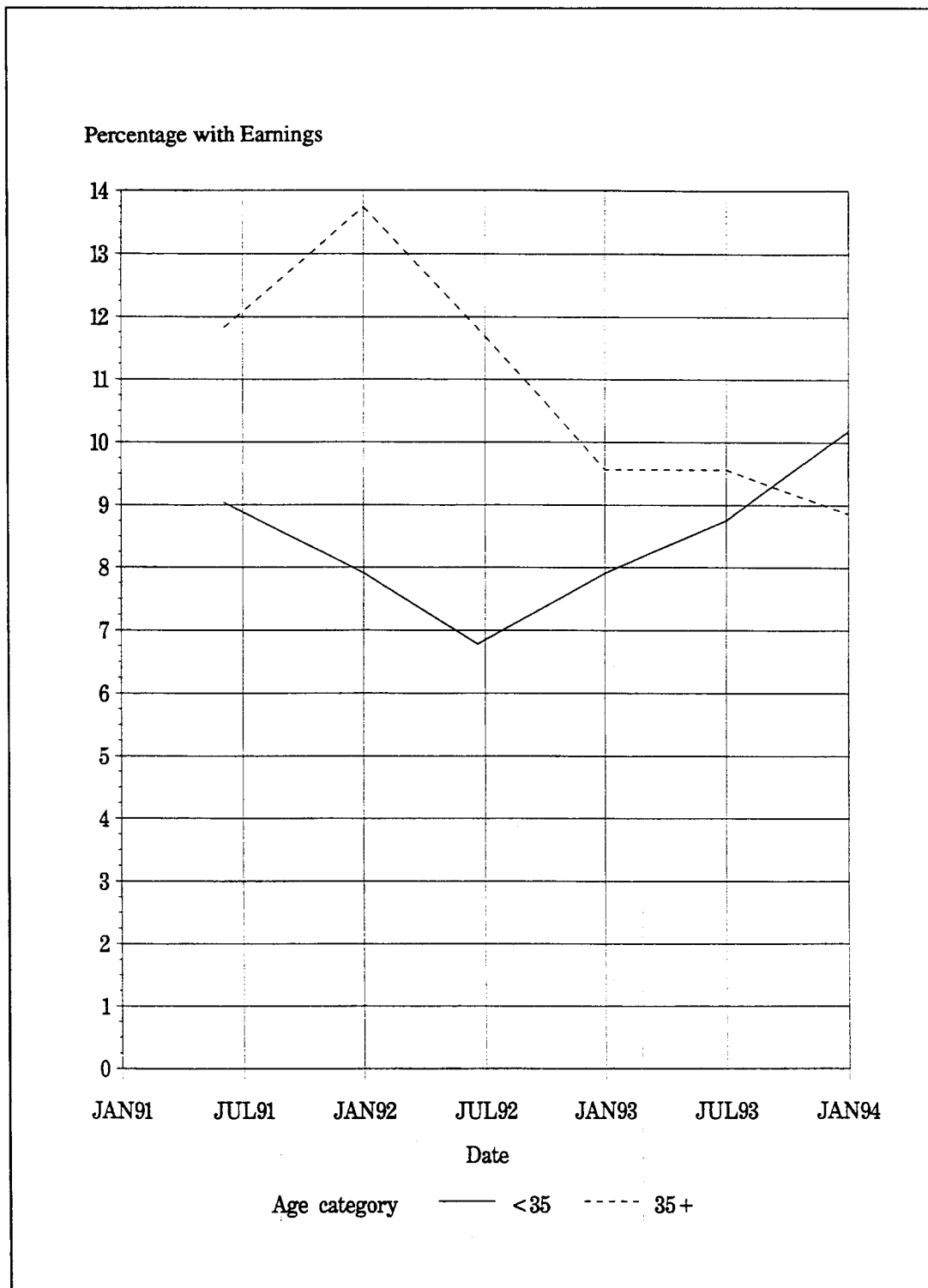
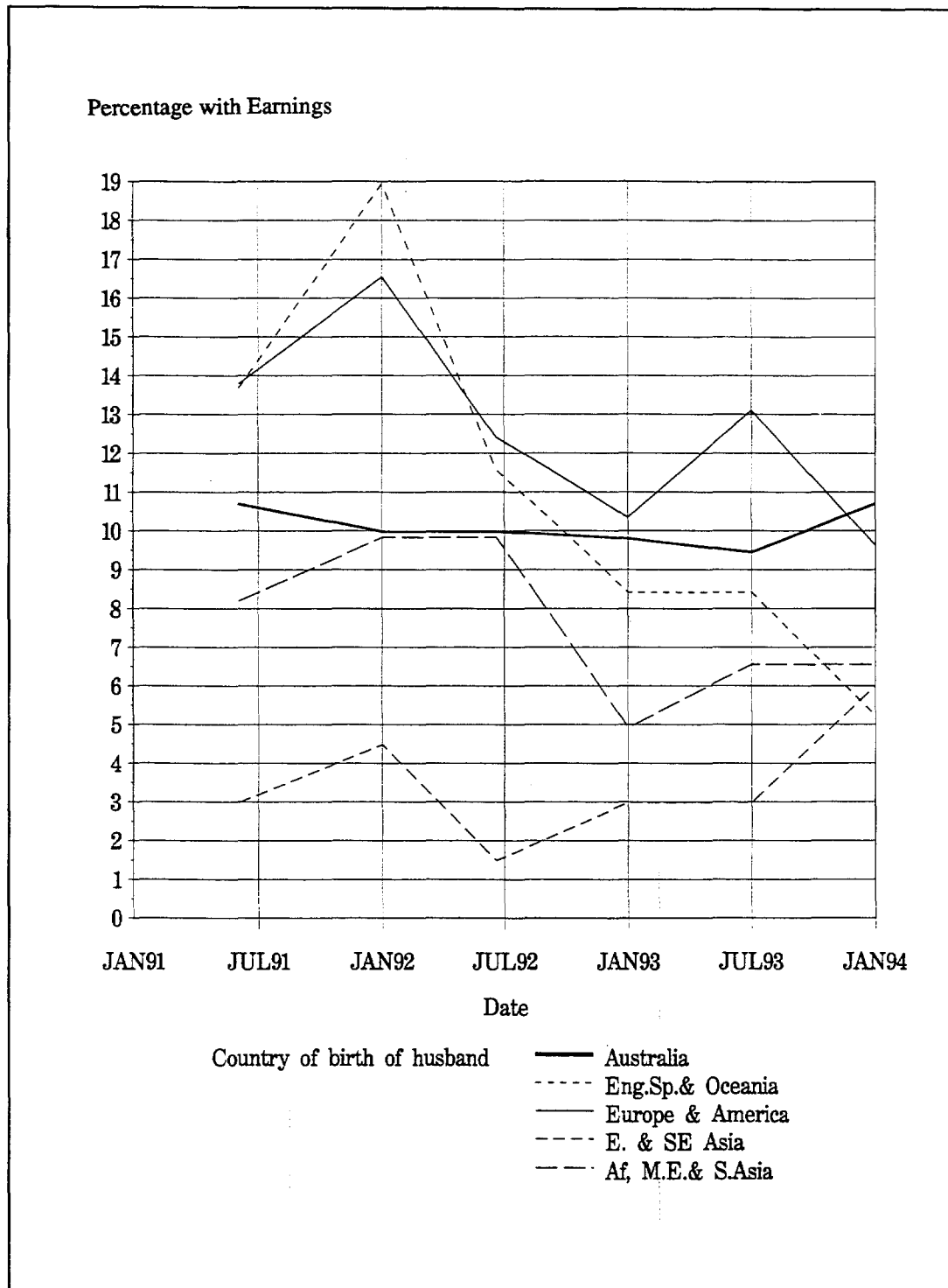
Figure 4.10: DSS Panel: Employment Rate of Women in All Samples by Date and Age

Figure 4.11: DSS Panel: Employment Rate of Women in All Samples by Date and Husbands' Country of Birth



5 The Interview Survey

The third data source used for this study was information collected in an interview survey with the partners of men who were, or who recently had been, receiving unemployment allowances. The intention of the survey was to be exploratory, to investigate the range of factors which condition these women's labour force decisions. As such, the survey was designed to cover women in different circumstances, rather than to provide a statistically representative sample. Details of the sample design are set out below, followed by a description of the questionnaire schedule, an account of the fieldwork, and a description of the final sample. As will be seen, the final sample differed in some important respects from the sample design.

5.1 Sample Design

The sample was designed to include three groups of women:

- women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowance (either JSA or NSA) and where the women have no paid work;
- women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowance (either JSA or NSA) and where the women do have some paid work; and
- women whose partners were recently receiving unemployment allowance (either JSA or NSA), but where the payment has been cancelled due to the woman finding full-time employment.

The three groups thus cover women with different degrees of labour force activity: no paid work, some paid work, and full-time paid work sufficient to remove the couple's entitlement to unemployment allowance. While the first two of these groups cover the 'target' group for the study, women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowances, the third group is more appropriately described as a 'comparison' group. Given a policy concern to encourage the labour force participation and employment of women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowance, comparison of the situations of the women in these three groups is of obvious interest. What is different about the women with no paid work, those with paid work but not so much that the entitlement to unemployment allowance disappears, and those with sufficient paid work to remove the entitlement?

The sample design sought to eliminate or reduce the play in the sample of two established factors which condition the labour force activity of married women: namely, the presence of very young children and the woman's age. Women with children of pre-school age, specified here as those under six years old, were to be excluded. We already know that the presence of young children is a particularly important factor in married women's labour force decisions. Their exclusion avoids

the need to control for the presence of pre-school-age children and should enhance the visibility of other factors which could otherwise be masked by child-care considerations. Similarly, the sample was restricted to women under 50 years old to avoid the complications of early retirement: either voluntary or involuntary.

Two further restrictions were placed on the sample. Firstly, inclusion was restricted to couples where both were aged at least 21 years old. This was done to exclude couples subject to the special work-testing arrangements for young couples receiving unemployment allowances (see Section 2). Secondly, the sample was restricted to women living in metropolitan Sydney. The study would have faced higher costs with fieldwork outside Sydney and, given a fixed budget, this means there would be a trade-off between the geographic spread of the sample and sample size. Sample size was seen as the more important consideration. In summary, within the three groups identified above, the sample design defined women in scope to be those who:

- were aged 21-49 years;
- had a partner aged 21 years or over;
- did not have a child under six years old; and
- lived in metropolitan Sydney.

As was noted above, the survey had an exploratory nature and, accordingly, the required sample size did not depend on considerations of statistical significance. Instead, the sample size needed to be large enough to capture a range of circumstances and to go some way beyond yielding what would be described as anecdotal evidence. In general, the larger the sample, the more likely would be the survey to reveal the range of factors at work and to point to relationships worthy of further research. On the other hand, marginal increases in the sample size in this type of survey will increase the burden of data analysis, given a certain amount of qualitative information, while making no impression on the statistical significance, or rather the lack of statistical significance of the results.

It was felt that final sample sizes of around 20 to 30 women in each of the three groups would be reasonable. In comparison, McLaughlin, Millar and Cooke (1989) had a total sample of 55 couples in four different labour market areas, with and without children, and with varying degrees of women's labour force attachment. Their sampling method would have provided a maximum sample size of 80 couples which 'would have been rather a large sample for this type of qualitative study' (McLaughlin, Millar and Cooke, 1989: 29). Jordan et al. (1992) used a sample of 36 couples: 18 where both partners were employed, ten where neither was employed, and eight where just one partner was employed.

Ideally, we would have liked to have interviewed both the women and their partners. While the primary interest is in the circumstances of the women, we are particularly interested in the role of their partners' circumstances and attitudes in the women's labour force decisions. Budgetary considerations and a view that not a lot would be lost by not talking to male partners, however, lead to the decision to only interview the women. In most cases, they should be able to provide information about their partners' situations and, as regards attitudes, it is arguably women's impressions of

partners' attitudes which are important rather than the attitudes as stated or otherwise revealed by partners.

5.2 The Interview Schedule

Face to face interviews were conducted using an interview schedule which drew on the experiences of other related research: notably, the surveys described by Donnelly and McClelland (1988), McLaughlin, Millar and Cooke (1989) and Jordan et al. (1992). Questions also drew on previous survey research undertaken by the Centre for the Department of Social Security and on a number of other sources.

Broadly, the interviews sought information on numerous facets of the current circumstances of women and their partners, their recent and longer-term labour force histories, and their attitudes towards work. The interview schedule was divided into the following sections:

- A - Personal Details
- B - Current Job/Training Details
- C - Current Income Support
- D - Other Income
- E - Additional Household Details
- F - Labour Market/Income Support History
- G - Job Search
- H - Health Costs and Concessions
- I - Perceptions of Transfer System
- J - Costs of Working (Financial)
- K - Costs of Working (Caring/Household Work)
- L - Income Sharing
- M - Woman's Attitudes Towards Paid Work
- N - Partner's Attitudes Towards Respondent's Work
- O - General Attitudes

The first section, Section A, included questions on matters such as: age, country of birth, education, children, illness and disability, and caring responsibilities. In general, the questions were asked with regard to both the woman and her partner. Section B sought details about any current employment or training for the woman and her partner, including information on voluntary work. In Sections C and D questions were mainly asked about both partners' incomes from social security and other sources, and about the duration of receipt of unemployment allowance. Section E, on additional household details, included questions about other household members, housing, transport and, if applicable, children's schooling. In particular, the women were asked whether their partners' period of unemployment had affected in any way these aspects of their circumstances.

Section F was devoted to collecting information about the women's labour force histories. Firstly, a broad picture of their activities since leaving school was obtained by asking a sequence of questions about periods since leaving school defined

according to whether the woman was mainly working full time, working part time, unemployed or not in the labour force. Depending on the nature of the activity, further questions were asked about each period; for example, women were asked the main reason for any periods out of the labour force. Questions were also asked about what their partner, if any, was doing at the time and about their main sources of income. Responses were recorded in a table with the level of detail sought indicated by an instruction to interviewers to spend no more than ten minutes on this aspect of the questionnaire if possible. The questions in Section F then turned to the more recent past: specifically, the period since the woman's partner began receiving unemployment allowance. The women were asked whether they changed their work situation in any way in response to their partner's unemployment.

Questions about the women's job search, if they were looking for some or more work, were included in Section G, including details such as: type of work, hours and wages being sought, reservation wages, methods of job search and reasons for difficulty finding work. Similar questions were asked about their partners' job search experience. When women were not looking for some or more work, questions were asked about the reasons why not.

In order to gain an impression of the value to couples of the fringe benefits attached to receipt of unemployment allowances, women were asked in Section H about their and their partners' use of concession cards. Attention to social security provisions continued with the questions in Section I which sought to ascertain women's familiarity with, and knowledge of, aspects of social security payments of possible relevance to their labour force decisions: details about the income test, for example.

As an element likely to enter into women's decisions about paid work, those women with paid work were asked about associated costs, such as transport costs, in Section J. Another potential barrier to paid employment, the responsibility for unpaid household work, was examined in Section K where questions sought to elicit the division of household labour in terms of a number of regular household tasks. Another perspective on household roles was investigated in Section L with questions about the division of responsibility for the management and control of household finances. These questions drew on the models of the management of household finances used by Edwards (1984).

The three remaining sections of the questionnaire included questions about attitudes and values. Section M included a number of questions about the woman's attitudes to paid work: whether it was important, should both she and her partner have paid work, if possible, and so on. Corresponding questions about her partner's attitudes to her having paid work were asked in Section N, and it is important to remember that the responses to these questions are the women's impressions of their partners' attitudes, and not partners' own responses. Section O then included attitudinal questions concerning married women's paid work in general, including the use of some questions adapted from the National Social Science Survey. Finally, women were asked for suggestions as to how the government might usefully provide further

assistance for women in their circumstances who might be looking for some or more paid work.

The questionnaire was designed for an interview duration of between one hour and one and a quarter hours. While this was longer than interviews conducted in previous research for the Department by the Centre, the time was needed in order to collect the range of information required including information on both the respondent and her partner, on labour force history, and responses to a number of qualitative questions. It was believed that an interview of this duration would not amount to an unacceptable response burden. The questionnaire was piloted in early November 1991, leading to some refinements and confirmation that the interview could comfortably be undertaken over 60-75 minutes. It also became evident during the pilot interviews, however, that it was not always going to be easy to conduct the interviews with the women alone and in the absence of their partners.

5.3 Sample Selection and Contact

The Procedure

The procedure for drawing the sample and contacting potential respondents followed the steps described below.

- Three sample subgroups were defined, as described in Section 5.1, in consultation between the Social Policy Research Centre and the Social Policy Division of the Department. One element of the consultation was ensuring that cases with the required characteristics could be identified from the Department's administrative data.
 - With an anticipated response rate of 65-70 per cent, and an aim to have 20-25 cases in each sample group, 45 potential respondents in each of the sample groups were identified by the Systems Division of the Department by random selection within the populations defined by the sample design criteria. This required merging of administrative data from the Allowances and Family Payments masterfiles. Because of the likely difficulty, and associated time and cost, of conducting the interview through an interpreter, cases where the Department's On-Line Enquiry System indicated that an interpreter would be needed were excluded. In addition to the three groups of 45 potential respondents, a reserve group of 50 respondents was selected as a contingency in the event that response rates proved lower than anticipated.
 - For reasons of confidentiality and ethics, the initial contact with respondents was made by the Department and through their partners; that is through the males who were or who recently had been recipients of unemployment allowances. Letters were sent by the Department to these men asking them to pass on the information to their female partners. The letter explained the survey and the role of the SPRC, advised that the SPRC would follow up with another letter, stressed the confidentiality of information provided and gave a 008
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telephone number to ring if the woman did not wish to participate. During the course of the fieldwork, it became evident that, in a small number of cases, men did not pass on the letter to their partners and the woman first heard about the survey when the SPRC contacted her. We do not know how many men rang and declined to participate on their partner's behalf but without their partner's knowledge, though we have no reason to believe there were more than a few such cases, if any.

- If, after receiving the letter from DSS, the woman (or her partner) had not indicated that she did not wish to participate, the SPRC then contacted her by letter. This letter further outlined the study, suggested a date and time for an interview, and asked her to contact us if she wished to change the date or time of the interview or if she would need an interpreter. The letter also included another invitation for the woman to decline to participate in the survey.
- If the woman had not taken this second opportunity to decline to participate, an interviewer called at the arranged time when there was, of course, a further opportunity to decline to participate.

Problems with Sample Selection

Somewhere in the early steps of this process, there were some hiccoughs in translating the sample design into the drawn samples of potential respondents. These have important implications for the nature of the study. There were three areas of divergence between the sample design and the actual samples drawn.

- Only women in couples receiving Family Payments were included in the samples for the two groups of women whose partners were currently receiving unemployment allowance. They all had dependent children, albeit all over the age of five years.
- Women with children under the age of six years were not excluded from the third group of women whose partners' entitlement to unemployment allowance had recently been cancelled.
- The women in the third group were not exclusively cases where their partners' unemployment allowances had been cancelled because of the women's earnings. Other reasons for cancellation were included.

The first of these divergences was not detected until interviewing was well underway. Interviewers were not in a position to detect the error, and it was only picked up through a chance scanning of the payments data which accompanied the contact details provided by the Department. An attempt was made to include new cases without dependent children but, given the limited resources available for interviewing, it was too late to have any real effect on this unplanned characteristic of the first two sample groups.

Those women in the third group with children under six years old should have been picked up at an early stage in the interview, recognised as out-of-scope and the interview terminated. The reason they were not recognised can only be put down to interviewers having a misplaced confidence in the procedures of sample selection. The extent of the third divergence, regarding the reason why unemployment allowance was cancelled, was not identified until the data analysis stage, although interviewers had noticed individual cases where the woman's account of why her partner had stopped receiving unemployment allowance differed from what was expected.

Obviously, this experience serves as a lesson in the need for careful checking at each step in the process of sample selection and contact. The immediate effect, however, was to alter the nature of the sample used in this aspect of the study. The significance of these problems with sample selection for the nature of the sample is set out in Section 5.6 after description of the fieldwork and survey response.

5.4 Fieldwork

Interviewing was undertaken in November and December 1993 by three experienced interviewers from the Centre. In all but one case, the interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes; the exception being a case where the interview was conducted over the telephone. While it was made clear that only the woman's presence was needed to complete the interview, and efforts were made to avoid the presence of third parties, partners were present in many cases. Their involvement in the interviews varied from that of silent observer, who might possibly influence the woman's responses, to taking an active role in responding to questions. Interviews were conducted through interpreters in 13 cases: formal interpreters in three cases, male partners in seven cases, daughters in two cases, and a friend of the respondent in one case. Only in some of the cases where interpreters were required did the length of the interview appear onerous to respondents.

Interviewers carried basic information on DSS payments, such as the leaflets setting out current rates of payment, in order to answer any basic enquiries made by respondents. At the close of the interview, a number of respondents expressed an interest in the results of the research and were promised a copy of a summary of findings upon completion of the study.

5.5 Survey Response

In total, 151 women were contacted by the Department through their partners and invited to take part in the survey. Of these, 73 went on to be interviewed; a response rate of 49.0 per cent after taking account of cases which were found to be out-of-scope (Table 5.1). Table 5.1 shows that the anticipated response rate of 65-70 per cent was not achieved and that, in order to achieve the required number of completed interviews in total, it did prove necessary to approach women in addition to those selected in the three initial groups of 45 potential respondents.

Table 5.1: Survey Response

Sample group	Number of cases						Response rate ^(a) (%)
	Approached	Out-of-scope	Non-contact	Part contact	Refusal	Responded	
1. Receiving unemployment allowance: woman has no earnings	56	0	5	6	14	31	55.4
2. Receiving unemployment allowance: woman has some earnings	50	1	2	4	15	28	57.1
3. Unemployment allowance cancelled	45	1	12	9	9	14	31.8
Total	151	2	19	19	38	73	49.0

Note: a) Calculated as responding cases as a proportion of all cases approached with the exclusion of out-of-scope cases.

In about half of the 78 cases where women were not interviewed, the reason was their decision not to participate, with 38 refusals in all. Some of these refusals were in response to the initial letter from the Department, some in response to the subsequent letter from the SPRC, and some were encountered on the doorstep. When possible, the reasons for refusal were sought and the two reasons mentioned most frequently were lack of interest and lack of time. Lack of time was mentioned particularly by those women with paid work, though also by women without paid work but caring for children.

In two cases, interviews were not undertaken because the respondents were identified to be out-of-scope. As noted earlier, interviews were conducted in some cases where the respondent was out-of-scope but not recognised as such. In the remaining 38 cases, the reason for non-response was either that interviewers were unable to make direct contact with the woman or only partial contact was achieved. Interviewers were instructed to make three attempts to speak to each potential respondent before writing-off the case as 'non-contact'. Thus, if the woman was not home at the pre-arranged time, efforts were taken to make alternative arrangements by leaving a card, telephoning and calling back to the address. Even so, no direct contact was obtained with 19 of the women. The 19 cases of non-response through partial contact refer to situations such as where no mutually convenient time for an interview could be arranged, or where the woman was willing to take part but would

prefer not to because of language difficulties and it was agreed not to proceed with the interview.

Although the total number of women interviewed was as hoped for, relatively few interviews were completed with women in the third sample group: just 14 interviews compared to around 30 for each of the two other groups (Table 5.1). The response rate achieved for this third group was correspondingly low: 32 per cent, compared to around 55 per cent for the two other groups. The low response rate for women in this third group is attributable to the fact that most of the women were working full time. This made it impossible for interviews to be conducted during working hours and left the women with little time to spare at other times.

5.6 The Final Sample

The 73 completed interviews shown in Table 5.1 were supplemented with two of the pilot interviews, both cases of a woman with no earnings and partner receiving unemployment allowance, to give a total final sample of 75 cases. Furthermore, in three of the cases in the second sample group where women had earnings at the time when the sample was drawn, the women had no earnings at the time of the survey. These three cases were accordingly transferred to the first sample group. One of the couples in the third group, where unemployment allowance had been cancelled, was found to be receiving unemployment allowance again by the time of the interview. The resulting sample numbers, and the terminology used to refer to the three subgroups, are as follows:

Group 1 - No Earnings	36 cases
Group 2 - Some Earnings	25 cases
Group 3 - Cancelled	14 cases

Now, we return to the matter of the impact of the way in which the sample was drawn on the nature of these three groups, as compared to the characteristics specified in the sample design. While none of the women in Group 1 and Group 2 had children under six years old, all the women in Group 2 and all but six of those in Group 1 had dependent children: defined as children under 15 years old or full-time students aged 15-20 years. All of the 14 women in Group 3 had dependent children and in nine cases the youngest child was under six years old. In effect, the manner in which the sample was drawn transformed the survey into a survey of women in couples with dependent children. While the effective exclusion of women without dependent children was very disappointing, as they arguably constituted the group with the greatest potential to change their labour force behaviour, there was nothing, or at least very little, that could be done about it, as was explained earlier.

The effect of the manner in which the sample was drawn on the characteristics of the sample regarding children had a corresponding effect on the age structure of the sample. In Groups 1 and 2, the planned exclusion of women without children under six years old and the unplanned exclusion to a large extent of women without dependent children meant that most of these women were in their forties. In fact, 50

of the 61 women in Groups 1 and 2 were aged between 40 and 49 years. In contrast, with most of the women in Group 3 having children under six years old, most were in their thirties and, indeed, none were aged 40 years or over.

The capacity of Group 3 to perform the role of a comparison group was thus rendered highly questionable by the very different characteristics to the other two groups in terms of the women's ages and the ages of youngest children. As if not sufficiently compromised by now, the other element of the divergence from the sample design further diminishes its value as a comparison group. The element referred to is the reason for cancellation of unemployment allowance. Group 3 was designed to include couples where the entitlement to an unemployment allowance ceased because of the level of the female partner's earnings. Examination of the situations of the 14 women in Group 3, however, reveals a different picture. The entitlement to unemployment allowance ceased because of an increase in the male partner's earnings in nine cases, because of an increase in the female partner's earnings in three cases, and because of a simultaneous increase in both partners' earnings in two cases. The common characteristic across all 14 cases is that, at the time of cancellation, the woman had some earnings.

The definition of Group 3 is thus couples where the male partner had recently lost entitlement to an unemployment allowance because of the level of joint earnings, where at least part of joint earnings was the female partner's earnings. This is not the same as couples who have lost entitlement because of an increase in the female partner's earnings, and it is not what was intended. On top of the problem of the inclusion of women with children under six years old, and the low response rate achieved for this Group, serious consideration was given to discarding the Group 3 interviews. It was felt, though, that the survey participants deserved better and Group 3 was, accordingly, retained. It is not, however, a comparison group. Rather it is simply another group of women, defined in a somewhat peculiar manner. This needs to be continuously borne in mind in the following discussion of the survey results.

Profiles of the three groups of women are presented in Section 6, describing their characteristics and circumstances, including characteristics of partners where relevant. Section 7 provides a picture of the women's labour force histories: firstly, a broad picture of their activities since leaving school and, secondly, an account of the time since their partner became unemployed. Sections 8 and 9 look at factors associated with women's being in or out of the paid labour force; Section 8 covers expressed reasons and concrete characteristics, while Section 9 examines attitudes and roles. The women's job search activities and experiences are covered in Section 10, before Section 11 discusses the women's impressions about their circumstances.

6 Demographic Profile of the Women in the Survey

This section provides a picture of the characteristics and circumstances of the 75 women in the sample, with distinction between women in the three Groups: the 36 women in Group 1 with no earnings, the 25 women in Group 2 with some earnings, and the 14 women in Group 3 where the unemployment allowance has been cancelled. The description covers household demographics, education, training and employment, incomes, housing and transport. The aim is to provide a feel for the groups of women which will be referred to in the later chapters and also to present some of the salient characteristics which have a bearing on the particular matters in question.

6.1 Household Demographics

Age

The samples were constrained by design to only include women between the ages of 21 and 49 years. Within this range, respondents were highly concentrated in the 40 to 49 year age group which accounted for 50 out of the 75 cases (Table 6.1). This is partly attributable to the unplanned element in the drawing of the sample, discussed in the previous chapter, which led to a sample which was almost entirely constituted by women with dependent children over the age of five years: a feature of the survey which is described in greater detail under the description of children. The two groups of women who would be most prevalent in the younger age groups, women without dependent children and those with very young children, were thus largely excluded from the survey. As a result, the sample includes only 13 women in the first half of the age span, from 21 to 34 years, and 62 women in the second half, from 35 to 49 years. The median age of all women in the sample was 42.0 years.

While not planned as such, the manner in which the sample was drawn means that the survey should now be seen as one which concentrates on the circumstances of women aged 40 years or more. This is particularly so for Groups 1 and 2, with only 11 out of the 61 women in these two Groups being under 40 years old (Table 6.1). The table shows marked differences in the age distributions for the three Groups. Women with no earnings tended to be older than those recipients with some earnings who tended, in turn, to be older than those women where the unemployment allowance had been cancelled. The differences are summarised by the respective median ages of 44.0 years, 41.0 years and 33.5 years. The relative youthfulness of Group 3 is, however, at least partly exaggerated by another aspect of the problems encountered in drawing the sample, namely, the inclusion of women with children under six years old in this part of the sample.

Table 6.1: Survey Sample: Age Characteristics by Group

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Woman's age (years)				
21-24	0	0	1	1
25-29	0	0	4	4
30-34	1	4	3	8
35-39	2	4	6	12
40-44	18	9	0	27
45-49	15	8	0	23
Total number	36	25	14	75
Median age (years)				
Woman	44.0	41.0	33.5	42.0
Partner	46.5	42.0	36.5	44.0
Median age difference^(a) (years)	3.0	1.0	3.0	3.0

Note: a) Age of male partner minus age of female partner.

Within couples, males were generally a few years older than their female partners. In only ten cases was the male younger, the partners were the same age in five cases, and the male was older in the remaining 60 cases. In about three quarters of these 60 cases, the male was less than five years older than his female partner. The median age difference was 3.0 years, with no notable difference between the three Groups.

Partnership

Most of the couples in the sample were men and women in long-term relationships. In about half the cases, the women had been living with their current partners for at least 20 years and, in three quarters of cases, for ten years or more (Table 6.2). There is a notable variation in the median duration of current partnerships for the three Groups though this is simply in line with the differences in age distribution.

Migrant Characteristics

Over half the women in the sample were migrants, with most of these, and about half the sample, born in non-English-speaking countries (Table 6.3). Among the migrant

Table 6.2: Survey Sample: Duration Living with Current Partner by Group

Duration (years)	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Less than 5	2	0	2	4
5-9	4	2	5	11
10-19	3	11	7	21
20 or more	27	10	0	37
Not stated	0	2	0	2
Total number	36	25	14	75
Median (years)	23.0	18.0	9.0	20.0

women, no particular countries of birth stood out, with about half the migrants born in European countries and the remainder from a range of other countries. In Group 3, however, which was characterised by more recent arrivals as is described below, migrant women were predominantly from Asia, South and Central America. There was a strong correlation between partners' countries of birth and, focusing on those born in non-English-speaking countries, the second part of Table 6.3 shows that most couples included both male or female born in non-English-speaking countries or neither born in non-English-speaking countries (including, of course, those born in Australia). Among the whole sample, 43 per cent of couples included partners who were both born in non-English-speaking countries, and the proportions were similar for each of the three Groups.

The Groups did differ, however, in the durations of residence of the overseas-born women as shown in the third part of Table 6.3. All but one of the overseas-born women in Group 1 had, in fact, migrated before 1973 and the median duration of residence was 25 years. In Group 2, most had emigrated before 1975 and the median duration of residence was 20 years. In contrast, most of the overseas-born women in Group 3 had been in Australia for less than ten years, including some very recent arrivals, and the median duration of residence for these women was just five years.

Duration of residence is a characteristic of note because it is an indicator of the opportunities to overcome disadvantages frequently associated with emigration from a non-English-speaking country. Another indicator is age at the time of migration. The younger the immigrant, the more likely they are to gain English proficiency and to acquire recognised qualifications, and thereby to reduce their labour market disadvantage. If the age structures of the overseas-born in the three Groups were similar, the above discussion of durations of residence would lead us to expect women in Group 1 to have emigrated at younger ages than women in Group 2 and

Table 6.3: Survey Sample: Migrant Characteristics by Group

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Woman's country of birth				
Australia	16	10	4	30
Other English-speaking country	1	4	2	7
Non-English-speaking country	19	11	8	38
Total number	36	25	14	75
NESB^(a) status of couples				
Both NESB	15	11	6	32
Woman only NESB	4	0	2	6
Man only NESB	2	0	0	2
Neither NESB	15	14	6	35
Total number	36	25	14	75
Women born overseas: duration of residence (years)				
Less than 10 years	1	3	8	12
10-24 years	9	9	1	19
25 years or more	10	3	1	14
Total number	20	15	10	45
Median (years)	25	20	5	22
Women born overseas: age when emigrated (years)				
0-9	5	1	1	7
10-19	7	3	0	10
20-29	7	8	6	21
30-39	1	3	3	7
Total number	20	15	10	45
Median (years)	18.0	22.0	28.0	22.0

Note: a) NESB (Non-English-speaking background) is equated with being born in a non-English-speaking country.

these, in turn, to have emigrated at younger ages than those women in Group 3. As it turns out, any differences in age structure only moderate such a pattern and the median ages at the time of migration were 18 years for Group 1, 22 years for Group 2, and 28 years for Group 3.

Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders

Only one of the women identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, while this woman and two others reported that their male partners identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Children

With only one exception, the couples in the sample all had children of some age living at home, with the age of the youngest child ranging from one year to 22 years (Table 6.4). This is a reflection of neither the population nor the sample design, but of the manner in which the sample was drawn. As discussed previously, couples without children were supposed to be included in the survey, but to a large extent were not, and those with children under six years old were supposed to be excluded from the sample but, in the case of Group 3, they were not. Consideration was given to excluding from the analysis those cases with children under six years old, but it was decided to retain them as their loss would so deplete the Group 3 sub-sample.

The particular interest of the survey in the presence of children was in the extent to which they affect women's labour force decisions. Accordingly, we need to look beyond simple numbers of children to some measure of dependency and the standard ABS definition of a dependent child has been used; that is, a dependent child is defined as a child under 15 years old or a full-time student aged 15-20 years old. The second part of Table 6.4 breaks down the sample by the number of dependent children calculated according to this definition, showing only six couples without dependent children. At most, the couples in the sample had four dependent children.

Other Household Members

In only seven cases did households include people other than the woman, partner, and dependent or independent children. The additional household members in these cases were all relatives, including parents, children-in-law and grandchildren.

