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GENDER AND LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND

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ABBREVIATIONS

ASHE	Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings
CSO	Central Statistics Office
ECHP	European Community Household Panel
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
IE	Ireland
LFS	Labour Force Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PP	Percentage Points
SILC	Survey on Income and Living Conditions
UK	United Kingdom
WFH	Working from Home

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Labour market inclusion is a key component of gender equality. In recent decades, in Ireland and Northern Ireland, women have increasingly entered paid employment. Yet, comparative research across the island on the level and conditions of women's participation remains limited. Different policies, educational systems, sectoral distribution of employment, attitudes to equality, migration and economies shape the participation and inclusion of women in the labour market, with notable differential consequences for gender equality North and South on the island of Ireland.

This report draws on a consultation with key stakeholders and analysis of labour force survey data to identify the barriers and opportunities to women's participation on the island of Ireland. In both jurisdictions, it explores the impact of policies, education, demographic characteristics, household types, sectors, and attitudes on the participation and conditions of women and men in the labour market.

KEY FINDINGS

Differences between the jurisdictions

The policy systems differ in important respects including the longer duration of free pre-school provision in Ireland than in Northern Ireland, a greater degree of individualisation in the tax system in Northern Ireland compared to Ireland and differences in the generosity of welfare payments, especially for larger families. On the latter point, benefits for larger families are significantly lower in Northern Ireland; however, given the constraints that mothers with more children face, such as childcare, it is unlikely that this will greatly impact on work incentives. The differences between the educational qualifications of the working-age population in Ireland and Northern Ireland are an important driver of variation in employment patterns.

Labour market participation

In 2022, female labour force participation stood at 76% in Ireland and 72% in Northern Ireland. Men's labour force participation rates stood at 88% in Ireland and 81% in Northern Ireland. While the barriers to female labour force participation are similar in both jurisdictions on the island, the strength of these factors differ.

Differences in education attainment account for much of the variation in participation across the two jurisdictions. Especially, low levels of education attainment are a strong inhibitor of labour market participation for women and men in both settings. Having young children reduces labour market participation among women to the same extent in Ireland and Northern Ireland, but women in

Northern Ireland with older children were less likely to participate than their counterparts in Ireland. Lone mothers, especially those with larger families, are less likely to be in the labour market than others, but being a lone parent operates as a stronger barrier in Northern Ireland. Older age also acts as a greater barrier for women in Northern Ireland.

Conditions of employment

Low pay

In 2022, 25% of females and 18% of males were low-paid in Ireland, using the definition of earning less than two-thirds of the median hourly pay. In Northern Ireland, 21% of females and 14% of males were low-paid. Comparisons across the two jurisdictions in pay should be treated with some caution, due to some data limitations. Even when a range of relevant factors such as education, age, nationality, household type, family status, sector of employment and part-time status are held constant, women's probability of being low-paid is still higher than men's in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, and the scale of this increased risk is similar.

Higher education offers strong protection from low pay in both jurisdictions. In general, rising age is a protective factor, except in the case of older working women in Northern Ireland. Migrants and lone mothers have a higher risk of low pay in Ireland even when education levels are considered. These factors are not significant in Northern Ireland, which may be due to the small sample size. Working in the public sector shelters workers from low pay, but the protection appears stronger in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. Working part-time, which is much more common among female workers, is an additional risk factor for low hourly pay. The risk of low pay associated with part-time work is the same in both settings.

Working from home

In the wake of the pandemic, working from home emerged as a key dimension of labour market flexibility. In 2022, 25% of females and males in Ireland were working mainly from home, compared to 14% of females in Northern Ireland and 19% of males. The lower working-from-home rates of females in Northern Ireland are mainly explained by their over-representation in public sector jobs (education, health, and front-line public administration) and in part-time jobs. Stakeholders warned that while working from home allowed for greater flexibility and the possibility of balancing caring and work demands, it also decreased visibility, which may have negative consequences for career advancement for both women and men.

Hours of work

Those living in Ireland work longer hours than those living in Northern Ireland. In both jurisdictions, women are much more likely to work part-time than men. The main predictors of part-time employment are educational level, household composition and number of children. These factors have a stronger effect on the probability of working part-time for females in Ireland than in Northern Ireland.

Occupational position

Previous research¹ indicates that workers in professional and managerial occupations typically have higher wages, prestige, greater security, and better career prospects. Women in both jurisdictions have a lower probability of working in professional/managerial occupations, and this effect is maintained when education is held constant. The effect of having a degree or above is especially strong in Ireland, particularly for men. The gender gaps reduce when controlling for socio-demographic, household and employment characteristics.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The role of education in enhancing employment prospects and job quality means that ensuring access to education and training opportunities is a key policy lever.

While education attainment levels have been rising in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, the proportion of the working-age population in Northern Ireland holding degrees and post-secondary qualifications is significantly lower. This has substantial consequences for workers in Northern Ireland. While significant improvements in the initial educational system would be needed to bring about large-scale change, access to lifelong learning could play an important role in enhancing job quality among women (and indeed men), an issue highlighted by policy stakeholders.

The gendered nature of care and its consequences for access to employment, especially high-quality jobs, are a common feature of both settings. Previous research has outlined the nature of early childhood care and education in the two jurisdictions and highlighted the ongoing issues of affordability of access. The analyses presented here show that barriers to employment are not limited to the mothers of pre-school children, suggesting a role for after-school as well as pre-school care.

The disadvantages faced by lone parents, both in accessing employment and in the conditions of employment, pose a significant challenge for policy. The emphasis on labour market activation in the welfare system is stronger in Northern Ireland, yet the participation rate is lower. This points to the persistence of barriers that go

¹ See occupational prestige in Scott and Marshall, 2015.

beyond welfare disincentives. Tackling low pay among lone parents is a key concern if they are not to be activated into in-work poverty.

In conclusion, the study points to the value of comparing neighbouring systems in understanding gender differences in employment. Unpacking commonalities and differences in the level and quality of paid employment provides insights into the complex interaction of tax, welfare, family support, education and labour market policies and their effects on the gender gap, providing evidence for mutual policy learning.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The distribution of paid work and care, the types of jobs in which women and men are employed and the pay they receive are central determinants of broader gender inequalities in social status, wellbeing and poverty (Andrew et al., 2021). Gender relations and labour market participation of women have undergone significant change across both Ireland and Northern Ireland over recent decades. Women – particularly women with children – have increasingly taken up paid employment, attitudes to gender roles have altered over time, and opportunities in education and the labour market have changed (Russell et al., 2017; Wilson, 2021). Yet significant gender differences remain in both the levels of paid work and care carried out (Russell et al., 2017), and in the types and conditions of employment (England et al., 2020; Doris, 2019; McGinnity et al., 2021).

However, relatively little research has been carried out on whether gender inequalities have diverged or converged in Ireland and Northern Ireland (though see O'Connor and Shortall, 1999; and Wilson, 2020 for important exceptions). While Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) are routinely placed in the same country typology (in terms of their welfare and gender regimes) (see, for example, Esping-Andersen, 2009), this disguises significant differences in the detail of welfare and employment policies (see Chapter 2) that are likely to have concrete consequences for access to the labour market and conditions of work. Moreover, the economies of Ireland and Northern Ireland have followed different trajectories (Bergin and McGuinness, 2022), which shapes the opportunity structures for both women and men. Education and training systems in Ireland and Northern Ireland are also quite distinct, leading to significant differences in the qualification levels of those living in two jurisdictions (Smyth et al., 2022). Patterns of migration and other demographic features such as differential divorce/ separation rates and birth rates may also lead to differences in the labour force participation of women and men in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Finally, gender norms may differ somewhat between the two jurisdictions influenced by differing experiences and institutions, though very little evidence has been gathered on this topic to date.

To address this gap in research, in this study we set out to examine the following research questions:

1. How do patterns of labour force participation differ for women and men in Ireland and Northern Ireland? Are the same groups outside the labour market in both jurisdictions?

2. How do gender differences in quality of employment compare in Ireland and Northern Ireland?
3. What is the role of policy, educational qualifications, demographic characteristics, gender role attitudes and the sectoral distribution of employment in accounting for any gender differences between the two jurisdictions?

1.2 MACRO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Ireland and Northern Ireland have faced different economic contexts over recent decades that have shaped labour market opportunities. During the 1980s economic growth was greater in Northern Ireland than in Ireland, though it was sluggish in both the UK and Ireland (see Table 1.1). In the 1990s, this pattern was reversed, with greater economic growth in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. Over the ten-year period from 2000 to 2010, the annual average change was less than 1 percentage point in both jurisdictions, a figure that hides very significant rises in GDP in the first part of the period and precipitous falls after the economic crash in 2008. The crisis led to a substantially greater shock in Ireland than in Northern Ireland, due to the housing crash and the greater exposure of the Irish banking system, requiring a bail-out from the IMF, the European Commission, and the ECB. Northern Ireland and the UK avoided these extremes (this can be seen more clearly in the employment trends in Table 1.1). However, while the downturn was longer and deeper in Ireland, the recovery when it came resulted in a sharper rebound.

TABLE 1.1: NORTHERN IRELAND AND UK GDP PER HEAD AND IRELAND GNI PER HEAD, AVERAGE ANNUAL CHANGE (%)

	Ireland	United Kingdom	Northern Ireland
1960–70	3.9	2.4	3.1
1970–80	2.5	2.0	1.4
1980–90	1.3	2.8	2.2
1990–2000	5.5	2.2	3.0
2000–10	0.5	0.9	0.4
2010–16	3.2	1.3	0.6
2016–20*	5.3	-1.1	-0.9

Source: FitzGerald and Morgenroth, 2019. *World Bank, 2024 for IE and UK; NISRA, 2024 for NI.

Ireland's gross national income (GNI) per head continued to grow during the period 2010–2016 (FitzGerald and Morgenroth 2019). Following the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, private investment in Northern Ireland increased; however, the levels of foreign investment in Northern Ireland were low and concentrated in low value-added sectors, such as construction and distribution (Bergin and

McGuinness, 2022). Public investments were directed towards consumption rather than investment in human capital (*ibid.*). These factors combined with the legacy of the Troubles subdued market forces in Northern Ireland and productivity levels started to decrease (Bergin and McGuinness, 2022). During the Great Recession, the UK maintained its transfer at around 20% of Northern Ireland's gross domestic product (GDP), mainly through support for public services, which maintained employment in the public sector (FitzGerald and Morgenroth, 2019). Yet, output per worker continued to decline (Bergin and McGuinness, 2022).

In contrast, during the early 2000s, the multinational sector in Ireland greatly expanded on foot of a low tax regime for corporations and access to the European single market (FitzGerald and Morgenroth, 2019). This attracted foreign investment in high valued-added service sector firms employing highly educated graduates. Ireland invested in a major human capital development programme which transformed Ireland's educational attainment levels (*ibid.*). Consequently, the number of graduates and productivity levels grew and a productivity gap opened up between Ireland and Northern Ireland (Bergin and McGuinness, 2022). The post-recession recovery from 2013 onwards was buoyed by growth in the multinational-dominated sector, where productivity rose massively. By 2020, productivity was approximately 40 per cent higher in Ireland compared to Northern Ireland (Bergin and McGuinness, 2022).²

Brexit created further economic (and political) uncertainty in Northern Ireland. The onset of the pandemic led to a further economic shock in both jurisdictions. However, unprecedented supports to firms and individuals cushioned the impact at the firm and household level and both economies rebounded in 2021 and 2022. The impact of these changes can be seen in the employment trends outlined later.

1.3 THE LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT

Comparisons of women's labour market experiences in Ireland and Northern Ireland are rare. In a comparative analysis of women's position in paid work in Ireland and Northern Ireland at the end of the 20th century, O'Connor and Shortall (1999) found higher female employment rates, especially among married and older women in Northern Ireland throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

The higher female employment rate in Northern Ireland was attributed to the availability of jobs in the textile and clothing industries not affected by the marriage bar³ (O'Connor and Shortall, 1999). In Ireland, the marriage bar affected all sectors

² The effect of multinationals on gender equality in the labour market is uncertain (Van Der Straaten et al., 2020) and there is a lack of research on this question in Ireland.

³ The marriage bar was the requirement for women to leave certain jobs once they got married. A marriage bar was in place in many occupations in Ireland and Northern Ireland until the 1970s, though it was removed earlier in Britain.

and employment among married women remained below 10% until the 1980s (Mosca and Wright, 2019).

O'Connor and Shortall also found that women in Northern Ireland were more likely to be working part-time, which they attributed to differences in tax and welfare policies, such as an individualised tax system in Northern Ireland in contrast to a (then) joint system of taxation in Ireland. At that time, State provision of childcare services was virtually non-existent in both jurisdictions. The study also noted a higher prevalence of low pay among female employees in Northern Ireland.⁴

More recently, Wilson (2020) has undertaken a comparison of the gender pay gap in Ireland, North and South. Drawing on the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) for Ireland and Understanding Society survey data for Northern Ireland, Wilson (2020) concludes that females earn less than males in both settings. However, the scale of the gap and the difference between Ireland and Northern Ireland is sensitive to how it is measured. The unadjusted gender pay gap at the median stood at 8.1% in Northern Ireland and 2.8% in Ireland, while the gap at the mean was lower in Northern Ireland (3%) than in Ireland (9%). The gender pay gap among full-time workers is found to be higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. Wilson notes that the higher share of female employment in the public sector in Northern Ireland compared to Ireland is likely to go some way to explaining the narrower pay gap in mean hourly earnings.

1.3.1 Employment rates

In Figure 1.1, we map employment rates for females in Ireland and Northern Ireland over the period 1998 to 2022. As O'Connor and Shortall (1999) outline, female employment rates were higher in Northern Ireland than in Ireland in the late 1990s. This gap then closed in the early 2000s, when employment rates among females in both jurisdictions rose steadily to over 60 per cent. The Great Recession in 2008 led to a fall in female employment across the whole island, but the drop was steeper and more prolonged in Ireland. This meant that throughout the 2010s employment was again significantly higher among females in Northern Ireland. The onset of the pandemic led to a fall in employment which was again sharper in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. However, the recovery in 2021 was stronger for females in Ireland, which has meant that female employment rates are now marginally higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland.

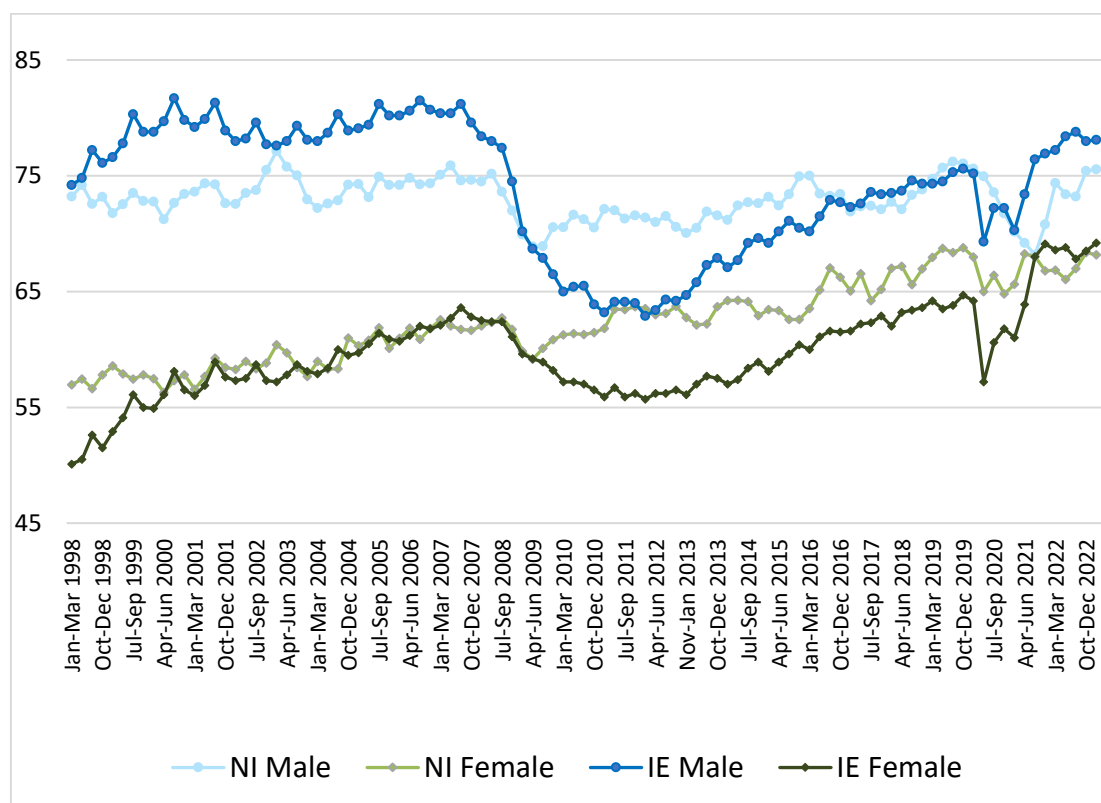
The comparative situation is somewhat different for men. From 1998, male employment rates were consistently higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland but as for women, the 2008 recession-related decline in employment was more

⁴ They cite figures showing 40 per cent of full-time female employees in Northern Ireland were low-paid (earning less than two-thirds of median earnings) compared to 30 per cent of female employees in Ireland.

dramatic in Ireland than in Northern Ireland, with rates only converging again in 2016. In contrast to the earlier recession, the pandemic-related dip in employment was felt more acutely in Northern Ireland and was more prolonged. The latest figures show a return to a picture of higher employment rates among men in Ireland compared to Northern Ireland.