Illness and Disability

Some 17 of the 75 women in the sample reported an illness or disability which affected their ability to work in paid employment, including 12 out of the 36 women in Group 1. Such illnesses and disability were seen to affect work in two main ways:

Table 6.4: Survey Sample: Children at Home by Group

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Age of youngest child (years)				
0-5	0	0	9	9
6-12	19	17	4	40
13-15	12	5	1	18
16 and over	4	3	0	7
Not applicable	1	0	0	1
Total number	36	25	14	75
Number of dependent children^(a)				
0	6	0	0	6
1	21	7	3	31
2	7	11	8	26
3	0	6	3	9
4	2	1	0	3
Total number	36	25	14	75

Note: a) Dependent children are defined as children under 15 years old or full-time students aged 15-20 years.

either by restricting the type of work which could be undertaken, with a restriction to light duties because of back or other problems being the most common situation, or through frequent medical appointments or recurring hospitalisation making it difficult for the women to work in paid employment with regular hours. In addition, four women in the sample had partners with an illness or disability which required some form of special care from them. These were all cases where the woman had also reported an illness or disability of her own which affected her ability to work in paid employment.

Seven of the women reported having some responsibility for the care of sick or elderly parents, relatives or others. These involved time commitments ranging from two to 16 hours per week.

6.2 Education, Training and Employment

Education

Overall, the women in the sample had low levels of formal education: many had been under 15 years old when they left school, most had not completed the highest year of secondary schooling available, and only a minority had any post-school

qualifications (Table 6.5). There is a clear pattern of educational attainment according to Group, with the lowest levels of attainment for the women in Group 1, higher levels for those in Group 2, and the highest for those in Group 3. Among the women with no earnings in Group 1, less than 60 per cent had left school at the age of 15 or older, only around ten per cent had attended the highest year of secondary schooling available, and only 25 per cent had any post-school qualifications. In comparison, about 70 per cent of the women with some earnings in Group 2 had left school at the age of 15 or older, 17 per cent had attended the highest year of secondary schooling available, and 32 per cent had any post-school qualifications. While the level of educational attainment for the Group 2 women is thus higher than for those in Group 1, the difference is not considerable and the women in both groups can be described as having low levels of attainment. Group 3, on the other hand, is quite different with majorities of women in this group having left school at 16 years or over and having post-school qualifications.

This apparent correlation between educational attainment and employment status does not necessarily mean there is a simple and direct relationship between the two. Other factors may be at work. In particular, it was noted earlier that there are marked differences in the ages of the women in the three groups, and it is possible that the pattern of educational attainment is a cohort effect, reflecting the greater likelihood of women born more recently to have pursued formal education.

The male partners overall had a similar pattern of educational attainment to that of the women; the one notable difference being a higher propensity for the males to have post-school qualifications. Moreover, comparison of the education levels of women and their partners shows quite extensive correlation (Table 6.6). Excluding those cases where the women did not know partners' educational details, both partners had left school the same side of age 16 in 64 per cent of cases, both had the same status regarding the highest year of secondary schooling in 82 per cent of cases, and both had the same post-school qualifications status in 65 per cent of cases. The extent of such correlation is similar among the couples in each of the three Groups.

Training

Only two of the women were currently participating in a training or education course. Both women were studying for their Higher School Certificate: one woman in Group 2 combining part-time work with full-time study, and one in Group 3 combining full-time work with part-time study. Participation in education or training was far more frequent among the male partners, but still there were few cases: only seven among the 61 couples in Groups 1 and 2. Typically, these were lengthy part-time TAFE courses, following referral by the CES or DSS in three cases.

Women's Paid Employment

By definition, none of the women in Group 1 and all of the women in Group 2 had paid employment in the fortnight preceding the interview. In all but one case, the

Table 6.5: Survey Sample: Education Characteristics of Women by Group

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Age left school				
Under 15 years	15	8	1	24
15 years	12	9	3	24
16 years or over	8	8	10	26
Total number	35 ^(a)	25	14	74 ^(a)
Secondary schooling				
Attended highest year	4	4	6	14
Left before highest year	31	20	8	59
Total number	35 ^(a)	24 ^(a)	14	73 ^(b)
Post-school qualifications				
Yes	9	8	8	25
No	27	17	6	50
Total number	36	25	14	75
Notes:	a) Excludes one 'not stated' case. b) Excludes two 'not stated' cases.			

women in Group 3 had paid work. The nature of the jobs held by the women in Groups 2 and 3 are described and contrasted below with key characteristics presented in Table 6.7.

The jobs held by the women in Group 2 spanned a range of occupational categories, though there were concentrations in two categories: 'salespersons and personal service workers' and 'labourers and related workers', including cleaners in particular; each accounted for around a third of the jobs. The jobs were typically casual, as indicated by the absence of any entitlement to paid sick leave, and part-time. All but two of the jobs were part-time (defined as less than 35 hours per week), with about half the jobs being for 15 hours per week or less.

Women were asked details about their usual weekly pay either before or after tax. In the few cases where before-tax figures were given, these have been converted into after-tax amounts through simple application of the 1993-94 tax rates and scales. Usual weekly after-tax earnings for the women in Group 2 ranged between around \$50 and \$250 with no apparent clustering around the levels where the income test steepens. The median level of weekly after-tax earnings was \$120. Hourly after-tax wage rates were calculated by dividing usual after-tax wages by the usual number of

Table 6.6: Survey Sample: Education Characteristics of Couples by Group

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Left school at age 16 or over				
Both	3	4	6	13
Female only	4	4	3	11
Male only	7	5	1	13
Neither	17	11	2	30
Don't know or not stated	5	1	2	8
Total number	36	25	14	75
Attendance at highest year of secondary schooling				
Both	3	2	3	8
Female only	1	2	2	5
Male only	1	3	3	7
Neither	26	17	3	46
Don't know or not stated	5	1	3	9
Total number	36	25	14	75
Has post-school qualifications				
Both	7	3	5	15
Female only	1	5	3	9
Male only	11	5	2	18
Neither	15	12	4	31
Don't know or not stated	2	0	0	2
Total number	36	25	14	75

hours worked. These hourly wage rates ranged from a low of \$2 for a woman running a market stall to a high figure of \$15 for a cleaner, though most were within \$2 of the median figure of \$10.

For seven of the 25 women in Group 2, their current jobs had begun in 1993, while most of the remainder had held their jobs for at least three years. The two most common means of finding the work had been through friends or relatives and by direct approach to the employer. The 'other' ways of finding the work included three cases where women graduated from their previous positions as volunteer workers for the employer, two where the woman was known to the employer from a previous period of employment, two where the woman was self-employed, and two where the work had stemmed directly from a training course. In about two thirds of cases, the women expected their jobs to continue for at least another year. Among the remainder, five of the women were unsure of the prospects, while three expected their jobs to end within a month.

Table 6.7: Survey Sample, Groups 2 and 3: Women's Paid Employment by Group

	(2) Some earnings (n = 25)	(3) Cancelled (n = 13)
Occupation:		
Managers and administrators	1	1
Professionals	1	1
Para-professionals	2	0
Tradespersons	0	0
Clerks	4	2
Salespersons and personal service workers	8	2
Plant and machine operators etc.	1	0
Labourers and related workers	8	7
Entitled to paid sick leave		
Yes	5	7
No	19	6
Usual weekly hours worked		
1-9	8	1
10-19	9	2
20-34	6	4
35 or more	2	6
Median (hours)	16.0	30.0
Usual weekly after-tax earnings		
Less than \$100	10	0
\$100 but less than \$200	9	3
\$200 or more	6	10
Median (\$)	120	330
Hourly after-tax wage rate		
Less than \$10	10	6
\$10 but less than \$12	10	2
\$12 or more	5	5
Median (\$)	10.0	11.30
Year that job started		
1993	7	7
1990-92	7	5
Before 1990	11	1
How job was found		
Approached employer directly	7	4
Through friend or relative	9	2
Job advertisement	2	2
CES noticeboard	0	1
Other	6	3
Not stated	1	1
Expected duration of job		
A year or more	16	10
Between 6 months and 1 year	0	0
Between 1 and 6 months	1	1
Less than 1 month	3	0
Don't know or not stated	5	2

Turning now to the 13 women in Group 3 with paid work, the nature of their employment is most easily presented by comparison with the women in Group 2. The occupational breakdowns of the two Groups are similar. Where casual part-time work was typical in Group 2, however, casual employment was less prevalent in Group 3 and hours worked were notably longer with around half the women working full time and a median figure of 30 hours per week. Combined with a tendency to higher after-tax wage rates, usual weekly after-tax earnings were correspondingly higher for the women in Group 3, mostly being over \$300. As would be expected, many of the women in Group 3 had started at their jobs relatively recently, though there were others who had held their jobs for a number of years. The ways of finding work were similar to those reported by women in Group 2, with the exception that friends and relatives played a lesser role, and most expected their job to continue for at least a year.

The relative wage levels for women in the two Groups are, of course, largely figments of the Group definitions: those in Group 2 having some earnings but not enough to remove the entitlement to unemployment allowance, with those in Group 3 supposedly having had earnings at some stage which were sufficient to remove entitlement. The fact that a few of the women in Group 3 had earnings at the time of interview below the level which would remove entitlement to unemployment allowance simply points to another source of income for the couple, such as the male partner's earnings but, in doing so, it also reflects again the problem with the way in which the sample for Group 3 was drawn.

Men's Paid Employment

In 19 of the 75 couples in the sample, the male partners had some paid employment in the fortnight prior to the interview. Most of these cases (11) were in Group 3 where, as was explained in the previous chapter, entitlement to unemployment allowance had most often been cancelled as a result of the male's earnings. Otherwise, in three of the couples in Group 4 and five of those in Group 5 the male had some paid employment. Employed males in these two Groups are combined in the following description of men's paid employment (Table 6.8).

The first part of Table 6.8 shows the occupational breakdown of men's jobs and the large share of these jobs in the two categories of 'plant and machine operators etc' and 'labourers and related workers'. The particular occupations noted with most frequency were transport driver and trades assistant which together accounted for about half the jobs. As would be expected, the employed males in couples receiving an unemployment allowance were predominantly working part time, though tending to work more hours per week than their female counterparts. These jobs for men in Groups 1 and 2 were almost all casual positions, as defined by no entitlement to paid sick leave. The employed men in couples where the unemployment allowance had been cancelled, on the other hand, were mainly working full time although the positions were still casual in about half the cases.

Table 6.8: Survey Sample: Men's Paid Employment by Group

	(1) and (2) No or some earnings (n = 8)	(3) Cancelled (n = 11)
Occupation:		
Managers and administrators	0	1
Professionals	2	0
Para-professionals	2	0
Tradespersons	3	0
Clerks	0	1
Salespersons and personal service workers	0	0
Plant and machine operators etc.	1	3
Labourers and related workers	0	6
Entitled to paid sick leave		
Yes	0	5
No	7	6
Don't know	1	0
Usual weekly hours worked		
1-9	3	0
10-19	0	1
20-34	3	0
35 or more	2	9
Don't know	0	1
Median (hours)	22.0	40.0
Usual weekly after-tax earnings		
Less than \$100	3	0
\$100 but less than \$200	1	1
\$200 or more	3	9
Don't know	1	1
Median (\$)	190	390
Hourly after-tax wage rate		
Less than \$10	1	6
\$10 but less than \$12	5	3
\$12 or more	1	1
Don't know	1	1
Median (\$)	10.30	9.60
Year that job started		
1993	4	10
1990-92	3	1
Before 1990	1	0
How job was found		
Approached employer directly	1	2
Through friend or relative	4	3
Job advertisement	0	1
CES noticeboard	0	1
Other	3	4
Not stated	0	0
Expected duration of job		
A year or more	2	9
Between 6 months and 1 year	0	0
Between 1 and 6 months	1	0
Less than 1 month	0	0
Don't know or not stated	5	2

Information on usual after-tax weekly wages and wage rates was obtained in the same fashion as for employed women. Men's usual weekly after-tax earnings tended to be higher than those of their female counterparts, though hourly wage rates were similar or, if anything, lower for those employed men in Group 3 compared to employed women in Group 3. It needs to be borne in mind here that the information on men's employment was largely obtained indirectly from their female partners. Most of the employed men had started their jobs in 1993, including all but one of the men in Group 3 in line with the basis for cancellation of unemployment allowances. As was the case with women, a majority of the jobs had been found through friends or relatives or through direct approach to an employer. The 'other' ways of finding work included a private employment agency in two cases, and self-employment in two cases. The expectation for men in Group 3 was that their jobs would continue for at least a year, while for those in Groups 1 and 2 there was far more uncertainty.

Labour Force Status of Couples

The combination of the incidence of women's and men's paid employment is shown in Table 6.9. By definition, none of the women in the Group 1 couples had any employment, and in all but three of these couples neither partner had any paid work. In the case of the three exceptions, the male partner had some part-time paid work. Again by definition, all the women in the Group 2 couples had some paid work, amounting to full-time work in two cases. For five of these couples the male partner also had some paid work, providing two cases where an unemployment allowance was being received where one partner was working full time and the other part time. In these two cases, working hours were varied and receipt of JSA was correspondingly intermittent. Most of the Group 3 couples had both partners in paid employment, two had only one in paid employment, and one couple had neither partner in paid employment. In this latter case, the couple was receiving unemployment allowance again.

For those not employed, distinction is now made between being unemployed and being out of the labour force. Being unemployed is defined here as having no paid work but looking for work. Those who have no paid work and are not looking for work are then defined as not in the labour force. The labour force status, so defined, of women is depicted in Figure 6.1. The pattern of part-time and full-time work has been previously described, and the new point of note is the division of the 36 women in Group 1 into a minority of 15 who said that they were looking for work and a majority of 21 who are classified as not in the labour force.

All but eight of the men in the couples in Groups 1 and 2 had no paid employment (Table 6.8) and, out of these 53 men, all but four were reported to be looking for work. That four of the men were not looking for work initially appears contradictory to their receipt of an unemployment allowance, though there are explanations which were all to do with health. In one case, the man had just had an operation and had been temporarily transferred to Sickness Allowance, while in another an application for Disability Support Pension was pending.

Table 6.9: Survey Sample: Employment Status^(a) of Couples by Group

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled
Neither employed	33	0	1
Male only employed:			
part time	3	0	0
full time	0	0	0
Female only employed:			
part time	0	18	1
full time	0	2	1
Both employed:			
both full time	0	0	3
male full time	0	2	6
female full time	0	0	1
neither full time	0	3	0
not known ^(b)	0	0	1
Total number	36	25	14

Note:

a) Full time is defined as 35 hours or more per week.

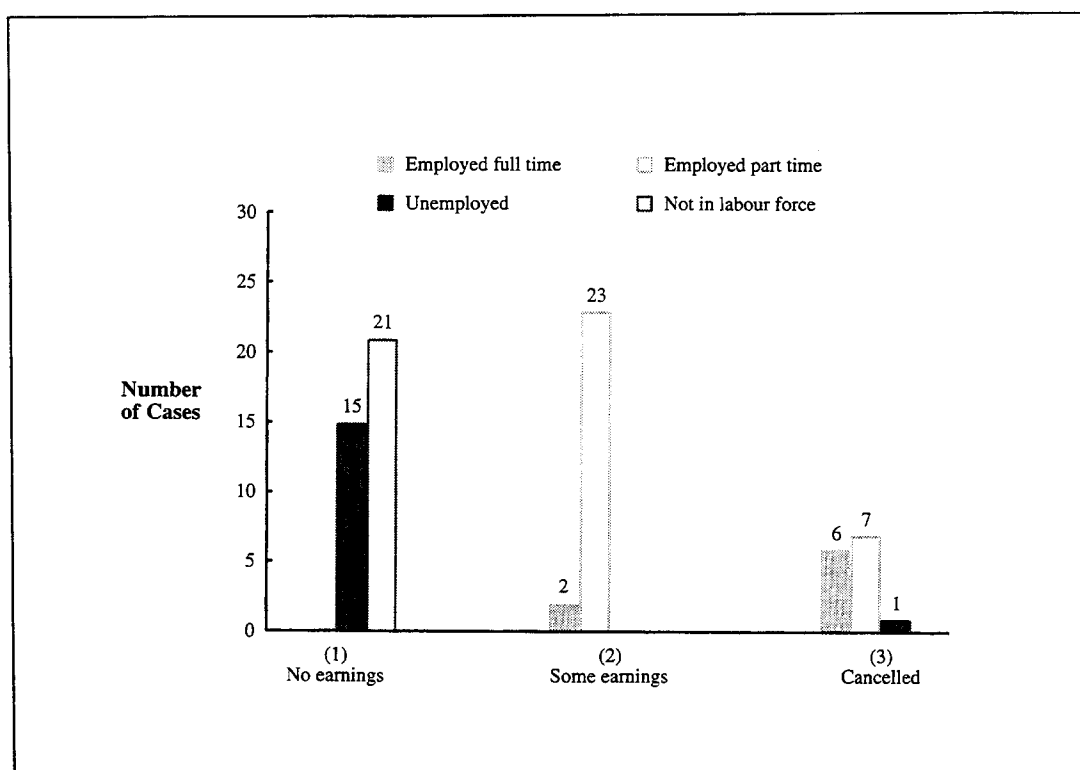
b) Female employed full time; male employed but hours not known.

The preceding discussion is summarised in Table 6.10 which shows the various combinations of the labour force status of the partners in couples.

Household Work

Information was also sought on unpaid domestic work, particularly the division of this work between the women and their partners, through a question about who mainly did selected household tasks. The responses are given in Table 6.11 and clearly show the predominant role of women in these tasks, despite their partners' unemployment. Cooking, washing up, shopping, laundry, house cleaning and ironing were overwhelmingly tasks performed by the women. Among the selected tasks, gardening and home maintenance are the only ones which were mainly undertaken by men. Those tasks related to children were typically shared between both partners, though where only one was involved then it tended to be the woman.

An 'index of responsibility' has been devised to summarise the responses to the questions on each of the 11 tasks. It is calculated by assigning a score of 1.0 if the task is mainly done by the woman, 0.0 if mainly done by the man, and 0.5 if shared,

Figure 6.1: Survey Sample: Labour Force Status of Women by Group

and these scores are then averaged over the number of applicable tasks; for example, taking children to school only applies where there are children who need to be taken to school. The index can thus range between a value of 1.0 when all tasks are done by the woman and 0.0 when all are done by the man. Consideration was given to weighting the scores for particular tasks according to the time they entail, though reference to recent time-use survey data indicated that this would be difficult because of differences in the definitions of tasks. It did also suggest, however, that weighting would have little effect on the index as, where identifiable, the tasks took times of similar orders of magnitude.

There was not much variation in the average value of the index of responsibility for the couples in the three Groups: 0.68 for Group 1, and 0.63 for Group 2 and Group 3 (Table 6.11). Thus, in Group 1 where, apart from three cases where the men had part-time work, neither the woman nor the man has paid work, it is the woman who takes on the greater responsibility for household tasks. In Group 2, where generally the women have some paid work and the men have no paid work, women still clearly have the prime responsibility for these selected tasks. Men in these couples are doing more than their counterparts in Group 1, but not much more. The suggestion is that the women's having paid work makes little difference to their share of unpaid household work.

Table 6.10: Survey Sample: Labour Force Status of Couples by Group

Woman's Labour Force Status ^(a)	Man's Labour Force Status ^(a)	
Group 1: No Earnings		
UN	PT	2
UN	UN	13
NILF	PT	1
NILF	UN	17
NILF	NILF	3
Total number		36
Group 2: Some Earnings		
FT	UN	2
PT	FT	2
PT	PT	3
PT	UN	17
PT	NILF	1
Total number		25
Group 3: Cancelled		
FT	FT	3
FT	PT	1
FT	UN	1
FT	FT/PT ^(b)	1
PT	FT	6
PT	UN	1
UN	UN	1
Total number		14
Notes:		
a)	FT - employed full time; PT - employed part time; UN - unemployed; NILF - not in labour force.	
b)	Hours of work not known.	

Voluntary Work

Women were asked whether they did any voluntary work and about a quarter of the sample reported that they did, including eight of the women in Group 1 and eight of those in Group 2. Such work included helping out at the local school or hospital, meals on wheels and working with their church. Hours were often irregular, but where an indication of the hours of voluntary work could be given, responses were polarised between those working on average for three hours or less each week and those working on average for more than a day each week

Table 6.11: Survey Sample: Responsibility for Household Tasks by Group

Task	(1) No earnings (n = 36)				(2) Some earnings (n = 25)				(3) Cancelled (n = 14)			
	Task mainly done by				Task mainly done by				Task mainly done by			
	Woman	Partner	Both	Total ^(a)	Woman	Partner	Both	Total ^(a)	Woman	Partner	Both	Total ^(a)
Cooking	30	1	5	36	11	5	9	25	9	1	4	14
Washing up	21	3	10	34	8	2	9	19	7	2	4	13
Shopping	16	1	19	36	16	1	8	25	8	2	4	14
Laundry	26	2	8	36	16	0	9	25	9	2	3	14
House cleaning	26	0	10	36	13	0	10	23	6	2	5	13
Ironing	28	0	5	33	19	1	4	24	9	2	2	13
Gardening	4	15	12	31	4	12	6	22	2	7	2	11
Home maintenance	1	23	5	29	2	17	4	23	2	7	3	12
Taking children to school	3	3	11	17	5	4	5	14	6	2	1	9
Taking children to sport/activities	6	8	9	23	4	2	8	14	5	2	4	11
Caring for children at home	10	1	17	28	8	2	13	23	6	0	8	14
Index of Responsibility^(b)	0.68				0.63				0.63			

- Notes:**
- a) Totals differ for the various activities as they exclude not applicable cases and also some cases where task was undertaken by someone other than woman and/or partner.
 - b) The index can range between a value of zero when only the male partner undertakes the tasks and a value of 1.00 when only the woman undertakes the tasks. See text.

6.3 Incomes

The reported receipt of payments from the Department of Social Security is shown in Table 6.12. By definition, all the couples in Groups 1 and 2 were receiving an unemployment allowance. Overall, there were fairly equal numbers receiving Job Search Allowance (JSA) and Newstart Allowance (NSA), though NSA was more prevalent among the Group 1 couples and JSA was more prevalent among the couples in Group 2. With payment of NSA depending on the claimant having been registered with the CES as unemployed for at least 12 months, this pattern reflects the longer durations of receipt of unemployment allowances reported for the males in the Group 1 couples than for those in the Group 2 couples. The median duration of receipt for Group 1, 20 months, was almost double the median duration of 11 months for Group 2.

The amount of unemployment allowance received (which excludes any supplementary payments) largely reflects the couples' earnings. The maximum payment at the time was \$527.40 per fortnight, hence most of those in Group 1, where the female at least has no earnings, received \$500 or more in the last payment prior to the interview, whereas most of the couples in Group 2 were receiving part payments. In the single case in Group 3 where receipt of an unemployment allowance was reported, payment had been cancelled at the time when the sample was drawn but the payment was being received again at the time of the interview.

Reflecting the strong bias in the sample toward couples with dependent children, there were only nine couples who were not receiving Family Payment in respect of dependent children or eligible students. Out of the 36 Group 1 couples, 29 were receiving Basic Family Payment (BFP) and Additional Family Payment (AFP), as was the case for 23 out of the 25 couples in Group 2. All 14 couples in Group 3 reported receipt of Family Payment: mainly just receipt of BFP (eight cases), but also AFP in two cases, with distinction between the two payments not made in four cases.

Few women, and none of those in Group 3, reported themselves or their partners receiving any income other than in the form of social security payments or wages/salary. Thirteen were receiving board payments from children or other relatives, with a median value of \$50 per week, while three reported small amounts of interest income, and two mentioned income from other sources. Among the 17 cases reporting private income from other than wages/salary, the median amount received was \$45 per week and most, both in terms of amounts and frequency, was in the form of board payments from children and other relatives.

Another perspective on someone's financial position can be obtained by asking about the existence of a financial buffer. How vulnerable are they if faced with unexpected financial demands. The women were asked if they and their partner could raise \$500 in a week if needed for a financial emergency and, if so, could they raise \$1500 in those circumstances. The responses are shown in Figure 6.2 in which responses of 'maybe' have been combined with responses of 'yes'. Overall, about

Table 6.12: Survey Sample: Couples' Reported Social Security Incomes by Group

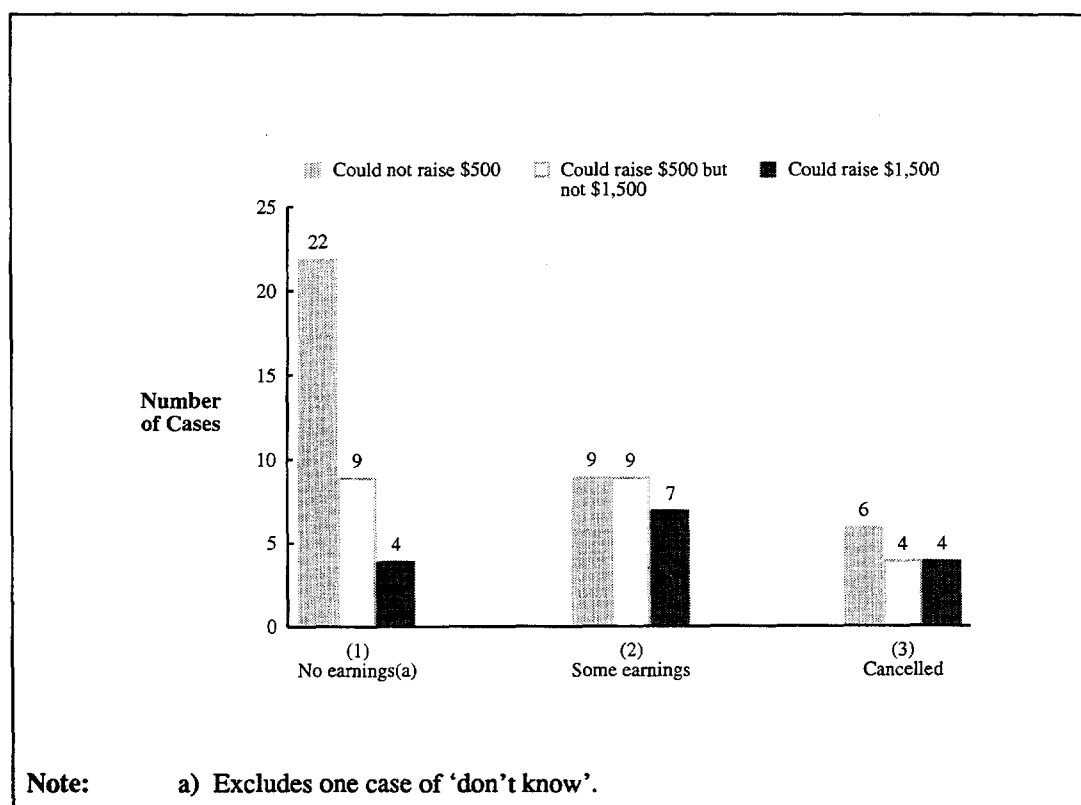
	(1) No earnings (n = 36)	(2) Some earnings (n = 25)	(3) Cancelled (n = 14)
Number of couples receiving payment			
Job Search Allowance	14	17	0
Newstart Allowance	22	8	1
Subtotal: Unemployment Allowance	36	25	1
Family Payment	29	23	14
Amount of unemployment allowance received (\$ per fortnight)			
0	1	0	13
1-249	1	6	0
250-499	4	11	0
500 or more	29	5	1
Not stated	1	3	0
Median (\$ pfn)	520	460	-
Duration of continuous receipt of unemployment allowance			
0-11 months	9	12	1
12-23 months	10	5	0
2-4 years	11	3	0
5 years or more	6	4	0
Median (months)	20	11	-

half of all women said that they would not be able to raise \$500 in a week, including the majority of the women in Group 1. Where they could raise \$500 this would primarily have been from family and friends, with the only other major source being savings. Not surprisingly, savings were a potentially more important source for those couples with earnings. Only 15 of the couples thought they could raise \$1500 in a financial emergency; those with earnings were more likely to be able to do so and savings were the most frequently mentioned source.

6.4 Housing, Transport and Telephones

Housing

A little over half of all the couples in the sample were home owners or purchasers, with the remainder evenly divided between private and public renters (Table 6.13). There were notably high relative proportions of outright home owners and public renters among Groups 1 couples, while those in Group 3 stand out because of an absence of home owners, a likely reflection of their young age, and high proportions of home purchasers and private renters.

Figure 6.2: Survey Sample: Couples' Ability to Raise \$500 or \$1,500 in a Financial Emergency**Table 6.13: Survey Sample: Housing Circumstances by Group**

	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled
Housing tenure			
Outright owner	13	6	0
Purchaser	5	9	7
Private rent	6	6	5
Public rent	11	4	2
Other	1	0	0
Total number	36	25	14
Average housing costs^(a) (\$/week)			
Including outright owners	72	89	158
Excluding outright owners	113	117	158

Note: a) Includes mortgage and rent costs.

Information on housing costs was collected in terms of payments on mortgage, rent or board and reveal a typical pattern. Couples in the two high-cost tenures of home-purchase and private rental had average weekly housing costs of \$144 and \$154 respectively. The figure for public renters was a much lower \$74 per week. As information on the costs of repairs and maintenance was not sought, the housing costs of outright owners are measured as zero, though it should be recognised that this will underestimate their true costs. The housing costs for the couples in each of the three Groups are given in the lower part of Table 6.13 and largely reflect their composition in terms of housing tenure. Thus the average housing costs for couples in Group 1, with high proportions of outright owners and public renters, at \$72 per week are markedly lower than the \$89 per week paid by the couples in Group 2 and both are considerably lower than the \$158 per week faced by the Group 3 couples with their high proportions of purchasers and private renters. A similar pattern of variation, albeit moderated, remains when the zero housing costs of outright owners are removed from the averages.

Transport

A number of questions were asked about women's access to transport, concerning whether they and their partners had driver's licences, car-ownership, the availability of lifts, their perception of the provision of public transport, and their willingness to use public transport. The responses to some of these particular questions are given in Table 6.14. A considerable number of the women, 27 out of the 75 cases, did not have driver's licenses, compared to just nine of the partners who did not have licenses. Most couples (46) had one registered car, 18 had two registered cars, and 11 couples had none. Most of the women thought that the availability of public transport in the area was 'good' or 'very good', some found it 'OK', and only a few described it as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

But does it matter if public transport is good or poor if someone does not need it because they have a car which they would prefer to use or because they would be unwilling to use public transport? More pointed information on transport situations can be obtained by combining the responses to the various transport questions, and this is done here by creating an indicator of transport access. Women with 'good' transport access are defined as those who either have access to a car (or motorbike) all of the time, or can get a lift whenever they need to, or who both think that the availability of public transport in the area is 'good' or 'very good' and who would use public transport to get to and from a job. Others are defined as having 'poor' transport access. The lower part of Table 6.14 shows a significant number of the women had poor transport access so-defined, including a third of the women in Group 1 and in Group 3.

Telephones

Having no telephone would be a clear impediment to job search and women were asked whether they had a telephone and, if not, why not. All the households did have the telephone on.

Table 6.14: Survey Sample: Transport Characteristics by Group

	(1) No earnings (n = 36)	(2) Some earnings (n = 25)	(3) Cancelled (n = 14)
Driver's License Holding			
Both	19	17	8
Woman only	2	2	0
Man only	11	5	6
Neither	4	1	0
Number of registered vehicles			
0	8	2	1
1	21	16	9
2 or more	7	7	4
Perception of availability of public transport in area			
Very good	11	6	2
Good	11	7	5
OK	8	9	6
Poor or very poor	4	3	1
Not stated	2	0	0
Transport access^(a)			
Good	24	20	9
Poor	12	5	5
Total	36	25	14
Note:	a) See text.		

7 Labour Force Histories

Some sense of the women's lives over past years can be gleaned from the descriptive material in the previous chapter; for example: their age, educational attainment, duration of their current partnership, numbers and ages of children, duration of partner's unemployment and migrant characteristics. A detailed account of the women's past years is now presented, focusing on their labour force activity and the related matter of their dependence on different sources of income. The account begins with examination of an indicator of labour force history, before turning to the detailed information on labour force histories that was collected in the survey. This covers the time since the women left school up until the time of interview. Closer attention is then paid to the recent histories with consideration of women's labour force responses to their partners' unemployment, and other responses made by the couple.

7.1 Previous Job Holding

A common and simple indicator of labour force history is the time since someone last had a job which lasted three months or more. Table 7.1 provides this indicator for both women and their partners, and with distinction between the time since a full-time job was held for three months or more and the time since any job was held for three months or more. Very few of the women, just four out of 75, had never held a job for three months or more, and only seven had never held a full-time job for three months or more. Still, the main point here is not the low proportion of cases with no history of job-holding, but rather the fact that some of the women have never held a job for three months or more, let alone a full-time job.

Of particular interest in Table 7.1 are the figures for the women in Group 1, with no current earnings, and the times since a full-time job was last held by the predominantly part-time workers in Group 2. In addition to the few women in Group 1 who had never held a job for three months or more, many had not done so for some years. About two out of five women in the Group had not had a job lasting three months or more over the previous 15 years, and about one out of every two had not had a full-time job which went for three months or more over this period. The history of full-time job-holding was slightly more recent for those women in Group 2; two out of five had not had a full-time job lasting three months or more in the past 15 years. These durations are summarised in Figure 7.1.

The picture for the male partners, given in the lower part of Table 7.1 is quite different. Few, just nine out the 70 partners for whom the information was available, had not held a full-time job for three months or more in the past five years.

Table 7.1: Survey Sample: Time Since Last Held a Job for Three Months or More, by Group

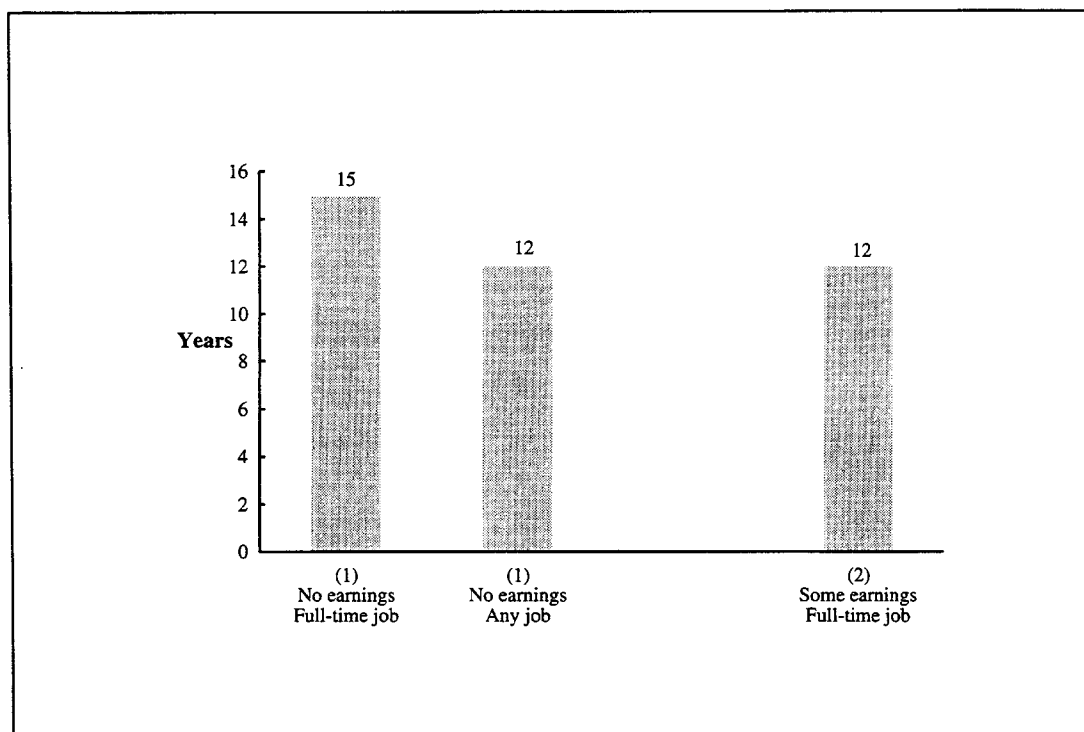
	(1) No earnings		(2) Some earnings		(3) Cancelled	
	Full-time job	Any job	Full-time job	Any job	Full-time job	Any job
Women						
Current job	0	0	2	21	6	12
0-5 years ago	9	10	5	0	3	0
6-15 years ago	9	11	9	2	2	0
16 or more years ago	14	10	6	1	1	0
Never held	3	3	3	0	1	1
Not stated	1	2	0	1	1	1
Total number	36	36	25	25	14	14
Men						
Current job	0	2	2	4	7	8
0-5 years ago	29	27	19	17	4	1
6-15 years ago	3	3	3	3	0	0
16 or more years ago	0	0	0	0	0	0
Never held	0	0	1	0	2	2
Not stated	4	4	0	1	1	3
Total number	36	36	25	25	14	14

7.2 Labour Force Activity Since Leaving School

The Nature of the Data on Labour Force Histories

In the interviews, women were asked to provide an account of their labour force histories at a medium level of detail. The women were asked to give a broad picture, rather than details of every job they might have had, with distinction between periods when they were mainly employed full time, employed part time, unemployed, or out of the labour force. After this preface, the women were asked what they were mainly doing in the years after they left school, how long did this last, what did they do next, and so on up to the present. A picture was thus obtained of women's labour force histories in terms of a sequence of periods defined by their main labour force activity at the time.

Figure 7.1: Survey Sample: Median Time Since Woman Last Held a Job for Three Months or More



Further questions pertaining to each identified period were also asked, covering: the woman's main source of income at the time, the reasons for being out of the labour force where applicable, and information on her partner's activity during this period. The questions on partners' activities referred to the woman's partner, if any, at the time and thus not necessarily to the activities of her current partner. The interest in the partners' activities was not an interest in married men's labour force histories, but rather an interest in the women's circumstances.

Probably, the best indicators of the level of detail sought in these questions are the provision in the form used to record responses for up to ten distinct periods in the history, the instruction to interviewers to try to limit the time spent on these questions to no more than ten minutes, and the distinction when coding the data of only those periods of at least a year.

Women's Labour Force Activity

The upper part of Table 7.2 presents information on the years that women in the three Groups have spent in different labour market activities since they left school. The first column under each Group shows the number of women with some time

[illegible]

spent in the activity. The second and third columns then apply to those women who had spent some time in the activity; the second column showing the average number of years spent in the activity, and the third column showing the average proportion of their time since leaving school which had been spent in this activity. For example, the first row of numbers in the table show that 33 of the 36 women in Group 1 had spent some years in full-time employment and, for these 33 women, the average period spent in full-time employment was 8.0 years and amounted on average to 27 per cent of their time since leaving school.

The percentage figure takes account, to some extent, of the different age structures of the women in the three groups. The difference in ages means that, all else being equal, women in Group 1 (with an average 29 years since leaving school) would have longer periods in any labour force activity than women in Group 2 (an average 26 years since leaving school) and, particularly, than women in Group 3 (an average 16 years since leaving school).

It should be remembered that the table is an accounting of periods defined by main activities. Thus, the recording of periods of unemployment for only 14 of the women does not mean that the others have never been unemployed. It means that they have spent no substantial periods of time, of around a year or more, being unemployed. Also, the information in the table makes no distinction between the number of periods a woman has spent in a particular labour force activity. It does not show, for example, that for those women in Group 1 with periods of full-time employment, the average length of these full-time jobs was 8.0 years. It shows that, on average, these women had spent 8.0 years in full-time employment.

Looking first at the time spent in paid employment, Table 7.2 shows that all but five of the 75 women had spent periods in employment and, indeed, in full-time employment. While most of the women in Groups 2 and 3 had spent periods in both full-time and part-time employment, this was the case for only a minority of the women in Group 1 where the picture is dominated to a greater degree by full-time employment. Among all those with periods in employment, the share to which this amounts of their time since leaving school varies between the Groups: 40 per cent for the women in Group 1 with no current earnings, 52 per cent for those in Group 2 with some earnings, and 57 per cent for those in Group 3 where unemployment allowances have been cancelled.

Some of the women, 14 out of the 75, reported having had substantial periods of unemployment. While periods of unemployment accounted for significant shares of these women's years since leaving school, unemployment does not loom large in the overall picture of labour force histories. Virtually all the women had spent periods out of the labour force and, given the characteristics of the sample, it is no surprise that this was mainly related to caring for children. For the 31 out of the 36 women in Group 1 who reported periods out of the workforce caring for children, this activity accounted on average for over 50 per cent of their time since leaving school. For the corresponding women in Group 2, the figure was a much lower 35 per cent. Comparison with the women in Group 3 is difficult because of their different

positions in the life course as indicated by their relatively young age and, in particular, the number with very young children (see Table 6.4). Besides being out of the labour force for reasons of child care, a number of women reported periods out of the labour force because of their own ill health or disability (14 cases) or for other reasons, including: training and further education (12 cases) and caring for partner (three cases).

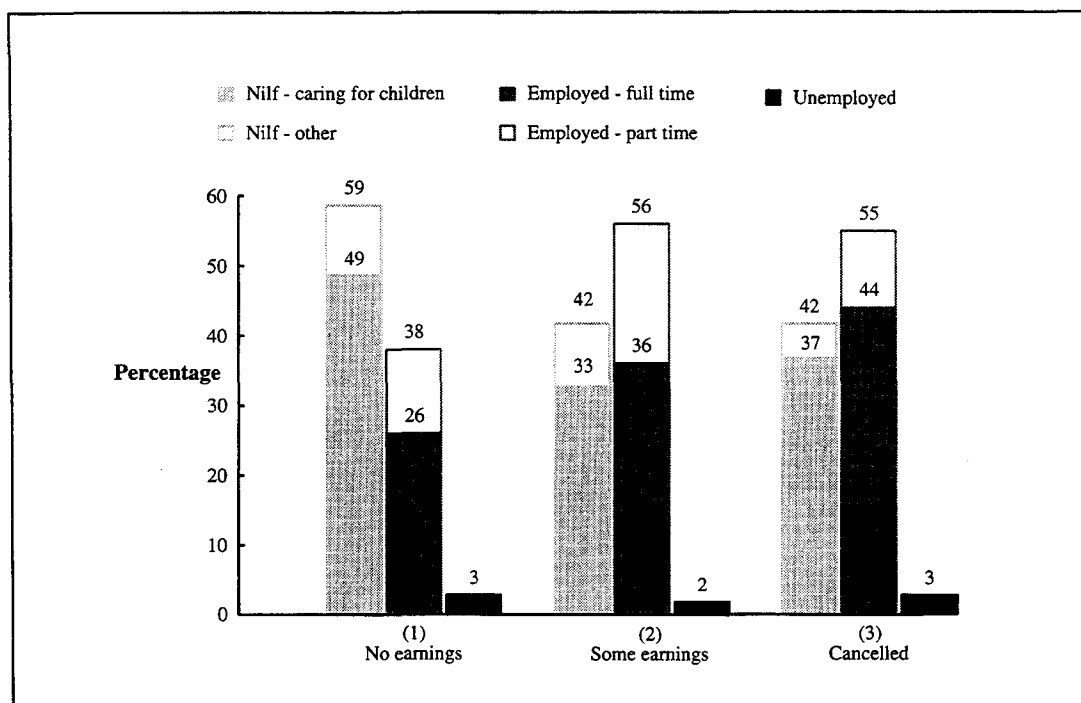
In summary, the two main labour force activities since leaving school for these women are clearly periods of employment, particularly full-time employment, and of being out of the workforce when caring for children. The overall picture is more clearly seen in Figure 7.2 which presents the data in a different way. To produce Figure 7.2, the years in each activity have been summed across all the women in each Group and expressed as a percentage of the total number of years since leaving school for the women in that Group. In doing so, the years where activities were not specified, which accounted for seven per cent of total time, were excluded. The most interesting comparison is between the women in Groups 1 and 2. The pictures are similar for these two Groups in terms of the greater importance of full-time rather than part-time work, the importance of child care as a reason for being out of the labour force, and in the relative insignificance of periods of unemployment. But they are quite different in terms of the relative importance of periods in paid employment and out of the workforce. Since leaving school, the women in Group 1 had spent most of their time (59 per cent) out of the workforce. The women in Group 2 had spent most of their time (56 per cent) in paid employment.

Partners' Labour Force Activity

What were the activities of the women's partners over the period since women left school? This information is given in the lower part of Table 7.2 and the first point to note is the category of 'no partner' which accounts for around six years on average of women's time since leaving school. For most of the 12 women for whom no period without a partner was recorded, it is believed that there were in fact such periods but they were inappropriately recorded as 'not specified' rather than indicating that they had been living as a couple ever since leaving school.

Setting aside the periods when the woman had no partner, the picture of partners' activities is dominated by the years that the women had spent with partners in full-time employment. Only four out of the 75 women did not report a period with their partner in full-time employment and, on average, the women had spent almost two thirds of their time since leaving school with a full-time employed partner. The only other activity of note is unemployment. By definition, all the women in the sample had spent some time with an unemployed partner, and in the great majority of cases this amounted to a long enough duration to be distinguished in these labour force histories. The other feature that stands out from the material on partners' activities in Table 7.2 is the absence of any marked variation in the pictures for the partners of the women in each of the three Groups. This, and the other key features described

Figure 7.2: Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Women's Time in Labour Market Activities Since Leaving School, by Group



above, are more clearly evident in Figure 7.3, which has been constructed in the same way as Figure 7.2.

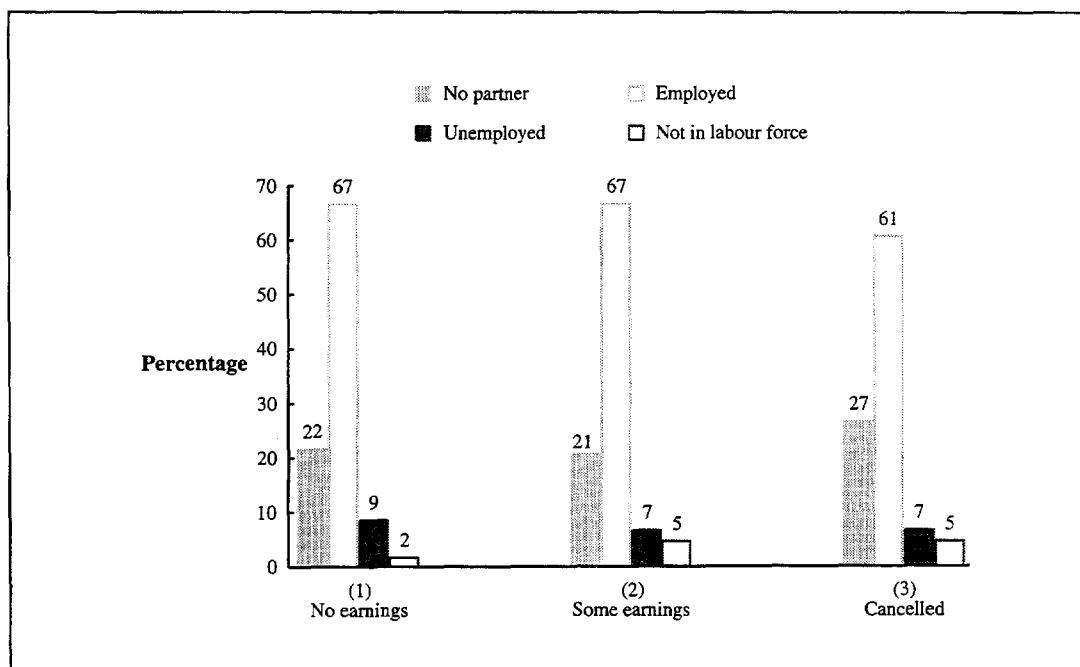
7.3 Income Sources Since Women Left School

As would be expected, the picture of the women's histories in terms of their main sources of income corresponds closely to their histories in terms of their labour force activity and that of their partner, when present. Looking at income sources, it makes sense to consider partner's income sources first, given the contribution these will make to the picture for women.

Partners' Main Sources of Income

Information on periods with different main sources of income is presented in Table 7.3 which follows the format of Table 7.2. Periods defined according to partners' main source of income are covered in the lower part of Table 7.3 and, as before, it should be recognised that the information about partners' activities refers to the woman's partner, if any, at the time and thus not necessarily to the activities of her current partner.

Figure 7.3: Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Partner's Time in Labour Market Activities Since Woman Left School, by Group



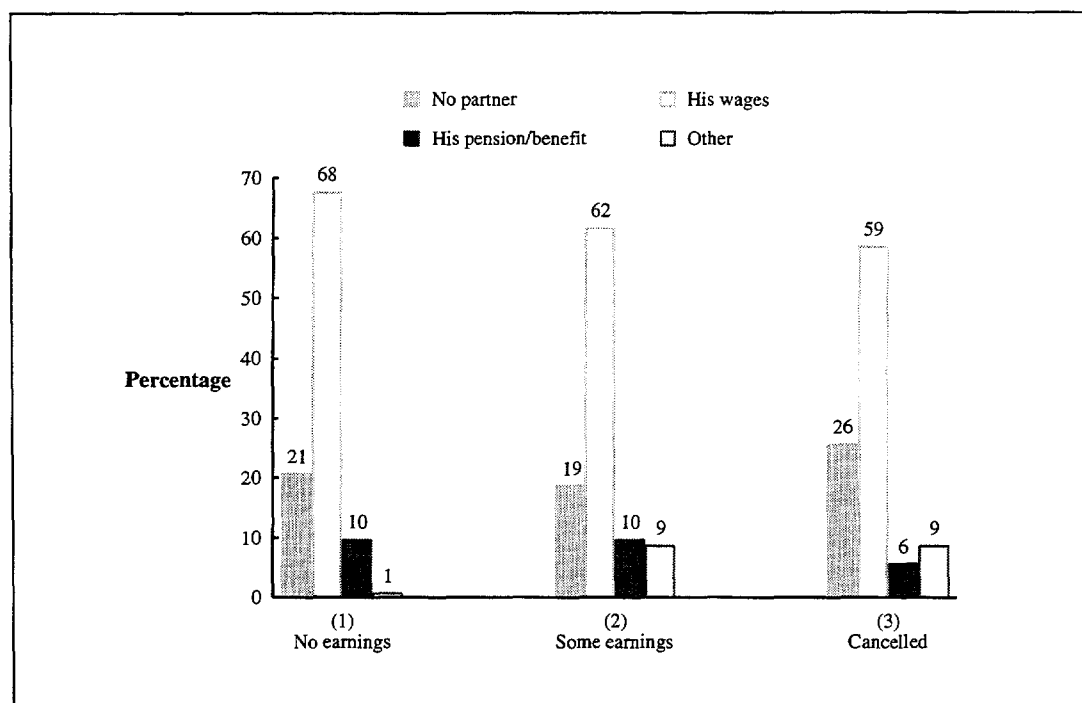
In line with the pattern of partners' labour force activity described above, income from wages and salaries dominates the picture of partners' main sources of income. As we have seen, this has overwhelmingly been wages and salaries from full-time work. Other than the periods when women were without a partner, the only other main source of income to appear with any frequency is government pensions/benefits which very largely refers to the receipt of unemployment allowances. There were very few instances reported of periods where the woman's wages provided the main source of income for her partner.

These periods of reliance on the woman's income, together with periods where the main source of income was a combination of wages and benefit or 'other', have been combined in the 'other' category in Figure 7.4 which summarises the historical picture of partners' income sources. Figure 7.4 has been produced in the same way as Figures 7.2 and 7.3, adding the periods for all the women in a Group and expressing them as a percentage of total time less those periods where the main source of income was not specified. The dominance of wage income is clear, as is the secondary importance of social security incomes, with no marked difference between the partners of women in the three Groups; that is, once allowance has been made for the greater share of periods with no partner for the women in Group 3. The 'other' category for women in Groups 2 and 3 largely comprises periods where the partner's main source of income was a combination of his wages and his social security income.

		Group 1			Group 2			Group 3		
Main Income Source		(a) no.	(b) years	(c) %	(a) no.	(b) years	(c) %	(a) no.	(b) years	(c) %
Woman's main source of income										
Wages:	her wages	34	9.8	35	24	12.6	49	13	8.9	57
	partner's wages	31	13.5	45	17	8.2	31	10	5.2	29
	combined wages	3	8.7	32	2	10.0	34	0	-	-
	total	36	21.6	74	24	19.3	73	13	12.9	80
Pensions/benefits:	hers	4	5.3	19	6	2.3	9	2	5.0	22
	partner's	30	3.6	12	5	6.2	23	3	1.3	12
	total	32	4.0	14	10	4.5	17	4	3.5	20
Combination of wages/benefit		3	5.0	17	4	9.0	44	6	2.5	23
Other		8	4.4	14	3	7.3	32	2	2.5	18
Not specified		11	9.1	30	12	6.4	25	7	2.1	15
All main income sources		36	29.3	100	25	25.7	100	14	15.5	100
Partner's main source of income										
No partner		34	6.1	21	22	5.3	21	7	7.7	40
Wages:	his	35	19.1	65	23	16.4	63	13	9.5	63
	woman's	0	-	-	1	1.0	3	2	1.0	7
	total	35	19.1	65	23	16.4	63	13	9.7	64
Pensions/benefits:	his	31	3.3	11	19	3.2	12	10	1.2	9
	woman's	0	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	-
	total	31	3.3	11	19	3.2	12	10	1.2	9
Combination of wages/benefit		3	2.3	10	5	5.4	23	6	2.8	22
Other		3	2.0	7	2	13.0	61	1	1.0	6
Not specified		7	9.3	29	5	6.8	25	4	1.8	17
All main income sources		36	29.3	100	25	25.7	100	14	15.5	100

Notes: a) no. - number of cases with period as main source of income.
b) years - for applicable population, average total time with this main source of income (years)
c) % - for applicable population, average share of total time since woman left school with this main source of income (percentage)

Figure 7.4: Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Partner's Time Since Woman Left School According to His Main Source of Income, by Group

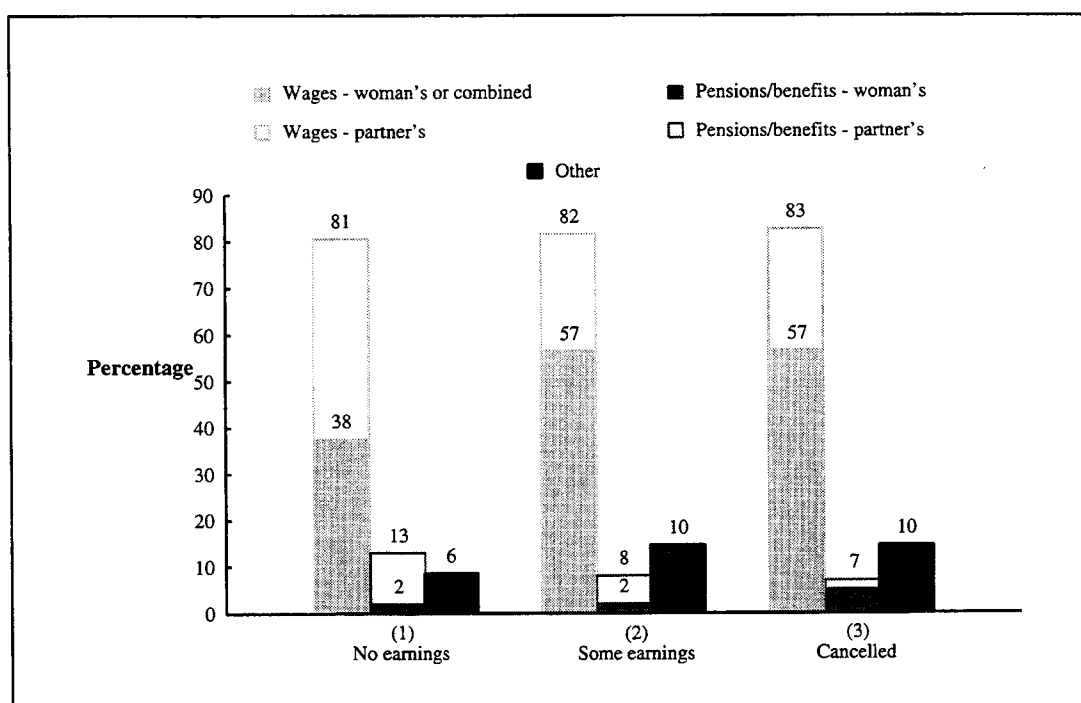


Women's Main Sources of Income

The pattern of women's periods with different main sources of income since leaving school is shown in the upper part of Table 7.3 and can be seen as the product of the women's histories of labour force activity and of the histories of the partners' main income sources, when present. Thus, partners' wages figure strongly in women's sources of income and, to a lesser extent, partners' social security incomes also play a role. But, overall, women's own wages remain the single source which accounts for the greatest share of women's time since they left school. This is evident in terms of both the numbers and length of periods when women's own wages constituted their main source of income.

The picture is summarised in Figure 7.5 which reveals some differences in the pattern for those women in Groups 1 and 2. For the women in Group 1, their own wages have played a lesser role as a main source of income than they have for the women in Group 2. Correspondingly, partners' wages and social security incomes have been more important for the women in Group 1 than for those in Group 2. Maybe the key point from Figure 7.5, however, is that our sample includes women who, in contrast to their current circumstances, have not spent substantial periods of their adult lives dependent on social security incomes, but who have spent substantial periods dependent on partners' earned incomes.

Figure 7.5: Survey Sample: Aggregate Proportions of Women's Time According to Main Source of Income Since Leaving School, by Group



7.4 Women's Responses to Partners' Unemployment

The focus now shifts to the more recent phase of the women's labour force histories; namely, the period since their partners started receiving unemployment allowances. Did the women adjust their own labour force activity in response to their partners' unemployment and, if so, how? The three women who partnered after their partner had started to receive unemployment allowance are excluded from this part of the analysis, thus leaving a sub-sample of 72 women. The length of the period since the partner started receiving unemployment allowances does, of course, vary. The distribution of these durations for men still in receipt of unemployment allowance was shown in Table 6.12 and, adding the durations of previous receipt for those couples in Group 3 where unemployment allowance had been cancelled, means that we will be looking at periods of under one year for 29 of the women, of at least one year but less than two years for 19 women, and of two years and over (predominantly less than five years) for 24 women.

Labour Force Status: Then and Now

Comparison of the distributions of the women's labour force status just prior to their partner starting to receive unemployment allowances and at the time of interview shows a marked increase in the extent of the women's labour force participation over

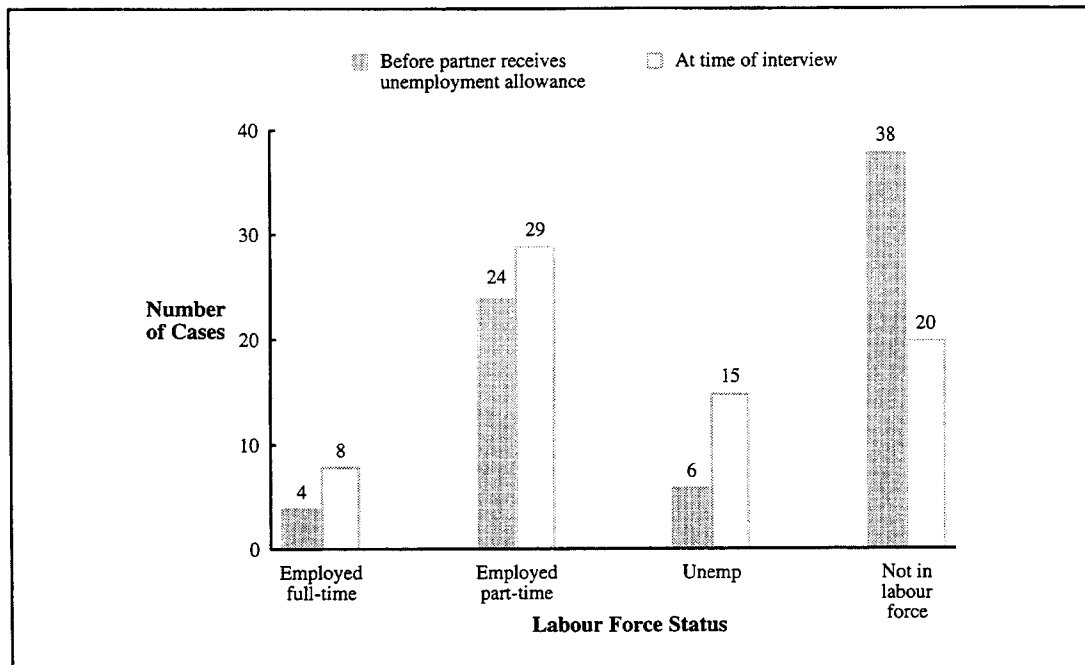
the period (Figure 7.6). The numbers not in the labour force were almost halved, with corresponding increases in those in the labour force appearing in both the numbers with paid employment and the numbers unemployed. Prior to their partners starting to receive unemployment allowance, the women were predominantly out of the labour force. At the time of the interview, the women were predominantly in paid employment, particularly part-time employment.

While this might appear to contradict the conclusions of Section 4, this is not necessarily so as the overall picture from the survey is very much coloured by the definition and selection of the sample groups. It should also be noted that Section 4 was concerned with the more substantial moves in and out of employment and did not, for example, seek to identify moves between being out of the labour force and being unemployed. These features of the present analysis need to be borne in mind when interpreting the results concerning women's labour market responses.

The same finding of increased labour force activity is evident for the women in each of the three Groups (Table 7.4). The increase is most modest for the women in Group 1 who, by definition, were not in employment at the time of interview. For this Group, the number in the labour force, albeit all now unemployed, increased markedly: the increase in the number unemployed corresponding to losses partly in the numbers employed but mainly in the numbers out of the labour force. One third of the women in Group 2 had no employment just prior to partners receiving unemployment allowances, while, all, by definition, had paid employment at the time of the interview. Among the 14 women in Group 3, while five had been out of the labour force at the earlier time, none of them were at the time of interview. Moreover, the numbers in full-time employment in Group 3 increased considerably. These changes in the aggregate distributions of labour force status do not, however, reveal the extent of underlying movement in labour force status. A small shift in the distribution, for example, may be the result of either a small number of shifts in status or a large number of shifts where most counteract each other.

What individual shifts in labour force status make up the picture of the changing distribution of labour force status described above? A basic distinction is made between no change, increased labour force activity and decreased labour force activity. Increased labour force activity is defined to include movements from being out of the labour force to in the labour force, from unemployed to employed, and from part-time work to full-time work. Decreased labour force activity refers to corresponding movements in the opposite direction. Overall, most of the women (41 out of 72) reported no change: their labour force status at the time of interview was the same as their labour force status just before their partners started receiving unemployment allowances. Of the others, 24 women increased their labour force activity, and seven decreased their activity.

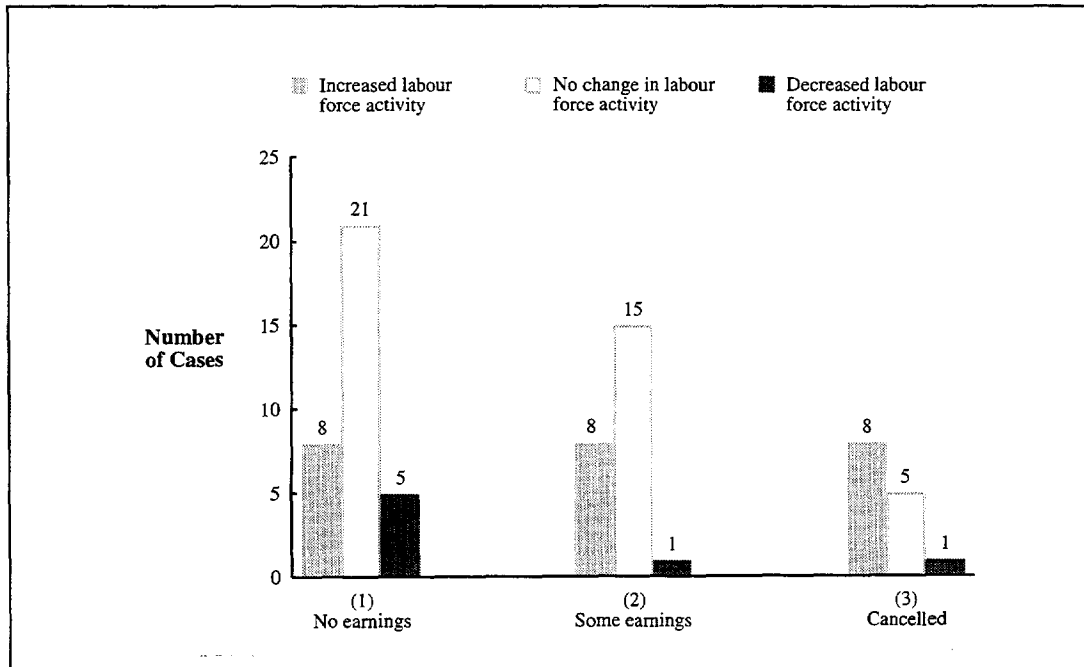
The breakdown of these movements for women in each of the three Groups is shown in Figure 7.7. All three Groups, particularly Groups 2 and 3, show an excess of increases in labour force activity over decreases, while the predominance of no

Figure 7.6: Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Status Just Prior to Partner Receiving Unemployment Allowance and at Time of Interview**Table 7.4: Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Status Just Prior to Partner Receiving Unemployment Allowance and at Time of Interview^(a), by Group**

Labour force status	(1) No earnings		(2) Some earnings		(3) Cancelled	
	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2	Time 1	Time 2
Employed full time	1	0	2	2	1	6
Employed part time	3	0	14	22	7	7
Unemployed	3	14	2	0	1	1
Not in labour force	27	20	6	0	5	0
Total number	34	34	24	24	14	14

Note: a) Time 1 - just prior to partner receiving unemployment allowance;
Time 2 - at time of interview.

Figure 7.7: Survey Sample: Change in Women's Labour Force Status Since Partner Started Receiving Unemployment Allowance, by Group



change in status is clear for the two Groups still receiving unemployment allowances. Within Group 1, the increases in activity refer to shifts from being out of the labour force to being unemployed, and the decreases are mainly cases of part-time workers becoming unemployed. In Group 2, the increases are mainly moves from being out of the labour force into part-time work, while the increases in Group 3 are more diverse, including moves from out of the labour force into part-time or full-time work and from part-time to full-time work.

Not all of the changing pattern of labour force status described above is necessarily attributable to a response to partners' unemployment; some may be due to other factors. To get a clearer impression of women's labour force responses, we can look at their answers to direct questions on the matter. Before doing so, however, it is useful to add another element to the context of these decisions by considering women's anticipated durations of their partners' unemployment.

Anticipated Durations of Unemployment

Women were asked how long they had expected their partners to be receiving unemployment allowance when they first started getting it, and their responses to this question in comparison with the actual duration of receipt up to the time of interview are given in Table 7.5. The first point to note from Table 7.5 is that over

Table 7.5: Survey Sample: Anticipated and Actual Durations of Receipt of Unemployment Allowance, by Group

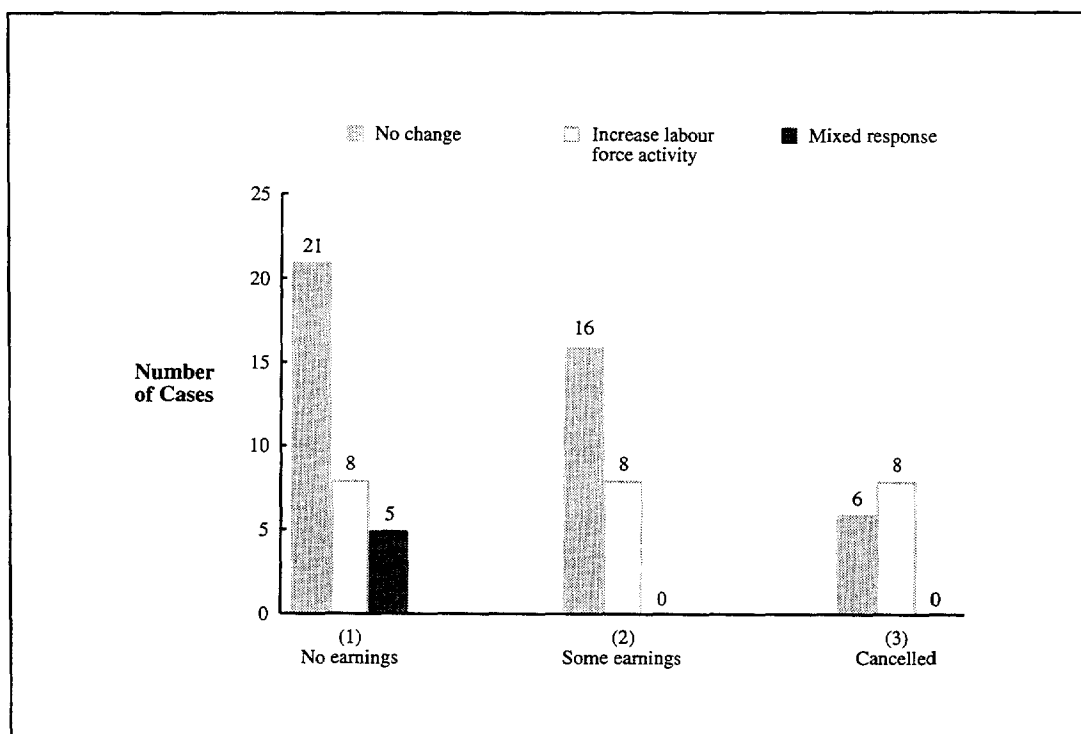
	(1) No earnings (n = 34)	(2) Some earnings (n = 24)	(3) Cancelled (n = 14)
Women's response			
Don't know	18	16	7
Expectation stated	16	8	7
Where expectation stated			
Median anticipated duration (months)	2.0	3.5	2.0
Median elapsed duration (months)	18.0	9.0	12.0
Median excess of elapsed over anticipated duration (months)	13.5	6.5	10.0

half the women in the sample could not say how long they expected their partner to interview, the median time by which the duration of unemployment allowances had so far exceeded expectations was over 12 months for those women in Group 1, and just over 6 months for those in Group 2.