The gender gap in employment in Ireland was at its narrowest in the post-recession period, due to the high levels of male unemployment. In Northern Ireland, the narrowest gender gap occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is likely to reflect the occupational distribution with females more concentrated in health, education and other front-line services (see section 1.3.2).

FIGURE 1.1: EMPLOYMENT RATES IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 1998–2022



Sources: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

1.3.2 Employment structure

The ongoing reality of gender segregation in occupations (Russell et al., 2017) means that the sectoral composition of the labour market north and south of the border structures the demand for male and female labour. Historically, the economy of the North was much more industrialised than that in Ireland. During the first half of the 20th century, Northern Ireland had very significant shipbuilding and textile industries, while the Irish economy remained predominantly agrarian.

Throughout the 2000s services sector employment expanded significantly in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, while employment in agriculture and manufacturing declined.⁵ In 2022, manufacturing and other industry still accounted for a higher proportion of employment in Ireland than in Northern Ireland (13.3 and 10.8 per cent respectively), while agriculture accounted for only 3 per cent of employment in Ireland and 2 per cent in Northern Ireland.

A further significant and relatively longstanding difference in the labour markets of the two jurisdictions is the higher proportion of public sector employment in Northern Ireland. In response to the Troubles and the decline in manufacturing employment, there was a significant expansion in public sector employment in Northern Ireland, which grew from representing one-quarter of jobs in 1971 to one-third in 1980 (FitzGerald and Morgenroth, 2019). Over the period 2008–2016, the proportion of employment in the public sector was on average 3 percentage points higher in Northern Ireland (33 per cent) than in the UK as a whole (30 per cent), while the figure was substantially lower in Ireland (25 per cent) (FitzGerald and Morgenroth, 2019).

Whether the employer is in the public or private sector is not directly measured in the Irish Labour Force Survey. A common practice is to consider the sectors of public administration and defence, education and health as a proxy for the public sector.⁶ A significantly higher share of the employed population works in the public sector in Northern Ireland (35.3 per cent) than in Ireland (27.8 per cent). In both jurisdictions, a much larger share of females than males are employed in the public sector. Over half of females employed in Northern Ireland work in the public sector compared to 18.9 per cent of males. In Ireland, the figures are 42.6 per cent and 14.6 per cent respectively. The widest cross-border discrepancy occurs for public administration and defence, which accounts for 10.4 per cent of employment in Northern Ireland, compared to just over half that proportion in Ireland (5.5 per cent).

In 2022, public sector employment rates were similar in the UK and Northern Ireland, with 35.2%⁷ of the UK employed population working in the public sector, including 47.4 per cent of employed females and 20.1 per cent of employed males.

⁵ In 2000, 7.8 per cent of employment was in the agricultural sector in Ireland and 4.8 per cent in Northern Ireland. Manufacturing and other production accounted for 18.5 per cent of employment in both jurisdictions (https://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/otherreleases/northsouth_2000.pdf).

⁶ There are known misclassifications in this definition; for example, the childcare sector, which sits in education, is predominantly private sector in Ireland.

⁷ LFS UK 2022, author's calculation.

TABLE 1.2: NACE SECTOR BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022 (%)

	Ireland			Northern Ireland		
	All	Females	Males	All	Females	Males
Public administration and defence	5.5	6.2	4.9	10.4	11.5	9.3
Education	8.6	13.6	4.2	10.4	16.8	4.6
Human health and social work	13.6	22.8	5.5	14.5	24.7	5.0
Public sector	27.8	42.6	14.6	35.3	53.0	18.9
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2.9	0.8	4.8	1.8	0.5	2.9
Manufacturing, mining, electricity, water supply	13.3	8.7	17.4	10.8	6.7	14.6
Construction	6.6	1.3	11.4	7.7	2.0	13.0
Wholesale and retail trade	11.8	12.3	11.4	12.8	11.7	13.9
Transportation and storage	4.4	1.9	6.6	3.9	1.5	6.1
Accommodation and food services	5.5	6.3	4.9	3.6	4.3	3.0
Information and communication	6.9	4.5	9.0	3.0	1.7	4.3
Financial, insurance, real estate	5.5	5.6	5.4	4.5	4.4	4.7
Professional, scientific, technical	6.7	6.4	6.9	6.5	5.9	7.2
Administrative and support service	4.3	3.9	4.6	4.1	2.8	5.3
Other services¹	4.4	5.8	3.1	5.9	5.6	6.1
Private sector	72.2	57.4	85.4	64.7	47.0	81.1

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE: 48,429. N-NI: 10,924

Note: ¹ Includes a small percentage employed by private households.

In Ireland, in the private sector, a higher share of females than males are employed in wholesale and retail trades, in accommodation and food services, in financial, insurance and real estate, and in other services. In Northern Ireland, a higher share of men are employed in all economic activities in the private sector. In both jurisdictions, mining, manufacturing and other production are the sectors employing the most men, followed by wholesale and retail trade and construction.

The demand for labour and the conditions of employment, including wages, differ substantially across sectors. Therefore, the differential sectoral composition of employment in Ireland and Northern Ireland and the segregation of females and males across sectors are likely to have significant consequences for access to employment and working conditions, issues that we investigate in the following chapters.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine gender differences in labour market inclusion on the island of Ireland. It relies primarily upon in-depth analysis of labour market survey data, combined with an expert consultation event to glean/extract the views of stakeholders. We also undertook a review of policy provision and published research on the two jurisdictions, and an analysis of comparative survey data on gender role attitudes in Ireland and Northern Ireland (see Chapter 2).

1.4.1 Consultation with stakeholders

An online consultation with relevant stakeholders was held on 18 July 2023 to help identify the barriers faced by women in the labour market and examine the implications for policy development. It gathered 26 participants from various fields: government departments and state bodies, researchers, academics, trade unions, business representative groups, NGOs, and other organisations (focusing on lone parent, rural, migrant and carer women, women's rights, and civil and political life). Among the participants, 12 were from Northern Ireland, 1 from the rest of the UK and 13 from Ireland. The majority of participants were female.

The consultation was divided into three phases. The first was a presentation of preliminary findings, followed by questions and research suggestions from participants. The second was the organisation of three break-out groups, where participants were asked to discuss the following sets of questions:

- Are there barriers to participation in the labour market for women in Ireland and Northern Ireland? What groups are excluded from the labour market?
- What are the current issues around the quality of work (gender pay gap, hours, contracts, flexibility, occupational level, etc.)? What would facilitate access to better-quality employment?
- Policy learning: What is working well? Are there any examples of good practice? What is not working? What could we learn from across the border?

In the last phase, each group's rapporteur summarised their group's discussions. It was followed by a general conversation on past and future policies to improve women's labour market inclusion on the island of Ireland.

1.4.2 Labour market data

The Labour Force Surveys in the UK and Ireland are well suited to a comparative study of the labour market inclusion of women on the island of Ireland because comparable questions were asked across jurisdictions, and the survey questions

are centred around the labour market condition of the respondents. The sex of respondents is systematically surveyed as a binary variable ‘male’/‘female’ allowing comparisons by sex.⁸

Following Brexit, the UK is no longer included in European surveys such as the European Labour Force Survey. Thus, comparing gender and labour market inclusion on the island of Ireland requires us to combine and harmonise different datasets. The following statistical analysis is based on a dataset combining all quarterly labour force surveys (LFS) of 2022 from the UK Data Archive,⁹ with the 2022 LFS for Ireland (using anonymised microdata files [AMF]). For Ireland, the AMF data are used since we were able to pool it with the UK data to enable comparison across jurisdictions. This was not permitted for the Research Microdata.¹⁰ For the UK LFS, only respondents in Northern Ireland have been kept (N=25,413). Both data collections occurred on a quarterly basis, covering a three-month period, and surveyed individuals living in private households. Most labour market questions are based on the International Labour Organization (ILO) definition and measurements. The recoding of variables was necessary to make the Ireland and Northern Ireland datasets comparable. Weights descriptives are available in the Appendix (Appendix 1). Data manipulations are available on request.

1.4.3 Statistical analysis

The quantitative part of the research explores how labour market characteristics differ among working-age females and males in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Thus, for the purposes of this analysis, the sample has been restricted to those aged 20–64 years.¹¹ The analysis focuses on two main components of labour market outcomes: participation and employment conditions. The level of participation is measured through labour force participation (Chapter 3). The conditions of employment are captured through working hours, income, flexibility and occupation (Chapter 4). Since all the outcomes have been recoded as binaries (Table 1.3), logistic regressions have been conducted, and reported in terms of

⁸ In the report, we use sex as a proxy for gender. Respondents might answer a question on whether they identify as male or female on the basis of their biological sex or gender identity.

⁹ Office for National Statistics (2023). Quarterly Labour Force Survey, January to March 2022 (data collection). 4th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8957, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8957-4>.

Office for National Statistics (2023). Quarterly Labour Force Survey, April to June 2022 (data collection). 2nd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8999, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8999-2>.

Office for National Statistics (2023). Quarterly Labour Force Survey, July to September 2022 (data collection). 4th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 9027, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9027-4>.

Office for National Statistics (2023). Quarterly Labour Force Survey, October to December 2022 (data collection). 2nd Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 9052, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-9052-2>.

¹⁰ Earnings data for Ireland are only available in the restricted RMF data file, and researchers are not permitted to add the UK LFS data to the CSO server.

¹¹ In the data for Ireland, the minimum working age is 15 years old and the age variable is available in five-year categories. In data for Northern Ireland, the minimum age for the labour force questions is 16 years old and the age variable is continuous. To ensure comparability, we imposed a lower age cut at 20 and an upper age cut at 64, since the majority of people aged 64 and above are retired.

marginal effects. Results indicated the predicted probability of an outcome, for a particular category (or group), compared to the probability of the reference group. To estimate the effect of covariates in each jurisdiction, margins with interaction terms have then been run, for females and males separately. The full list and coding included in the models are available from the authors.

TABLE 1.3: LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES ANALYSED IN THE REPORT

	Variable	Coding
Participation levels	Labour force participation	1: labour force participant (employed or unemployed) 0: outside the labour market
Employment conditions¹	Part-time	1: in employment, working part-time (29 hours or less) 0: in employment, working full-time
	Mainly work from home	1: Yes 0: No
	Occupation	1: Professional/managerial occupation 2: All other occupations
	Low-paid (employees only)	1: low hourly pay (<2/3 median hourly pay) 0: not low-paid

Note: ¹ See Chapter 4 for further details.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

Given the potential for institutional and policy differences to shape women's employment, Chapter 2 discusses the extent of variation in tax, welfare, employment and family support policies in Ireland and Northern Ireland drawing on policy documents and insights from the stakeholder consultation. The chapter also describes differences in the educational and demographic profile as well as differences in gender role attitudes. Chapter 3 explores rates of female labour force participation and the extent to which they vary by age, education, migration status and family characteristics in the same way across jurisdictions. Chapter 4 examines differences in working conditions, focusing on low pay, the prevalence of working from home, working hours and type of occupation. While the analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 are predominantly quantitative, they also draw on information from the consultation. Chapter 5 summarises the main findings of the study and discusses the implications for policy development.

CHAPTER 2

The policy and societal context

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we compare key features of the social and policy environments that are likely to shape differences in the labour market inclusion of women and men in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Labour supply is influenced by a wide range of personal, family and institutional factors. Here we consider whether these factors vary between Ireland and Northern Ireland and how this might contribute to differences or similarities across the island. We begin by comparing policy contexts. As individual characteristics, such as education, and family characteristics, like age and number of children are also highly relevant for female labour market participation, we also compare educational and demographic profiles across the two jurisdictions. Finally, we investigate societal attitudes toward gender roles. The discussion of policy issues also draws on the inputs from stakeholders at the consultation event, demonstrating the impact of these policies on the lived experience of paid work in both jurisdictions.

2.2 TAX, WELFARE, EMPLOYMENT AND FAMILY POLICIES

A large body of research internationally has focused on how the policy system – employment, tax/welfare and family policies – shapes the level and type of employment among women and men, especially those in households with children. This configuration of employment, welfare and family policies in a particular country has been described in terms of a welfare regime (Esping-Andersen, 1990). While there have been several variations on typologies of countries, studies have tended to group Ireland and the United Kingdom (UK) within the liberal cluster, characterised by relatively low levels of labour market regulation and reliance on private providers for social care (see, for example, Lightman, 2019).¹² However, this grouping can obscure important policy differences between Ireland and the UK, and, in the wake of devolution, among the four constituent parts of the UK (Deeming et al., 2019). This section provides an overview of the nature of employment, tax/welfare and family supports in Ireland and Northern Ireland as context for the analyses presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

Labour supply decisions are influenced by tax and welfare systems which can incentivise different patterns of involvement in paid work. Married women are less

¹² For an exception, see O'Connor and Shortall (1999) who classified Northern Ireland in the late 1990s as having a 'modified male breadwinner system' and Ireland as having a 'strong male breadwinner' system.

likely to participate in paid employment when joint taxation means that they face higher marginal tax rates (Doorley, 2018). However, it is only in combination with other institutional features such as childcare provision that the tax system is found to influence female labour market participation rates across Europe (Dingeldey, 2001). Patterns of employment are also sensitive to social welfare provision and eligibility criteria, especially for lone mothers (Pedersen and Smith, 2002; Redmond et al., 2023). Table 2.1 outlines policies relating to tax, welfare and employment quality in both jurisdictions.

Prior to 1980, married couples in Ireland were treated as a single tax unit, resulting in higher marginal tax rates on the lower or secondary earner in the couple, usually the woman (Russell et al., 2009). This meant that secondary earners had less financial incentive to enter paid employment or increase their hours of work. However, from 2000, there was a move towards partial individualisation, with spouses being able to transfer tax credits but with tax bands being only partly transferable. It is estimated that this change resulted in an increase in the labour force participation rate of married women by 5–6 percentage points (Doorley, 2018). In contrast, Northern Ireland is closer to a fully individualised model with only a tenth of the personal allowance being transferable. These patterns would suggest potentially higher incentives for married women to be in paid employment in Northern Ireland than in Ireland.

TABLE 2.1: TAX, WELFARE AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

	Ireland	Northern Ireland
Tax	Partial individualisation – can transfer credits but only partly tax bands	Individualisation – can only transfer 10% of personal allowance
Welfare	Insurance-based/means-tested split Mean-tested payments include payment for second adult and children Some allowance for caring periods for State pension	Insurance-based/means-tested split Universal credit includes payment for second adult and up to two children Child benefit recipients get insurance contributions towards pension
Lone parents	Means-tested One-Parent Family Payment; account of child age and conditionality re work	Universal Credit; account of child age and conditionality re work
Minimum wage	€11.30 per hour for people aged 20+	£10.42 per hour for people aged 23+ (€12.17)
Working hours	Maximum of 48 hours per week	Maximum of 48 hours per week

Sources: Authors' analysis.