Responses Directly Attributable to Partners' Unemployment

The women were asked: 'When your partner started getting (unemployment allowance), or when you knew he was going to start getting it, did you straight away change or try to change your own work situation in any way?'. Over two thirds of the women (52 out of the 72 applicable cases) said that they made no change; the other 20 reported a range of responses which will be described in more detail below. A following question asked 'Did you later change or try to change your own work situation in any way because your partner was still getting (unemployment allowance)?'; 15 of the 72 women reported some change at this later stage. In the first instance, the types of work responses reported by women in response to these two questions have been grouped into 'no change', 'increased labour force activity' and 'decreased labour force activity'. Increased labour force activity includes responses such as: start looking for work, look for work with more hours, increase hours of work. Decreased labour force activity covers responses in the opposite direction.

The responses to the two questions were then combined to produce the picture shown in Figure 7.8. 'No change' refers to the case where the woman reported no immediate work response and no later work response. Out of the 72 applicable women, 43 (about 60 per cent) reported no change in, or attempt to change, their work situation in response to their partner's unemployment: either straight away or later. 'Increase in labour force activity' refers to the case where the woman increased

Figure 7.8: Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Responses to Partners' Unemployment, by Group

or attempted to increase her labour force activity either straight away or later, with no change at the other time. A third of the sample, 24 women, fell into this category. None of the women fell into the corresponding category of 'decrease in labour force activity', though five of the women reported a 'mixed response': an increase in labour force activity at one stage and a decrease in activity at the other stage. Not surprisingly, Figure 7.8 suggests a relationship between women's current labour force circumstances, as defined by the three Groups, and their propensity to have responded at an earlier stage to their partners' unemployment.

The association between the response to partners' unemployment and women's characteristics is investigated further in Table 7.6. What characteristics are associated with a higher propensity for women to have increased, or attempted to increase, their labour force activity in response to their partner's unemployment? Four characteristics stand out. The most prominent was the woman's age; women under 40 were much more likely to have increased their labour force activity than were women over 40 years old.

The three other characteristics are: the woman's labour force status at the time her partner became unemployed, the partner's duration of unemployment, and housing

Table 7.6: Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Responses to Partners' Unemployment, by Selected Characteristics

	Response			
	No change	Increase labour force activity	Mixed	Total
Group				
No earnings	21	8	5	34
Some earnings	16	8	0	24
Cancelled	6	8	0	14
Woman's labour force status when partner became unemployed				
Employed full time	4	0	0	4
Employed part time	16	7	1	24
Unemployed	3	3	0	6
Not in labour force	20	14	4	38
Number of dependent children				
None	3	2	1	6
One	17	8	4	29
Two or more	23	14	0	37
Age of youngest child				
0-5 years	4	5	0	9
6-12 years	22	14	2	38
13-15 years	11	4	2	17
16 or older	5	1	1	7
No children	1	0	0	1
Woman's age				
Under 40 years	12	13	0	25
40-49 years	31	11	5	47
Migrant status				
Both NESB	20	11	1	32
Neither NESB	20	10	2	32
Other	3	3	2	8
Housing tenure				
Outright owner	15	2	2	19
Purchaser	10	8	2	20
Public renter	9	7	0	16
Private renter	8	7	1	16
Other	1	0	0	1
Elapsed duration of partner's unemployment				
Less than 12 months	16	9	4	29
12-23 months	15	4	0	19
2 years or more	12	11	1	24
Total number	43	24	5	72

tenure. A greater proportion of women who were not employed when their partner became unemployed, than those with some paid work, responded with an increase in labour force activity, possibly reflecting greater scope to increase activity. Similarly, the relatively high proportion of increases in activity among those women whose partner had been unemployed for two years or more may simply reflect the greater time available for a response. On the other hand, it might indicate a recognition that their partners' unemployment was not going to be a brief episode in their lives. Finally, the association with housing tenure suggests that higher housing costs may play a role in determining whether or not women responded to their partners' unemployment, though the close association between age and housing tenure needs to be borne in mind.

Women Who Responded by Increasing Labour Force Activity

As was noted above, 24 women responded to their partners' unemployment by increasing their labour force activity. These responses were mainly initiated within four weeks after the event, and included 17 cases of women without paid work starting to look for work or looking harder for work, and seven cases of women with paid work looking for more hours. Taking a comparison of the women's hours of work at the time their partner became unemployed and at the time of the interviews as a measure of the success of these responses, the following groups can be identified:

- eight women with no work at the outset, who started to look for work or looked harder for work, but still had no work at the time of interview;
- nine women with no work at the outset, who started to look for work or looked harder for work, and had work at the time of interview;
- five women with work at the outset who unsuccessfully tried to increase their hours; and
- two women with work at the outset who successfully tried to increase their hours.

Thus, in about half the cases, responses to increase labour force activity did not translate into any increase in hours worked; or, given the measure of success used, have at least not translated into a sustained increase in hours worked.

Among those eight women who unsuccessfully attempted to get some work, most noted the motivation of the need for more money and mentioned a range of job search efforts: 'I called into factories, shops, looked in the papers and went to the CES with my husband. I tried for half a year, then only looked in the paper'. Of the nine women who did find some work, two found jobs through friends and most of the others found work only after persistent and extensive job search.

Women With Mixed Responses

Five women's responses to their partners' unemployment involved increases and then decreases in labour force activity. In four of these cases, the women started to look for work through a range of channels but stopped when they were unable to find any work: 'There were no jobs available for someone my age, who hasn't got the skills they want and hasn't much experience'; 'It was difficult finding work anywhere, and there wasn't enough money to keep driving around looking'; 'I became very disheartened and my husband, because of his heart condition, wasn't keen for me to work anyway'.

In the fifth case, the only case in the sample where the woman's response to her partner's unemployment was to decrease her labour force activity, the woman resigned from her part-time job. She did this on the basis of a financial calculation with consideration of the value of her part-time earnings, unemployment allowance, and the cost of petrol for getting to and from work. Financial pressures, in particular the need to keep up mortgage payments, subsequently motivated her to look for full-time work though she had not yet found any by the time of the interview.

Once again, it is worth a reminder that these survey results do not purport to, and indeed are unable to, provide an indication of the behaviour of the wives of unemployed men in general. The survey results are heavily conditioned by the sample design and their purpose is to identify and illustrate different types of response.

7.5 Other Responses to Partners' Unemployment

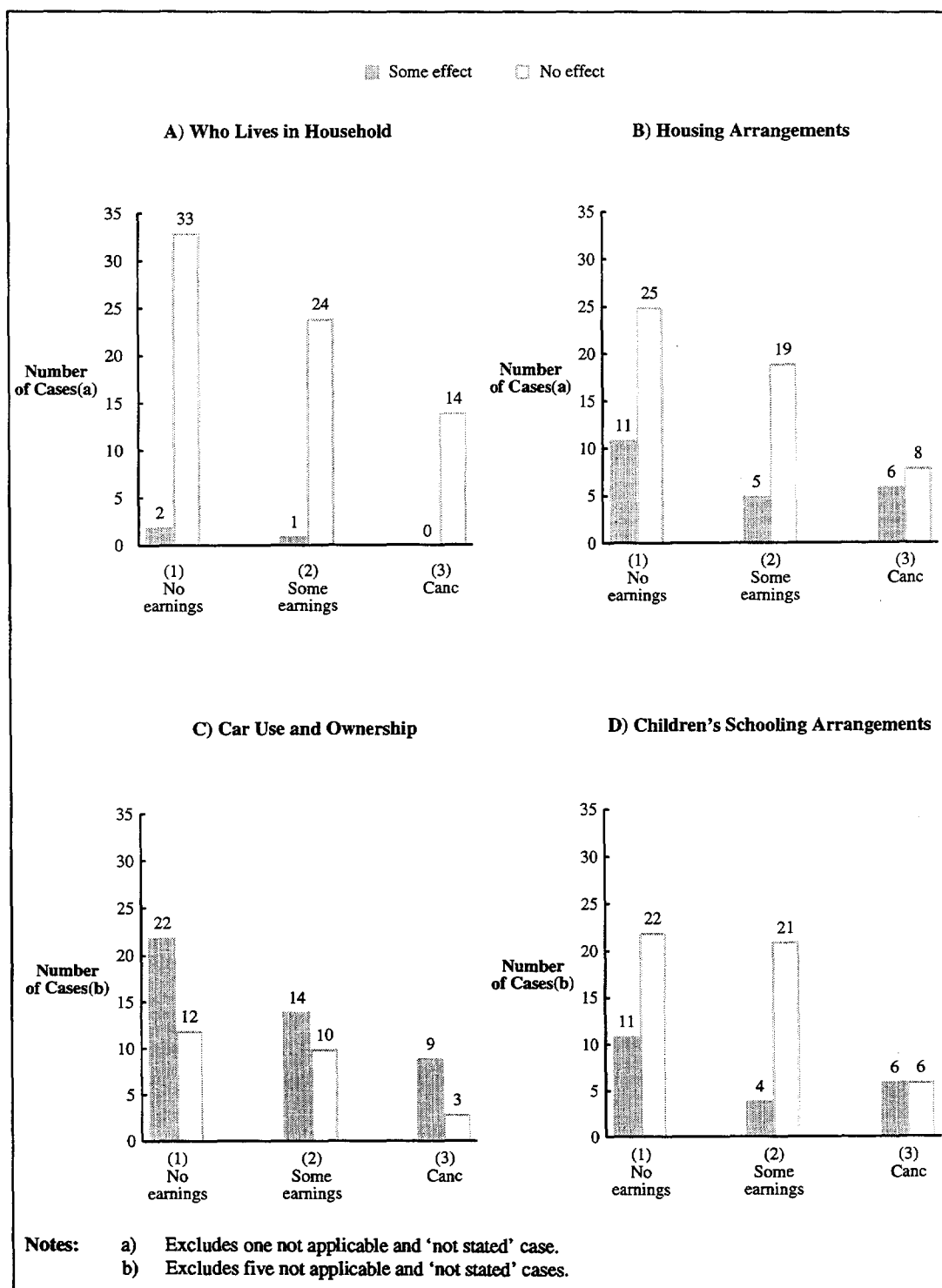
The women were also asked questions to elicit an impression of other effects of their partners' unemployment which may have conditioned their labour market responses. These included the matters of the numbers of people living in the household, their housing and car arrangements and, where applicable, their children's education. The responses to these questions are shown in Figure 7.9.

Who Lives in the Household

Three women said that the fact that their partner had been receiving unemployment allowance had affected who lived with them. In one case, their daughter and son-in-law had come to live with them to help pay the bills. In another case, the youngest son moved out because he was unemployed and they could not afford to support him. In the third case, which appears to have more to do with rent-setting in public housing than with the partner's receipt of unemployment allowance, the children left home as soon as they found jobs because otherwise the rent would be increased.

Housing Arrangements

A considerable number of the women, 22, reported some change to their housing arrangements as a result of their partners' continued receipt of unemployment

Figure 7.9: Survey Sample: Impact of Partner's Unemployment on Selected Aspects of Couple's Circumstances

allowance. These all clearly related to difficulties meeting their housing costs, though in no case had yet resulted in the couple deciding or being forced to move. In eight cases, the women reported that they were falling behind with rent or mortgage payments, with consequences of varying seriousness. In one of these cases, the bank had threatened to foreclose on the loan, in another the Department of Housing had warned of possibility of eviction, while in another the Department had proved to be quite flexible. In six cases, the couples were getting some form of assistance to meet their housing costs: payments from the Mortgage Relief Scheme in two cases but, otherwise, informal help in the form of loans or gifts from family and friends. The other main type of effects was where housing costs had been reduced. Five women reported reduced housing costs as a result of the income-related nature of public housing rents or renegotiation of mortgage repayment schedules and, in one case, by bargaining with a private landlord.

Car Ownership

Most of the women, 45 out of the 70 who answered the question, said that their partner going on to unemployment allowance had affected their car situation in some way. In over half of these cases, the effect amounted to difficulty meeting the running costs of a car: nine mentioning less use of the car because of petrol costs, ten reporting difficulty with maintenance costs or forgoing maintenance, and nine specifically mentioned difficulties with the costs of registration and insurance. In other cases, the effect of partners' unemployment was to reduce the number of cars that the couple had: from two to one in four cases, and from one to none in five cases. A work car was lost when the partner lost his job in two of these cases, the car loan repayments could not be kept up and the vehicle was surrendered in one case, and in the other cases the car was sold.

Childrens' Schooling Arrangements

Among the 70 women who had school-age children during the course of their partners' unemployment, 21 thought that it had affected their children's schooling arrangements in some way. In 19 of these cases, the women reported difficulties paying school expenses, with particular reference to the costs of excursions, uniforms and public school fees. Two of these families were receiving assistance from the school. Two faced difficulty with private school fees; one thought their son would have to be taken out of private school if they remained on unemployment allowance while, in the other case, continued private school education had remained possible since the woman found part-time work. Two women said that they had hoped to send their children to private school, but now did not think this was going to be possible.

7.6 Some Case Studies

One way of gaining a full appreciation of the diversity of experiences of the women included in this study is by way of individual case studies. In this section several

case histories of the labour force behaviour of women since leaving school up until the time of interview are presented. Particular attention is given to their responses to their husbands' and their own unemployment.

There are several common features that can be identified in these case histories.

- Women's employment patterns of either full- or part-time work are strongly contingent on the age of the youngest child, the number of dependent children and the women's need to have paid work and earn money to help with the family's financial situation. However the unemployment of their husband appears to have little direct effect on the wife's labour force behaviour.
- It was rare for husbands' unemployment benefit payments to end as a result of the women's employment.
- It appears that some women who were initially in full-time skilled employment are, after marriage and children, employed below their level of qualifications and skills and working in part-time low-skilled or unskilled occupations.

In summary, we might describe many of the families described in this section as 'Aussie battlers', families with limited resources, harshly affected by downturns in the economy and particularly by the recession of the early nineties.

Group 1: Women With No Earnings

Pamela, aged 42, left school at 15 years of age. For two years she worked as a shop assistant, before leaving to have her first child. After the birth she married and returned to work as a shop assistant full time. After three years Pamela left work as her husband wanted her to be at home. The next year she had her second child. The next two years Pamela spent at home caring for her two children. When her husband, an apprentice electrician, left her Pamela returned to full-time work as a checkout operator. After two years working, she left work as she was expecting her third child. She remarried, had a fourth child and spent the next three years at home with her six children (including two step-children). Pamela has not been in paid work since 1975. She is actively seeking part-time work as a checkout operator but thinks her age is the main reason she is not able to find work.

Pamela's second husband, aged 44, worked most of his life as a labourer and then a truck driver. He lost his driving licence and his job in 1990 and has received JSA/NSA since that time. The couple, dependent on NSA and Family Payment, live with their youngest child (15) in public housing.

Eva, aged 43, came to Australia from Europe when she was three. After leaving school at 16, she worked for three years in a clerical position. After marrying and having her first child Eva stayed at home for four years. Two more children were born in this time. When a catering position with good hours came along she re-entered the labour market and worked for seven years part time. Wanting a change,

Eva began work as a process worker full time. After three years in this position she had her fourth child, when she was 33. After two years at home caring for her children Eva began part-time work (25 hours per week) as a sales representative. She worked for seven years until her position was made redundant in December 1992. Eva is looking for part-time work in retail sales but has not been able to find work since 1992. Eva gives her age as the main reason it is difficult to find work.

Eva's husband, aged 44, worked most of his life as a fitter/machinist. After 20 years in his last position he was made redundant in 1993 and has been in receipt of JSA for five months. The couple live with their four children and own their own home.

Brigid, aged 44, arrived in Australia from Europe when 12 months old. After leaving school at 15, Brigid worked for about 18 months as a sales assistant then a filing clerk before marrying. She had two children and stayed at home for three years caring, before returning for six months to full-time employment as a process worker, when her youngest was nine months old. When her youngest was four, Brigid found part-time evening work as a cleaner so her husband could mind their young children. She worked full time as a process worker when her youngest was six. Two years later she began full-time work in the telecommunications industry and worked in the industry for 14 years during which time her third child was born. In 1986, aged 36 she remarried and worked full time with Telecom, first as a telephonist, then a data entry clerk, then a receptionist. Brigid was retrenched in 1993 and is actively seeking full-time work as a receptionist. Her age is the main reason Brigid thinks it is difficult to find work.

Brigid's first husband was a bricklayer who was in and out of work most of his life, on occasions going to other towns in NSW to find work. Brigid's second husband, aged 50, has worked in various positions, as a factory worker, hospital wardsman, cleaner and driver. He was only ever out of work between jobs for a few weeks and did not apply for unemployment benefits. Retrenched three times, the last in 1992, he applied for benefits only when Brigid was retrenched eight months later, in 1993. Brigid's husband now works six hours a week as a hospital minibus driver and he is currently completing a part time clerical course at the local TAFE. The couple own their own home and their youngest child (15) lives with them.

Brenda, aged 46, after leaving school at age 15 worked briefly as a machinist, then as a telephonist for two years before commencing a nursing course. Two years into her course, Brenda left and married at age 20. Brenda then worked as a full-time clerk for 18 months until her first child was born. She had five children and except for two periods of 12 months as a laundry worker and later 12 months as a process worker, she has been out of the labour market since 1983. Brenda is not seeking employment.

Brenda's husband, aged 47, has worked most of his life as a painter and decorator. Work in his trade became difficult to find after they moved to their current home (public housing) and he was unemployed from time to time for about three years, receiving unemployment benefits for some of this period. In the early eighties he worked for about seven years as a country train guard. He left this job and set up his

own painting business because he was needed at home to help with rearing his children. After two years he became unemployed and completed a training course as a storeman. He then worked full time for two years in a chemical factory as a storeman leaving in 1990 due to health problems related to his employment. Brenda's husband has been unemployed for about three years and is in receipt of NSA. The couple and two of their children rent in public housing.

Annetta, aged 47, came to Australia with her husband from a middle eastern country when she was 25. Two months after their arrival her first child was born. She then worked full time for 12 months as a factory hand as the couple wanted to buy a home. Another child was born and Annetta was at home for three years caring for her children. Returning to full-time factory work for financial reasons when her youngest was four, she worked for two years until she was retrenched. The family moved house and Annetta could not find work for 12 months. Aged 30, when her youngest was five, Annetta returned to work for 12 years, full time, in a factory job, during which time a third child was born. She sustained a work related injury in 1988 and could not find a job with light duties. She has been out of work since her injury occurred. Annetta who is actively seeking full-time 'light' work thinks the main reason she is having difficulty finding work is because there are no suitable jobs available.

Annetta's husband, aged 46, worked first as a steel worker, then as a builder. He was unemployed in 1975/76 for about 12 months when he could not find work. The couple used their savings in this period and then the husband began work as a self-employed builder. After 12 years he could not find work and became unemployed in 1988. He has been in and out of employment for four years and out of work currently for 15 months. The couple and their three children, two students, one unemployed, are in the private rental market paying \$310 per fortnight.

Lisa, 47 years of age, left school aged 15. For five years she worked in an office learning typing and telephonist skills. Married, Lisa had two children and went back to full-time work as a packer in a factory when her youngest child was eight months old. Child care arrangements were unsatisfactory and there was a lack of child minding facilities in the area so she left work. Lisa was then out of the labour force for 17 years caring for her three children. In her early forties she returned to employment full time as a manager of the dairy section of a supermarket. Not wanting to work full time she moved to part-time work as a checkout operator after 12 months. Lisa resigned her position because of her husband's circumstances. Lisa is actively seeking full-time work that does not involve any heavy lifting but thinks the main reason she is having difficulty finding work is that there are no suitable jobs available.

Lisa's husband, aged 49, worked most of his life as a storeman. His last job of four years ended when he was retrenched in January 1993. Both Lisa and her husband worked in the same local area, a considerable distance from their home and not accessible by public transport. After losing his job, her husband continued to drive Lisa to and from her job. Some two months later the couple decided it was not

worth Lisa's while to continue in employment as her earnings were cutting her husband off benefit and also entitlement to a concession card for pharmaceuticals (he was on constant medication) and their transport costs were high. The couple are paying a mortgage of \$859 per month and plan to approach Home Fund for a reduction on their payments as the son who previously contributed to the payments no longer lives at home. The couple live with two of their children and a grandchild of ten months.

Group 2: Women With Some Earnings

Patsy, now aged 48, left school at age 15. After working as a shop assistant full time for seven years, Patsy married and had a child. When the child was 12 months old she returned to work as a kitchen hand. She held this job for three years and then the family moved. After having another child, she did not have paid work for four years. Needing money, Patsy did baby-sitting full time in her home for about 12 months. She separated from her husband and received Sole Parent Pension for about three years. On remarriage at age 34, Patsy had another child and spent the next seven years at home caring for the children and also baby-sitting full time. In 1986, she worked full time in factory work for 12 months. Patsy's second marriage broke down, the youngest child aged eight lived with the father and Patsy worked as a medical receptionist part time as well as receiving unemployment benefits. Patsy repartnered in 1987 and worked as a cashier four hours a week. This is her current position and because of her age she is not looking for more paid work.

Patsy's first husband worked as a mail van driver, the second as a clerk and her third, aged 38, is a court officer. Her third husband has been unemployed off and on for six years and when employed is on a casual part-time basis. He also has casual employment as a part-time (six hours a week) price assessor. Currently he has a temporary job as a court officer 35 hours a week for four weeks. The couple, with two children at home, are in public rental housing.

Sharon, aged 40, left school at 14 and worked as a factory/process worker for four years. Married at 18, she worked for four years as a process worker. Sharon then had two children within three years. When the youngest was 18 months old Sharon returned to full-time work as a process worker. After six years she had enough and then worked part time on and off as a process worker or shop assistant till aged 30 when she had her third child. When her youngest was five, Sharon had a casual job for six months part time as a kitchen hand and then worked as a shop assistant part time for two years till the shop shut down. In 1991, aged 36, she began working part time (25 hours) as a shop assistant. This is her current position. Sharon is happy with her current hours and does not want to change.

Sharon's husband, aged 44, has worked most of his life as a storeman or barworker. In 1991 while working as a storeman he was laid off. He has been unemployed and on JSA/NSA since then. There is one child at home and the couple pay rent of \$ 165 in the private market.

Katrina, aged 48, came to Australia from Eastern Europe when she was 27. Before coming to Australia Katrina had left school at 18, studied for three years as a building technician and then was in the army for two years. She then worked for two years as a building consultant before moving to the UK and spending two years studying and not in the labour force. In 1972, Katrina, her husband, an east European, and child came to Australia and in 1975 their second child was born. Katrina worked as a tax consultant each year but mainly was at home caring for her children. In 1981 a third child was born and in 1987, when her husband set up a driving school, Katrina began working in the business. Katrina is not looking for more work but would like business to pick up.

Katrina's husband, aged 46, worked as a clerk before coming to Australia. Since arriving in Australia he has worked as a process worker, delivery driver and taxi driver. He starting working for a driving school 12 years ago and in 1987 became self-employed in the driving school business. Business has experienced a down turn in the last three years and he has been in receipt of part JSA for seven months. He and his wife work approximately five to ten hours per week together and have a joint income from work of around \$100 per week. The couple and their two children rent privately (\$ 130 per week).

Annabel, aged 46, left school at 16 and worked as a nanny for about two years. Wanting a change she worked as a ward maid for two years. At 20, Annabel married and had a child. In 1973 Annabel, her husband and two children, came to Australia from the UK. She worked in 1974 for six months as a part-time process worker while her husband cared for the children and then in 1975 she had her third child. The family moved to a rural area on the outskirts of Sydney and between 1975 and 1993 there was no need for Annabel to work as her husband was on 'good money'. A fourth child was born in 1981. Annabel has a chronic debilitating disease which allows only minimal participation in paid work. For the last 12 months she has worked six hours each Sunday at a local market selling her plants, earning between \$30 and \$ 50 a week. Annabel is not seeking work mainly because of her ill-health.

Annabel's husband began work as a baker's assistant, then a psychiatric nurse, and a prison officer. He worked for seven years in a bakery again before coming to Australia. Since arriving in Australia he has worked as a car salesman for 20 years. He was retrenched in 1993. He has been in receipt of JSA for eight months and has no work at present. The couple, who live with their two youngest children, are paying a mortgage of \$354 per month.

Sarah, aged 39, came to Australia from the UK shortly after leaving school at 14. After working for three years as an office worker, then shop assistant she married and had her first child. When her child was 12 months old, Sarah worked for two years full time as a shop assistant as she needed the money. In 1975, Sarah had her second and then third child and was at home for three years caring for her children. Aged 25 and with her youngest three years old, Sarah returned to factory work full time. When she was 27, her marriage broke down and for five years she received SPP. In 1986, Sarah remarried and had her fourth child and stayed at home caring

for her children until 1992 when her husband lost his job. Sarah began a clerical part-time (ten hours per week) job in 1992 and is currently working in this position. She is not interested in obtaining further paid work.

Sarah's first husband worked as a white goods mechanic. Her second husband, aged 42, is a truck driver. After injuring his back in 1992, he lost his job. He received workers compensation for a period of time and for the last 12 months has been in receipt of JSA and has not worked. The couple live with three of their children in public housing.

Katie, aged 47, was born in New Zealand and left school at 18. She commenced full-time nursing training and after 12 months she migrated to Australia where she worked for four years as a nursing assistant. Katie married and had her first child at age 24, returning to part-time nursing work six months later because she wanted to work and they needed the money. Katie's second child was born when she was 25 and she returned to nursing part time when the youngest was three months old. Two years later, she and her family returned to New Zealand to care for her sick father. While in New Zealand she worked full time as a shop assistant, when her youngest was three years old. After her father's death, Katie returned to Australia. Twins were born in 1979 and Katie returned to nursing work full time when the twins were 12 months old. Eight months later Katie cut back her nursing job to part time (16 hours per week) due to child care needs and has maintained this job for the last 11 years. Katie suffers with high blood pressure and would like to work full time if her health was better.

Katie's husband, aged 51, born in New Zealand, worked as a painter and decorator in Australia. When the family returned to New Zealand he worked as a truck driver. On return to Australia he resumed work as a painter for a short time and then worked as a truck driver from 1981 until 1991 when he became ill and has not worked since. He was on Sickness Allowance for 18 months then NSA for the last six months. The couple and their three children are in the private rental market paying rent of \$150 per week.

Soo, a 37 year old Asian, had only two years of schooling before working most of her life on her family's farm. When she was 28, Soo came to Australia with her husband and three children. A fourth child was born soon after their arrival. She was out of the labour force from 1984 to 1993, caring for her children. She began looking for work when her youngest child, an asthmatic, was seven. She tried working in a clothing factory but found the electric machines were too fast to operate - she had never used an electric sewing machine before. In July 1993 she began work in a chicken processing plant. She works four hours a day, four days a week. Soo is not looking for more paid work as there is the prospect of a full-time job in her current job after a trial period. Soo's husband cares for the children when she is working.

Soo's husband, aged 38, spent most of his life as a fisherman with his family. Since arrival in Australia in 1984 he has been in receipt of JSA/NSA and has had no paid work. Neither Soo nor her husband can read, write or speak English. The couple

live with their niece and three youngest children in the private rental market and pay \$160 per week rent.

Group 3: Benefit Cancelled

Karin, aged 40, born in South America, came to Australia with her husband and two children in 1987 when 34. After finishing school, aged 20, Karin found work difficult to get and worked off and on as a cashier/secretary till her marriage at 24. After the birth of her first child the following year, Karin was at home for five years. She returned to secretarial work part time for two years and then had her second child in 1984. Karin was at home for two years caring for her children and then worked part time in the school shop/canteen for 12 months before coming to Australia. Eight months after arriving here, she began working part time (16 hours per week) as a cleaner and is currently in this position. Karin has just completed a two year part-time course in dressmaking/fashion at the local TAFE. Karin is not looking for more paid work due to caring for children and difficulty with English.

Karin's husband was in the army for one year after finishing school and then worked for 15 years as a security guard before coming to Australia. Employed as a carpenter for six years, he lost his job in 1992 and was unemployed for about 18 months. He has been in employment as a casual carpenter for the last month. The couple and their two student children share a house with a relative's family. The house is divided into two self-contained flats and the couple pay a mortgage of \$ 780 per month. The couple were assisted by their relatives with the mortgage payments when Karin's husband became unemployed.

Sally, aged 36, came to Australia from northern Europe when 14 years of age. After leaving school at 18, Sally worked as an office assistant till she was retrenched two years later. Working then as a sales assistant, Sally was retrenched again after four years. She worked as a process worker for two years till retrenched because of a repetitive strain injury in both wrists and neck. When she was 24, Sally was on workers compensation for six months, then married and had a child. When her youngest was two, Sally returned to paid work as a part-time sales consultant. The company closed down 12 months later and Sally was out of work for six months. From 1988 to 1993, she worked part time (27 hours per week) as a sales assistant in a supermarket and is currently in this position. Sally has tried to gain extra hours in her current job with little success. If another part-time job became available Sally thought it would not be worth taking because of child care costs.

Sally's husband, aged 35, left school at 13 to care for his mother and seven other children. Entering employment at 17, he worked as a process worker, shoe repair and key cutter and in later years as a self-taught cabinet maker. He was unemployed for 18 months in the late seventies and again in 1991 when he was retrenched. He worked off and on in casual positions, gaining full-time casual employment in June 1993. His position became permanent in October 1993 and he is currently working in this position. The couple who live with their two student children are paying a mortgage of \$910 per month. They experienced great difficulty meeting mortgage

and council payments and paying bills when Sally's husband was unemployed and it appeared they would have to sell their home to pay their debts. The couple gained assistance under the Mortgage Assistance Scheme and are now attempting to pay back that particular loan, the bank mortgage and overdue council rates.

Nancy, aged 34, left school aged 18 and worked for three years as a receptionist until retrenched. After an eight week period on unemployment benefits, Nancy worked as a full-time ward clerk for seven years. During this period she married, left her job and went to live in the ACT because of her husband's employment. Nancy had three children and was not in paid work for four years, caring for the children. Returning to Sydney and with the youngest child 18 months old, Nancy began work part time as a ward clerk. After 14 months, Nancy changed her job to weekend work (13 hours) so her husband could care for their children. Previous work at a different hospital necessitated child care for three children and even with fee relief Nancy was using half her wages to pay for care. Nancy receives on the job training in computers and expects more training when the system is upgraded. Nancy, if given the choice, would rather be home with her children.

Nancy's husband had worked for 19 years as a clerk/teller with a large bank. For three years before the children were born he had a second job as a club attendant (20 hours per week). In July 1993, he was retrenched and received unemployment benefits for eight weeks. Nancy commented that her husband's JSA payment was greatly reduced because of her earnings and if she had given up work they would have been in a similar situation moneywise. He currently has a similar clerking job as previously with a large insurance company. The couple are paying a mortgage of \$440 per fortnight. When he was retrenched the couple used some of the retrenchment money to pay the bank mortgage payments six months in advance because of their lower income when on social security payments.

8 The Labour Force Decision: Reasons and Characteristics

Already, from the descriptions in the previous two sections, a picture has been developed of characteristics which distinguish women in the three sample groups covered in the survey. Now, the focus shifts away from a distinction between women according to their current employment status and toward a distinction based on their employment aspirations. For example, up to this point, all women with no earnings where the couple was receiving an unemployment allowance have been placed in the same boat. Now, we distinguish among those women according to whether or not they are looking for work and, if so, whether that is part-time or full-time work, and look for distinguishing features. The account of the survey results thus becomes more closely linked with the process of obtaining employment.

Gaining employment can usefully be seen as the result of two steps: entering the labour force and finding work. Separation of these two steps corresponds, firstly, to a focus on the reasons why some women decide not to look for some or more paid work and, secondly, to a focus on the reasons why some of those that do look for work then have difficulty finding work. It recognises the point that the low employment rate among women whose partners are receiving unemployment benefits may be the result of a low level of labour force participation and/or a high unemployment rate.

Examination of the labour force participation decision begins in this chapter, looking at the stated reasons given by survey respondents for their labour force participation decisions and setting these in the context of their objective circumstances. This analysis is complemented in Section 9 by consideration of the part played by attitudes and household roles in the labour force participation decision. Section 10 then turns to an examination of the nature of job search and the difficulties faced by those women who have decided to look for work.

8.1 Labour Force Participation

In this and the following Section, women are distinguished according to the intensity of their labour force participation. The standard classification of labour force participation counts people who either have or are looking for paid employment as in the labour force and all others as out of the labour force. Our interest in labour force participation, however, needs to extend beyond a simple distinction between being in or out of the labour force. In order to capture the range of circumstances of women in our sample we need to consider the degree of labour force participation and, to this end, a three-part classification of labour force participation has been derived. It is defined as follows:

- Not in the labour force
 - no paid work and not looking for work.
- Part-time labour force
 - part-time paid work and not looking for full-time work, or
 - looking for part-time work.
- Full-time labour force
 - full-time paid work, or
 - looking for full-time paid work.

This classification of labour force participation differs from the standard classification of labour force status, as used for example by the ABS, in the scope of the second and third elements. A standard classification of labour force status would add the distinction between part-time and full-time work, but would assign women without work but looking for work to a separate category of unemployed. In contrast, the classification used here includes the combination in single categories of employed and unemployed people, and of people with different levels of employment. The third category, for example, will include people with full-time jobs, people with part-time work who are looking for full-time work, and people with no work who are looking for full-time work. The classification is somewhat unusual but its basis is the fact that we are interested at this stage solely in the degree of labour force participation: we will come in Section 10 to the matter of how job search translates into actually finding work.

The pattern of labour force participation among the women in the sample is shown in Table 8.1 which is derived by adding consideration of job search to the picture of current paid work. None of the 36 women in Group 1 (No Earnings) had paid work at the time of the survey, yet only 15 of these women reported that they were looking for work, seven looking for part-time work and eight looking for full-time work. Those women not looking for work are counted as having nil labour force participation (NILF), those looking for part-time work as having part-time labour force participation (PTLFP), and those looking for full-time work as having full-time labour force participation (FTLFP).

Well over half of the women in Group 1 were therefore not in the labour force, and an obvious question of interest concerns the factors associated with this continued withdrawal by many from the labour force. That it is continued withdrawal, rather than cases of people who have never been in the labour force, was indicated in the previous chapter; in particular, Table 7.1 showed that only three of the women in Group 1 had never held a job for three months or more. Another question concerns why some are looking for part-time work and some for full-time work.

Akin to the question of why women without any paid work are not looking for work, is the question of why those women in the sample with part-time work are not looking for more work.

Table 8.1: Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Participation Status by Group and Paid Work Status

Group and woman's paid work status ^(a)	Labour force participation ^(a)			
	Nil	Part-time	Full-time	Total
No earnings				
Nil	21	8	7	36
Some earnings				
Part-time	-	18 ^(b)	5	23
Full-time	-	-	2	2
Subtotal	-	18	7	25
Cancelled				
Nil	0	1	0	1
Part-time	-	7 ^(c)	0	7
Full-time	-	-	6	6
Subtotal	0	8	6	14
Total	21	34	20	75

Notes:

- a) Full time is defined as 35 hours per week or more.
- b) Comprises 16 women not looking for more work and two looking for increased part-time hours.
- c) Comprises 6 women not looking for more work and one looking for increased part-time hours.