Both systems have a long-standing distinction between insurance-based payments, where social insurance contributions while in paid employment ensure access to a payment in the case of unemployment or illness for a specified period, and means-tested payments, where household income and other factors are considered in assessing access to payments. However, the (phased) introduction of Universal

Credit, bringing together six types of income support, in Northern Ireland from 2017 has led to a divergence in the way means-tested payments operate for families. In Ireland, means-tested payments include a payment for an adult dependant and allowances for children. Universal Credit in Northern Ireland enables couples to make a joint claim but only makes provision for up to two children. Research on the UK as a whole has pointed to a disproportionate increase in poverty among large families as a result of the measure (Stewart et al., 2023). Both systems make some allowance for time out of paid employment in assessing insurance contributions, covering full-time care for children (proxied by receipt of child benefit in Northern Ireland) or for ill/disabled adults. In both jurisdictions, lone parents can avail of a means-tested payment, though this depends on the age of the child(ren) and there is conditionality regarding paid work.¹³

The potential impact of the tax and welfare system on disincentives to participate in employment was highlighted by participants in the consultation event:

Social welfare system ... disincentives to participate, either in caring or in the labour market, not only for parents but also grandparents, the loss of secondary benefits, the kind of calculations people [make] to manage – just in terms of survival, never mind careers.

The nominal hourly minimum wage level is somewhat higher in Northern Ireland than in Ireland (IE) (Table 2.1). However, research (Redmond et al., 2021) has shown that only a small proportion of workers are at this level (6.8% to 10.6% in IE in 2022 [Redmond et al., 2023]; 8% in NI [Francis-Devine, 2023]). Later chapters will look at the actual distribution of earnings by gender in the two jurisdictions. Both systems have similar regulations around maximum working hours. In practice, most are working fewer than 48 hours per week, so later analyses look at actual working time and the extent to which this differs by gender. Stakeholders in the consultation event discussed the level of hours and its variation by gender but also highlighted the rigidity of the current working day and week model for those combining paid work and care:

The impact of the structure of our labour market, of our welfare state ... as it relates to impacting on the participation of females in terms of the days worked model rather than an hours-based model and how conversations around the four-day week might impact.

¹³ In Ireland, for example, lone parents can receive One-Parent Family Payment until their youngest child is seven and then move to Jobseeker's Transition Payment, payable until the youngest child is 14 and with earnings above a certain level assessed as means. In Northern Ireland, other supports for lone parents were replaced by Universal Credit, with lone parents whose youngest child is three or above expected to engage in job-seeking (initially for 16 hours a week moving to 35 hours for children aged 13 or above).

Family leave policies, childcare availability and costs are particularly important for the participation of women with children. Women are more likely to participate in the labour market and work longer hours where paid family leave is more generous (Kalb, 2018; Koslowski et al., 2022)¹⁴ and affordable childcare is available (Akgunduz and Plantenga, 2018; Morrissey, 2017; Russell et al., 2017), though the effect of childcare price/subsidies on participation rates is relatively small.¹⁵ The positive influence of childcare subsidies is greatest for women with lower incomes and is typically stronger for lone mothers than married/cohabiting mothers (Akgunduz and Plantenga, 2018; Han and Waldfogel, 2001; Morrissey, 2017). Availability of care supports for older people and those with a disability also influences patterns of employment for women (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004; Hollingsworth et al., 2022; Naldini et al., 2016).

Table 2.2 shows family support policies in the two jurisdictions. Paid maternity leave is longer in Northern Ireland than in Ireland (though levels of payment are somewhat higher in Ireland) while both jurisdictions have an entitlement of two weeks paid paternity leave. Available evidence from both settings shows much lower rates of take-up of paternity than maternity leave (Dickey and Miller, 2023; Köppe, 2019). Both systems have a system of unpaid parental leave, but this differs in duration and age of the child. In Ireland, parents may take seven paid weeks in the first two years of the child's life. In Northern Ireland, the system allows for a transfer of part of the maternity leave to the partner before the infant reaches one year of age. Some of the measures around leave for parents outlined in Table 2.2 are recent (such as, in Ireland, Parent's Benefit from 2021 and the extension of unpaid parental leave from 2020) so their potential impact may not yet be evident in the analyses presented in the remainder of the report.

As well as leave for parents, both systems have other supports in place for those caring for children and for ill/disabled adults. Child benefit is payable to families in both jurisdictions, but there are differences in its level, the rates for different numbers of children and the age cut-off for the youngest child. In addition, child benefit in Northern Ireland is taxable for those on the highest incomes. Supports for early care and education are described in greater detail in Curristan et al. (2023). The systems differ in the duration of free (part-time) pre-school education – being one year in Northern Ireland and two years in Ireland (see Curristan et al., 2023 for greater detail). Outside the pre-school programmes, working parents access early years care and education through a range of providers, with a greater reliance on informal support (family and friends) in Northern Ireland than in Ireland. In Ireland, recent reforms have resulted in a universal subsidy for formal childcare plus a

¹⁴ However, very long leave provision that is available only to mothers can suppress participation (Kalb, 2017).

¹⁵ A recent review of 36 studies found the elasticity between childcare subsidies and maternal employment ranged from nearly -1 to close to 0, elasticity being the ratio of a percentage change in childcare price to a percentage change in maternal employment (Akgunduz and Plantenga, 2018).

means-tested subsidy for low-income families, covering both pre-school and after-school provision. In Northern Ireland, supports for childcare costs for those on Universal Credit cover up to 85 per cent of these costs (subject to limits).¹⁶ Thus, in both jurisdictions, government subsidies have reduced early childhood education and care (ECEC) costs, particularly for low-income families. However, for middle- and higher-income families, costs in both jurisdictions are much higher than in many European countries, with potential consequences for the incentives to enter employment, particularly where such jobs are low-paid (Rastrigina and Verashchagina, 2015). Both systems have means-tested payments available to those providing care for someone with a long-term illness or disability. This is supplemented with an insurance-based payment for carers (for up to two years) in Ireland.

TABLE 2.2: FAMILY SUPPORT POLICIES IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

	Ireland	Northern Ireland
Maternity leave	26 weeks paid leave and 16 weeks unpaid leave	39 weeks paid leave and 13 weeks unpaid leave
Paternity leave	Statutory entitlement of 2 weeks at a flat rate but with allowance for non-working spouse and dependent children	Statutory entitlement of 2 weeks at a flat rate or 90% of average weekly earnings if less
Parental leave	Parents' leave – 7 weeks in first 2 years Parental leave – unpaid 26 weeks by 12 years	Shared parental leave – transfer part of maternity leave Parental leave – unpaid 18 weeks up to 18 years
Child benefits	Monthly €140 per child up to 15 (17 if in education)	Weekly payment of £24 for first child, £15.90 thereafter, up to 16 (20 in education); taxed at higher incomes
Support for caring for children	2 years free part-time ECEC Universal subsidy plus means-tested subsidy for children 24 weeks–15 years	1 year free part-time ECEC Universal Credit recipients – up to 85% of childcare costs (subject to limits); for employed parents, top-up payment (up to a certain income limit)
Support for caring for others	Means-tested Carers' Allowance; Benefit based on insurance	Means-tested Carers' Allowance

Sources: Authors' analysis.

In the consultation session, stakeholders emphasised the barriers to women taking on paid employment, particularly in the form of childcare provision and 'the availability of baby care places'. As discussed in Curristan et al. (2023), the high costs of, and lack of flexibility in, childcare were seen as a barrier to women taking on paid employment.

¹⁶ Employed parents can receive a top-up payment of £2 for every £8 paid for approved childcare (up to £2,000 for each child, £4,000 if the child has a disability).

Childcare, and in particular the very high costs of childcare ... both in Ireland and in Northern Ireland and the costs are very high, particularly for low-income families or where there's a two-income family where it can make financially more sense for one of the members of the family to leave work, and that's often then the woman.

One of the things as well that can help people in the workforce is having access to informal care rather than formal childcare because it can give you more flexibility. So formal childcare being just kind of matching the 9.00 to 5.00 jobs, whereas informal care where it's a family member or something can give you more flexibility in terms of accessing work that goes outside of the 9.00 to 5.00.

Employer provision of family-friendly supports, such as flexible work hours, part-time employment and additional leave, can also enhance female participation, especially in a context of low statutory provision (Russell et al., 2009b). Public sector employers and large private employers are more likely to provide such options (CSO, 2023a). Therefore, the different sectoral composition of employment in Ireland and Northern Ireland described in Chapter 1 is likely to influence female labour supply.

In practice, the different elements of tax, welfare and other supports interact in complex ways to affect decision-making around employment. One stakeholder group highlighted how legislation in different domains is all interlinked and can impact women's employment, highlighting the importance of 'having effective equality legislation, employment legislation and education legislation'.

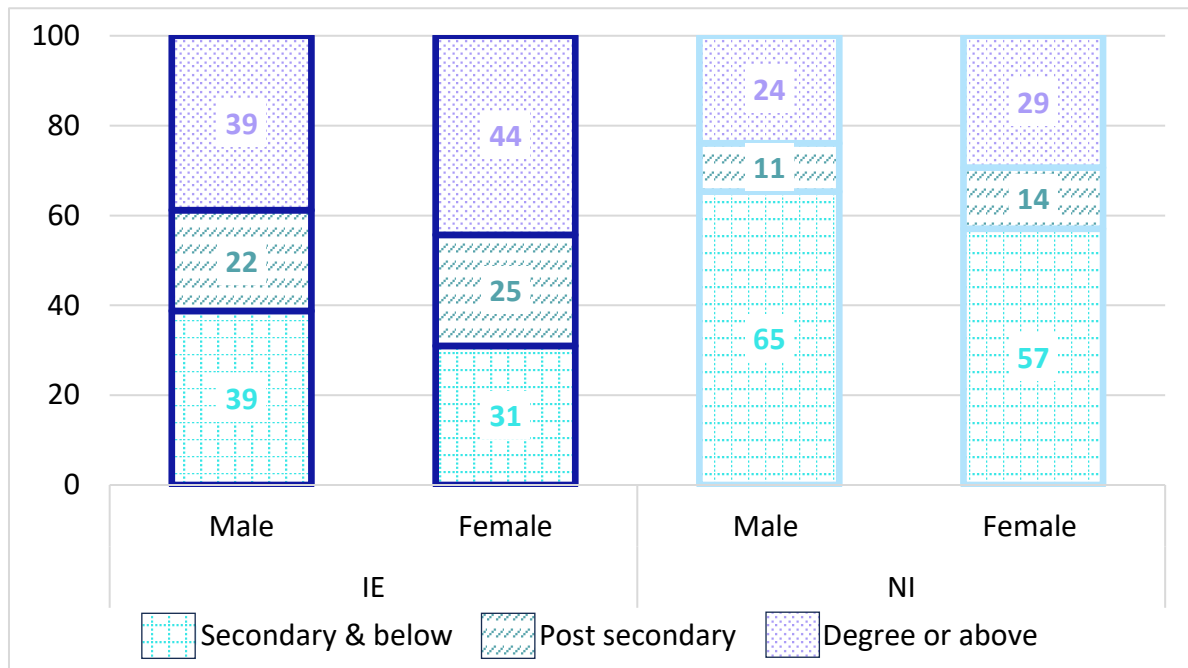
2.3 EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES

Educational qualifications are a key driver of participation in employment and of employment conditions, including pay, job satisfaction and opportunities for skill use. Women's labour market participation and hours of work are particularly strongly associated with education levels (Bercholz and Fitzgerald, 2016; Blundell and MaCurdy, 1999; Russell et al., 2009).

The qualifications of the working-age population are considerably lower in Northern Ireland than in Ireland in overall terms (Figure 2.1), which is likely to contribute to differences in labour market outcomes. In Ireland, 44 per cent of women have a degree or higher, compared to 29 per cent of women in Northern Ireland. Women in both jurisdictions have higher qualifications than men, and the gap is of a similar size. Expansion of third-level education has occurred in both Ireland and Northern Ireland over recent decades. However, there remains a larger cohort of young people in Northern Ireland who leave school early

(Smyth et al., 2022; Devlin et al., 2023), with this group facing considerable barriers in the labour market (Brunello and De Paola, 2014). Previous comparative research also finds that ‘the return to education in Ireland substantially exceeds that in Northern Ireland at all levels of educational attainment’ (Smyth et al., 2022, p. viii); this means that the relative cost of lower education qualifications in terms of pay may be greater in Ireland even if the prevalence is lower.

FIGURE 2.1: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AMONG WORKING-AGE POPULATION (20–64 YEARS), 2022 (%)



Source: LFS Ireland 2022; UK LFS 2022. N-IE: 62,333. N-NI: 14,580.
 Note: Secondary and below: ISCED 0, 1, 2 or 3; post-secondary: ISCED 4,5; degree or above: ISCED 6, 7, and 8.
 Differences are significant across sex and jurisdictions.

The importance of education and training in shaping labour market inequalities was also highlighted in the consultation:

Recognising the cumulative impact over time of having this lack of access to education, given the strong relationship between education and access to employment.

Access to continued training across the life course and in particular the need for further education and training for women returning to employment following a break for caregiving was also highlighted. Participants noted that the training systems were not geared towards the needs of this group:

When if you lose that moment of access, then you have barriers into career pathways.

The content of courses is maybe not aligning to either what people want, need or what resonates with particularly marginalised groups. And so they're not attracted to them.

And one of the other things is not only courses, but the lack of access to adult career guidance that's fit for purpose.

The education system was also seen as a domain in which gender segregation in occupations is reproduced.

The impact of the occupational segregation and how this links back to our education system in terms of degree choices and subject choices right through our education system.

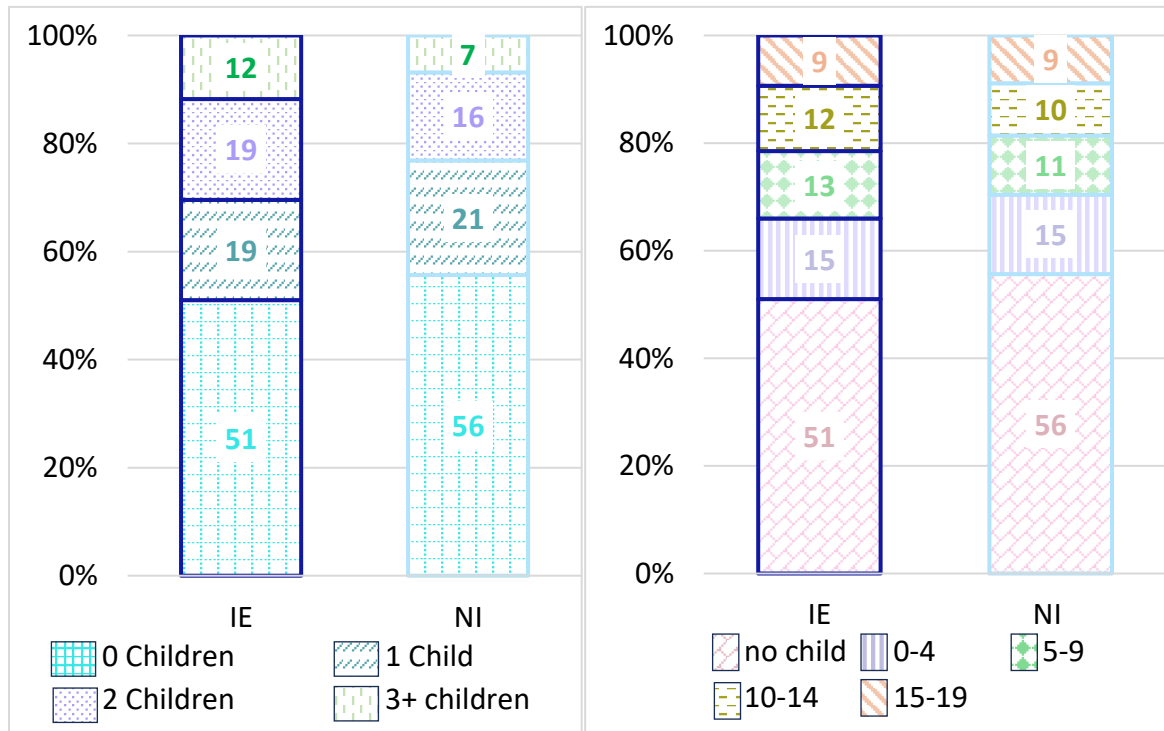
Single-sex schooling is much more common in Ireland than in Northern Ireland and the degree of subject choice (and the nature of options) available at lower and upper secondary level differs between jurisdictions. However, to date, there has been no comparative study on the extent of gender segregation in subject choice across the two jurisdictions.

2.4 THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Patterns of female employment are also associated with the number and age of children and whether the woman is a lone parent or in a couple. However, the strength of the association between these characteristics and employment levels and rewards varies considerably across countries (Budig et al., 2014; Gash, 2009), underlining again the importance of institutions (see Section 2.2) and cultural or attitudinal context (Section 2.5). The gap in employment and pay levels between women with children and those without, often termed the 'motherhood penalty', also differs between women with higher and lower levels of education and across the earnings distribution (Budig and Hodges, 2010; 2014; Doris, 2019). The impact of care commitments on employment is not limited to younger age groups, with women significantly more likely than men to retire early due to caring responsibilities (Privalko et al., 2019).

Among females of working age, those living in Ireland have more dependent children under the age of 20 compared to those in Northern Ireland (Figure 2.2). The proportion with pre-school children is the same in the two jurisdictions but the females in Ireland are somewhat more likely to have children of school-going age.

FIGURE 2.2: NUMBER OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN AND AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD, WORKING-AGE FEMALE, 2022



Source: LFS Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE: 32,483. N-NI: 7,731.
 Note: Dependent children are children aged 0 to 19 years living in the household.
 All differences across jurisdictions are significant except for females whose youngest child is aged 0–4 and 15–19 years old.

Barriers to labour market participation can be particularly acute for lone parents, who must meet financial need, care needs and work demands without the help of a partner (Harkness et al., 2016; Bernardi et al, 2018). Lone parents often have lower employment rates and are more likely to work part-time than partnered mothers, though this varies across institutional contexts. Lone mothers also tend to have lower education levels (Byrne and Murray, 2017) and hence are more clustered in lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs (Watson et al., 2016; Zagel, 2014). The proportion of working-age adults living in lone-parent households is slightly higher in Northern Ireland than in Ireland and this is reflected in the figures for the working-age population (Figure 2.3): 14 per cent live in lone-parent households compared to 12 per cent in Ireland (this includes both the lone parent themselves and their adult offspring).

Migration is another important factor in population change. While both Ireland and Northern Ireland have seen substantial inward migration in the past 20 years, the proportion of migrants is considerably higher in Ireland (McGinnity et al., 2023). In Northern Ireland, the proportion born outside of the UK has increased from 4.1 per cent in 2001 to 8.7 per cent in 2021. In Ireland, the proportion foreign-born increased from 10.4 per cent in 2002 to 20 per cent in 2022. McGinnity et al. (2023), using European labour force survey data for 2016–2019, find that 20 per cent of

the working-age population in Ireland were born abroad. This figure is 9 per cent for Northern Ireland. The gender breakdown of migrants is rather similar in both jurisdictions – there are slightly more women than men of working age – around 52 per cent. Employment rates among migrants are generally high in both Ireland and Northern Ireland, though lower among non-EU migrants, many of whom come to the island to study, join family or in some cases, seek international protection. Job quality is lower than the native-born population among East European migrants in both jurisdictions (McGinnity et al., 2023). Both in recruitment and allocation of jobs, evidence suggests that multiple factors play a role, including recognition of foreign qualifications and discrimination (McGinnity et al., 2021).

FIGURE 2.3: DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING-AGE INDIVIDUALS BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE, 2022



Note: All children are considered, regardless of their age. All members of the household are classified as having the same household type, e.g. adult children living with their parents are classified here as 'couple with children'. Differences significant across jurisdictions, except for lone mothers in IE and NI. Differences significant across gender except for females and males in couples without children in IE.

Finally, employment patterns will be affected by the general health of the population in terms of the numbers out of employment because of long-term illness or disability and the prevalence of early retirement. Poorer health levels among older age groups will also have consequences for the potential care burden of the working-age population. The age profile in the two jurisdictions is broadly similar, though there is a slightly higher proportion aged over 65 in Northern Ireland (Connolly et al., 2022). Existing research points to lower life expectancy and a higher prevalence of chronic health conditions (such as heart attack, diabetes, etc.) in Northern Ireland than in Ireland (see Connolly et al., 2022). These patterns might be expected to have consequences for levels of economic (in)activity in the two

settings. Comparing Northern Ireland and England, Devlin et al. (2023) find a higher proportion of those aged 50–64 years economically inactive because of illness/disability and a greater prevalence of such chronic conditions overall. Unfortunately, no comparable analysis is available for Ireland. However, McDermott and O’Callaghan indicate that, in 2017, 17 per cent of the economically inactive in Ireland attributed this to long-term illness/disability; this is much lower than the 30 per cent figure for Northern Ireland cited by Devlin et al. (2023). Available evidence therefore suggests that patterns of employment might differ between Ireland and Northern Ireland for the older part of the working-age population.

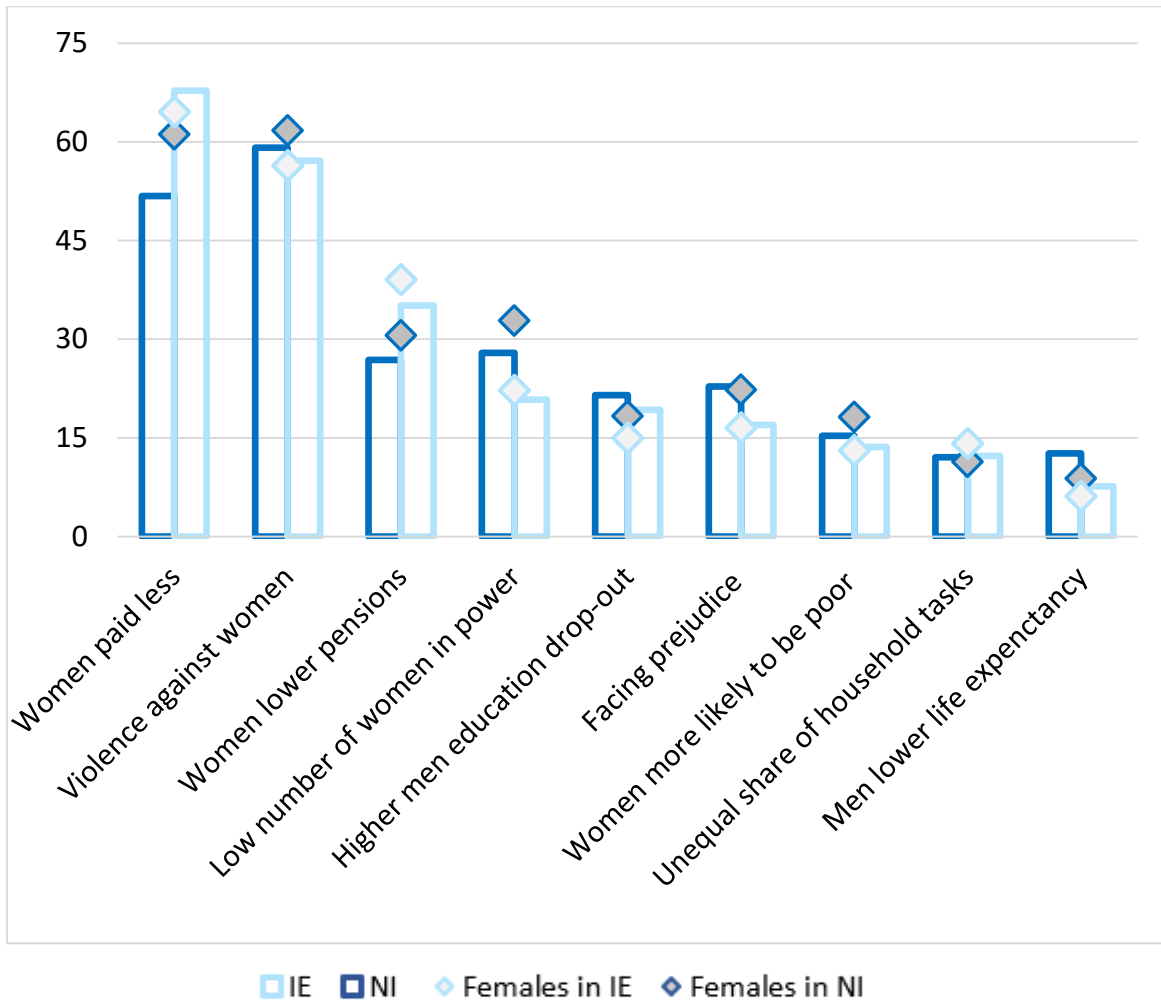
2.5 GENDER ROLE ATTITUDES IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Beliefs about whether it is acceptable for mothers to work outside the home and broader gender role attitudes also influence employment decisions. Rates of female employment are linked to national norms around intergenerational care provision (Naldini et al., 2016). Similarly, changing gender norms around responsibility for paid employment and care for children are correlated with actual shifts in labour market behaviour (Fortin, 2005), though it may be difficult to disentangle the direction of causality (but see Lietzmann and Frodermann, 2023).

Here we explore whether there are any differences in gender role attitudes between Ireland and Northern Ireland that may influence labour supply decisions at an individual or societal level. The findings outlined here come from Eurobarometer surveys¹⁷. Respondents were asked which inequalities between women and men should be dealt with most urgently. There was stronger public support for addressing the two economic dimensions – pay inequality and pension inequality – in Northern Ireland than in Ireland (Figure 2.4). Indeed, pay inequality was the top priority in Northern Ireland, while in Ireland it was violence against women. Addressing the unequal share of household tasks was assigned a relatively low priority in both jurisdictions.

¹⁷ Following Brexit, the Eurobarometer stopped collecting data on Northern Ireland in 2018. The data used is from a special module on gender equality which ran in 2014 and 2017, with both NI and IE.

FIGURE 2.4: TOP THREE PRIORITY ISSUES FOR INEQUALITIES BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN, BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, 2014 (%)

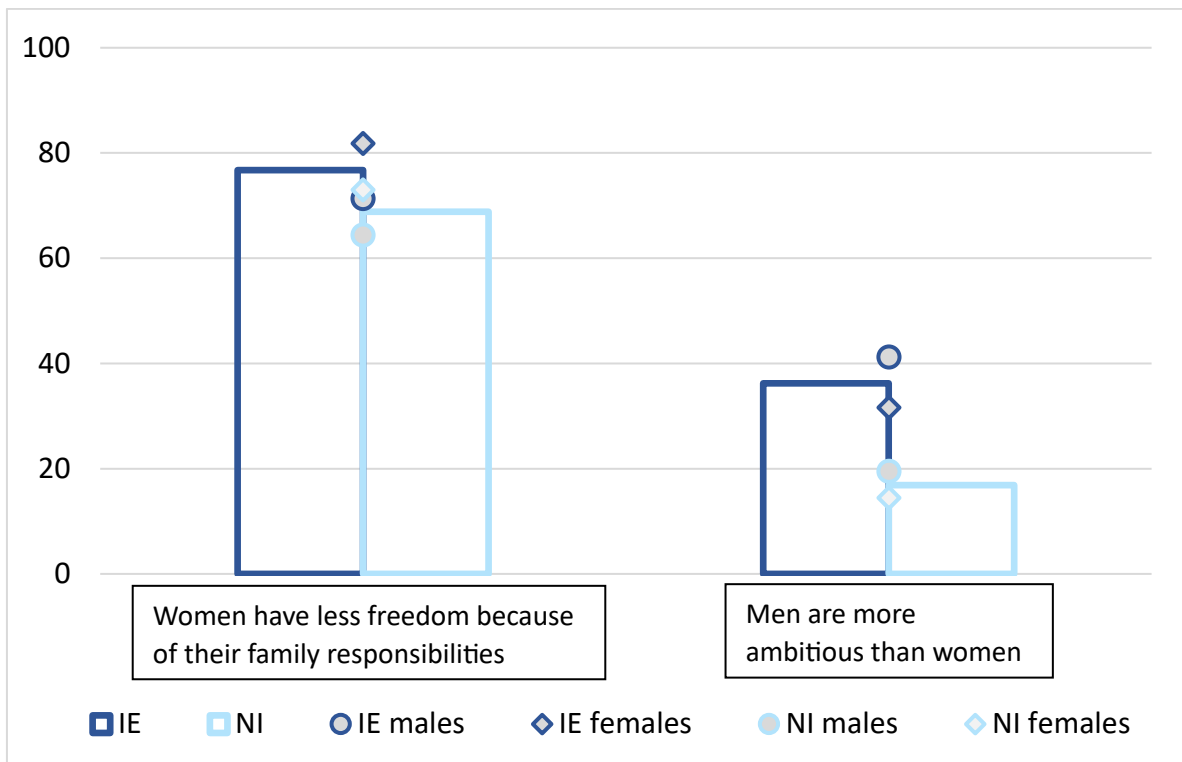


Sources: Eurobarometer 2014. NI N=312, IE N=1003.
 Respondents were asked ‘Here is a list of inequalities which men or women can face. In your opinion, which area should be dealt with most urgently? (Maximum three answers).’ Visualisation of the share of respondents choosing each option by jurisdiction and for females in each jurisdiction.

Notes: Across jurisdictions, none of the differences are significant except for women in a position of power. Across genders, the only statistically significant differences are between IE females and males for position of power and men lower life expectancy.

The issue of gender role attitudes was further explored using the 2017 Eurobarometer data. Respondents in Ireland were significantly more likely to believe that men are more ambitious than women compared to those in Northern Ireland (36 v. 17 per cent). Males in Ireland are more likely to hold this view than females (41 v. 32 per cent), but the difference by jurisdictions is bigger than the difference between females and males. The majority of respondents on both sides of the border agreed that women had less freedom than men because of their family responsibilities (Figure 2.5). This view was somewhat more prevalent in Ireland (77 per cent) than in Northern Ireland (69 per cent) but is not statistically significant.

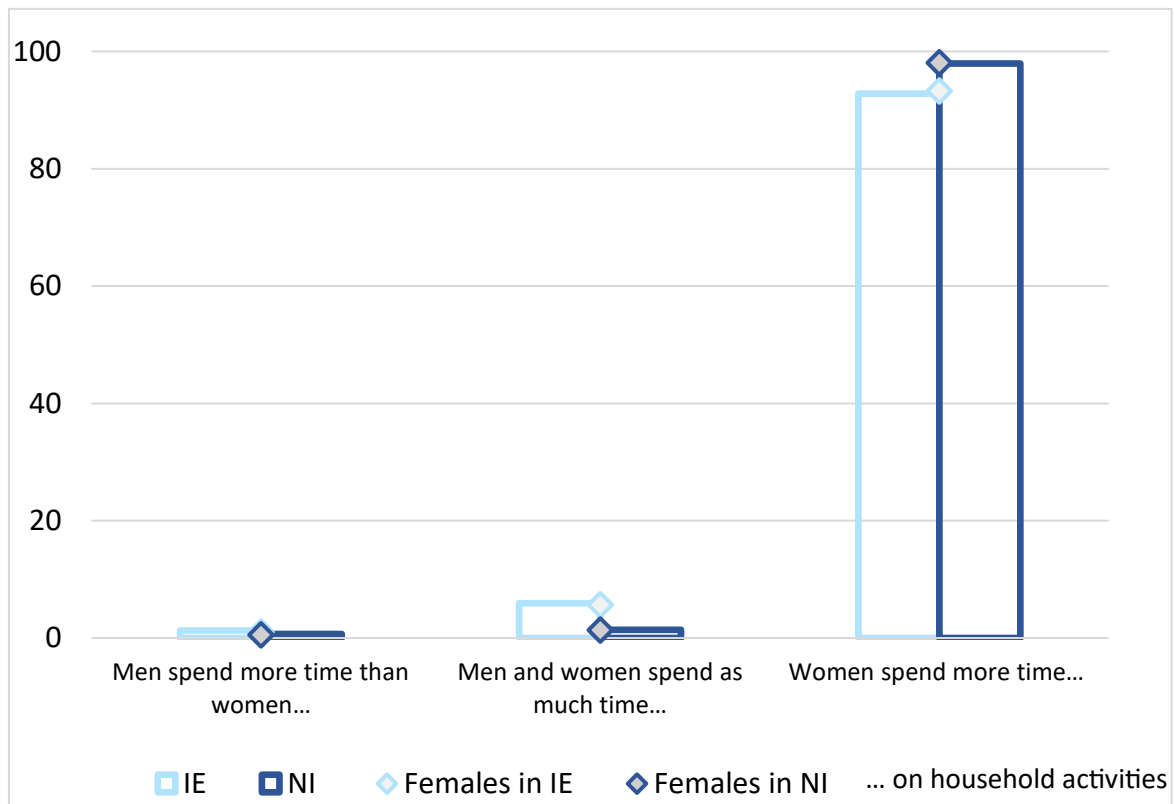
FIGURE 2.5: SHARE OF RESPONDENTS AGREEING WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS, BY JURISDICTIONS AND SEX, 2017 (%)



Source: Eurobarometer 2017. IE N=1008, NI N=327. Respondents were asked 'Please tell me whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements'. The graph reflects the proportion who 'totally agree' or 'tend to agree' by sex and jurisdiction.