While all 25 women in Group 2 had some paid work at the time of the survey, out of the 23 who had part-time work only seven were looking for more work. Group 2 comprises 18 women with PTLFP (16 part-time workers who were not looking for more work, and two part-time workers who were looking for more work but not enough to make them full-time) and seven women with FTLFP (two with full-time jobs, and five with part-time jobs but looking for full-time work). Around two-thirds of the women in Group 2 thus reported that they were not looking for some or more paid work. What characteristics are associated with the low level of labour force participation of these women?

In summary, the exercise now is to look for features which distinguish those women who either have or are looking for full-time paid work (FTLFP), those who either

have or are looking for part-time paid work (PTLFP), and those who neither have nor are looking for paid work (NILF). The exercise is conducted in two parts, with this section looking for the suggestion of associations between concrete characteristics and the intensity of labour force participation, while Section 9 covers the part played by attitudes and roles.

For the remainder of this section, the examination is restricted to the women in Groups 1 and 2: those in Group 3 are excluded because potentially important characteristics such as the woman's age and the age of youngest child are so different from the women in the other two groups, with this difference being a result of the manner in which that part of the sample was drawn. The inclusion of the Group 3 women would muddy the comparison between women with different degrees of labour force participation, which can otherwise be conducted with a more homogeneous group of women.

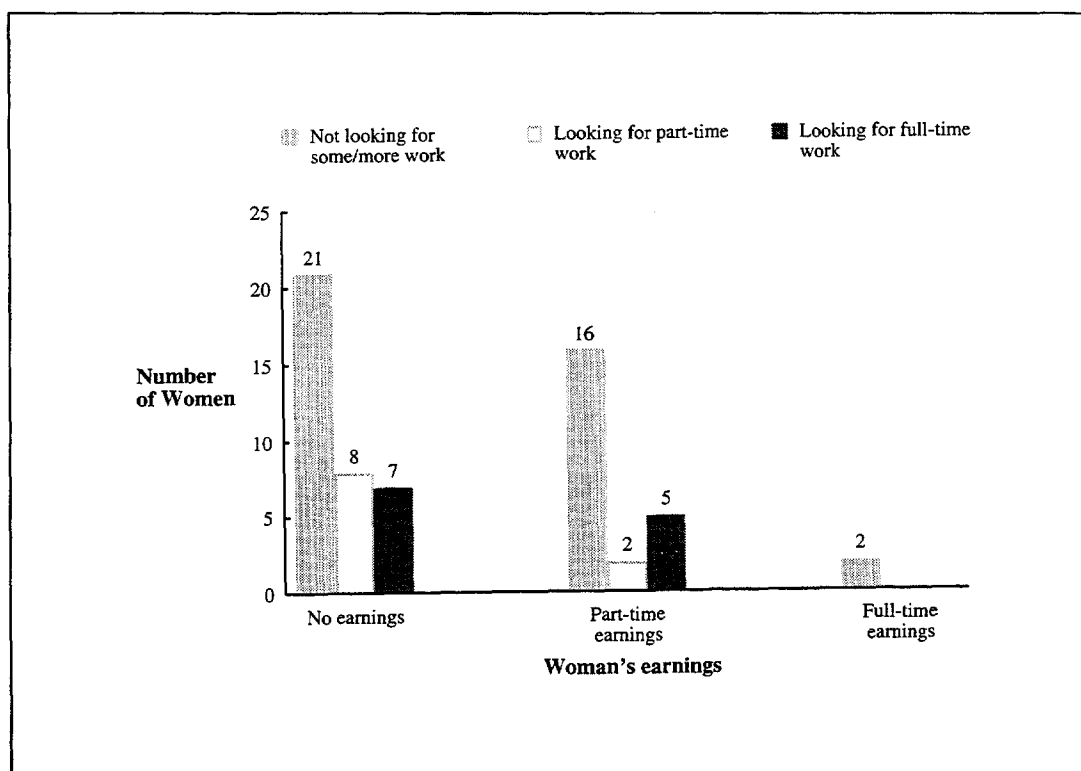
8.2 Reasons for Not Increasing Labour Force Participation

What characteristics might be associated with differences in the women's intensity of labour force participation? One place to begin is examination of the reasons women gave for not seeking to increase their labour force participation. Women who were not looking for work, or who were not looking for more work, were presented with a list of some of the common reasons people give for not looking for some/more work and asked to indicate which, if any, were important in their case. They were then asked to identify the main reason. The portion of the sample responding to this question is indicated by Figure 8.1 and includes: the 21 women in Group 1 with no paid work and not looking for work, and the 16 part-time workers and 2 full-time workers in Group 2 who were not looking for more work.

The detailed responses to the question on why women were not looking for some or more work, including the list of response options provided, are given in Table 8.2, with a summarised form in Figures 8.2 and 8.3. The two figures group the alternative responses into seven broad types of reason but are not simply an addition of the categories in Table 8.2. Their preparation also involved examination and allocation of the 'other' responses, as well as the avoidance of double counting where, for example, a woman mentioned two specific reasons within a single group of reasons.

Women with No Earnings

We look first at the women without any paid work, and their reasons for not attempting to increase their labour force participation from nil to part-time or full-time. Caring responsibilities emerge clearly from Figures 8.2 and 8.3 as the most prevalent reason given by women in this group for not looking for work. This reason was mentioned by 16 of the 21 women in the group, and was identified as the main reason in half of these cases. Mostly, these were cases of caring for children, though there were also instances of caring for partners and grandchildren. Where caring

Figure 8.1: Survey Sample: Women's Job Search and Earnings Status

responsibilities were nominated as the main reason for being out of the workforce, it was always with regard to the care of children. After caring responsibilities, women's own ill-health/disability and discouragement, primarily responses of 'no jobs', were each mentioned by just under half of all the women with no paid work, and each constituted the main reason for not looking for work for about a quarter of the group.

Caring responsibilities, the women's own ill-health or disability, and discouragement thus accounted for the great majority of both all reasons mentioned and main reasons. Other possible reasons were only mentioned infrequently. Five of the 21 women mentioned financial disincentives including four who believed that it was 'financially not worth it', three who mentioned the reduction in unemployment allowance, and two who mentioned the loss of concessions. Those women who said that it was 'financially not worth it' were asked to elaborate. Two of the women said that they were not qualified for anything that pays well, one of them only seeing prospects of piecework in the clothing industry with pay rates which would not make it worthwhile to her. Another woman only saw the prospect of intermittent casual work and, based on her partner's previous experience, did not believe it was worth the hassle with DSS involved in going off and on payments. Still, financial

Table 8.2: Survey Sample: Reasons Women not Looking for Some/More Work by Group
(Number of women who nominated each reason)

Reason	(1) No earnings (n = 21)	(2) Some earnings (n = 17) ^(a)	Total (n = 38) ^(a)
Number of women who nominated each reason			
Has work	0	6	6
No jobs	6	2	8
Financially, not worth it	4	2	6
Caring for children	14	8	22
Caring for spouse	4	1	5
Caring for other	0	1	1
In training/education	0	1	1
Transport difficulties	2	0	2
Reduction of pension/benefit	3	2	5
Loss of concessions	2	0	2
Own ill-health/disability	10	4	14
Other	4	6	10
Main reason			
Has work	0	3	3
No jobs	4	0	4
Financially, not worth it	1	0	1
Caring for children	7	3	10
Caring for spouse	0	0	0
Caring for other	0	0	0
In training/education	0	1	1
Transport difficulties	0	0	0
Reduction of pension/benefit	1	0	1
Loss of concessions	0	0	0
Own ill-health/disability	5	4	9
Other	2	5	7
Not stated	1	2	3
Total number	21	18	39

Note: a) Excludes one 'not stated' case.

disincentives appear to be a relatively unimportant consideration, mentioned by only five of the 21 women in the group and amounting to the main reason in only two cases. The only other type of reason mentioned by the women in this group was 'other constraints', including cases of difficulty with transport and with English, but in no cases amounting to the main reason why these women were not looking for work.

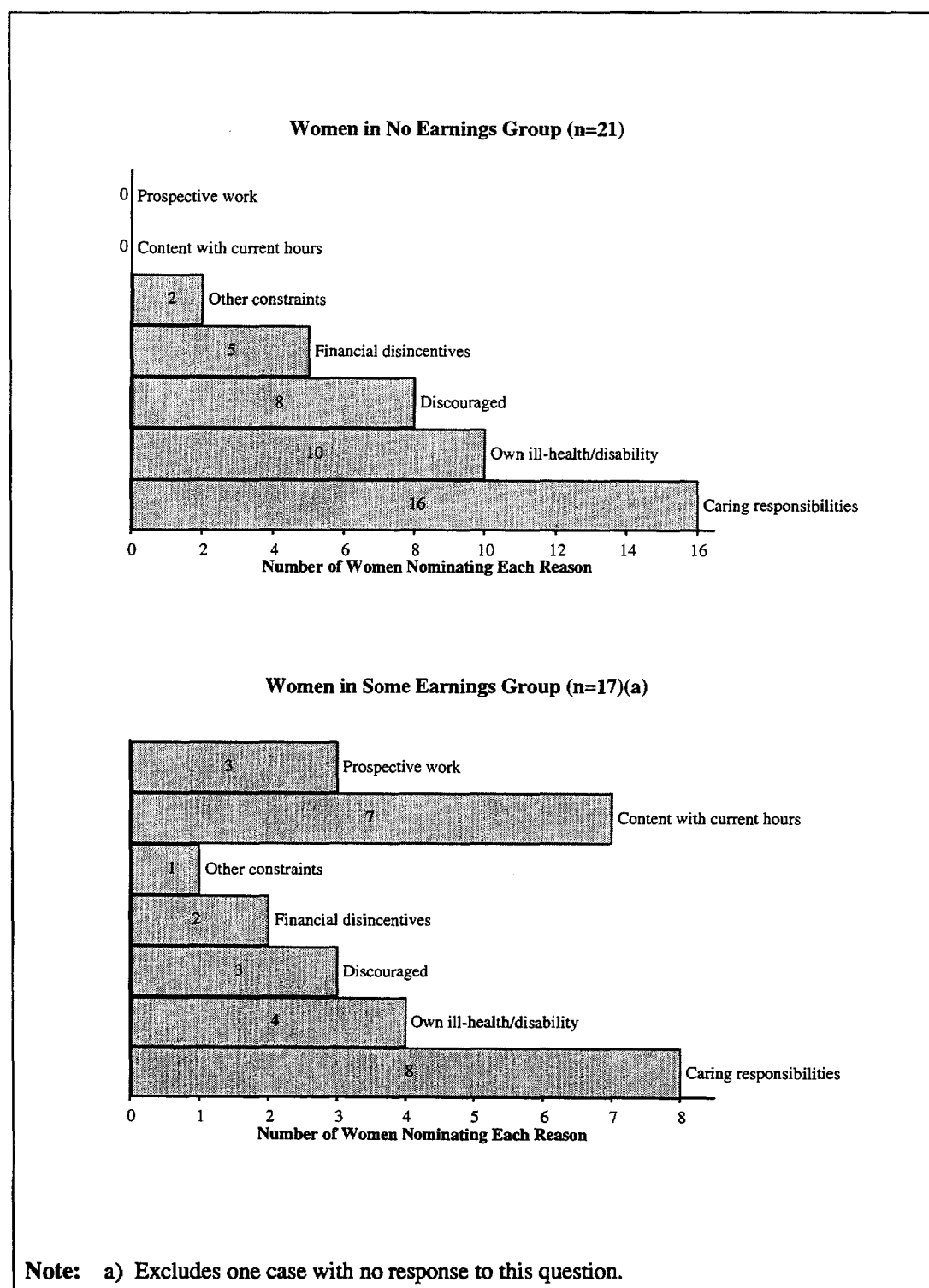
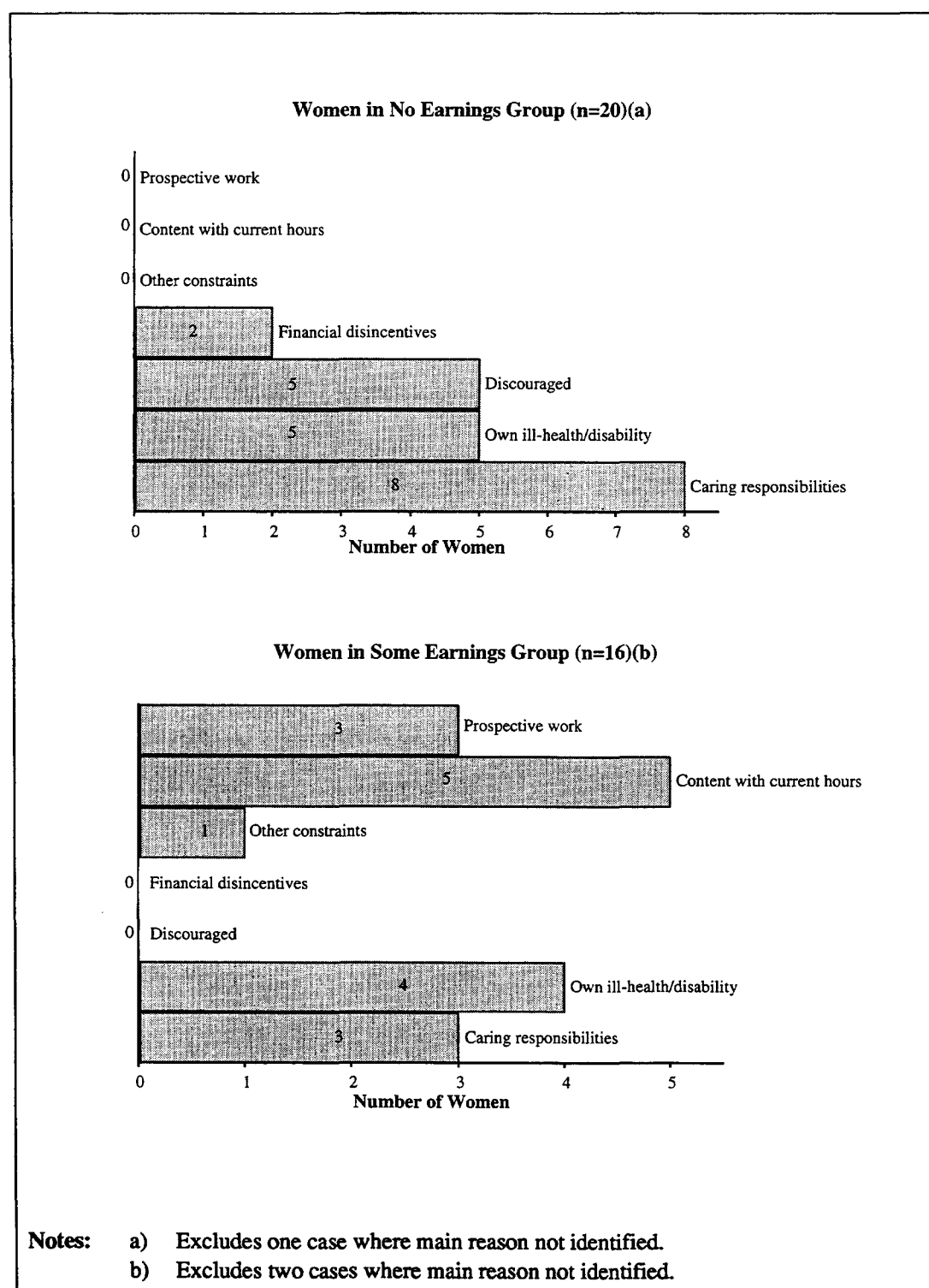
Figure 8.2: Survey Sample: Reasons Women Not Looking for Some/More Work

Figure 8.3: Survey Sample: Main Reason Women Not Looking for Some/More Work

Women with Some Earnings

For the group of women with some earnings, 16 with part-time work and two with full-time work, the relative frequencies of mentions of caring responsibilities, own ill-health or disability, discouragement and financial disincentives are similar to those found for the group of women with no paid work (Figures 8.2). For this group, however, two further types of reason emerge: satisfaction with current hours and situations where increased hours are in prospect and no job search is required. The fact that only five of the 15 women in the group mentioned satisfaction with current hours might be seen to suggest that the remainder of the women in the group are dissatisfied with their hours, though this would be wrong. Women who are not seeking to increase their labour force participation because of caring responsibilities, for example, may well be satisfied with their existing hours of work though they will not necessarily mention this as an important reason for not looking for more work.

As was the case with women with no earnings, the mention of caring responsibilities was primarily a reference to children. The two women who mentioned financial disincentives both thought that increasing their paid work was 'financially not worth it' and both also mentioned a concern with the reduction of unemployment allowance. One of the women elaborated with description of the dollar for dollar rate of withdrawal of unemployment allowance above a certain level of private income as 'the government penalising you for working'. While the 'other constraints' mentioned by two women with no earnings were matters of transport and language difficulties, the single case of 'other constraints' reported by women with some earnings was that 'husband's morale may be threatened'.

Besides the emergence of two further types of reason, the responses from the Group 2 women differ from those of the Group 1 women in the way that the mention of reasons translated into main reasons (Figure 8.3). The difference is particularly evident with the categories of 'own ill-health/disability', 'discouragement' and 'financial disincentives'. While their own ill-health/disability was the main reason for half the Group 1 women who mentioned it, it was the main reason for all the Group 2 women who mentioned it. For five of the Group 1 women who mentioned financial disincentives, this was the main reason for two of the women not seeking to increase their labour force participation. It was not the main reason for any of the women in Group 2. Similarly, discouragement did not amount to the main reason for any of the Group 2 women.

Summary

Besides those cases of women in Group 2 who were content with their current hours of paid work or who had prospective employment, three types of main reason for not looking for some/more work accounted for virtually all of the women. These were matters of caring responsibilities, largely relating to children, the women's own ill-health or disability, and discouragement. In only three cases were other main reasons given, including 'financial disincentives' in two cases. Financial disincentives

appear more important in the breakdown of all reasons mentioned and were all concerns with social security, resulting from weighing up the financial returns from work with the losses of benefits and concessions. Still, while caring responsibilities, own ill-health/disability or discouragement were the main reason in about half the cases where they were mentioned, a lower proportion of mentions of financial disincentives translated into financial disincentives being identified as the main reason for not looking for some or more work.

The types of reasons mentioned by women who were not looking for some or more work are now used as a framework for considering the association of various characteristics with the intensity of women's labour force participation.

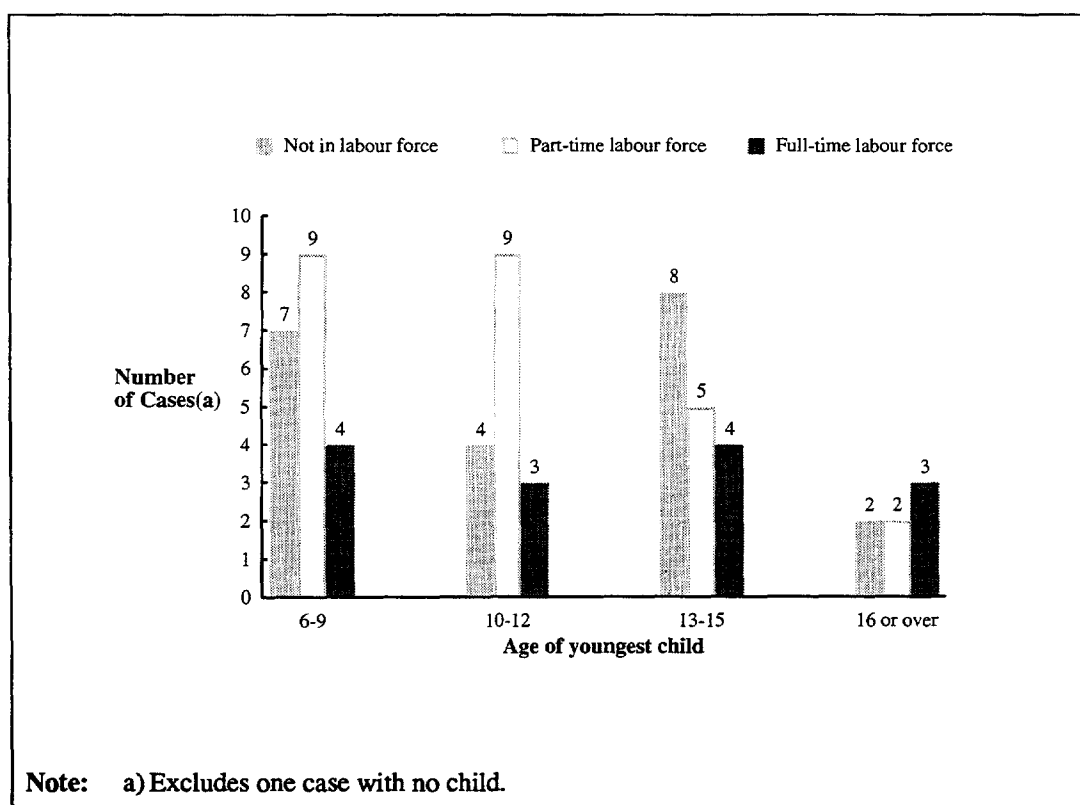
8.3 Caring Responsibilities

The Presence of Dependent Children

Where women had nominated caring responsibilities as reasons why they were not looking for some or more work, this was usually a reference to caring for children. Indeed, the presence and age of children are established as the main factors associated with variations in the labour force participation of married women in the prime working years. As mentioned previously, however, the manner in which the sample was drawn has provided us with little scope to compare women with and without dependent children in the population of interest in this study. Only six of the 61 women in couples receiving unemployment allowances (Groups 1 and 2) had no dependent children, where dependent children are defined as children under 15 years old or full-time students aged 15-20 (Table 6.4). Of these six women, four were in the full-time labour force, compared to just ten of the other 55 women. This is in line with what would be expected, though our data can yield no more than a faint suggestion of the importance of the presence of dependent children given the small number of cases without dependent children.

Age of the Youngest Child

A shortfall in the number of couples without dependent children in the sample does, however, have a consolation in the inflated numbers with dependent children and, thereby, a better basis for looking at a factor such as the age of youngest child. Figure 8.4 shows women's degrees of labour force participation according to the age of the youngest child. With this figure, and with similar figures that follow, it should be noted that it is the relative heights of the three labour force participation bars within each category which is important, not the absolute height of the bars from one category to another. Figure 8.4 shows an increase in the relative importance of FTLFP compared to PTLFP after the youngest child reaches 13 but, otherwise, there is no clear picture of variation. PTLFP is the most prevalent degree of labour force participation for women with children under 13, while NILF is the most prevalent for those whose youngest child is aged 13-15 years old. This is counter-intuitive but may be related to differences in the age of the mothers.

Figure 8.4: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Age of Youngest Child^(a)

Caring for Partners

Besides caring for children, some caring responsibilities were cases of caring for sick or disabled partners. Of the four women who reported that their partners had an illness or disability which required their special care, three were not in the labour force while one had PTLFP. The interpretation of this tendency for a low degree of labour force participation where the partner requires some special care needs to be qualified with the knowledge that, in all these four cases, the woman had also reported an illness or disability of her own which affected their ability to work in paid employment (see Section 6.1).

8.4 Women's Own Illness/Disability

Among couples receiving unemployment allowances, 16 of the women said that they had an illness or disability which affected their ability to work in paid employment. These women ranged across the degrees of labour force participation: seven NILF, five PTLFP, and four FTLFP. There is thus no suggestion of a marked variation in labour force participation according to whether or not a woman has an illness or disability which affects her ability to work in paid employment. This might seem to

contradict the prominence of women's ill-health or disability as a reason for not seeking to increase labour force participation though missing from consideration, of course, are the degree of ill-health or disability and the extent to which it affects the ability to work in paid employment. Looking at the nature of these women's illnesses or disabilities, the spread across the categories of labour force participation makes sense. For the women with PTLFP or FTLFP, it was most frequently a case of illness/disability restricting the type of work the woman could undertake, most usually no heavy lifting, while for those women who were out of the labour force it was more commonly a case of a condition or medical circumstances with broader effects.

8.5 Discouragement

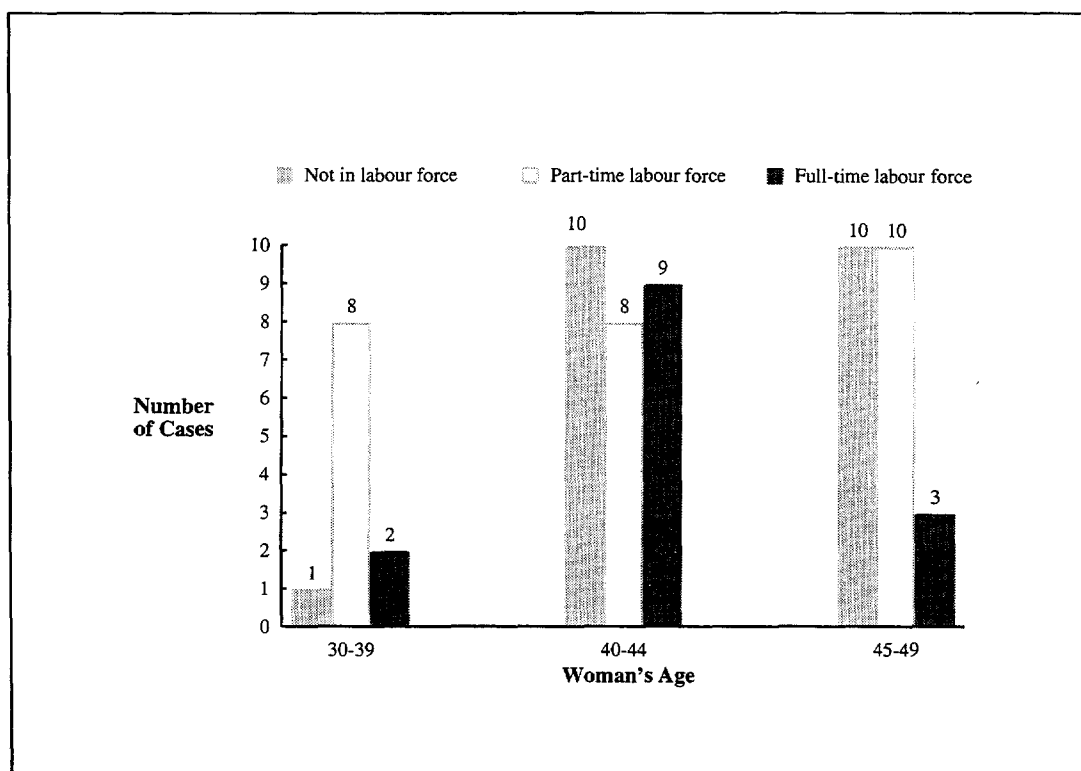
Discouragement refers to the situation where a woman would like paid work but sees no prospect of finding it. It frequently appeared in the form of beliefs by women that, with their skills or at their age, it was not worth looking for some or more work. Accordingly, the relationship between discouragement and the degree of labour force participation is examined here in terms of the woman's age, educational attainment, perception of the value of training, and labour market history.

Women's Ages

Figure 8.5 suggests two types of variation in the intensity of labour force participation according to women's ages. The proportion of women who are out of the labour force increases with age while, among those in the labour force, FTLFP is far more important for the 40-44 year olds than for either the 30-39 or 45-49 year olds. Just as it was argued that consideration of the age of the youngest child needed to be qualified by consideration of women's age differences, the picture in Figure 8.5 is likely to partly reflect variations between the age groups in the numbers and ages of dependent children.

Educational Attainment

Three indicators of educational attainment are covered in Figure 8.6: age left school, attendance at the highest year of secondary schooling, and the holding of post-school qualifications. The figure strongly suggests an association between the first two indicators, which are of course related, and the degree of labour force participation: those women who left school at a young age or who did not complete the highest year of secondary schooling had a markedly greater tendency to be out of the labour force. There was, however, no apparent variation in the relative importance of PTLFP and FTLFP with these two indicators. The holding of post-school qualifications, on the other hand, seems to increase the propensity of FTLFP relative to PTLFP, but not to affect whether or not a woman is in or out of the labour force.

Figure 8.5: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Age

Perceived Value of Training

Women were asked whether they thought job training would be useful to them, and 60 per cent of the women in couples receiving unemployment allowances thought not (Figure 8.7). As the intensity of labour force participation increases, so does the likelihood that a woman will see some use in job training. More interesting, however, are the responses given when the women were asked to elaborate on their answers to the question about the usefulness of training. Few of those women who were out of the labour force saw job training as useful for themselves. Those who did saw job training as having some use for them because of a belief that training in general increases someone's chances of getting a job. The reasons why most of these NILF women saw no use in training largely related back to the reasons why they were not looking for work: 11 of the 16 women said they were too busy at home looking after children and the house, or were 'too old to get a job anyway', or had health problems.

The women with part-time and full-time labour force participation were fairly evenly split between those who did and those who did not see any value in job training for themselves. Most of those who saw no value in training already had some paid work

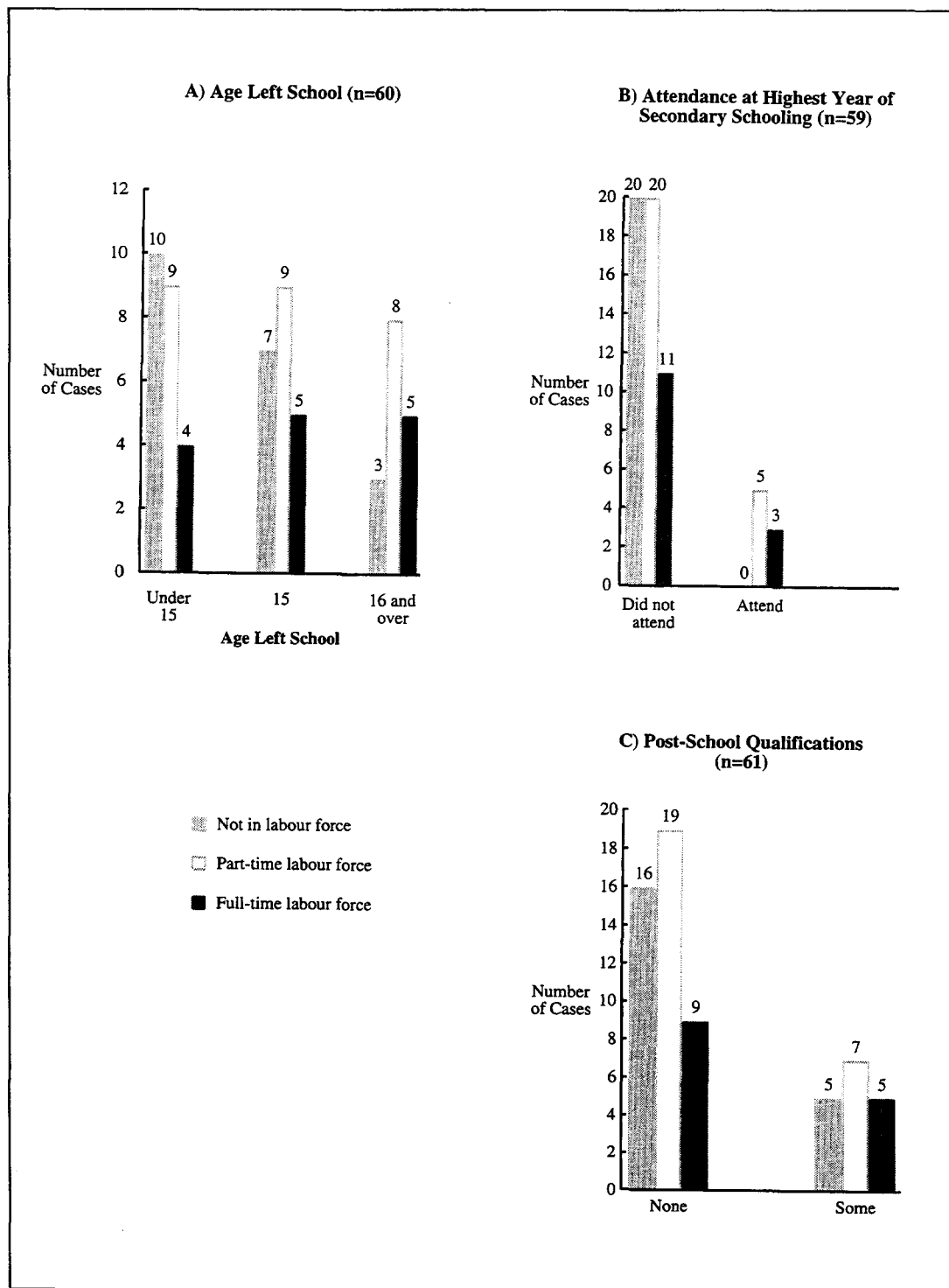
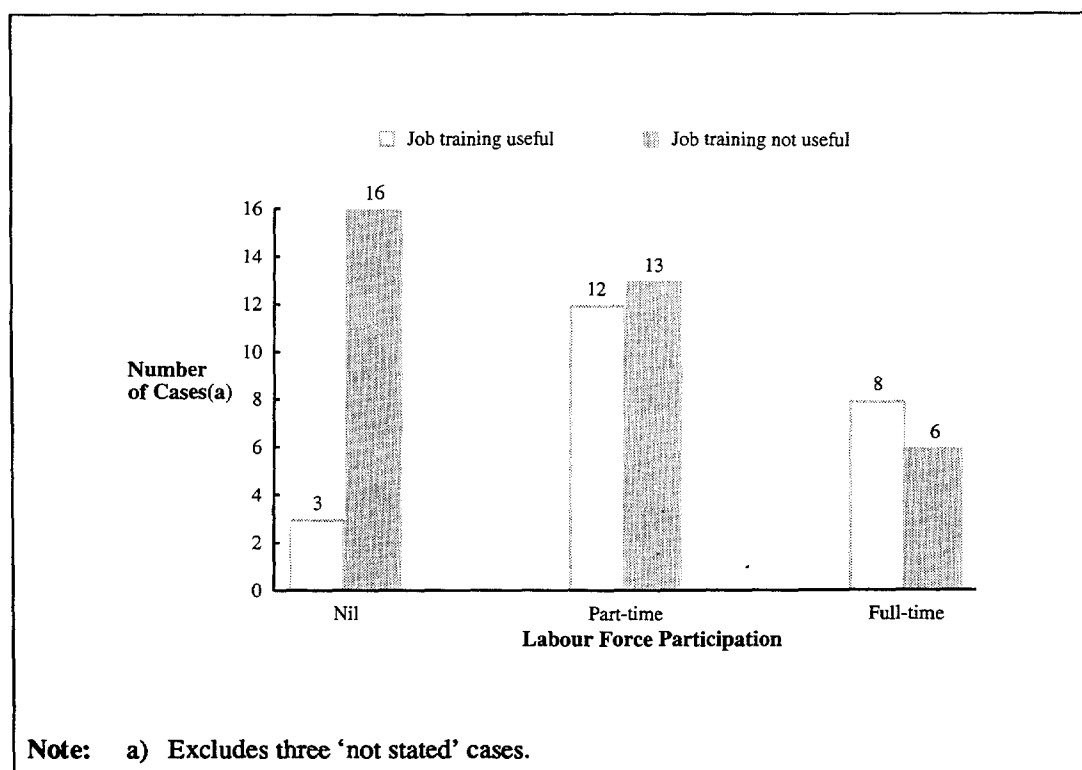
Figure 8.6: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Educational Attainment

Figure 8.7: Survey Sample: Perception of Usefulness of Job Training

and believed they had enough skills. Among the 20 of these women who thought training would be useful, five mentioned perceived general benefits of training, four mentioned the specific value of computer and word-processing training, four mentioned the value for them of English courses, three mentioned other specific courses and three mentioned a need for retraining to restore and update skills.