Note: Differences across jurisdictions are significant. Differences across gender are significant in IE.

Most respondents in both jurisdictions were also of the view that women spend more time on care and housework activities, with no significant difference between Ireland and Northern Ireland (Figure 2.6). This reflects previous findings on gender differences in care and housework in the UK and Ireland (Russell et al., 2017). However, there are no comparative behavioural data on the actual time spent on these activities in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

FIGURE 2.6: PERCEPTION OF WHETHER WOMEN OR MEN SPEND MORE TIME ON HOUSEWORK AND CARING ACTIVITIES, BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, 2017 (%)

Source: Eurobarometer 2017. IE N=1008, NI N=327.
 Respondents were asked: 'Which of the following statements regarding the share of housework and caring activities in households do you think best applies nowadays?' Visualisation of the share of respondents choosing each option by jurisdiction and for females in each jurisdiction.

Note: Differences across jurisdictions are significant for 'men and women spend as much time' and 'women spend more time'. Differences across gender are not significant, within and across jurisdictions.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presents evidence of similarities and differences in the policy, social and demographic context in Ireland and Northern Ireland that might help us to understand differences in the employment of women in the two jurisdictions. The policy systems differ in important respects including the longer duration of free pre-school provision in Ireland than in Northern Ireland, a greater degree of individualisation in the tax system in Northern Ireland compared to Ireland and differences in the generosity of welfare payments. On the latter point, benefits for larger families are significantly lower in Northern Ireland; however, given the constraints the mothers with more children face, it is unlikely that this will greatly impact work incentives. The differences in policies to support families will interact with differences in the demographic profiles of the two jurisdictions to shape labour market outcomes.

The differences between the educational qualifications of the working-age population in Ireland and Northern Ireland noted here and in previous research is

likely to play a significant role in shaping employment opportunities and the conditions of employment that we explore in the next chapters. The differences in gender role attitudes between Ireland and Northern Ireland are not large. Nevertheless, they form part of the backdrop in which decisions about employment participation and hours are taken. The persisting expectation that women will take on a larger share of caring and unpaid work will continue to shape the labour market outcomes of women in both jurisdictions.

CHAPTER 3

Gender and labour market participation

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we analyse the factors that influence female inclusion and exclusion from the labour market on the island of Ireland. Drawing on previous literature outlined in Chapter 2, we investigate whether age, education, migration status and family characteristics have the same influence in Ireland and Northern Ireland.¹⁸ In particular, we explore whether the variations in the policy context, educational qualifications and demographic profile (see Chapter 2) result in a differing set of opportunities and constraints.

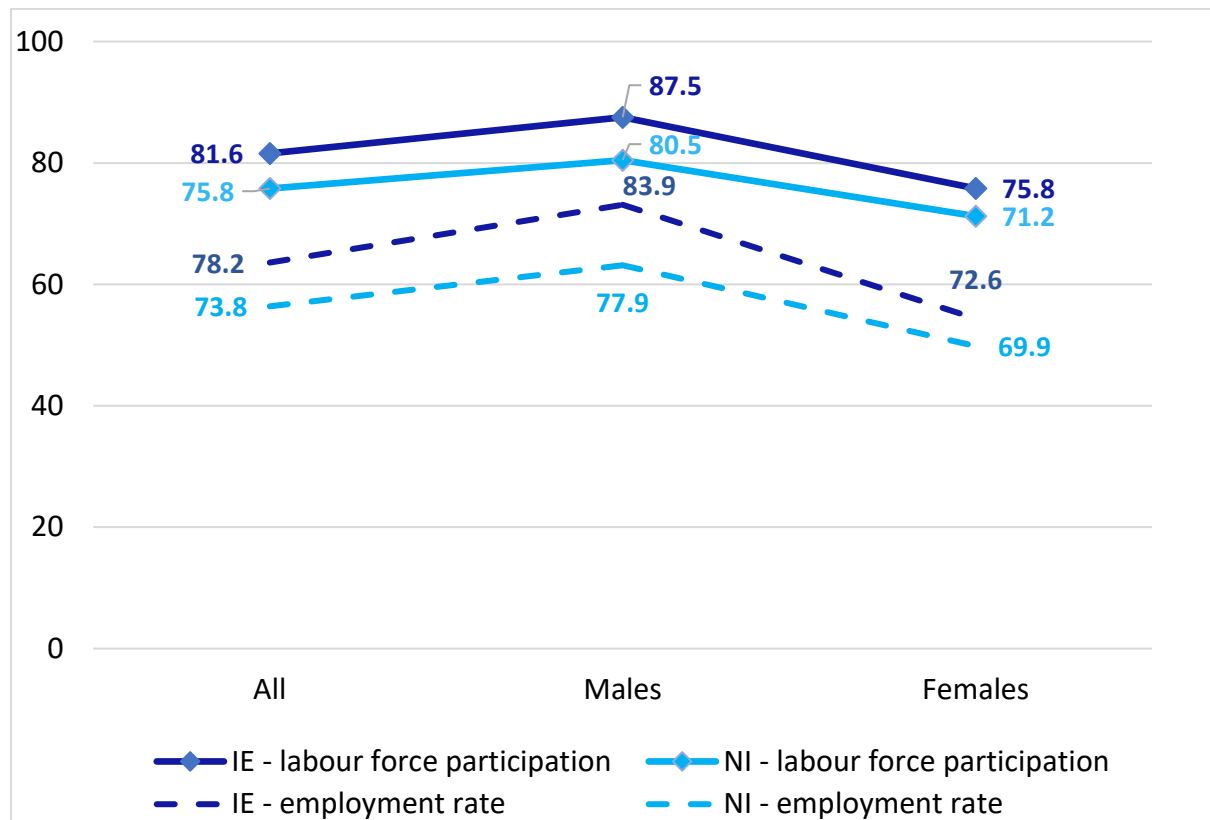
3.2 LEVELS OF LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION

3.2.1 Labour force participation 2022

The labour force participation rate is a measure of the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work (International Labour Organization, 2023).

In 2022, overall labour force participation is higher, on average, in Ireland (82 per cent) than in Northern Ireland (76 per cent) (Figure 3.1). In Ireland, the female participation rate is 76 per cent and in Northern Ireland, it is 71 per cent. In both jurisdictions, working-age males (20–64 years old) are more likely to be active in the labour market than their female counterparts. The gender gap in labour market participation is slightly larger in Ireland (11.7%-points difference) than in Northern Ireland (9.2%-points difference). Most labour force participants are employed, as levels of unemployment are currently low in both jurisdictions. The employment rate among those of working age is 78.2 per cent in Ireland and 73.8 per cent in Northern Ireland. The employment rates for females are 72.6 per cent and 69.8 per cent respectively. The share of labour force participants currently unemployed, actively looking for work and available is 4.2 per cent in Ireland and 2.5 per cent in Northern Ireland.

¹⁸ The LFS data available for pooled analysis do not contain information on region or urban/rural location nor is there information on ethnic background.

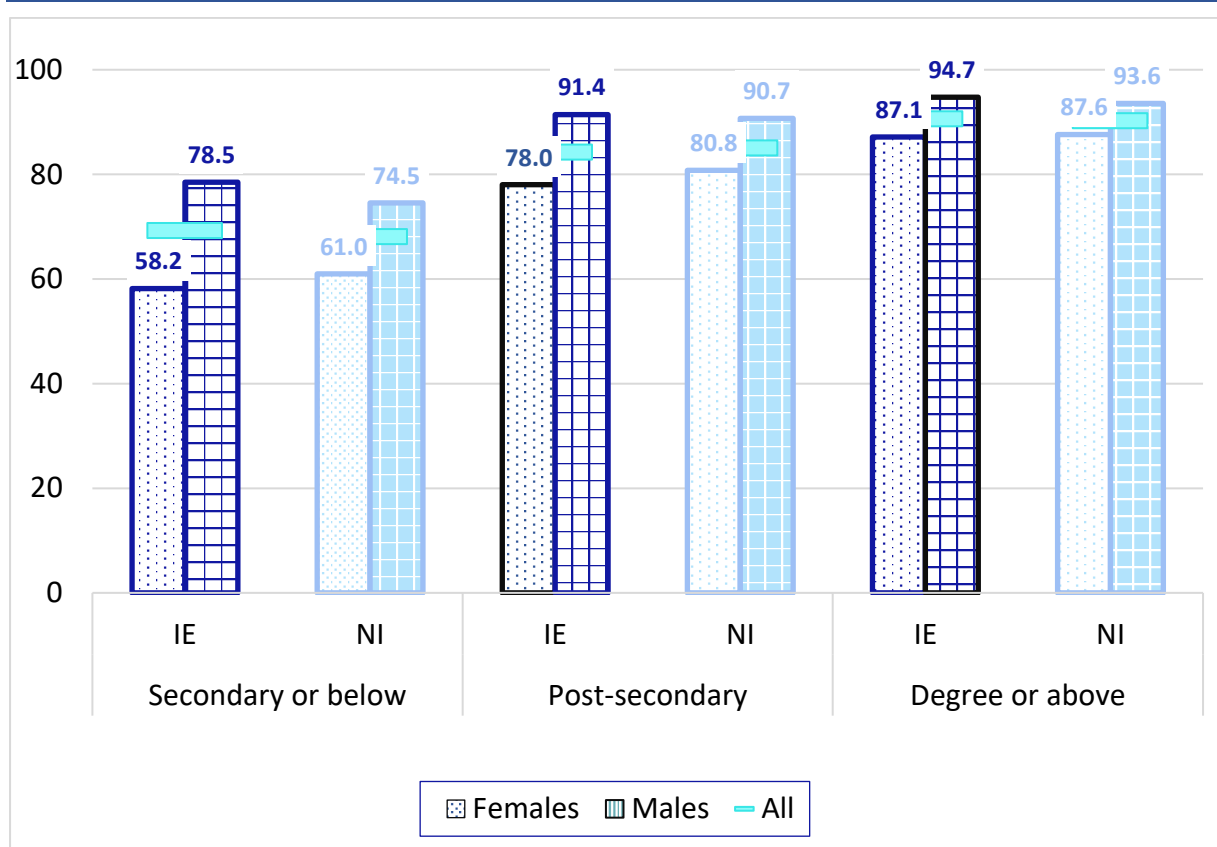
FIGURE 3.1: LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENTS RATES, BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022 (%)

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE 62,333. N-NI: 14,580.

Note: Differences across jurisdictions and sex are statistically significant for employment and labour force participation rates.

Participation in the labour market rises steeply with education in both jurisdictions (Figure 3.2). Taking females and males together, participation increases from just under 70 per cent among those with secondary education or below to just over 90 per cent among third-level graduates. There is no significant difference in the participation rates between Ireland and Northern Ireland within different education groups, though the proportion of both females and males in the highly educated group (university degrees) is higher in Ireland (see Chapter 2).

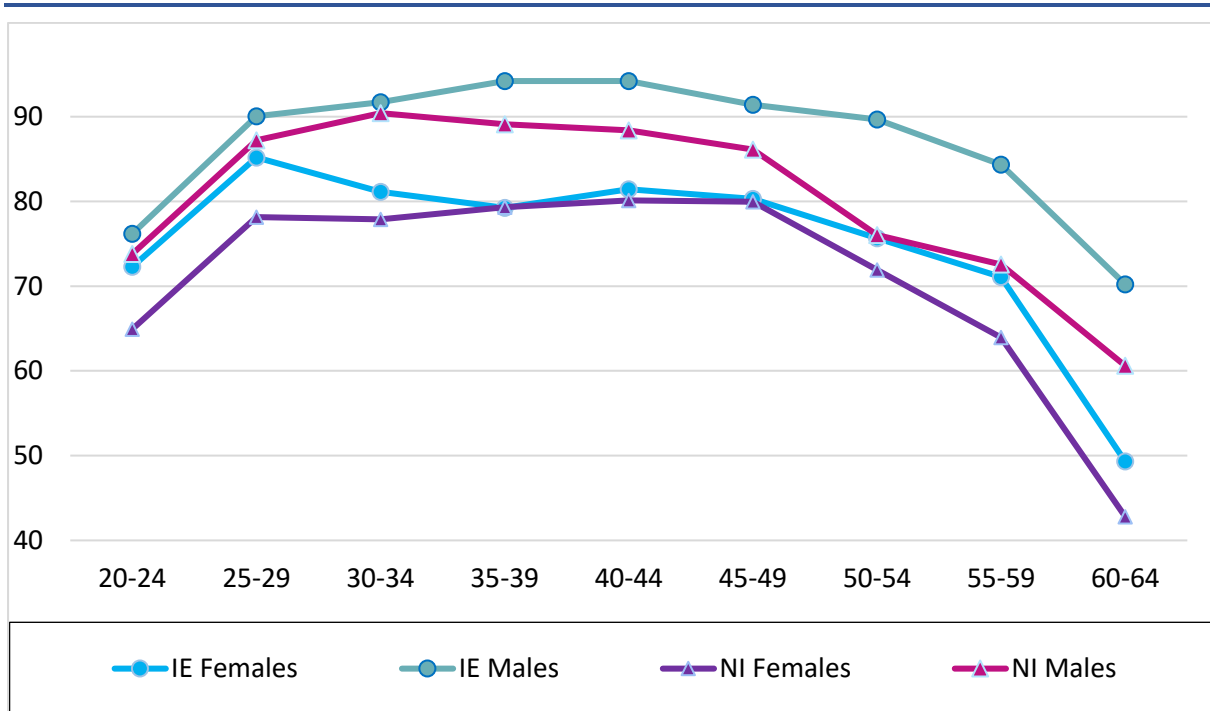
The increase in participation by educational level is much stronger for females than males. The gap in participation between females with secondary education or below and those with post-secondary education is 19.8 percentage points in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Females with secondary education or below are more likely to be active in Northern Ireland than in Ireland, but there is no significant difference in the participation rates of females with post-secondary or tertiary education between the two jurisdictions.

FIGURE 3.2: LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL, SEX, AND JURISDICTION, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022 (%)

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE 62,333. N-NI: 14,580.

Note: Differences across educational level are significant, except for males in IE with post-secondary education and those with a degree or above. Differences across jurisdictions are only significant for females and males with secondary or below education. Differences across sex are all significant.

Lastly, the gender gap significantly decreases as educational levels increase. In Ireland, the gender gap in labour force participation stands at 20.3 percentage points at the secondary or below level, at 13.4 percentage points at the post-secondary level, and at 7.6 percentage points at degree or above level. In Northern Ireland, the gender gaps are lower at all levels of education: 13.6 percentage points at secondary or below level, 9.9 percentage points at post-secondary, and 5.9 percentage points at degree or above level.

FIGURE 3.3: LABOUR MARKET PARTICIPATION, BY AGE CATEGORY, SEX AND JURISDICTION, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022 (%)

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE 62,333. N-NI: 14,580.