Labour Force Histories

Turning now to the association between women's labour force history and their current degree of labour force participation, there are a range of indicators that could be drawn from the material presented in the previous chapter. The single indicator selected for use in this analysis is the period of time spent out of the labour force since leaving school (Figure 8.8). The number of years spent out of the labour force since leaving school has been classified in a way which gives three groups of roughly equal size: eight years or less, nine to 20 years, and 21 years or more. Figure 8.8 suggests a strong relationship between years out of the labour force and current labour force participation, particularly regarding the distinction between being in and out of the labour force. Only two of the 19 women who had spent eight years or less out of the labour force were currently NILF, compared to one third (six cases) of the 18 women who had spent between nine and 20 years out of the labour force, and a

majority (11 cases) of the 16 women who had been out of the labour force for 21 years or more.

Corresponding to the increasing proportion of women currently out of the labour force as total time spent out of the labour force increases, the proportions with PTLFP or FTLFP decrease. Our sample, however, does not indicate a simple relationship between total time spent out of the labour force and whether current labour force status is part-time or full-time. The stronger relationship appears to be in terms of the distinction between being in and out of the labour force. The picture shown by Figure 8.8 can justifiably be questioned as perhaps partly spurious because of age effects: older women are more likely to have spent longer periods out of the labour force than younger women simply because a greater time has elapsed since they left school. Accordingly, a similar analysis was conducted using the proportion of time out of the labour force since leaving school, rather than the absolute number of years. The resulting picture was little different as only six out of the 53 women moved into a different labour force history category (long, medium or short period out of the labour force) when the indicator of labour force history was expressed in proportional rather than in absolute terms.

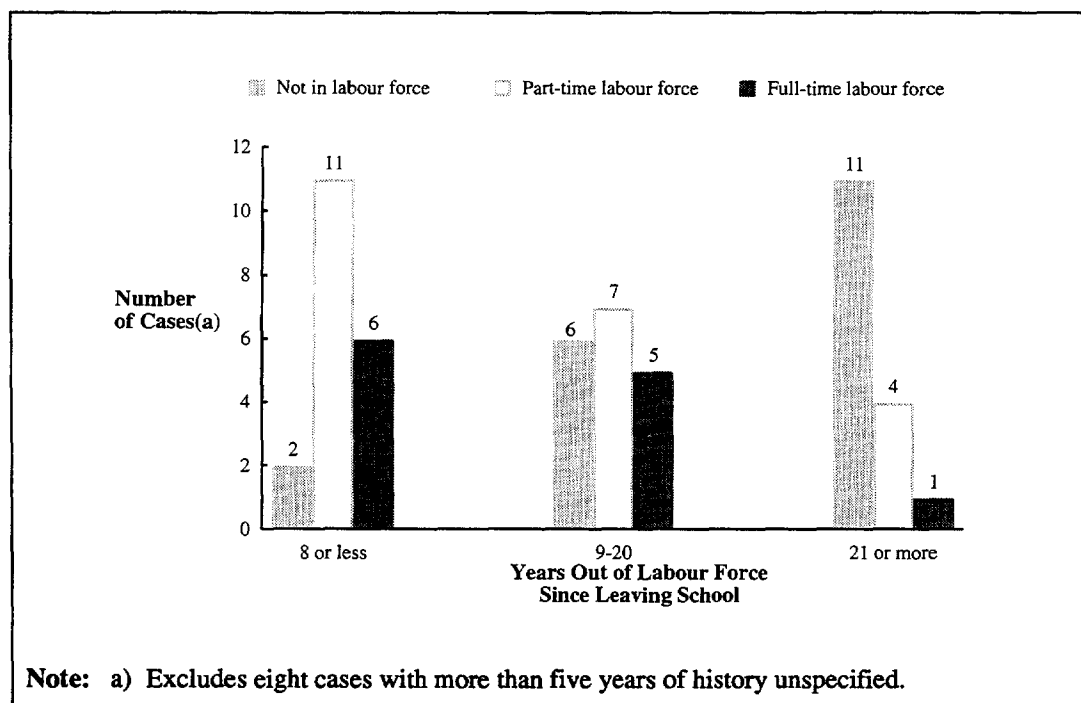
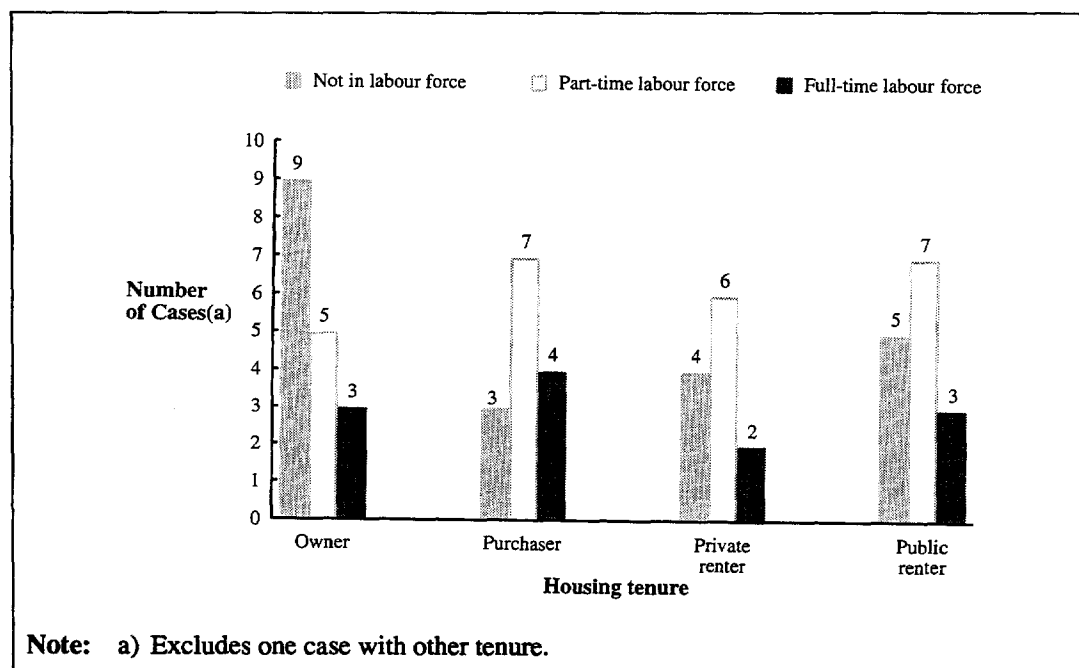
8.6 Financial Disincentives

Three aspects of financial disincentives are examined here: the roles of housing costs, of women's understanding of the effect of increased earnings on their social security entitlements, the use of concessions, and the costs of working.

Housing Costs

The potential role of housing costs in women's labour force participation decisions is really a combination of financial incentives and disincentives. Outright owners can be expected to have less incentive than others for a high degree of labour force participation because their housing costs are generally considerably lower than those of people in other housing circumstances. With a given degree of labour force participation, the social security incomes of outright owners will go further. Depending on the extent of their equity in their dwelling, home purchasers may be in a similar position to outright owners or may face high housing costs and a strong incentive to increase their income. The generally high housing costs of private renters may similarly provide a strong incentive to increase income, though moderated somewhat by the provision of Rent Assistance. For tenants in public housing, rents are income-related which means that they face higher effective marginal tax rates as their private incomes increase and possibly see a disincentive to increasing earnings.

Figure 8.9 breaks down women's labour force participation according to housing tenure, and one main point emerges. The first is that, just over half of the women living in homes which were owned outright were out of the labour force; a markedly

Figure 8.8: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Years Out of Labour Force Since Leaving School**Figure 8.9: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Housing Tenure**

higher proportion than for women in the other housing tenures. Indeed, only for outright-owners was NILF the dominant degree of labour force participation. Otherwise, there is little to distinguish between the other three housing tenures shown in terms of women's labour force participation.

Understanding of Income Support Provisions

Women were asked a number of questions to elicit their awareness and knowledge of the effect of earnings on social security entitlements and income tax liabilities. This was one area of the questionnaire where partners made their presence felt in the instances where it had proved impossible to conduct the interview with the woman alone. When present, partners were often 'first on the buzzer' and the responses to the questions, which are given in Table 8.3, should accordingly be seen as an exaggeration in some cases of women's own level of knowledge of the provisions covered.

Women were first asked how much either they or their partner could earn from working and still get the full amount of unemployment allowance. About two thirds of the women did not know and, of the remainder, around half knew the correct amount. Where women thought they knew, but gave the wrong figure, the amounts fell on both sides of the correct figure of \$110 per fortnight where only one of the couple is working, and ranged between \$40 per fortnight and \$200 per fortnight. There were no marked variations in the response according to women's degree of labour force participation.

The second question concerned the rate of withdrawal of unemployment allowance with earnings above the free area: specifically, by how much would the level of unemployment allowance be reduced if the woman or her partner earned \$20 more per fortnight more than the income-test-free level of earnings. Most women did not know, including all but one of those who were out of the labour force or who were in the full-time labour force. Only among those women in the part-time labour force, did a sizeable proportion of the women, albeit still a minority, know that unemployment allowance would be reduced by \$10 per fortnight in these circumstances.

Next, women were asked if they were aware that either they or their partner might be able to get an Employment Entry Payment (EEP) if they took up full-time employment. Once again, the great majority of the women were not aware of this provision. Of the 16 women, of varying degrees of labour force participation, who were aware of the EEP, nine said that they did not know how much the EEP was worth, while the other seven all knew its value as \$100. Very few of the women, only two cases, knew for how long someone could go off unemployment allowance and have a temporary job without having to serve the waiting period again.

The last question about social security provisions concerned whether the women were aware that, if someone goes off unemployment allowance, then they may still

Table 8.3: Survey Sample: Awareness of Income Support Provisions by Labour Force Participation

	Labour Force Participation		
	NILF (n = 21)	PTLFP (n = 24) ^(a)	FTLFP (n = 13) ^(b)
Level of earnings free of income test			
Don't know	14	17	9
Know - incorrect	4	3	3
Know - correct	3	4	1
Rate of withdrawal of allowance			
Don't know	20	15	12
Know - incorrect	1	2	1
Know - correct	0	7	0
Awareness of EEP			
No	15	16	11
Yes	6	8	2
Duration of temporary job without waiting period			
Don't know	18	22	10
Know - incorrect	2	1	3
Know - correct	1	1	0
Awareness of AFP for low-income earners			
Yes	7	10	4
No	11	11	6
Not applicable	3	3	3
Awareness of the Dependent Spouse Rebate			
No	15	16	10
Yes	6	8	3
Notes: a) Excludes two 'not stated' cases. b) Excludes one 'not stated' case.			

be entitled to Additional Family Payment (AFP). The question was only asked of those women who had dependent children. Among all the provisions covered by these questions, this was the only one with which a reasonable proportion of the women were familiar: 21 out of 49 said that they were aware of the possibility of receiving AFP after going off an unemployment allowance. Like the other provisions described above, however, there is no evidence of any marked variation in knowledge of this provision according to women's intensity of labour force participation.

There was also a question about the Dependent Spouse Rebate (DSR) in the income tax system. Roughly one third of the women were aware of the DSR, again with no apparent difference in awareness according to the woman's degree of labour force participation. Of those women who did know about the DSR, most knew the order of magnitude of its value, if not the exact amount.

The Use of Concessions

If someone loses their entitlement to unemployment allowance, they also lose entitlement to the value of the associated fringe benefits or concessions. It can thus be hypothesised that the more use that is made of these concessions, and hence their greater value, the less inclined someone will be to lose them. Does the extent to which these concessions are used show any association with women's intensity of labour force participation? There was no evidence of any such association from our sample, with women in the three categories of labour force participation reporting very similar patterns of use (Table 8.4).

The Costs of Working

The direct costs of working will enter somewhere into the equation for working out the financial benefits of employment, and act as a possible disincentive to taking up paid employment or increasing the hours of work. How much are the costs of working and do they differ between part-time and full-time work. Among the 38 women in the sample with current paid work, 31 reported that there were regular costs that they had to meet in their jobs. Of these 31 women with costs, 28 mentioned transport costs, ten mentioned clothing costs, and three mentioned other costs. Where transport costs were faced, there was little difference between the average values for part-time and full-time workers: \$19 per week among 21 part-time workers, and \$18 per week among seven full-time workers. Transport costs accounted for 83 per cent of the value of costs that were mentioned.

The sample numbers reporting other costs are too small to say anything about average costs. Only two of the women reported child care costs, both being full-time workers where their partners were also working, both having pre-school-age children, and both receiving fee relief (now known as Childcare Assistance) and paying around \$25 per week. It should be noted, though, that these small numbers

Table 8.4: Survey Sample: Use of Concessions by Women's Labour Force Participation

	Labour Force Participation		
	NILF (n = 21)	PTLFP (n = 26)	FTLFP (n = 14)
Number with concession card	21	25	14
Number having used the card for this purpose in the last year:			
Free hearing aids	0	0	0
Free spectacles	4	4	3
Transport concessions - bus/train/ferry	3	4	5
Bulk billing for visits to doctor	12	17	10
Cheap prescriptions	20	23	14
Free dental treatment at public dental hospitals	7	7	1

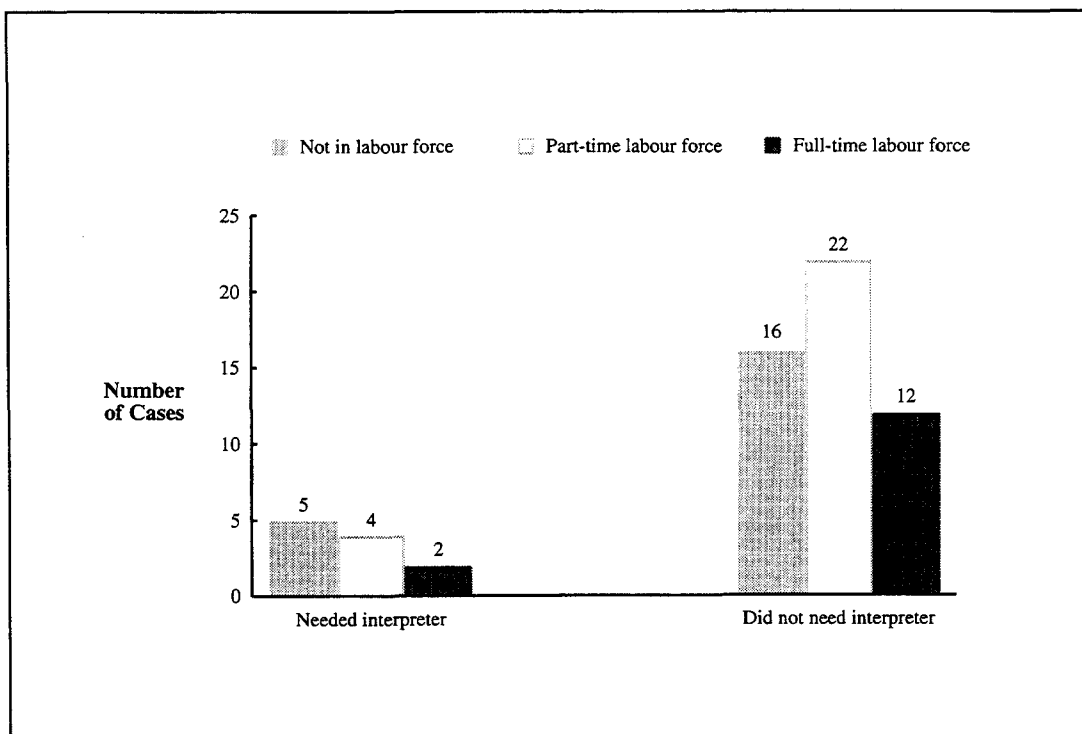
using formal child care do not give a true picture of the extent to which these women used child care, with other instances of informal child care being used. In most cases, however, only one member of the couple was working and the other was available to provide any child care (predominantly out-of-school-hours care) so our sample is a poor basis for estimating the child care costs if both partners were to gain employment.

8.7 Other Constraints

Other constraints were mentioned by a small number of women as reasons why they were not looking for some or more work; such constraints including English language difficulties, transport difficulties and the threat to the partner's morale. The first two of these are examined further below.

English Language Difficulty

While the survey included questions about country of birth and, for migrants, their duration of residence in Australia, there was no question about English language proficiency. The information on country of birth could be used as an indicator of English language proficiency, though a better measure is available by distinguishing between survey respondents who required interpreters and those who did not. Of the 61 women in couples receiving unemployment allowances, 11 needed interpreters and 50 did not. Figure 8.10 shows women's degrees of labour force participation for these two groups in the sample. There is a suggestion from our sample that those women who need an interpreter have a greater tendency to be out of the labour force

Figure 8.10: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Woman's Need for an Interpreter

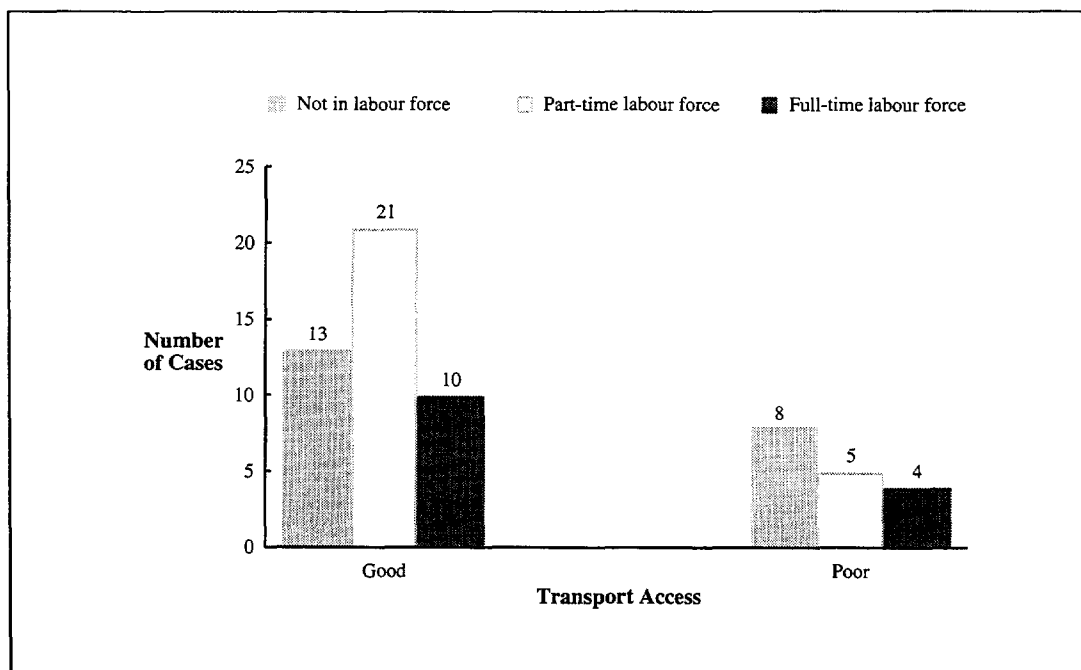
than do others, though this level of English language proficiency is certainly not a binding constraint. Among the 11 women who needed interpreters, six were in the labour force and, indeed, five of these women currently had part-time paid work.

Transport Difficulties

Potential difficulties with transport are looked at here in terms of a transport access indicator which combines the women's responses to questions on access to a car, the availability of lifts, availability of public transport in the area, and willingness to use public transport to get to and from a job. Specifically, women with good transport access are defined as those who either have access to a car (or motorbike) all of the time, or can get a lift whenever they need to, or who both think that the availability of public transport in the area is very good or good and who would use public transport to get to and from a job. All other women are defined as having poor transport access.

The degrees of women's labour force participation according to their transport access are shown in Figure 8.11. Just over a quarter of the women in couples receiving unemployment allowances were defined as having poor transport access, and these women display a notably greater propensity to be out of the labour force than do those women with good transport access.

Figure 8.11: Survey Sample: Labour Force Participation by Transport Access



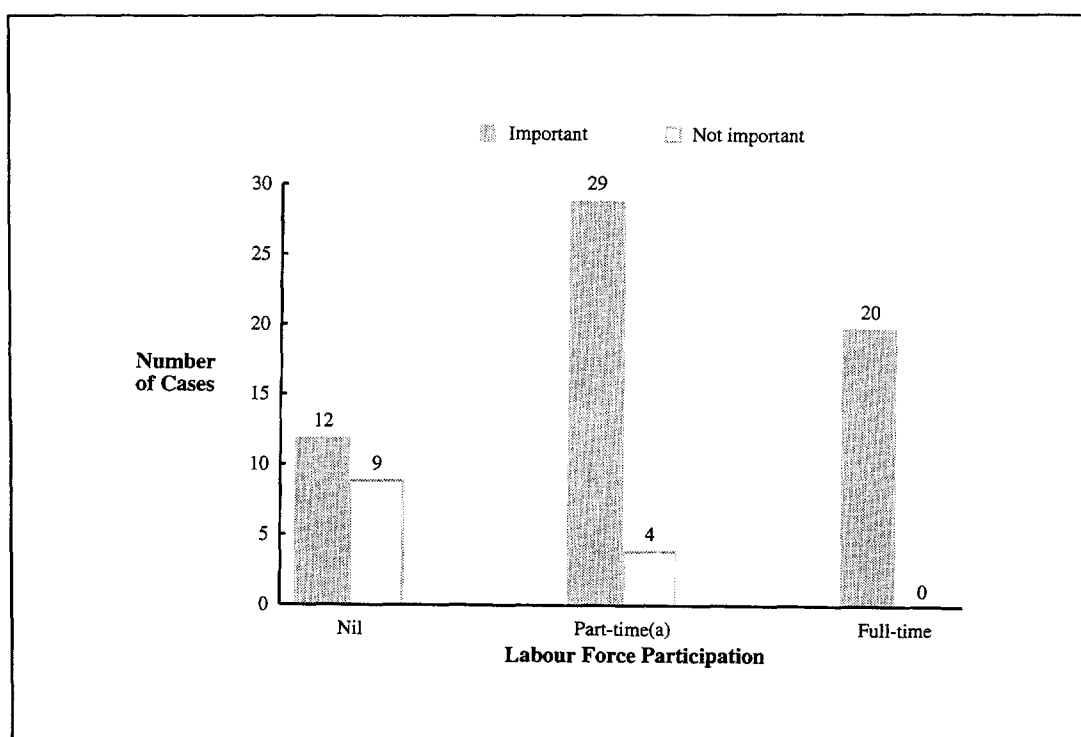
9 The Labour Force Decision: Attitudes and Roles

Differences in women's intensity of labour force participation were examined in the previous chapter with reference to reported reasons for current activity and the association with a number of concrete factors. The examination is now extended with consideration of the parts played by attitudes and household roles. The attitudes of both the women and of their partners are considered and, with regard to the latter, it is important to keep in mind that interviews were conducted with the women and not with the couples. We are discussing the women's impressions of partners' attitudes, not attitudes as expressed by partners.

9.1 The Importance of Paid Work: Women's Views

When discussing their feelings about work in general, over 80 per cent of the women in the sample said that having paid work was important to them. This included all of those with full-time labour force participation, the great majority of those with part-time labour force participation, and even a majority of those who were out of the labour force (Figure 9.1). With regard to the apparent contradiction with this latter group, there are two possible explanations. Firstly, the question was concerned with paid work in general rather than the current situation. Thus, it is not inconsistent for a woman to attach importance to paid work, but to be out of the workforce at some time for reasons such as caring for children or illness. Secondly, it may well not be the woman's attitudes alone which determine their labour force behaviour. Their partner may have an important role: a matter which is examined in the following section. All but two of the women who thought that paid work was not important were aged 40 years or older.

Those women who said that paid work was important to them were presented with a number of possible reasons and asked which ones were important and which one was the main reason. The overall responses to these questions are shown in Figure 9.2, with the frequency of reasons nominated as important in the upper part of the figure, and the frequency of main reasons in the lower part. All but one of the alternatives offered was mentioned as an important reason by between about 60 and 80 per cent of the women. The exception was 'having my own money' which was mentioned by only around one third of the women. Under the category of 'other' were references to the benefits of paid employment for health and well-being. A more discriminating pattern of responses appears with the frequency of main reasons in the lower part of Figure 9.2. This shows only three of the reasons to have been nominated as the main reason by more than one woman. In about 70 per cent of cases, the reported main reason for the importance of paid work was financial: either 'more money for us to live on' or 'we can't manage without the money'. A further 20 per cent or so of the women identified 'self-esteem' as the main reason why paid work was important to them.

Figure 9.1: Survey Sample: Is Having Paid Work Important to You?

When we look at the responses to these questions according to women's labour force participation (Table 9.1), there is no major difference in the pattern of all reasons mentioned, though there is variation in the emphasis accorded to particular main reasons. Among the three reasons noted above as identified as the main reason by more than one woman, the two financial reasons increase in importance as the intensity of labour force participation increases. Thus, either 'more money for us to live on' or 'we can't manage without the money' were given as the main reason for the importance of paid work for about 70 per cent of those with part-time labour force participation and about 90 per cent of those with full-time labour force participation, but for just 55 per cent of those who were out of the labour force but thought paid work was important. At the same time, as the intensity of labour force participation increases, the more extreme financial reason of 'we can't manage without the money' takes on greater importance compared to the more moderate 'more money for us to live on'.

This all points to the pre-eminence of financial factors in these women's labour force decisions: the more a woman sees paid work as financially important, the more likely she is to have or seek paid employment, particularly full-time paid employment. While this may seem a fairly obvious conclusion, the interesting point is the extent to which other factors disappear. Non-financial factors, predominantly

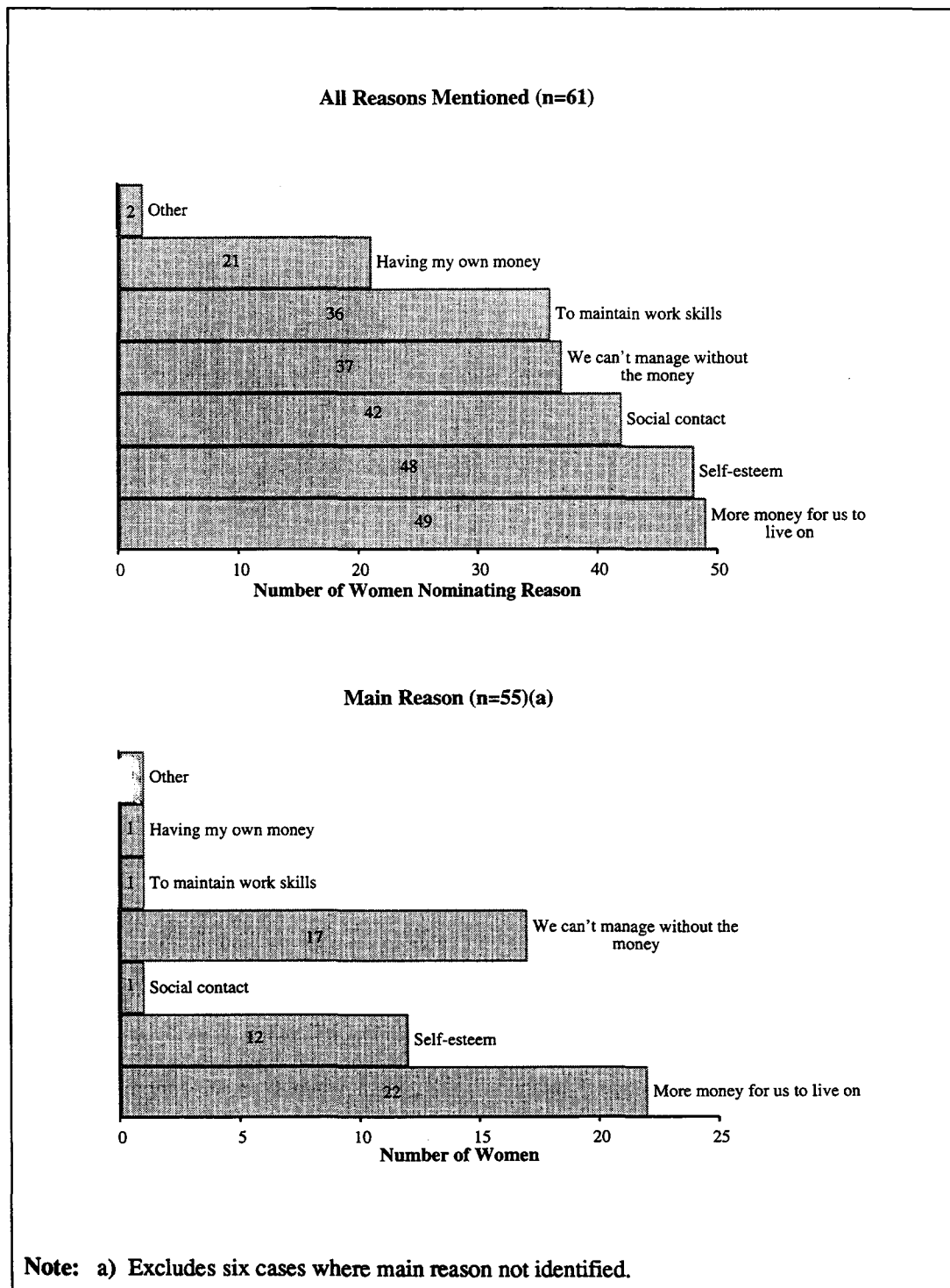
Figure 9.2: Survey Sample: Reasons and Main Reason Why Women Consider Their Having Paid Work is Important

Table 9.1: Survey Sample: Reasons and Main Reason Why Women Consider Their Having Work is Important, by Labour Force Participation

Reason	Labour Force Participation			
	Nil (n = 12)	Part-time (n = 29)	Full-time (n = 20)	Total (n = 61)
All reasons mentioned				
More money for us to live on	11	23	15	49
Self-esteem	9	25	14	48
Social contact	8	24	10	42
We can't manage without the money	4	20	13	37
To maintain work skills	6	18	12	36
Having my own money	4	9	8	21
Other	0	1	1	2
Main reason				
More money for us to live on	5	9	8	22
Self-esteem	5	6	1	12
Social contact	0	1	0	1
We can't manage without the money	1	7	9	17
To maintain work skills	0	1	0	1
Having my own money	0	1	0	1
Other	0	0	1	1
Not stated	1	4	1	6
Total	12	29	20	61

'self-esteem', were more important than financial factors as the main reason for the importance of paid work only in the case of the women who were out of the workforce.

All women were asked whether they saw any disadvantages in their having paid work, still talking about paid work in general. A substantial minority of 38 per cent perceived disadvantages with paid work, with two groups of women accounting for three quarters of these cases. The two groups are those women under 40 who thought that paid work was important, with 12 out of 23 identifying a disadvantage, and women who thought that paid work was not important, with nine out of 13 identifying some disadvantage. Almost all the women in the first of these two groups had part-time labour force participation and the reported disadvantages related overwhelmingly to child care: 'the children still need me at home when they come home from school', 'can't spend much time with the kids'. Women in the second group were almost all over 40 and out of the labour force. With this second group, many of the concerns again related to children, though equally important were

concerns about domestic work in general: 'work would pile up at home and no one else would do it'.

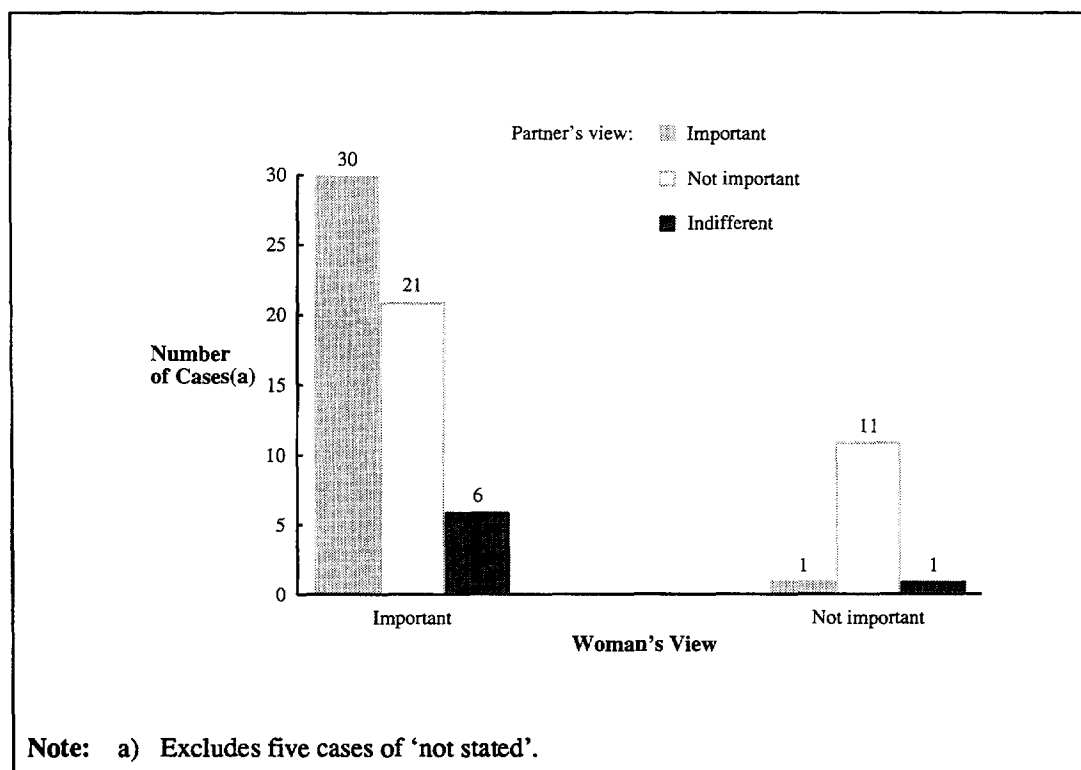
9.2 The Importance of Paid Work: Partners' Views

The women were asked whether they thought that their partner felt that it was important that they (the woman) should have paid work. Accordingly, as was stressed at the beginning of this chapter, it should be kept in mind that we are discussing the women's impressions of partners' views, not views expressed by partners. The numbers of positive and negative responses were fairly equal, with a few women reporting that they thought their partners were indifferent. Thus, while a substantial majority of the women in the sample had reported that paid work, in general, was important to them, they saw their partners holding the same view with less frequency.

The correspondence between women's and partners' views on the importance of paid work for the women is shown in Figure 9.3. Clearly, the divergence between the views of women and their partners is almost entirely located within the group of 21 women who considered that paid employment was important to them but believed that their partners held the opposing view. When examined more closely, this group turns out to be quite heterogeneous being spread across the categories of labour force participation, age and migrant status. No characteristics emerge as typical of cases where she thinks her having paid work is important but he does not. Moreover, there is no apparent association with the main reason why the woman sees her paid work as important.