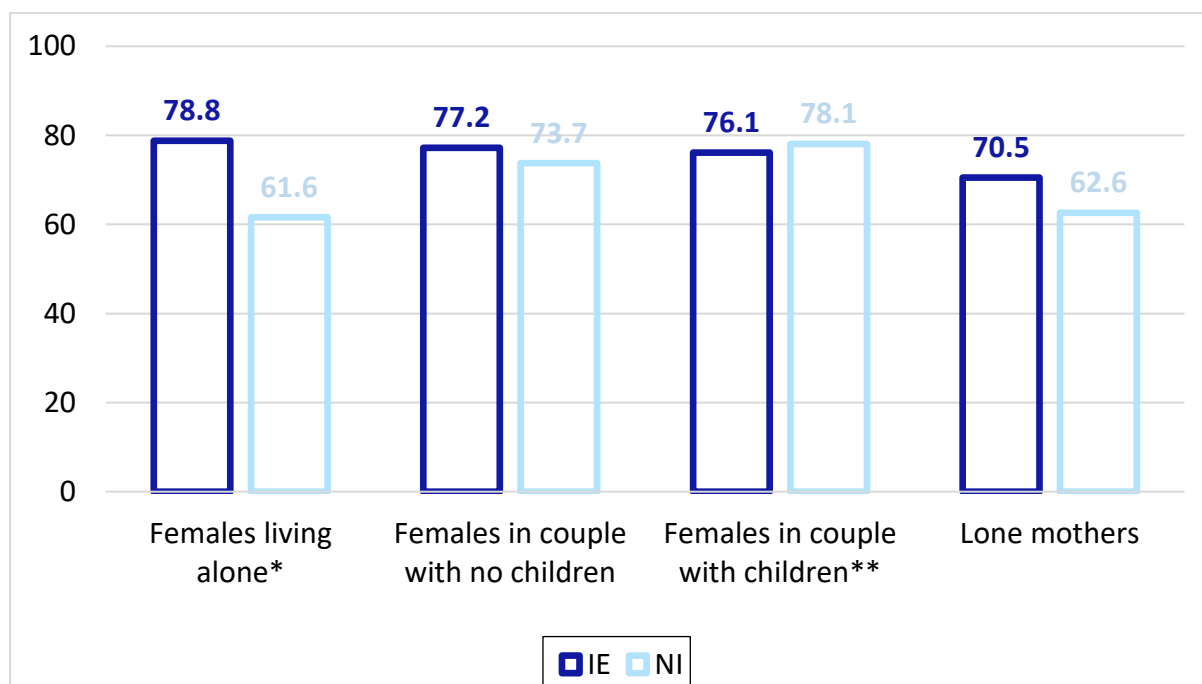
Note: Across jurisdictions, differences are significant for females aged 20–24, 25–29, 50–54, 55–59, 60–64. Differences across jurisdictions are significant for males aged 40–44, 45–49, 50–54, 55–59, 60–64. Across sex, all differences are significant, except for Northern Ireland, females and males aged 45–49.

Patterns of participation by age vary across the two jurisdictions (Figure 3.3). Among females, participation rates are significantly higher in Ireland than in Northern Ireland in the youngest age groups (20–34 years old). Rates then converge for females aged 35 to 49 years old, driven by a larger decline in participation among females in their thirties in Ireland. A gap in participation rates opens again for females aged 50 and over. Among this age group, participation rates fall more sharply for females in Northern Ireland. By age 60–64, only 43 per cent of females in Northern Ireland are active in the labour market compared to 49 per cent in Ireland. Among males, participation rates are similar in Ireland and Northern Ireland up to age 30–34. Then, the gap in participation widens and is statistically different for ages 40–44 and over. The participation gap is particularly wide for males aged 50–54: in Northern Ireland, only 76 per cent of males in this age group are in the labour market compared to 90 per cent in Ireland. While it is not possible to definitely establish the reason for this pattern, a greater prevalence of chronic health conditions and relatively high levels of being unavailable for work because of long-term illness/disability (see Chapter 2) may account for the sharp decline among older age groups in Northern Ireland.

Gender gaps in Ireland increase sharply from age 20–24 (3.9%-points) to 35–39 years (15%-points). It then remains stable until age 60–64, when a greater proportion of females have left the labour market (20.9%-points difference).

Gender gaps in Northern Ireland increase from age 20–24 (8.9%-points difference) to 30–34 (12.5%-points difference), but then decrease until 50–54 (4.1%-points difference). Like Ireland, the widest gender gap is reached at age 60–64 (17.8%-points).

FIGURE 3.4: FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATES, BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE AND JURISDICTION, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022 (%)



* Females living alone or with non-family members

** All children, regardless of their age are considered

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE 32,483. N-NI: 7,731.

Note: Differences are significant across jurisdictions for females living alone, in a couple without children, and lone mothers. In IE, lone mother labour force participation rates are significantly different from other household types. In NI, couples with no children and with children are significantly different from other household types.

Considering household types (Figure 3.4), across jurisdictions, the widest gap in female labour force participation is recorded among those living alone or with non-family member(s) (17.1%-points difference). Females in this household type have the highest labour force participation in Ireland (79 per cent) and the lowest in Northern Ireland (62 per cent). This may be partly explained by the much lower rate of participation among younger (20–30 years old) females and older females (aged over 50) in Northern Ireland (see Figure 3.3). Both these groups are more likely to live alone or with unrelated adults. Females in couples with no children in Ireland have a slightly higher participation rate (77 per cent) than similar females in Northern Ireland (74 per cent). However, there is no significant difference in participation rates among females in couples with children in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Lone mothers in Ireland have a significantly higher level of participation (71 per cent) than lone mothers in Northern Ireland (63 per cent). Consequently,

the gap in participation between lone and couple mothers is much wider in Northern Ireland.

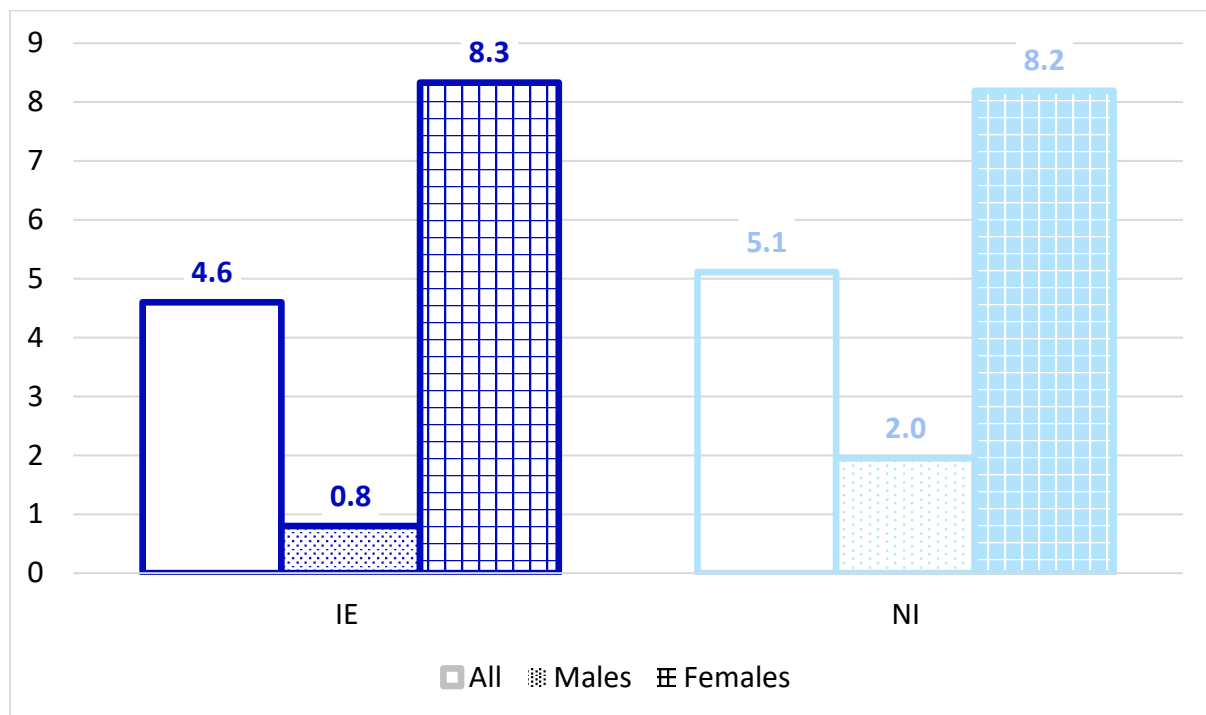
As the number of dependent children¹⁹ increases, the labour force participation rates decrease in both jurisdictions (graph not shown). Females in a couple with one dependent child have a 76.6 per cent labour force participation rate in Ireland and 81.4 per cent rate in Northern Ireland. Females in a couple with two dependent children have a 79.0 per cent labour force participation rate in Ireland and 79.9 per cent rate in Northern Ireland. Females in a couple with three or more dependent children have a 72.5 per cent labour force participation rate in Ireland and 75.3 per cent rate in Northern Ireland. Participation rates among lone mothers are also associated with the number of children. Lone mothers with one dependent child have a 73 per cent labour force participation rate in Ireland while those with two or more children have a rate of 64 per cent. The figures in Northern Ireland are 64 per cent participation and 55 per cent respectively.

3.2.2 Home and family responsibilities

National and international research have highlighted the gendered nature of unpaid work and care. It is therefore worth exploring the proportion of the population that are not in the labour market due to family or care responsibilities. There is limited information on caring in the Labour Force Survey for either jurisdiction. The most comparable information on unpaid care work in the UK and Irish Labour Force Surveys comes from questions on why individuals are not in employment and not seeking paid work. Those who say they are not seeking work due to care or family responsibilities are counted as family carers. The proportion of females that are family carers is 8 per cent in both jurisdictions (Figure 3.5); however, the proportion of males is lower in Ireland (1 per cent) than in Northern Ireland (2 per cent).²⁰

¹⁹ Dependent children are characterised as those aged 19 and below. Due to data limitations, we cannot put the cut-off at 18 years.

²⁰ In Ireland, respondents are also asked what they consider to be their main economic status, and one of the response categories is home duties. Using this definition, 10 per cent of females would be described as family carers.

FIGURE 3.5: FAMILY CARER, BY SEX AND JURISDICTION, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022 (%)

Source: LFS RMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE 62,333. N-NI: 14,580.

IE: Reason for not seeking employment. Carers: 'care responsibilities for own children or adult relatives' and 'other family reasons. NI: Basic economic activity. Carer: 'inactive – seeking, unavailable, looking after family, home', 'inactive – not seeking, would like work, looking after family, home', 'inactive – not seeking, not like work, looking after family, home'.

Note: Differences across sex and jurisdictions are statistically significant.

3.3 MODELS OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION²¹

3.3.1 Differences between jurisdictions and by sex

In the following analysis, we test three questions. First, we ask whether there is a difference in the effect of sex on participation in Northern Ireland and Ireland. We answer this by running a pooled model and testing the significance of the relationship between being female and living in Northern Ireland compared to being female in Ireland. We then ask whether variation in the composition of the two populations can account for any such differences in participation. We answer this by looking at whether that relationship changes when we take education and other factors into account. Thirdly, we ask whether the association between participation rates and factors such as age, education and family characteristics are the same in Ireland and Northern Ireland; in other words, do the same barriers exist in both jurisdictions? We answer this by running a model for females only and testing the interaction between jurisdiction and each characteristic.

²¹ The results for employment are very similar to those for labour force participation (Appendix 2); therefore, only the models for labour force participation are discussed here. The results for employment are available in the appendix (Appendix 3).

The analyses are based on logistic regression models where the outcome is participating in the labour market compared to not participating. The results are presented as contrast of predictive margins which show how the probability of participating differs for the group in terms of percentage points compared to the reference category. For ease of interpretation, we present the interactions graphically in Figure 3.6.

Model 1 (Table 3.1) shows that, for males living in Ireland, the probability of participation is 6 percentage points higher than that for males in Northern Ireland. This pattern is accounted by differences in educational level (compare models 1 and 2); in other words, males in Northern Ireland have lower levels of labour market participation because they are more likely to have only completed secondary education. The coefficient for females indicates lower participation rates among females than males. The interaction term between female and jurisdiction shows that the gender gap in participation is smaller in Northern Ireland than in Ireland. Comparing females, participation rates are lower in Northern Ireland than in Ireland (see also Figure 3.6) but the difference is smaller than that for males. When education is controlled for, females in Ireland have a lower rate of participation than females in Northern Ireland, suggesting lower qualifications accounts for the initial difference²² (see Figure 3.6, panel 2). Therefore, having a low educational level is a greater barrier to female participation than male participation in both jurisdictions. Low education has a more negative effect for women in Ireland compared to women in Northern Ireland. However, among males, low education is a greater barrier in Northern Ireland.

The gender gap in participation is wider in Ireland than in Northern Ireland – 11 percentage points compared to 8 percentage points²³ (model 1). The gender gap and the differing size of the gender gap in the two jurisdictions are not explained by education, age, place of birth, household type or age of dependent children. In fact, given differing educational profiles across jurisdictions and between females and males, we might have expected the gender gaps in participation to be better explained after accounting for education (compare models 1 and 2).

The pooled effect of the control variables (for females and males in both jurisdictions) is as expected. Compared to those aged 20–34, those aged 35–49 are more likely to participate in the labour market and those aged 50–64 are less likely to. The probability of labour market participation increases as the educational level increases. Holding a degree increases the probability of participation by 23 percentage points compared to having a secondary education or below (model 2). Compared to those born in their place of residence, being born in the

²² These analyses do not test for the potential interaction between education, gender and jurisdiction; this issue is explored in section 3.3.2.

²³ This is derived from the gender effect (-0.111) added to the female by jurisdiction interaction (0.028).

UK or outside the EU significantly decreases the predictive probability of participation, while being born in the EU increases participation (model 3).

TABLE 3.1: MODELS OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION, WORKING-AGE POPULATION IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND, 2022 (MARGINAL EFFECTS)

Labour force participation	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Jurisdiction – NI (ref: IE)	-0.056***	-0.002	-0.002	-0.0002	0.003
Sex – female (ref: males)	-0.111***	-0.127***	-0.126***	-0.120***	-0.121***
Sex gaps in NI v. IE	0.028***	0.049***	0.048***	0.048***	0.050***
Education (ref: secondary or below)					
Post-secondary		0.168**	0.158***	0.152***	0.154***
Degree or above		0.229***	0.216***	0.208***	0.21***
Age (ref: 20–34)					
35–49			0.025***	0.023***	0.02***
50–64			-0.077***	-0.084***	-0.093***
Place of birth (ref: same as place of residence)					
UK ²⁴			-0.015**	-0.013**	-0.011**
EU27 ²⁵			0.055***	0.049***	0.054***
Outside UK and EU27			-0.043**	-0.045***	-0.042***
Household type (ref: couple without children)					
Living alone				-0.079***	-0.079***
Couple with children...					-0.017***
... non-dependent children only				-0.021***	
... 1 dependent child				0.013*	
... 2 dependent children				0.002	
... 3+ dependent children				-0.052***	
Lone parents...					-0.094***
... non-dependent children only				-0.083***	
... 1 dependent child				-0.051***	
... 2+ dependent children				-0.139***	
Age of youngest child (ref: no dependent children)					
0–4					-0.025***
5–9					-0.012
10–14					0.028***
15–19					0.043***
Observations	76,913	76,913	76,913	76,913	76,913

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022

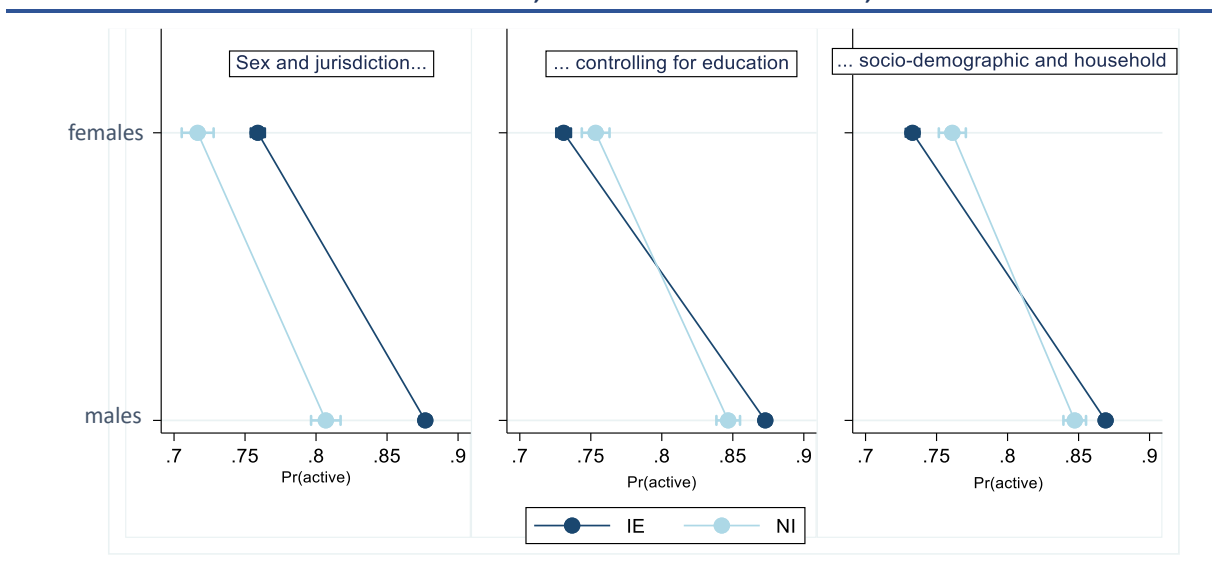
Note: Model 5 has been run with household types and the age of the youngest child separately, and the significance of the results did not change.

²⁴ For the NI LFS, the UK refers to those born in England, Scotland, or Wales.

²⁵ For the IE LFS, Ireland is not included in the EU27.

Model 4, Table 3.1, examines the relationship with household type, while the age of the youngest child is taken into account in model 5. Those living alone, as a couple with non-dependent children, with three or more dependent children, and as lone parents have a significantly lower predictive probability of being active than those living as couples without children. In contrast, individuals in couples with one dependent child have a higher predictive probability of participating in the labour market (model 4). Compared to individuals without children, having a youngest child aged between 0 and 4 decreases the probability of participation while having a child aged between 10 and 19 increases the probability of participation (model 5).

FIGURE 3.6: PREDICTIVE PROBABILITY OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND SEX, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022



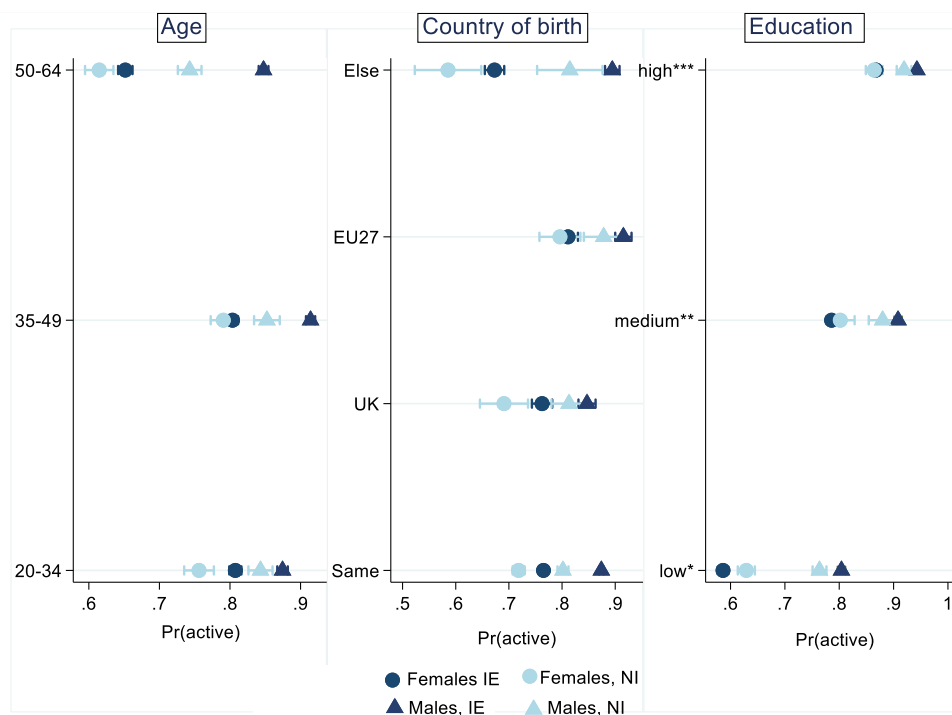
Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of labour force participation based on the interaction between jurisdiction and sex. In Panel 1 no controls are included. Panel 2 controls for educational level (model 2 in Table 3.1). Panel 3 controls for education, age, place of birth, household types, and age of the youngest child (model 4 in Table 3.1). Standard errors are not visible for IE because they are very small.

3.3.2 Are the barriers to participation the same for females in Ireland and Northern Ireland?

Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8 examine whether the association between different factors and participation differs for females in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Firstly, a logistic regression model with interaction terms between each covariate and jurisdiction was conducted, for each sex separately. Then, predictive probabilities, with interaction terms, have been estimated. Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8 are a visualisation of the results. Results for females and males have been estimated separately but are shown together for the purposes of comparison.

FIGURE 3.7: PREDICTIVE PROBABILITY OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, FOR EACH SEX, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022



Note: *low: secondary or below. **medium: post-secondary. ***high: degree or above

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of labour force participation based on the interaction between age and jurisdiction, place of birth and jurisdiction, and education and jurisdiction for females and males separately, controlling for other covariates as specified in model 4 (Table 3.1).

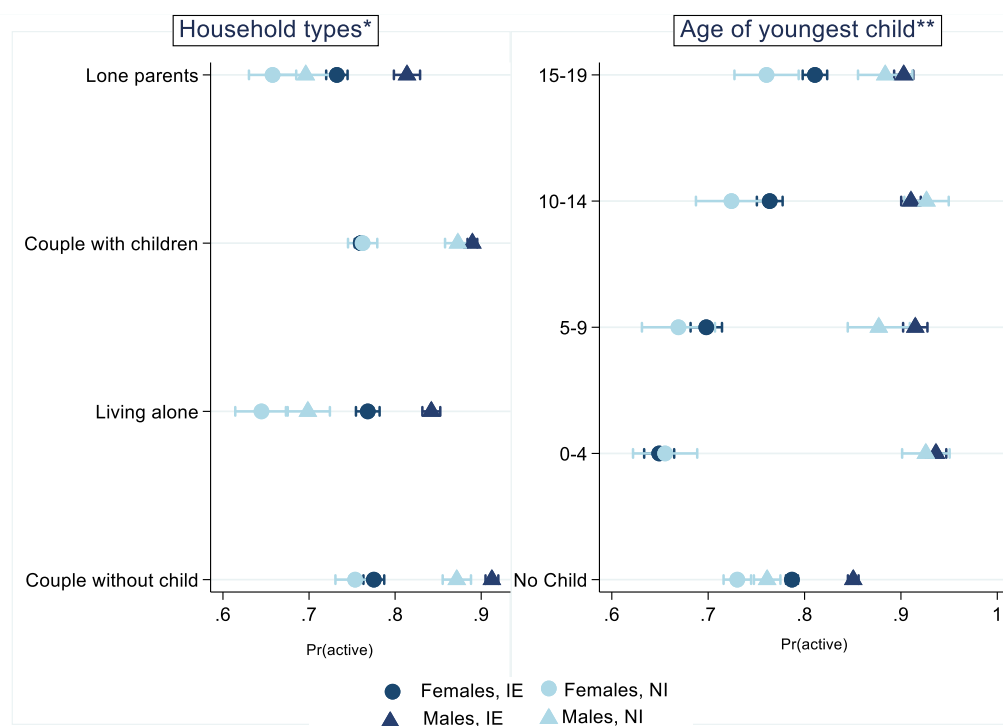
For most values of each covariate, the effect on participation differs significantly across the two jurisdictions, for females and males (Figure 3.7). Controlling for education, place of birth, and family structure, being in the oldest age category (50–64) is associated with lower participation for females in Northern Ireland. Young females (20–34 years) in Northern Ireland also have a lower probability of participation compared to females in Ireland with the same profile.

The effect of birthplace on labour force participation is stronger for females than for males (see panel 2, Figure 3.7). In both jurisdictions, the predicted probability of participation for females born outside the EU/UK is significantly lower than for those born in their place of residence (non-migrants). For example, in Ireland, the predictive probability for non-EU migrant females is 67 compared to 77 for non-migrants. In Northern Ireland, the predictive probability of labour force participation for non-EU migrant females in Northern Ireland is 59 per cent compared to 72 per cent for natives. The predicted probability of participation of non-migrant females is significantly lower than for females born in the EU27.

As we saw with the unadjusted figures in Figure 3.2, having a low educational level is a greater barrier to female participation in Ireland compared to Northern Ireland.

However, among males, low education is a greater barrier in Northern Ireland. Controlling for age, family status and migrant status, there is no difference in the participation rates of females with degrees or post-secondary education between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

FIGURE 3.8: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS, FOR EACH SEX, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022



* all children ** dependent children only

Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of labour force participation based on the interaction between household types and jurisdiction, age of youngest child and jurisdiction, for females and males separately, controlling for other covariates as specified in model 4 (Table 3.1). The model has been run with household types and the age of the youngest child separately, and the significance of the results does not change.

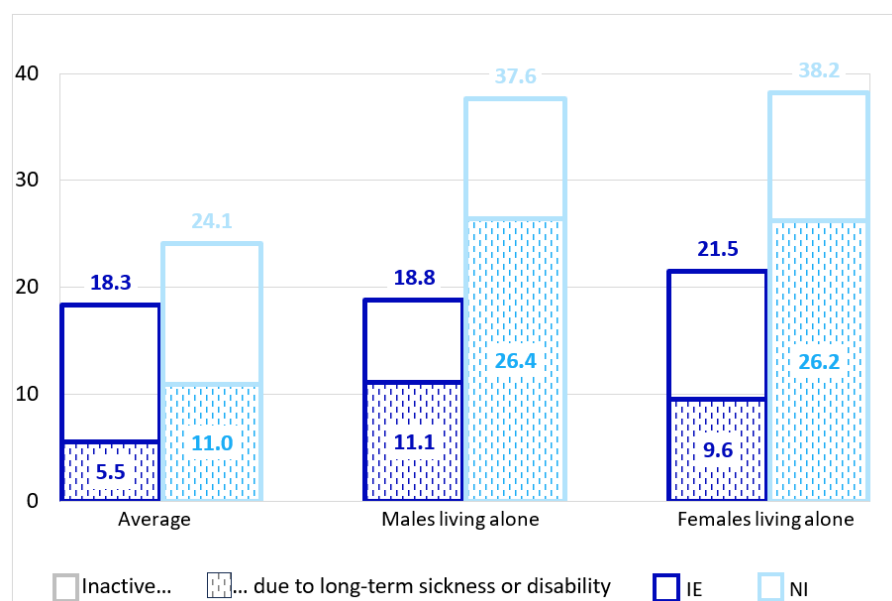
The effect of the age of the youngest child on the female labour force participation rate is very similar in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Female participation rates increase with the age of the youngest child. There is no difference in participation rates between the jurisdictions for mothers with children under 5, or those with children aged under 15 (panel 2, Figure 3.8). Only among mothers with children aged 15–19 is there a difference by jurisdiction. In previous work, we found mothers of pre-school children were more likely to be employed in Northern Ireland; the results for 2022 suggest that this gap is now closed.

The effect of family structure on participation differs by sex (Figure 3.8). Lone mothers have significantly lower participation probabilities than mothers in couples, and in Ireland only, lower than lone fathers. Being a lone parent is a greater

barrier to participation in Northern Ireland for both females and males. Controlling for socio-demographic characteristics, lone mothers in Ireland have a 73 per cent predictive probability of being in the labour market compared to 66 per cent in Northern Ireland. Both females and males living alone in Northern Ireland have a significantly lower probability of participation when compared to their counterparts in Ireland and to individuals living as a couple in Northern Ireland, of similar age, education level and migration status.

We further explore the situation of those living alone in Figure 3.9. In Ireland, females living alone have an inactivity rate of 21 per cent, while males living alone have an economic inactivity rate that is similar to the overall average for Ireland (18 per cent). However, for both females and males living alone and inactive, there is a higher level of illness/disability than among the total inactive population. For both females and males in Northern Ireland, inactivity among individuals living alone is particularly correlated with the inability to work due to long-term sickness or disability (see also Devlin et al, 2023).

FIGURE 3.9: INACTIVITY RATES IN NORTHERN IRELAND, BY JURISDICTION, SEX AND HOUSEHOLD TYPE, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022 (%)



Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE 62,333. N-NI: 14,580.

Note: The inactivity and disability/long-term sickness rates are significantly different across jurisdictions but not across sex.

3.4 OTHER BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION – CONSULTATION VIEWS

The consultation participants highlighted a number of other barriers to labour market participation for females in Ireland and Northern Ireland that we could not investigate with the quantitative data. The stakeholders identified females that experience discrimination and exclusion.

The whole area of discrimination and racism that is experienced by different groups and ... the groups that came up were Travellers, disabled people, migrants, women, different age groups, so younger people, older people and lone parents. And also ... family status in the sense of people who have children or other types of caring responsibilities face barriers.

While the analysis above confirms the role of being a migrant from outside the EU and being a lone parent in restricting participation, the LFS data do not allow us to investigate the scale of barriers facing ethnic minorities, including members of the Traveller Community, or those with a disability. Stakeholders emphasised the importance of taking an intersectional perspective. Women are not a homogeneous group and gender interacts with other dimensions of inequality to shape access to the labour market.

Intersectionality came up, in particular, some highlighted around LGBTI+ women because we know that ... there's a lot of sort of vocalisation of discrimination. The idea for women with disabilities, but also for other marginalised groups including socio-economic discrimination, your background, is that people don't necessarily feel comfortable in the workplace.

Regional inequalities, and the way in which location in a rural area can limit employment opportunities and access to critical services such as childcare, was a further dimension highlighted by stakeholders:²⁶

Our group talked about ... the issues to do with peripheral city and regional issues in terms of access to decent quality jobs, ... particularly the Northwest ... And the availability of work and ... commuting to urban centres for women who work, who live in rural areas and how that relates to childcare issues and access to childcare as well.

²⁶ Unfortunately, available data do not allow us to explore such potential regional differences.

3.5 SUMMARY

This chapter has examined the levels of labour force participation among females and males in Ireland and Northern Ireland. Males in Northern Ireland are less likely to be in the labour market than those in Ireland, a pattern that is related to their lower levels of education. Females in Northern Ireland are also less likely to be in the labour market compared to females in Ireland, but the difference between jurisdictions is not as large as for males. As a result, the gap in participation rates between females and males is somewhat wider in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. This gender gap within jurisdictions cannot be explained by factors such as age, education, place of birth, household type or age of dependent children. Similarly, between-jurisdiction differences in participation rates for females cannot be explained by these factors, suggesting the impact of an interplay of tax/welfare, employment, and family support policies (see Chapter 2).

Females in the two jurisdictions face similar sets of barriers to employment, particularly around household composition and care responsibilities, as proxied by the number and age of dependent children. Lone mothers, especially those with larger families, and those with pre-school-age children are less likely to be in the labour market than others. As is the case for males, having lower levels of education represents a significant barrier to employment. However, the size of the effect of these barriers appears to differ across jurisdictions, with being a lone parent and older age operating as stronger barriers in Northern Ireland. The low participation rates of older females in Northern Ireland may reflect the relatively high rates of work-limiting disability in Northern Ireland (see Devlin et al., 2023). Overall, education is a greater barrier to employment in Northern Ireland than in Ireland. Given higher rates of educational attainment, it may be that those with lower education levels in Ireland are more negatively selected on characteristics not captured in our model. The consultation discussion highlighted other barriers that could not be investigated using existing data sources. These include membership of the Traveller Community, disability and living in a rural area, issues which could merit further research from a comparative perspective.

CHAPTER 4

Gender and job quality

4.1 DEFINING JOB QUALITY

In this chapter, we compare the working conditions of women and men in Ireland and Northern Ireland. While the ‘quantity’ of employment is important, it is equally vital to consider the quality of work, an issue highlighted by key stakeholders:

Participation numbers can be quite high, quite equal, but often the work that women are doing is part-time, is low pay, it is very precarious, or it is work where there is very limited career progression... It's the working conditions. (consultation participant)

There is a good deal of national and international research that aims to identify the features of a job quality (Eurofound, 2021; McGinnity et al., 2021; Redmond et al., 2023). What constitutes a good job was also an issue that the stakeholders engaged with. Participants in the consultation agreed on the need for a broad definition. Earnings emerged as a central element, as it relates to the gender pay gap, to the affordability of childcare, and to the value assigned to a job.

Our first thing when we think of ... job quality is about pay. But right across the piece in terms of access to sick pay, in terms of access to leave, parental leave, holidays, the precarity piece, the security of work. The opportunities for career progression, the retention piece of workers.

Participants stressed the need to go beyond earnings when considering job quality. A good job is also a job that allows for a good work-life balance. With the pandemic, flexibility became reflected in the ability to work from home.