Where the partner attached importance to the woman having paid work, women were asked to identify the important reasons behind this view, but not to nominate a main reason. There was some difference in the overall pattern of the reasons which had been given by women for their seeing paid work as important (Figure 9.2) and the reasons attributed to their partners. As with the women's own views, the two financial reasons, 'self-esteem' and 'social contact' were mentioned with reference to partners' views in around 60 per cent to 80 per cent of cases. The reasons of 'to maintain work skills' and 'having my own money', however, were notably less frequently mentioned as partners' reasons than as women's reasons for the importance of the woman's paid work. Of the 31 cases where the partner was seen to attach importance to the woman having paid work, 'to maintain work skills' was mentioned in only 13 cases, and 'having my own money' in only seven cases.

Women were also asked whether their partners saw any disadvantages in their (the woman) having paid work. As with the women's own views, disadvantages were identified in a substantial minority of cases (42 per cent). While in women's views the nature of these disadvantages were primarily concerns with caring for children and with housework, the disadvantages attributed to partners' perceptions were more diverse. Of the 30 cases where the partner was seen to perceive some disadvantage,

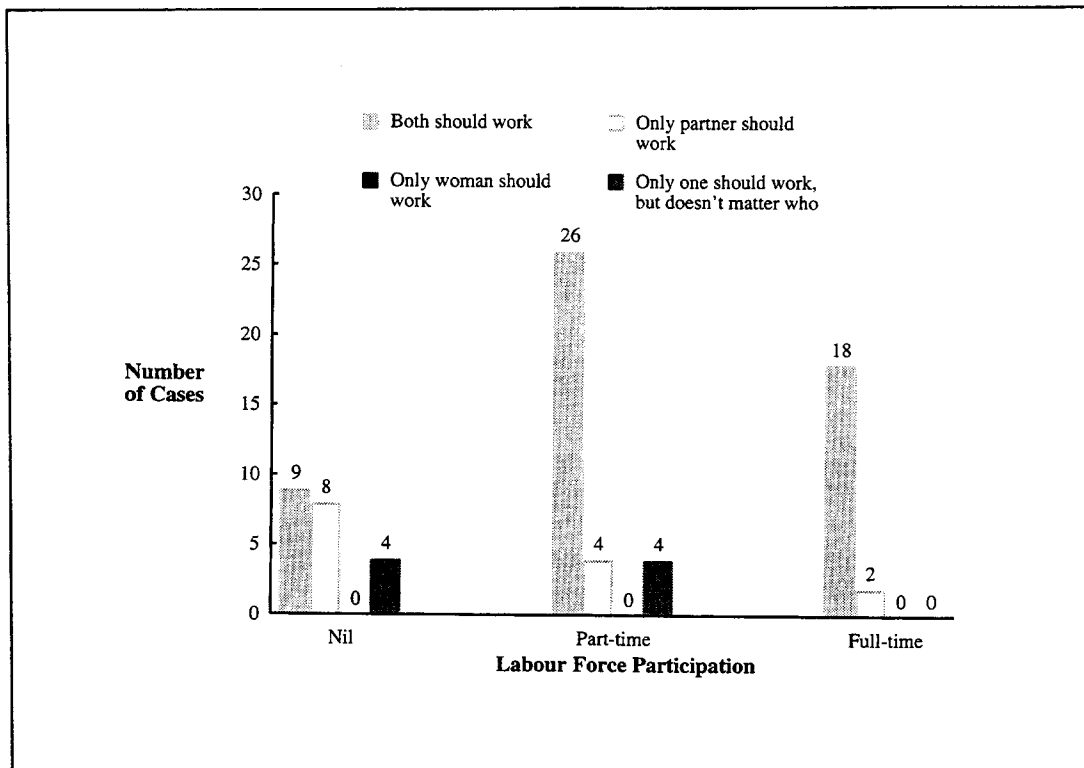
Figure 9.3: Survey Sample: Women's and Partners' Views on Importance of Paid Employment for the Women

13 cases related to the effects on child care and housework and two other types of disadvantage were then mentioned with some frequency. A general concern with women's role was mentioned in nine cases, 'better for the man to do the job and for the woman to stay at home', and a concern for company in seven cases, 'she's not at home to be with him'.

Returning to the 21 cases where the woman thought her having paid work was important but she believed her partner thought otherwise, in eight of these cases the partner was not seen to identify any particular disadvantage with her having paid work. He just did not think it was important. In the remaining cases, the particular disadvantages attributed to partners' views were similar to those mentioned in all cases.

9.3 Paid Work Roles Within the Couple

The women were asked whether both they and their partner should have paid work, if possible, and, if only one of them, which one. The responses to these questions are shown in Figure 9.4. Over two thirds of the women in the sample thought that both

Figure 9.4: Survey Sample: Women's Opinions on Distribution of Paid Work Within the Couple

should have paid work. Among the remaining 22 cases where it was thought that only one member of the couple should have paid work, in 14 cases it was the male who was nominated for this role and in eight cases it was not seen to matter who it was who had the paid work. None of the women suggested that where only one had paid work then it should be the woman. Where it was thought that only one member should have paid work, women were asked to elaborate on their nomination of who the paid worker should be. The reason most often given for nominating the partner was that she had responsibilities with looking after children and other domestic work; responsibilities which were either seen as the way things should be or as the way things were: 'husbands can't do housework'.

The view that both members of the couple should have paid work was particularly prevalent where the woman was in the labour force, though it was still held in about half of the cases where the woman was out of the labour force (Figure 9.4). The suggestion is one of constraints on labour force participation. Younger women were more likely to think that both they and their partner should have paid work if possible; this view being held by 80 per cent of those under 40 years old compared to 66 per cent of those aged 40 years or over. There was no noticeable difference in these responses according to migrant status.

Women were asked a similar set of questions regarding their partners' views on who should have paid work, and the correspondence between women's own views and their impressions of partners' views is shown in Figure 9.5. Women saw their partners thinking slightly less frequently that both should have paid work than they did themselves. Still, around 60 per cent of partners were believed to think that both members of the couple should have paid work. Where partners thought that only one should have paid work, the bias, as with women's own views, was strongly toward nomination of the male partner, with a small proportion thinking that it did not matter.

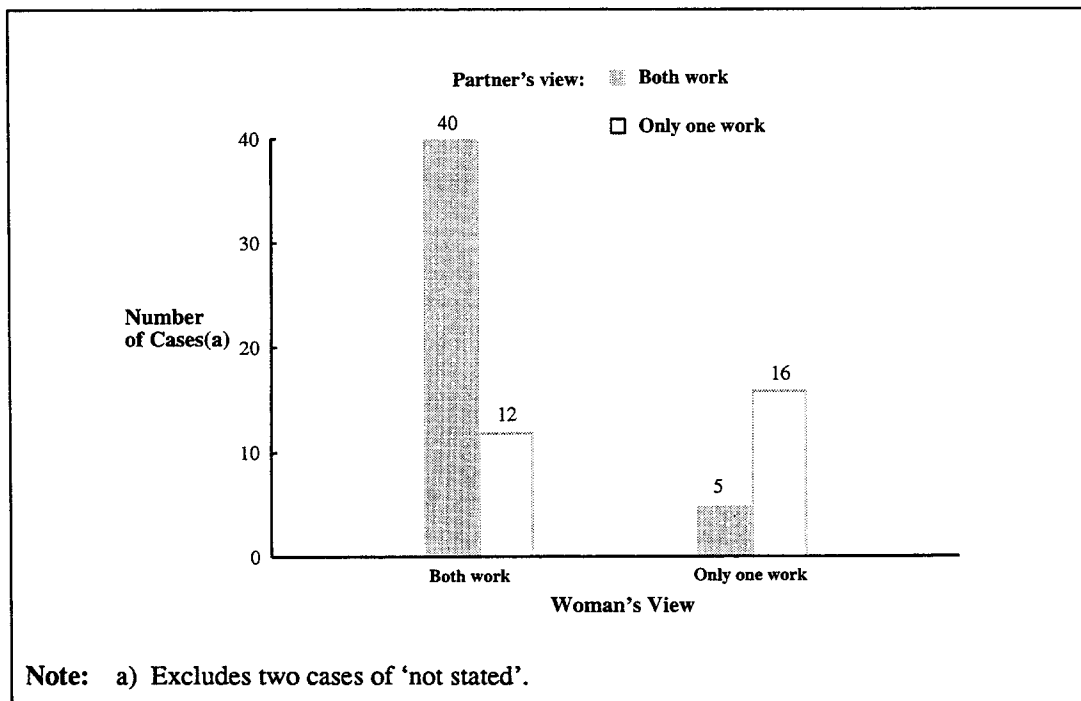
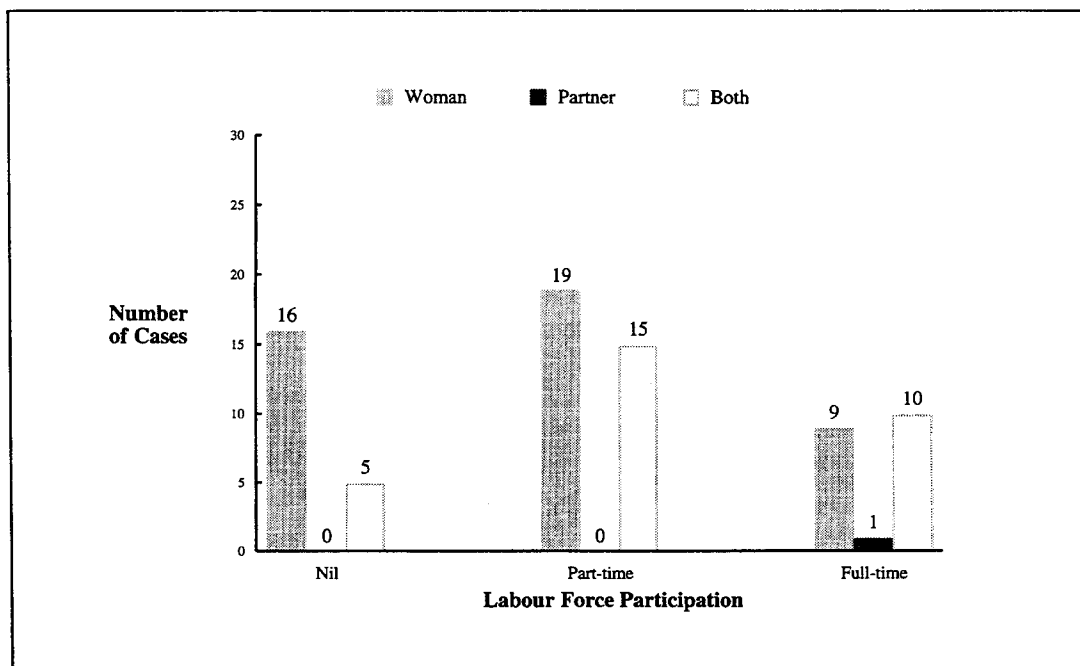
Reasons attributed to partners' views that only they should be in paid work were almost entirely couched in terms of this reflecting the appropriate roles within a couple: 'husband is the provider, it's the way it should be', 'it's more important for the man to work because it's more important for his self-esteem'. The women, however, did not always agree with these sentiments as is indicated by Figure 9.5 which shows 12 cases where the woman thought that both should have paid work but she believed her partner thought that only he should have paid work. In these cases, the reasons given for partners' preferences for their (the partner) being the sole member of the couple in the paid workforce took on a less prescriptive air: 'he wants to be the breadwinner and wants me to stay at home and look after the house'. These 12 cases were spread across the labour force participation categories, while all but one were aged 40 years or over.

9.4 Household Work Roles Within the Couple

The other side of work roles within the couple is unpaid household work and women were asked who they thought should be mainly responsible for doing household work. The responses are presented in Figure 9.6 with, overall, about 60 per cent of women believing that it is they who should be mainly responsible, 40 per cent believing that responsibility should be shared, and one case where household work was seen as the responsibility of the partner. Thus, apart from this latter single case, where the woman had full-time paid work and her partner had part-time paid work, the woman was seen to have a key responsibility for household work in all cases. The variation is in terms of whether or not the male partner should share some of this responsibility.

As shown by Figure 9.6, the extent to which it is believed that the partner should share some of the responsibility increases with the intensity of women's participation in the paid labour force. Joint responsibility was seen as appropriate by only about one quarter of those women who were out of the labour force, but by almost half of those with part-time labour force participation and by over a half of those with full-time labour force participation.

Women over 40 years old were notably more likely to nominate themselves as solely taking the main responsibility for household work than were those women under 40 years old. While much of this relationship, however, appears to be associated with

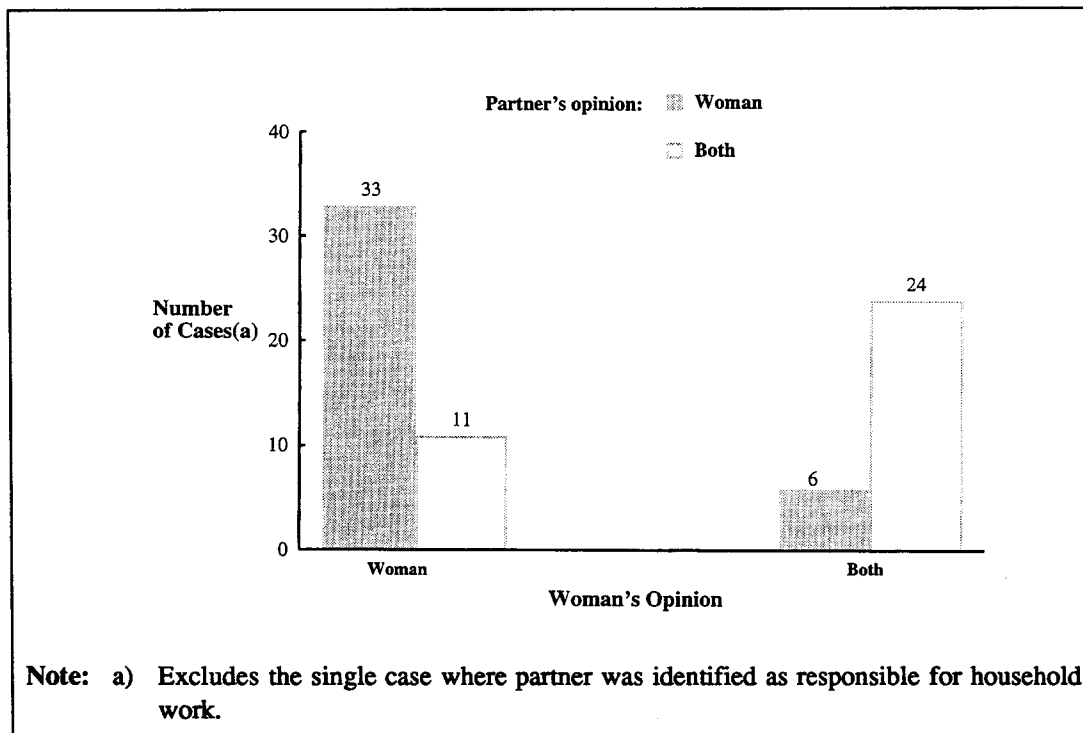
Figure 9.5: Survey Sample: Women's and Partners' Views on Distribution of Paid Work Within the Couple**Figure 9.6: Survey Sample: Women's Opinions on Responsibility for Household Work**

the different age structures of the labour force participation groups, there did appear to be a residual age effect. Within each labour force participation group, the proportion of over 40 year olds nominating themselves as solely responsible for household work was higher than the proportion of under 40 year olds doing so. There also appeared to be a relationship with birthplace: women in couples where both partners were born in non-English-speaking countries were more likely to see themselves as mainly responsible for household work than were women in couples where both partners were born in English-speaking countries, including Australia.

The pattern of responses shown in Figure 9.6 suggests that women's intensity of participation in the paid labour force may be an important factor in their view about who should take the main responsibility for household work, but it is certainly not the only important factor. There are, for example, many women with part-time labour force participation whose partners have no paid work and who still believe that the main responsibility for household work is theirs. Where women nominated just one member of the couple as mainly responsible for household work, they were asked to elaborate on this statement. In about half of such cases, overall and for each of the labour force participation groups, the reason for nominating themselves as mainly responsible for household work had to do with the perceived role of a woman in a couple: 'it's the woman's job', 'I was brought up that way I suppose'. Other reasons which were mentioned with some frequency were the fact that the woman had always done it and the point that she preferred to do it, often accompanied by a view that she does it better: 'I'm particular and like things done properly'. Still, many of these reasons were presented in conditional terms, with the view of who should be responsible depending at least partly on the paid work status of the woman and her partner.

Women were also asked who they thought their partner believed should be mainly responsible for household work. In almost 80 per cent of cases, the two views coincided and, otherwise, there were cases both of the woman thinking it should be a joint responsibility while the partner thought it should be hers, and of the woman thinking it should be her responsibility while her partner thought it should be joint (Figure 9.7). Examination of the reasons for assigning main responsibility to the woman alone provides no simple characterisation of these two groups where opinions differed. Overall, partners were seen to believe that household work was a joint responsibility slightly more frequently than were women themselves. How this translates into the division of household labour is, of course, another matter and the material in Section 8 would suggest that the relationship between broad roles and actual responsibility is far from direct and straightforward. Where the partner thought household work was the woman's responsibility, the reasons given were predominantly in terms of it being the woman's role. This type of reason accounted for around three quarters of the reasons attributed to partners, a much higher frequency than that found with women's own opinions.

We did not consider joint analysis of the opinions on roles within the household with regard to paid work and to unpaid household work, because the nature of the

Figure 9.7: Survey Sample: Women's and Partners' Opinions on Responsibility for Household Work

respective questions would make such an analysis difficult. The questions on paid work were clearly hypothetical in terms of who, if possible, should have paid work. The questions on household work, on the other hand, were somewhat ambiguous in this regard but taken by most respondents to mean who should be mainly responsible for household work under current circumstances.

9.5 Income Sharing

Another perspective on roles within the couple can be obtained by looking at the pattern of income sharing which can give a picture of the division of decision-making between the two partners. With particular relevance to this study, it can also give an indication of the responsiveness of either partner to change in the other's income. Eliciting a clear picture of the division of financial arrangements within couples, with care taken to distinguish between the management and the control of monies, does require, however, careful and intricate questioning which was beyond the scope of this survey. Instead, we have resorted to the use of a number of indicators.

Women were asked which of five alternative arrangements best described the way that they and their partner managed their finances. Because of the frequent receipt of DSS Family Payments, and their standard method of payment to the woman, women were asked to ignore any such payments when answering this question. The responses are given in Table 9.2. The first point to note is the description of arrangements as shared management in about two thirds of all cases, with management by the woman accounting for most of the remainder. Thus, in the vast majority of cases (over 90 per cent), the woman has some role in management of the couple's finances (excluding consideration of any Family Payment).

Looking at the results in Table 9.2 for the three labour force participation groups, it is interesting to see that the woman's management of the couple's finances becomes less prevalent, and joint management correspondingly more prevalent, as the intensity of her labour force participation increases. A more pointed picture was found when financial arrangements were examined with respect to the women's employment status (Table 9.3). Shared management dominates the couples in Group 2, where all the women have earnings, and also those in Group 3, where most have earnings, but accounts for only half the couples in Group 1, where none of the women have earnings. Focusing on the variation between Groups 1 and 2, where very few of the male partners have earnings, when the women have some earnings then the prevalence of their management of the couples' finances decreases markedly.

Does this mean that when the woman receives income of her own, then her partner wants some say in its management? Without pursuing possible explanations, it is enough here to use this finding to illustrate the important difference between the management and control of household finances. Maybe, financial management is less of a privilege and more just another household task. Still, the main point is that, even where the women have no private income of their own, they tended to be involved, and often to be the main party, in the management of couples' finances.

Joint management of finances was more prevalent where women were under 40 years old than among the older age group, though this is closely associated with the different employment patterns for the two age groups. There was no apparent variation in the form of financial management according to country of birth.

To throw some light on the question of financial control, rather than financial management, women were asked who would decide what to do with an extra \$50 a week from somewhere, firstly, if she received it and, secondly, if her partner received it. The overall responses to these two questions are presented in Figure 9.8 which shows broadly similar pictures where the extra money is received by the woman and where it is received by her partner. In around two thirds of cases, use of the extra money would be the subject of a joint decision and, otherwise, mainly the woman's decision. Where it is not a joint decision, the predominance of the woman's decision reflects the difference between the 14 cases where the woman would decide what to do with extra money received by her partner and the single

Table 9.2: Survey Sample: Management of Couples' Finances, by Labour Force Participation

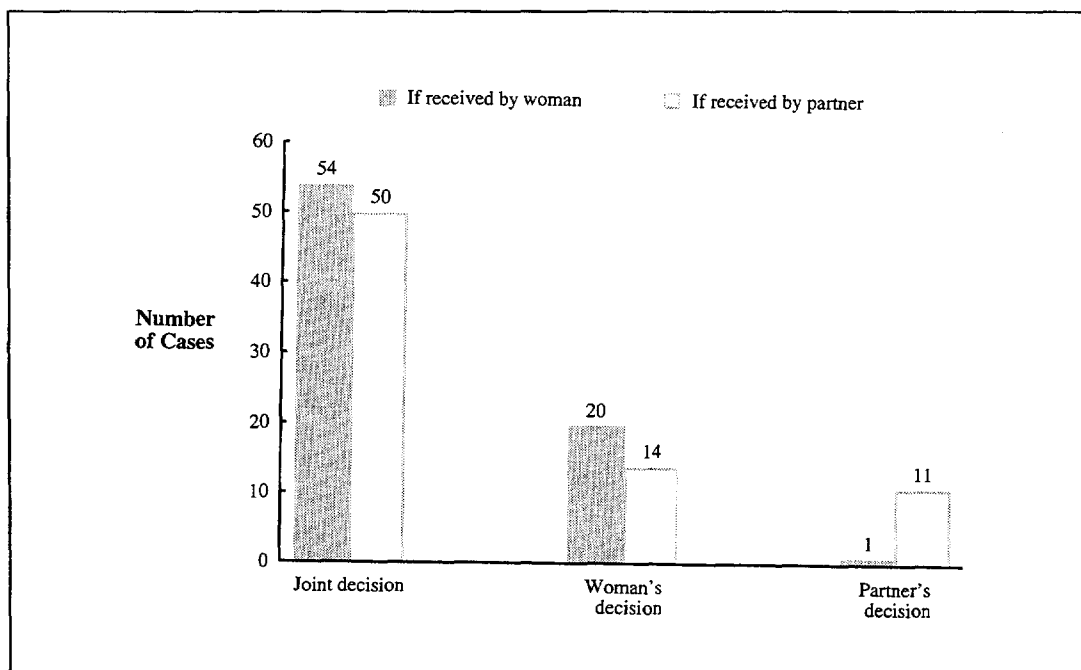
Financial arrangements	Labour Force Participation			Total
	Nil	Part-time	Full-time	
Shared management	10	25	14	49
Woman manages all the money	8	9	3	20
Partner manages all the money	2	0	0	2
Woman only has a housekeeping allowance	0	0	2	2
Incomes are largely kept separate	1	0	1	2
Total number	21	34	20	75

Table 9.3: Survey Sample: Management of Couples' Finances, by Group

Financial arrangements	(1) No earnings	(2) Some earnings	(3) Cancelled	Total
Shared management	18	21	10	49
Woman manages all the money	12	4	4	20
Partner manages all the money	2	0	0	2
Woman only has a housekeeping allowance	2	0	0	2
Incomes are largely kept separate	2	0	0	2
Total number	36	25	14	75

corresponding case where the partner would decide on the use of extra money received by the woman. There was no marked variation in the responses to these two questions according to women's labour force participation.

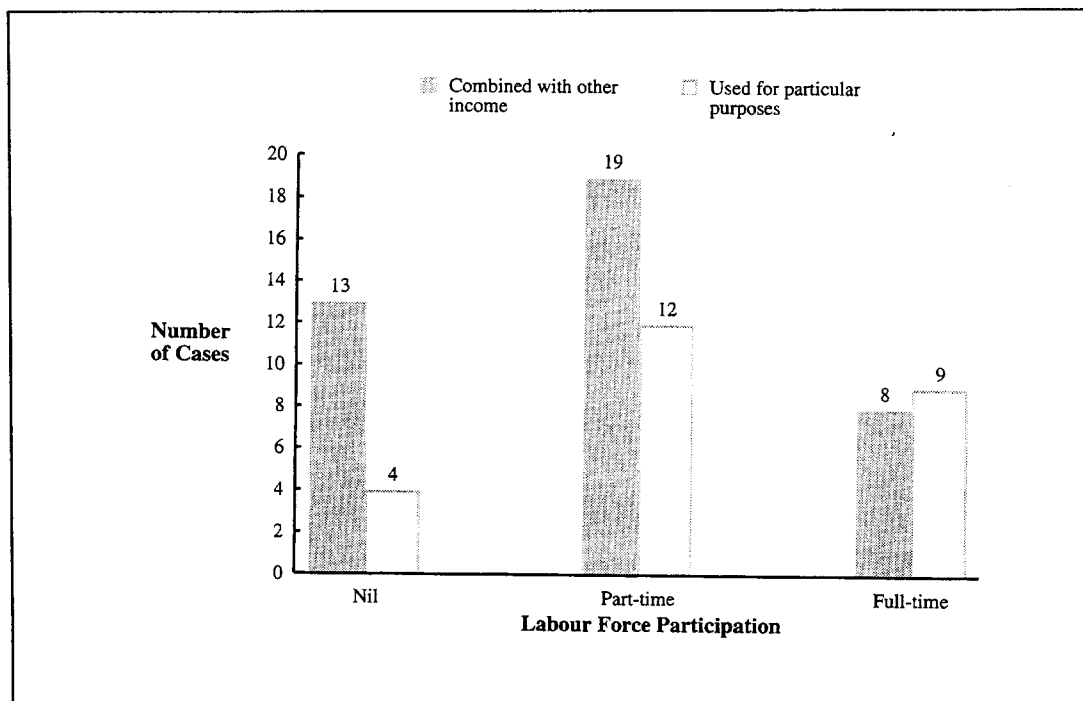
There was a close correlation between the responses to the question on the form of financial management and the questions about who would decide on the use of extra money. Consideration of the responses to the three questions together show that a majority of the women in the sample (58 per cent) have reported both shared management and joint decision-making with regard to additional money, irrespective of who received it. A second group of 11 per cent reported woman's management of the couple's finances and the woman's decision-making. Together, these two groups account for around 70 per cent of cases, and no other combination of responses stood out.

Figure 9.8: Survey Sample: Who Would Decide What To Do With an Extra \$50/Week

A specific question was asked to ascertain where any Family Payment fitted into the couples' finances. Those women who received Family Payment were asked whether it was used for anything in particular or simply pooled with other income (Figure 9.9). Among the 65 women receiving Family Payment, most (40 cases) reported that it was combined with other income. Figure 9.9 suggests an increase in the propensity to use Family Payment for specific purposes as income increases, a pattern which was confirmed by examining the responses with regard to women's employment status. The women in Group 1, with no earnings, reported the lowest propensity (29 per cent) to use Family Payment for specific purposes. Expressed the other way, with decreasing income, Family Payment is more likely to be pooled with other income. Where Family Payment was devoted to specific purposes, these were almost always for children: particularly, school expenses, children's clothing and shoes. One respondent reported that the Family Payment was used to pay household bills, such as for the telephone and electricity, though when her husband had been working it had always been used for the children.

9.6 General Attitudes About Women and Work

Finally, women were asked for their opinions in general about women and work, starting with how they felt about four broad statements. The wording of the statements and the responses are shown in Table 9.4, where the sample is broken down by women's labour force participation. While the actual question provided five alternative responses, 'strongly agree' and 'agree' have been combined in the table,

Figure 9.9: Survey Sample: Use of Family Payment

as have 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree'. There were relatively few cases where either 'strongly agree' or 'strongly disagree' was chosen.

There was a high degree of agreement with the first statement about whether married women should have paid work. Just over 80 per cent of the women approved of married women having paid work, with no marked difference according to labour force participation. About half of all women (51 per cent) disagreed with the statement that 'men are not happy to see their wives go out to work' and, with a relatively high number of women who neither agreed nor disagreed, the number of women in disagreement far outweighed those in agreement. This was not the case, however, for those women who were out of the labour force with equal numbers agreeing and disagreeing in this group. Most of the women (78 per cent) agreed that 'there are few jobs which allow combining paid work with caring for a home and family', while there is a suggestion that the proportion who agree increases with the intensity of women's labour force participation. Such an association could be interpreted in two ways: either those in the labour force are more aware of the extent of opportunities or those out of the labour force are so because there are few suitable jobs available. Responses to the fourth statement that 'women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work' were evenly balanced between agreement and disagreement. Those women not in the labour force, however, were mainly in agreement in contrast to women in the labour force who tended to disagree with the statement.

Table 9.4: Survey Sample: Degree of Agreement^(a) with General Statements About Women and Work, by Labour Force Participation

	Labour Force Participation			
	Nil (n = 21)	Part-time (n = 34)	Full-time (n = 20)	Total (n = 75)
I approve of a married woman having paid work even if she has a husband capable of supporting her				
Agree	14	30	16	60
Neither agree nor disagree	2	3	0	5
Disagree	5	1	3	9
Total number	21	34	19(b)	74(b)
Men are not happy to see their wives go out to work				
Agree	8	11	4	23
Neither agree nor disagree	4	7	2	13
Disagree	8	16	13	37
Total number	20(b)	34	19(b)	73(b)
There are few jobs which allow combining paid work with caring for a home and family				
Agree	18	26	12	56
Neither agree nor disagree	1	0	1	2
Disagree	2	8	4	14
Total number	21	34	17(b)	72(b)
Women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work				
Agree	13	13	7	33
Neither agree nor disagree	2	3	2	7
Disagree	6	18	10	34
Total number	21	34	19(b)	74(b)

Notes: a) The question provided five alternative responses. 'Strongly agree' and 'agree' have been combined in this table, as have 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

b) Excludes one or more cases of 'not stated' or 'don't know'.

In summary, the group of women who were out of the labour force stand out with their more extensive beliefs that 'men are not happy to see their wives go out to work' and that 'women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work'. Also, the perception of the availability of jobs which allow combining paid and domestic work appears to increase with the intensity of women's labour force participation.

The degree of agreement with these four statements was also examined with respect to the woman's age and the couple's country-of-birth status (Table 9.5). The table shows the proportions of women agreeing with each statement, and does not separately identify the two small mixed country-of-birth categories. To get some idea of any association between women's labour force participation and age or country of birth in the responses, the lower part of the table controls in part for labour force participation by presenting results only for those women with part-time labour force participation. Looking at age first, the upper part of Table 9.5 shows women over 40 and those women in couples where both partners were born in a non-English-speaking country to have been notably more likely than others to believe that 'men are not happy to see their wives go out to work' and that 'women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work'. The lower part of the table suggests this pattern is independent of labour force participation.

Women were also asked what they thought was the appropriate labour force activity for women in certain circumstances related to the life course and, particularly, the presence and age of children. Table 9.6 presents the responses according to women's labour force participation. The wording of the question was 'Do you think that women should work outside the home full time, part time, or not at all under these circumstances?' The first life course stage considered referred to married women before the couple had any children and, besides those women who preferred not to be prescriptive, all responses were for paid work, and overwhelmingly for full-time work. For the second stage, when there was a child under school age, the most frequent response was that the woman should not be in paid work, with part-time work still seen as appropriate in many cases. Few women thought that women, unless they wanted to, should remain at home after the youngest child starts school, with most respondents favouring part-time work during this stage. After children have left home, paid work continues to be seen by most of the women as the appropriate activity, though now full time rather than part time.

There is no marked variation in the responses shown in Table 9.6 according to women's degree of labour force participation. The existence of any variation according to age or country of birth is examined in Table 9.7. The only point of variation which stands out concerns the opinions of women of different ages regarding the appropriate activity when there is a child under school age. Excluding the 'up to them' responses, about three quarters of all women aged 40 years or over thought the woman should stay at home under these circumstances, while this was the opinion of only about one half of the women under 40 years old. There thus appears to be a fairly broad consensus about the appropriate labour force activity of women at different stages of the life course, with no major variation in opinions apparent according to either the woman's labour force participation or the couple's country of birth status, but some variation according to the woman's age.

Table 9.5: Survey Sample: Degree of Agreement with General Statements about Women and Work, by Age and Country of Birth (Proportion of women agreeing with statement^(a), percentages)

	Woman's Age		Country of Birth		All Cases
	Under 40	40 or over	Both born in NESB country	Neither born in NESB country	
Among all cases	(n = 25)	(n = 50)	(n = 32)	(n = 35)	(n = 75)
a) I approve of a married woman having paid work even if she has a husband capable of supporting her	88	78	87	74	81
b) Men are not happy to see their wives go out to work	17	39	39	26	32
c) There are few jobs which allow combining paid work with caring for a home and family	83	75	79	74	78
d) Women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work	29	52	74	14	45
Among cases with part-time labour force participation	(n = 16)	(n = 18)	(n = 11)	(n = 19)	(n = 34)
a) I approve of a married women having paid work even if she has a husband capable of supporting her	88	89	100	79	88
b) Men are not happy to see their wives go out to work	13	50	45	26	32
c) There are few jobs which allow combining paid work with caring for a home and family	81	72	73	74	76
d) Women's true role is caring for a home and family rather than going out to work	25	50	82	11	62
Note: a) Number of women who either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' as a proportion of total excluding cases of 'don't know' and 'not stated'.					

Table 9.6: Survey Sample: Opinions on Appropriate Labour Force Roles for Women Under Certain Circumstances, by Labour Force Participation

	Labour Force Participation			
	Nil (n = 21)	Part-time (n = 34)	Full-time (n = 20)	Total (n = 75)
After marrying and before there are children				
Work full time	18	23	18	59
Work part time	0	2	1	3
Stay at home	0	0	0	0
Up to them	3	9	0	12
Total number	21	34	19(a)	74(a)
When there is a child under school age				
Work full time	1	0	0	1
Work part time	5	9	5	19
Stay at home	14	18	12	44
Up to them	1	7	2	10
Total number	21	34	19(a)	74(a)
After the youngest child starts school				
Work full time	1	4	7	12
Work part time	17	20	12	49
Stay at home	2	3	0	5
Up to them	1	7	0	8
Total number	21	34	19(a)	74(a)
After the children leave home				
Work full time	15	19	11	45
Work part time	2	3	3	8
Stay at home	0	1	1	2
Up to them	4	11	4	19
Total number	21	34	19(a)	74(a)

Note: a) Excludes one case of 'not stated' or 'don't know'.

Table 9.7: Survey Sample: Opinions on Appropriate Labour Force Roles for Women Under Certain Circumstances, by Age and Country of Birth

	Woman's Age		Country of Birth		All Cases
	Under 40	40 or over	Both born in NESB country	Neither born in NESB country	
After marrying and before there are children					
Work full time	18	41	30	25	59
Work part time	1	2	1	0	3
Stay at home	0	0	0	0	0
Up to them	5	7	0	10	12
Total number	24(a)	50	31(a)	35	74(a)
When there is a child under school age					
Work full time	0	1	1	0	1
Work part time	9	10	8	11	19
Stay at home	10	34	21	18	44
Up to them	5	5	1	6	10
Total number	24(a)	50	31(a)	35	74(a)
After the youngest child starts school					
Work full time	5	7	4	6	12
Work part time	13	36	23	23	49
Stay at home	1	4	4	1	5
Up to them	5	3	0	5	8
Total number	24(a)	50	31(a)	35	74(a)
After the children leave home					
Work full time	13	32	19	23	45
Work part time	2	6	4	3	8
Stay at home	1	1	1	1	2
Up to them	8	11	7	8	19
Total number	24(a)	50	31(a)	35	74(a)

Note: a) Excludes one case of 'not stated' or 'don't know'.

10 Looking for Work

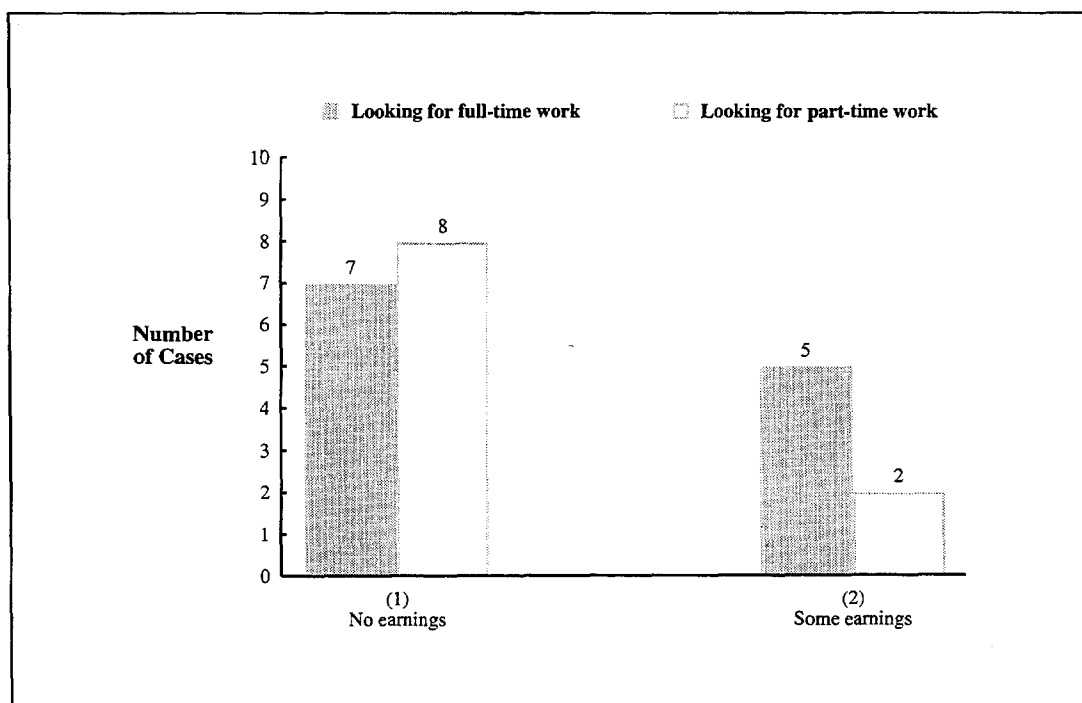
As was set out at the beginning of Section 8, employment rates can be seen as the product of labour force participation rates and unemployment rates. Thus, the low employment rates of women whose partners are receiving unemployment allowances can usefully be examined, first, in terms of their labour force participation and, second, in terms of unemployment. The previous two chapters have examined the association of a range of factors with women's degrees of labour force participation and we now turn to an examination of the women's unemployment, or, more accurately, their search for some or more work. What are the circumstances of those women who have decided to try and increase their labour market activity but who, so far, have been unsuccessful in doing so? What emerges from their behaviour and experiences as the key difficulties that they confront in finding work, and do these have anything to do with the fact that their partners are receiving unemployment allowances?

Referring back to Table 8.1, the first point to note here is that a minority of women in our sample were looking for either some or more paid work: just 15 out of the 36 cases in Group 1, seven out of the 25 cases in Group 2, and two out of the 14 cases in Group 3. Because of the small numbers involved, we will largely combine the women from Groups 1 and 2 who are looking for work, and ignore the two cases from Group 3, in the following discussion.

10.1 Nature of Work Sought

Roughly equal numbers of women were looking for full-time work, defined as 35 hours or more per week, and for part-time work (Figure 10.1). Of the 15 women from Group 1 (no earnings), seven were looking for full-time work and eight for part-time work, while five of the seven women from Group 2 (some earnings) were looking for full-time work. Where part-time work was being sought, it was mostly substantial and of the order of 20 to 30 hours per week. With regard to the type of work the women were looking for, five of the women said that they were looking for 'anything'; a further two were looking for 'anything without heavy lifting'. The rest of the women mainly nominated occupations with basic skill levels. These included supermarket workers, shop assistants, office workers, cleaners and factory workers.

After describing the type and hours of work that they were looking for, the women were asked how much they would expect to earn from this work and what would be the minimum amount that they would accept, that is, their 'reservation wage'. In only eight out of the 22 cases, however, did the women feel able to report an amount that they would expect to earn and these responses have thus not been analysed. There was a higher, but still barely satisfactory, response rate for the reservation wage question, with 13 responses. Among those looking for full-time work, the after-tax

Figure 10.1: Survey Sample: Women Looking for Some or More Work

reservation wages ranged between \$100 and \$350 per week, with a concentration of responses around \$300 per week. Among all 13 responding cases, the nominated reservation wages were standardised by their expression as after-tax hourly wage rates which gave a median reservation wage of \$7.50 per hour. This does not appear overly ambitious, particularly when compared with the median after-tax wage of \$10.0 per hour being received by those women in Group 2 with paid employment (Table 6.7).

What is the basis for the amounts of reservation wages? When women were able to report a lowest weekly wage that they would accept, they were then asked how they arrived at that figure. In four cases, it was derived from a notion of what was needed to meet household costs: 'what would be needed for household expenses and to get rid of debts'. In another four cases the amount stated was seen as the going rate, in two cases the amount was related to previous earnings, and in two cases the amount was related to the level of unemployment allowance: 'need at least what you can get on the dole but would work for less if could get part payment'.

10.2 Job Search Behaviour

The women were asked what they had done to look for work in the four weeks preceding the interview. Checking newspapers, contacting friends or relatives about

getting work, and making a direct approach to an employer, either by phone, letter or application in person, were job search methods that had been used by most of the women over the period (Figure 10.2). About half of the women looking for work had answered a newspaper advertisement for a job, and the same number said that they had checked the CES noticeboards. Most of the women had pursued three, four or five of these job search avenues in the four-week period.

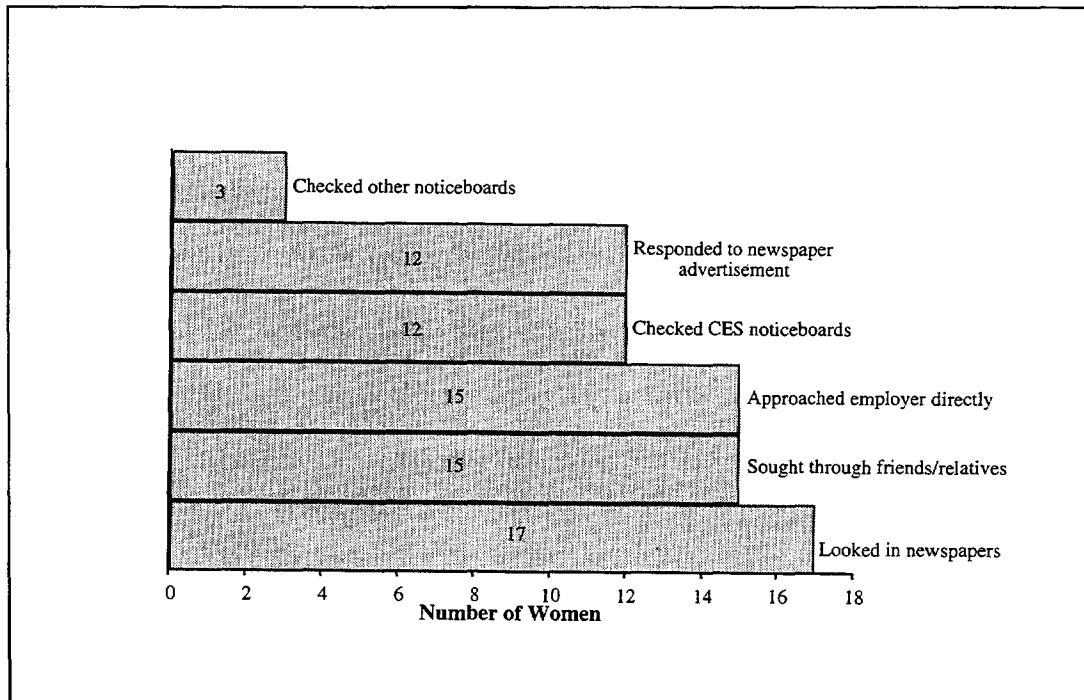
Only eight of the women, however, were registered as unemployed with the CES. All but one of these eight had no current paid work, and six of the eight were looking for full-time work. They had generally been registered with the CES for a considerable time, with the median duration of registration being 21 months. While the fact that only a minority of women were registered with the CES might seem to qualify the picture of serious job search provided by Figure 10.2, two points should be borne in mind. Firstly, women were not always aware that they could register with the CES and, secondly, other means of job search may in fact be more promising. Thus, the most common ways in which those women in the sample with paid work had found that paid work was through direct approach to the employer or through friends and relatives (Table 6.7).

10.3 Difficulties Finding Work

Those women looking for some or more work were presented with a list of common reasons that people give for their difficulty finding work and asked whether any were important in their cases, and which was the main reason. The responses are given in Figure 10.3 which shows all reasons mentioned in the upper chart and the main reasons in the lower chart. All but four of the 22 women mentioned their age as a reason for their difficulty finding work, and 11 women nominated it as the main reason. At this point it should be noted that the great majority of the women looking for work (18 out of 22) were aged 40 years or older. We are thus largely looking at the reasons why some married women 40 years old and over have difficulty finding work. Still, this takes nothing away from the finding that, for the women in this age group, their age is by far seen as the most common main reason for difficulty finding work.

After age, a view that there were no suitable jobs available was the next most frequently mentioned reason and five women said it was the most important reason. The woman's age or the perception of no suitable jobs thus accounted for the main reason for difficulty finding work in 16 out of the 22 cases. A number of other reasons were then mentioned but in few cases did they amount to the main reason for difficulty in finding work. The exception was English language difficulty which, when mentioned, tended also to be the main reason.

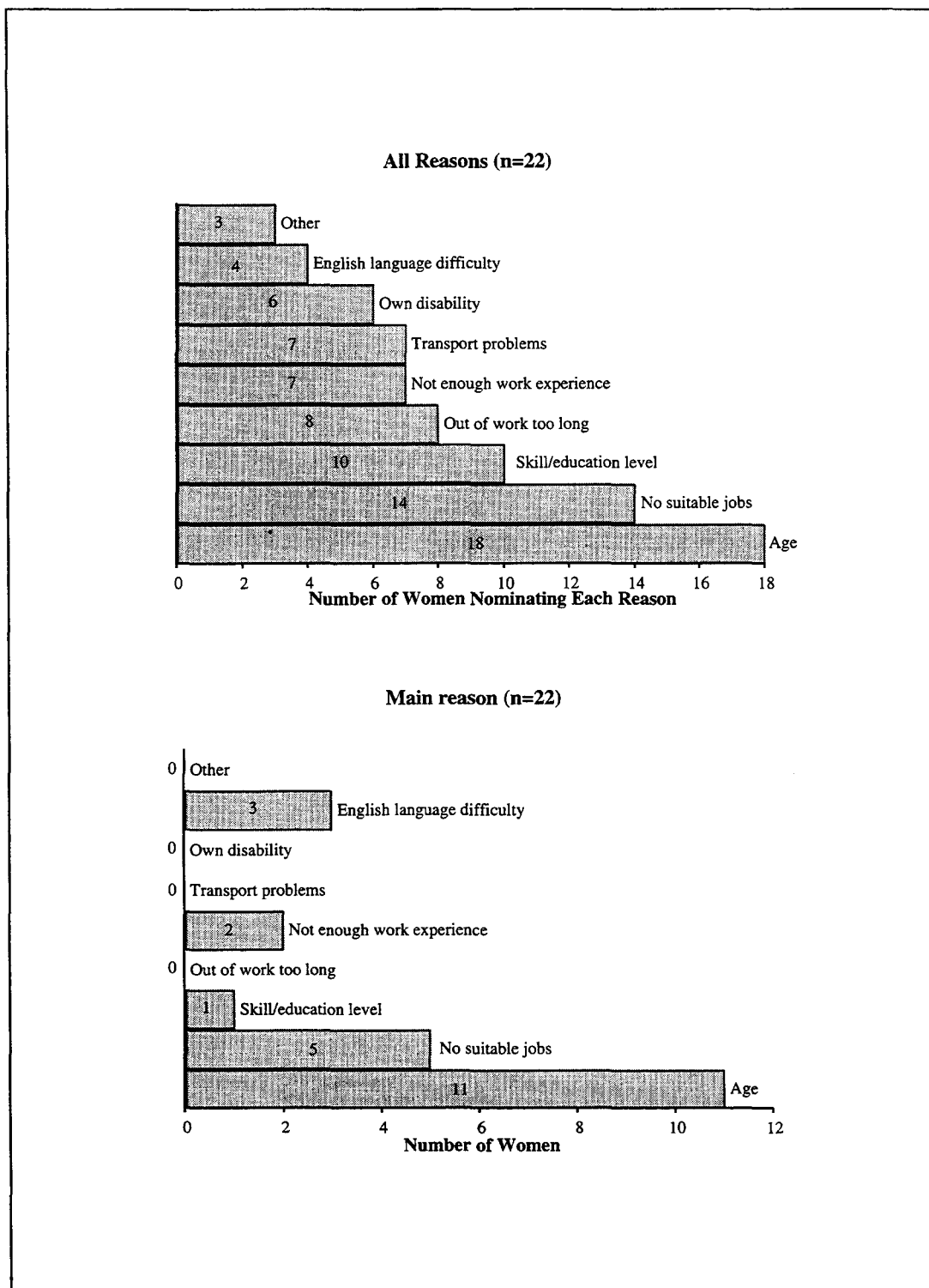
While skill or education level was mentioned as a difficulty by about half the women who were looking for work, it was selected as the main reason by none. Nevertheless, it is interesting to look at these women's views on training as it has the potential to address in some way all the main reasons for difficulty finding work that

Figure 10.2: Survey Sample: Women's Job Search Activities in the Past Four Weeks (n = 22)

were reported. Training can obviously reduce the barrier of English-language difficulty, can expand the range of jobs which are 'suitable', and may counteract the perceived disadvantage of age.

Fourteen of the 22 women thought that job training would be useful for them. When asked how it would be useful, most of the women responded in general terms about the value of training in increasing job prospects, some mentioned specific courses they would like to do, including English courses, and two specifically saw training as a way to catch up on their outdated or curtailed education. However, still, none of the women were taking part in a training or education course at the time of the interview. The eight women who were looking for work but who saw job training having no value to them gave a variety of elaborations. Most frequently, they cited existing skills and did not believe they needed any more. Others mentioned potential difficulties they would face in doing a training course, such as a disability or lack of time. Two saw no benefit in training: 'My age is against me. I could study but what's the point? I couldn't get a job'.

Finally, women were asked how they rated their chances of finding work within the next six months. The most frequent responses were 'poor' or 'very poor' which together accounted for 16 out of the 22 cases.

Figure 10.3: Survey Sample: Reasons Women Having Difficulty Finding Work

10.4 Partners' Reservation Wages

While the nature of job search by the unemployed male partners in the sample is not in general a concern of this study, certain aspects are. One of these is the reservation wages of unemployed married men. Do unemployed men's reservation wages, the minimum wage level for them to consider it worthwhile to move from unemployment to paid work, vary according to the activity of their partner? It can be hypothesised, for example, that where the woman has no work, and thus no earned income, the man will feel the need to set a reservation wage considerably higher than he would if his partner had some income or, indeed, if he was single without dependants. If this is the case, and the accordingly high reservation wages are unrealistic in the context of available job opportunities, then the couple may find themselves locked in to being out of work.

Information on partners' reservation wages was obtained indirectly by asking women what would be the lowest weekly wage that their partner would accept. A large number of 'don't know' responses was, accordingly, not a surprise, and amounts were only given in a little over a half of the cases: for 18 of the Group 1 couples, and for 14 of the Group 2 couples. Boldly passing by the low response rate to this question and the indirect nature of the responses, the interesting question now is whether the reservation wages for the males in Group 1, where the women have no earnings, are higher than those for the males in Group 2, where the women have some earnings.

As in similar exercises described previously, reservation wages were standardised by their expression in terms of after-tax hourly wage rates. In only one relevant case was the male partner looking for other than full-time work, and amounts had been reported in after-tax terms in the great majority of cases. For those looking for full-time work, the reservation wages for both Groups exhibited a clear floor at the same level of around \$300 per week after tax, seemingly related to the level of unemployment allowance. The median reservation wages for males in both Groups were quite similar: \$8.60 per hour for the men in Group 1 and \$8.00 per hour for those in Group 2. The suggestion of slightly higher reservation wages for men whose partners have no earnings would not, however, have any statistical significance. Rather, the results can be seen to offer no support to the suggestion that there is any great difference in the reservation wages of unemployed men according to the earnings status of their partners. The main impression from these figures on reservation wages is not how high they are, or how different they are, but how low they are.

Where figures were given for male partners' reservation wages, women were asked how they would have arrived at the figure. In 18 of the 32 cases, spread between Group 1 and Group 2, the male partner's reservation wage would have been based on a consideration of household costs and expenses. In contrast to the above discussion, this suggests that the reservation wages should largely vary according to whether or not the female partner had any earned income. It seems that we will have to remain quite inconclusive on this matter. Other bases for the amount of the reservation wage

included six cases where the amount stated was seen as the going rate or the 'basic wage', six cases where it was set in terms of at least what the couple were getting in unemployment allowance, and two cases where the amount was related to previous earnings.

10.5 Where Both are Looking for Work

Another reason to examine the job search characteristics of males in the couples is the broad question of the extent to which the low employment rate for women whose partners are unemployed is attributable to male and female partners having similar labour market attributes. Some light has already been thrown on this matter through the description of the couples in Section 6 and we look now at whether male and female partners face the same difficulties finding work. The comparison, which is necessarily restricted to the 21 couples in Groups 1 and 2 where both partners were looking for work, revealed a degree of correlation. For 11 of the 21 couples, the main reason for difficulty finding work was the same for both partners: their ages in eight cases, and the lack of suitable jobs in three cases. There was a similar degree of correlation between the women's opinions on the prospects of her and her partner finding work within the next six months, with the same response for each partner in ten of the 21 cases. For 13 of the couples, the prospects of either partner finding work within six months were seen as 'poor' or 'very poor'.

11 The Women's Impressions

Besides the questioning about details of their circumstances, women were asked some more impressionistic questions about their situations. These related to their views about the income test for unemployment allowances, suggestions as to how women in their situations who are looking for work could be further assisted by government, and whether they would change their labour force activity if their partner found work.

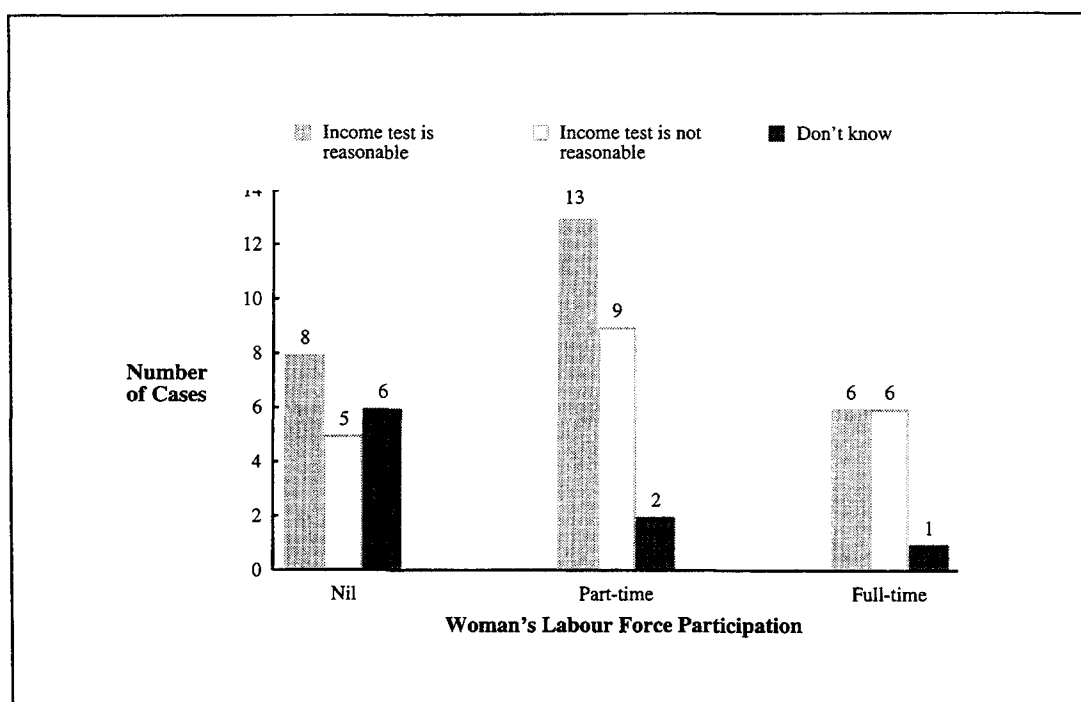
11.1 Is the Income Test Reasonable?

While talking about the detail of social security provisions, women were asked whether they thought that the income test for unemployment allowances was reasonable. The responses, for those women in couples receiving unemployment allowances, are depicted in Figure 11.1 which shows that close to half (27 cases) of the 56 women who answered the question thought that the income test was reasonable, nine women were not sure, and a sizeable minority of 20 women thought the test was unreasonable. Many of the women who were not in the labour force were not sure whether or not the income test was reasonable, perhaps reflecting the absence of any relevant current or anticipated earnings on their part. If so, and 'don't know' responses are taken to mean an absence of concern, then there is a suggestion that concern about the income test increases with the degree of women's labour force participation.

When women said that they thought the income test was unreasonable, they were asked how they thought it could be improved. Thirteen of the 20 women said that they thought the income-test-free amount should be increased: the few women who suggested a specific cut-off named a figure of around \$200-\$250 per fortnight. Where further elaborated, the reasoning behind the suggested increase in the income-test-free area was generally a reference to the difficulty of getting by on a low income, but in some cases indicated a poor understanding of how the income test works. For example, one woman noted that 'it's very hard to find part-time jobs that bring in \$160 a fortnight. Most part-time work that's worth doing would bring in more'. Other suggestions were for indexation of the income test threshold, a higher threshold where there are dependent children to support, and averaging of income over a number of fortnights for income test purposes. Two women thought there were inequities in the income test, describing people that they knew were getting unemployment allowance but thought should not: 'Something's wrong somewhere. You see people on the dole who have money and they still get it'.

11.2 What Extra Help Should the Government Provide?

At the close of the questionnaire, women were asked 'Finally, some women in your situation are looking for work and others are not. For those who are, what sort of

Figure 11.1: Survey Sample: Perception of Reasonableness of the Income Test

extra help do you think the government should give them?'. Out of the 75 women in the sample, 52 offered responses to this question, including almost all the women with some earnings but only around half of those women without earnings. It appeared that where women had no work and were not looking for work, they understandably had not given much thought to this issue and did not feel they had anything to contribute.

The types of extra assistance suggested are summarised in Table 11.1 with the comments grouped into eight broad categories. The three areas of child care, training and job creation stand out, each being mentioned by around a third of the women who answered the question. Other areas, mentioned with lesser frequency, included: assistance with job search, the level of income support, discrimination, the treatment of married women as individuals, and the encouragement of working arrangements which are suitable for women with family responsibilities. The nature of the comments in each of these categories is described below.

Child Care

Child care issues were mentioned particularly by the women who had some paid work themselves and about half the cases identified a general need for more child

Table 11.1: Survey Sample: Suggested Areas of Increased Government Assistance

	Number of women
In sample	75
Responding to question	52
Mentioning:	
Child care	18
Training	17
Job creation	16
Assistance with job search	9
Level of income support	7
Discrimination	6
Treatment as individuals	4
Workers with family responsibilities	4

care, or often for more out-of-school-hours care. Many women pointed to a need for more flexible child care arrangements and the term 'child-minding' was used in a number of instances. These included flexibility at child care centres to accommodate the needs of families where women have casual work and whose hours may vary from week to week, and reasonably priced child-minding for women looking for work.

Training

The general thrust of the comments about training was that more training opportunities should be provided, both to provide work skills and to update skills through retraining where necessary. Particular mention was made by a number of women of the needs for English-language training and training with computers. There were suggestions that training opportunities should be provided locally, that particular attention should be paid to those women who have been out of work for longest, and that private companies should be encouraged to provide training. Two of the 17 women who suggested further assistance with training pointed to perceived inequities in access to training between men and women: 'provide courses, the same as they do for the men', 'training programs like the ones unemployed men can do'.

Job Creation

Comments about the need for 'more jobs' often stood alone, but were also often attached to the calls for more training: 'training courses are good, but not if they don't have a job at the end'. A number of women made distinction between men's and women's jobs, arguing, for example, for more part-time jobs for women, or for more jobs for both men and women: 'should create more jobs for the wives as well

as their husbands'. There were also the qualifications that there should be more jobs for older women and more jobs in outer Sydney. One woman suggested that the government should make sure that there was at least one income earner in every family. As to how these jobs might be created, there were suggestions of a job creation program administered by local government and of a program of community work: 'it doesn't matter what your qualifications are, all women should be given a chance. Given the skills a woman uses to run a home and family, they all can do the same work. Community work gives them confidence and experience'.

Assistance with Job Search

Besides the general suggestions that more help should be provided to find women jobs, specific suggestions related mainly to a need to provide greater financial support to cover the costs of looking for work, identified as transport costs by three women and as clothing costs by one. One woman thought that CES procedures could be improved in a number of ways: 'Jobs up on the board should be taken down after the job is taken. Queues are too long - it means you sometimes have to leave because you have to be home for the kids'.

Level of Income Support

While it was not made clear in the responses how increased levels of income support would assist women finding work, other than in those specific comments about the costs of job search which were described above, seven of the 52 women commented on the level of income support. Five women thought that the level should be increased, particularly for families with children, while one thought that levels were too high, especially for families with large numbers of children. One woman thought that weekly rather than fortnightly payments might help women with children to manage better.

Discrimination

Of the six women who mentioned a need to address matters of discrimination, two were concerned with sex discrimination and four with discrimination against older women in particular. Discrimination against older women was perceived to be practised both by employers and by the CES.

Treatment as Individuals

Three women argued that women should be treated as individuals by the Department of Social Security and not as dependants; they should be able to receive unemployment allowance in their own right: 'DSS shouldn't assume that because they're in a relationship, one person should support the other'. On the other hand,

one woman argued the other way, suggesting that couples should be able to split their incomes for taxation purposes.

Workers with Family Responsibilities

While aspects of this issue have been covered under the headings of child care and job creation, four women made other specific points about the need to encourage employers to provide suitable working arrangements for women with family responsibilities. These were seen to include the promotion of more job-sharing, more flexible working hours, part-time jobs which fit in with school hours, and jobs which accommodate school holidays.

11.3 What Women Would Do if Partner Found Work

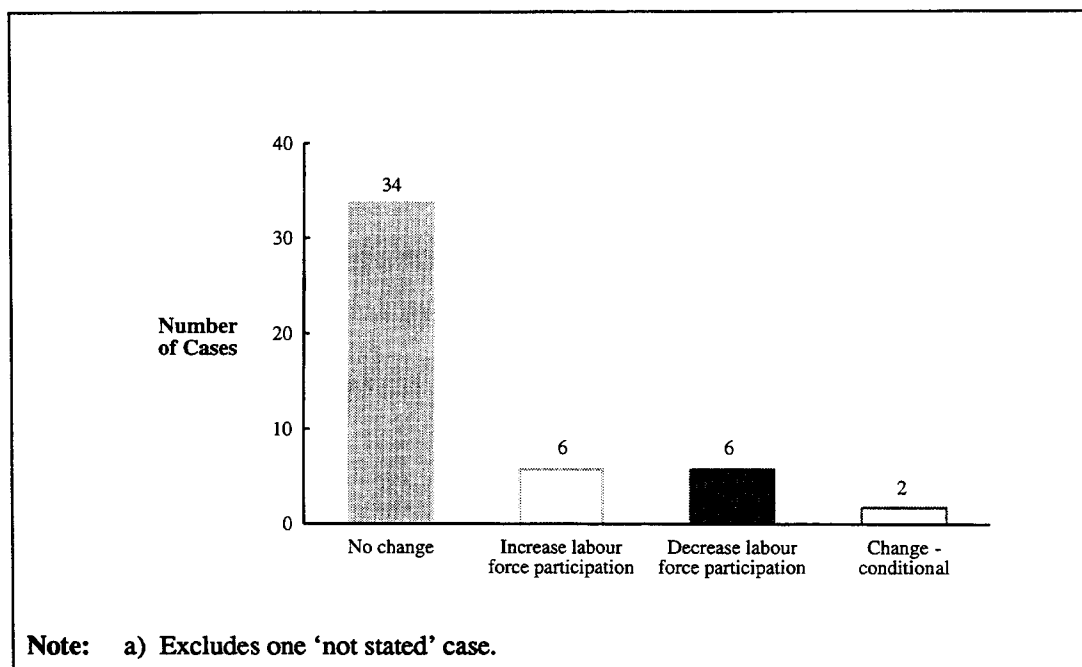
Women were asked a direct hypothetical question about what they would do if their partner found work: 'If your partner got a job, would you change your own work situation in any way? For example, would you change the number of hours you work, stop looking for work or start looking for it?'. The responses to this question are shown in Figure 11.2, for the 49 women in couples receiving unemployment allowances where the partner had no paid work but was looking for work. Over two thirds of the women thought that their partner getting work would have no effect on their labour force activity, while the minority who thought there would be a change was evenly divided between those who thought they would increase and those who thought they would decrease their labour market activity. While not forgetting that the majority of women anticipated no change to their activity, it is interesting to consider the detailed responses from women in particular labour force groups.

Among the 17 women, in the sub-sample defined above, who were out of the labour force (no current work and not looking for work), 13 expected to remain out of the labour force if their partners found work. Of the remainder, three women said that they thought they would look for work, without really saying why, while one woman qualified her response: 'It depends on his wage. If it was low, I would have to work too. But I would stay home to look after the children if his wage was good'.

There were 13 women in the sub-sample who were without paid work but who were looking for work. Eight of these women anticipated no change to their activity if their partner found work, one woman did not respond to the question, and four expected some change. Two thought they would try harder to find work; one because she 'would be jealous' and the other because she 'would be bored at home on her own'. Two women said that they would stop looking for work; one because it would allow her to stay at home and care more for the family, and the other because someone would need to look after their seven-year old child.

Among the 12 women with part-time work, who were not looking for more work, seven thought there would be no change to their activity while five anticipated some

Figure 11.2: Survey Sample: Women's Labour Force Response if Partner Got a Job, Where Partner has No Paid Work but is Looking for Work^(a)



change. Three of these women reported that they would stop work if their partners found jobs; two of them because they would prefer not to have paid work, and one who said she would have to give up her job to be with the children if her partner got full-time work. One woman said that she would look for more part-time work, without explaining why, while another thought that she would probably leave her work if her partner needed the car for his work. She did not think it would be worth buying a second car.

12 Conclusions

The intention here is not to reiterate the many findings presented in earlier sections on particular aspects of the labour force behaviour of women married to men receiving unemployment allowance. Rather, it is to draw together the material from the three analyses into broad conclusions regarding the range and relative importance of the influences on these women's labour force behaviour.

The main conclusions from the analyses of ABS and DSS data are that:

- Variations in the characteristics of married women, distinguished according to the employment status of their partner, are sufficient to explain almost all of the variation in employment rates between these groups of women.
- It is not possible, however, to be conclusive about which particular characteristics are the most important in this result. Similarities in the education level and age of the partners in a couple play a part, but only a small part. Surprisingly, regional characteristics seem to be even less important.
- To the extent that direct effects of the husband's unemployment on the wife's labour force are important, they appear to largely offset each other. These direct effects would include such matters as disincentives caused by income-testing, the incentive provided by the need to supplement family income, and the so-called 'bruised machismo' effect. The fact that the net impact of the various possible direct effects appears to be only slight does not imply that any single effect is unimportant. For example, income-testing may be important in influencing wives' employment but be offset by the need to supplement family income. If so, change in effective marginal tax rates would be expected to have some effect on the employment rate of these women.

The results from the interview survey throw some further light on the question, but it must be remembered that the survey was not based on a representative sample and that the manner in which the sample was drawn led to a sample which predominantly included women who were at least 40 years old and women who had dependent children.

One of the functions of the survey results is to illustrate and elaborate the various influences on the women's labour force behaviour. For example, it suggests that housing costs importantly condition the incentive to supplement family income. The survey also provided further evidence regarding the association between the characteristics of husbands and wives. In general, the survey revealed a diversity of women's experiences in terms of the factors influencing their labour market behaviour. Moreover, the picture is very much one of tendencies rather than deterministic relationships. Possibly the strongest relationship suggested is that between a woman's current labour force status and the total time spent out of the labour force since leaving school.

That said, some broad conclusions about the relative importance of different factors for this sample of women (predominantly women in their forties with dependent children) can be advanced.

- The picture is dominated by the women's role caring for children, the women's own ill-health or disability, and by labour market discouragement.
- Financial disincentives appear to play only a minor role, and there is little evidence of operation of the 'bruised machismo' effect.

What does the study suggest regarding the likely impact of the White Paper reforms on the situations of women whose husbands are receiving unemployment allowance? For a start, it should be noted that most of the women in the survey sample would qualify for either Parenting Allowance or Partner Allowance on the grounds of their dependent children or their age and labour market attachment and, thereby, would not be moved onto unemployment allowance with its associated access to labour market assistance. This is despite the fact that a number of the women were unsuccessfully seeking to increase their paid employment. The point is that eligibility for Parenting Allowance or Partner Allowance should not be taken to imply the absence of a need or desire for labour market assistance. More generally, the study suggests, through the apparent greater importance of labour market disadvantage than of disincentives related to social security provisions, that the elements of the White Paper reforms with the greatest potential to assist these women are the enhancements and extensions of labour market assistance, rather than the changes to social security provisions alone.

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