The ability and the ease with which working from home enables perhaps childcare and looking after children, that kind of toing and froing, kind of mixing care and work.

Working hours are also a key consideration in balancing care and work responsibilities; yet it was noted that there was a potential trade-off between part-time work and job quality, including access to training.

People who have caring responsibilities, they're time-poor... Women who have caring responsibilities can't access lifelong learning, and lifelong learning is very important for career progression. A piece that was noted was part-time work. It means that women are in the workforce, but it's usually poor quality.

Working hours are also a determinant of income; low working hours can be an indicator of inadequate income, especially if there are no other earners in the household as in the case of lone parents.

Occupational position is also a useful proxy for job quality. Some occupations, particularly professional and managerial roles, offer greater opportunities for skill use, autonomy, access to training, career paths, greater security and higher pay, while elementary occupations offer less skill development, fewer opportunities for career development, greater insecurity and may also involve greater physical exertion, and exposure to hazards (McGinnity et al., 2021).

Based on the consultation and data availability, this chapter focuses on four dimensions of job quality: pay, working hours, working from home and occupational position. The analysis is restricted to the employed population for working hours, working from home, and occupations, and to employees for low pay.

4.2 LOW PAY

Low pay refers to the share of workers earning less than two-thirds of median earnings. [...] High pay refers to the share of workers earning more than one-and-a-half times median earnings. (OECD, 2023)

The hourly wage is used as a measurement to explore income differences across employees in Ireland and Northern Ireland.²⁷ Hourly wages make it possible to disentangle pay levels from the quantity of work; it is therefore often used as a preferred measure of earnings (McGinnity et al., 2021). We focus on low pay rather than the entire earnings distribution, as this is a useful indicator of (poor) job quality (see Wilson, 2020, for a comparison of the gender pay gap in Ireland and Northern Ireland). Additionally, as low pay is measured against the median, it allows for a comparison in relative terms of the share of employees that are low-paid across Ireland and Northern Ireland.

²⁷ We restrict the analysis of earnings to employees as the earnings of the self-employed are more difficult to measure and are more error prone.

In Ireland, low pay refers to the share of workers earning less than two-thirds of the national median hourly earnings (Social Justice Ireland, 2020). In Northern Ireland, it refers to those earning less than two-thirds of the United Kingdom median earnings (Department for the Economy, 2023). High pay refers to those who earn more than 1.5 times the median hourly pay rate. Compared to the mean, the median measure reduces the impact of outliers with very high or low earnings. Previous research has found that the gender pay gap varies if we consider the mean pay instead of the median, or weekly/annual earnings instead of hourly (Wilson, 2020).

In Northern Ireland, earnings questions are asked to employees and there is a high level of missing values for low pay.²⁸ Since, previous research has noted the heterogeneity of earnings statistics across different data sources (Redmond et al., 2023), robustness tests across both data sets have been conducted (Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). The checks reveal a lower level of median earnings is recorded across all categories of workers in the LFS data compared to the ASHE data for Northern Ireland.²⁹ The gap between the two sources is widest for those working in full-time employment; therefore, the LFS data may be underestimating pay levels. In Ireland, the LFS earnings data for Ireland record higher median earnings for both men and women than the Structure of Earnings Survey (Appendix 6). Given this variation in earnings estimates, it is safer to compare the relative position (<2/3 median) of groups within Northern Ireland and Ireland rather than to compare the absolute earning figures.

The CSO rules did not permit pooling the datasets containing earnings for Ireland and Northern Ireland; therefore, descriptives and models have been run separately and differences between the two jurisdictions could not be tested in a joint model. Earnings are collected for employees only in Ireland; thus, the following analysis excludes the self-employed in both jurisdictions.

In Ireland, in 2022, the median wage was €21.20 per hour. In the United Kingdom, it was £13.50 per hour and in Northern Ireland, £12.50 per hour³⁰). The low pay threshold therefore falls at £9 in the UK data and at €14.13 in the Irish LFS data.³¹ The distribution of hourly earnings appears more unequal in Ireland than in Northern Ireland (Figure 4.1). A greater share of the population is low-paid (21 per cent) and high-paid (24 per cent) in Ireland compared to Northern Ireland, where most employees fall into the middle category (70 per cent). Women are more likely

²⁸ Pay data is available for 26% of surveyed employees in Northern Ireland.

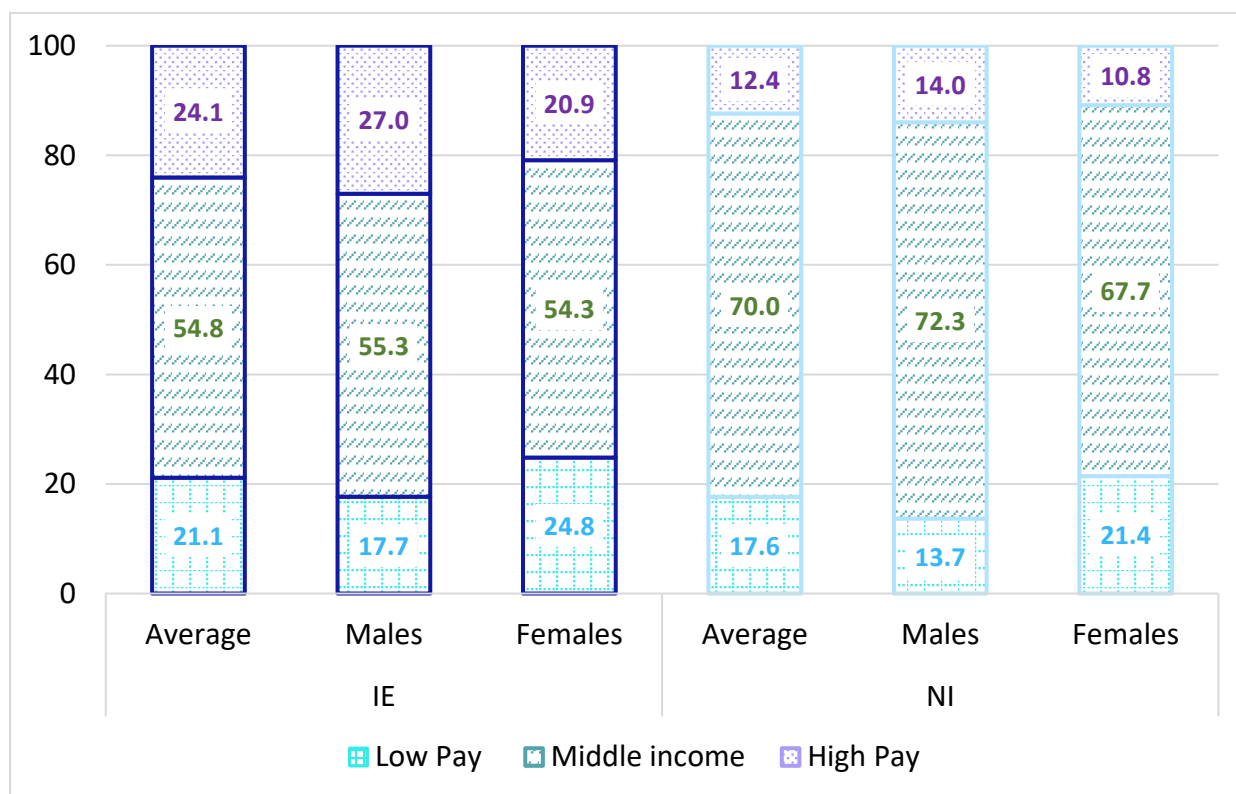
²⁹ The Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) is the primary source of data for earnings analysis in the UK (LFS: User guide volume 1, 2022). It comprised about 1% of all jobs in Northern Ireland covered by pay as you go schemes (Department for the Economy, 2023).

³⁰ This is equivalent to €15.84 and €14.66 respectively at the average sterling to euro rate in 2022 (1.173 Euro).

³¹ The threshold for the UK is lower than the national minimum wage (NMW) in 2022 (£9.50) while the low pay threshold for Ireland is above the NMW for 2022 (€10.50).

to be in low-paid jobs in both jurisdictions and men are more likely to be in high-paid jobs (see also Wilson, 2020). The share of low-paid women in Ireland (25 per cent) is higher than in Northern Ireland (21 per cent).

FIGURE 4.1: DISTRIBUTION OF HOURLY EARNINGS FOR EACH JURISDICTION, BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, EMPLOYEES, 2022 (%)



Source: LFS RMF Ireland 2022; UK LFS 2022. N-IE 28,000. N-NI: 2,578
 Note: Sample restricted to employees working between 1 and 70 hours per week. Respondents in the 1st percentile and the 99th percentile of the income distribution, per quarter, have been excluded from the analysis. The share of middle-income men and women is not statistically different in NI and IE. Differences are significant across jurisdictions.

While we cannot formally test the differences across jurisdictions, we run the same models to assess whether characteristics have the same effect on low pay in Ireland and Northern Ireland (Figure 4.1).

TABLE 4.1: MODELS OF LOW PAY FOR IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND, EMPLOYEE POPULATION, 2022 (MARGINAL EFFECTS)

Low-paid	Ireland			Northern Ireland		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Sex – female (ref: male)	0.072***	0.080***	0.076***	0.077***	0.054*	0.054*
Education (ref: secondary or below)						
Post-secondary		-0.074***	-0.076***		-0.133***	-0.133***
Degree or above		-0.229***	-0.224***		-0.188***	-0.189***
Age (ref: 20–34)						
35–49		-0.137***	-0.151***		-0.095***	-0.092***
50–63		-0.56***	-0.146***		-0.099***	-0.075***
Place of birth (ref: same as place of residence)						
UK		0.009	0.008		0.029	0.022
EU27		0.076***	0.078***		0.059	0.053
Non-EU		0.075***	0.076***		0.027	0.028
Household type (ref: couple without children)						
Living alone/non-relatives			0.0449***			0.000
Couple with children			0.021**			0.019
Lone parents			0.076***			0.055
Age of youngest child (ref: no dependent children)						
0–4		-0.049***			-0.048*	
5–9		-0.049***			-0.021	
10–14		-0.022*			-0.002	
15–19		-0.008			0.064*	
Sector – private (ref: public)		0.076***	0.077***		0.02	0.023
Part-time (ref: full-time)		0.158***	0.149***		0.141***	0.128***
Observations	28,000	28,000	28,000	2,578	2,578	2,578

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: LFS RMF Ireland 2022; UK LFS 2022.

Note: Models for IE and NI have also been run for females only and are available in the Appendix (Appendix 4).

In both jurisdictions, being female increases the probability of being low-paid, by 8 percentage points in Ireland (model 1) and 7 percentage points in Northern Ireland (model 1). When education level, age, household characteristics, sector and part-time status are held constant, females still have a higher probability of being low-paid than males (model 2). The results suggest that the penalty for being female is slightly larger in Ireland than in Northern Ireland when a range of factors relevant to pay are controlled.

Models 2 and 3 examine the predictors of low hourly pay for all respondents in each jurisdiction. Education is a significant predictor in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. Having a degree or above decreases the probability of being low-paid by

23 percentage points overall (model 2), while in Northern Ireland it reduces it by 19 percentage points (model 2). However, post-leaving cert qualifications have a stronger protection from low pay in Northern Ireland than in Ireland.

The probability of being low-paid decreases by age in both jurisdictions but the effect is stronger in Ireland.

The place of birth is not a significant predictor of low pay in Northern Ireland, though this may be related in part to the smaller sample size. In Ireland, migrants from EU and non-EU countries have a significantly higher probability of being low-paid than those born in Ireland.

In Ireland, parents whose youngest child is aged 0 to 14 years old are less likely to be low-paid than individuals without dependent children. In Northern Ireland, those whose youngest child is aged 0–4 years old are less likely to be low-paid, while those with a youngest child aged 10–14 are more likely, compared to individuals without dependent children. Household type is significant in Ireland but not Northern Ireland, though this may be related to sample size. In Ireland, those living alone (or with non-relatives), living in lone-parent households, or living in couple households with children are all more likely to be low-paid than those in couple households without children.

Low pay among women

While the models above show us the influence of gender on low hourly pay in Ireland and Northern Ireland, they do not show us if each of the factors has a similar influence on low pay among women.

Given that a significant percentage of women are not in the labour market, it is possible that the women who do participate differ from those who do not in unobserved ways (as well as those we observe in Chapter 3) which will impact the wages they can earn. For example, participants may have a higher level of commitment to employment. To correct for this possibility, we run a Heckman selection model; this runs a joint model that estimates both selection into employment and low pay. The predictors for selection into employment are age, number of children and education.³² The rho value tells us whether the unobserved characteristics of women selected for employment are associated with the risk of low pay. In models for both Ireland and Northern Ireland, this value is significant and negative, which shows these unobserved characteristics reduce the risk of

³² The number of children is used as the exclusion restriction, i.e. it is included as a predictor of employment but not of low pay. We also drop the age of the youngest child from the low-pay equation, as this is correlated with the number of children.

being low-paid. Controlling for selection alters the strength of some of the relationships but the main pattern of results is similar.³³

Controlling for selection, women with higher levels of education are significantly less likely to be low-paid in both jurisdictions. This effect is stronger in Northern Ireland, where post-secondary education reduces the probability of low pay by 29 percentage points compared to having secondary education or less. In Ireland, the risk reduction is smaller (- 11 percentage points). Age is also associated with the risk of low pay. Women aged 35–49 years are less likely to be low-paid than the under-35 cohort. In Ireland, women aged 50–64 are also less likely to be low-paid; however, older working women in Northern Ireland are at just as high a risk of low pay as women aged under 35 years.

Women from EU27 countries and outside the EU/UK are at a greater risk of being low-paid than women born in Ireland. In Northern Ireland, birthplace is not significant.

Lone mothers face a higher probability of low pay compared to women in couples without children in Ireland. Lone motherhood is not a significant predictor of low pay in Northern Ireland though the coefficient is positive. Mothers in couples have a slightly reduced risk of low hourly pay compared to women without children, but there is no significant effect in Northern Ireland.

Part-time employment is associated with a much higher probability of low hourly pay in both jurisdictions: increasing the probability of low pay by 12 percentage points in Ireland and 9 percentage points in Northern Ireland compared to women in full-time work. Private sector workers are more likely to be low-paid in both jurisdictions. The protective effect of being employed in the public sector appears somewhat weaker in Northern Ireland than in Ireland.

³³ See Appendix 7 In Northern Ireland, the main selection effect is for women aged over 50: without correcting for selection, this group appears less likely to be low-paid but the selection model results suggest this is because employed women in this age group are selective on other characteristics. The selection correction also increases the association between pay and education in both jurisdictions.

TABLE 4.2: MODELS OF LOW PAY AMONG FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND, CORRECTING FOR SELECTION INTO EMPLOYMENT (HECKMAN SELECTION MODELS)

Low pay	Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	Coeff.	Margins	Coeff.	Margins
Education (ref: secondary or below)				
Post-secondary	-.309 **	-.113***	-0.791***	-0.294***
Degree or above	-1.09***	-.387***	-1.256***	-0.437***
Age (ref: 20–34)				
35–49	-0.467***	-.153***	-0.454***	-0.143***
50–63	-0.426**	-.140***	-0.047	-0.015
Place of birth (ref: same as place of residence)				
UK	0.043	.014	0.154	0.049
EU27	0.467***	.154***	-0.075	-0.023
Non-EU	-0.208***	.068***	-0.039	-0.012
Sector (ref: public) – private	0.315***	.104***	0.131#	0.041*
Part-time (ref: full-time)	0.368***	.118***	0.290**	0.094***
Household type (ref: other)				
Lone parent	0.183***	.059***	0.159	0.050
Couple parent	-.039*	-.012	0.112	0.035
Constant	0.357		0.318	
Selection into employment				
Number of children (ref: no child)				
1	-0.068***		0.090	
2	-0.188***		-0.149#	
3+ children	-0.449***		-0.554***	
Educational level (ref: secondary or below)				
Post-secondary	0.581***		0.720***	
Degree or above	0.888***		1.083***	
Age (ref: 20–34)				
35–49	0.145***		0.333***	
50–64	-0.249***		-0.250***	
Constant	-0.060**		-0.302***	
/athrho				
/athrho	-.609***		-1.059*	
Rho				
Rho	-.543		-0.785	
Wald test rho (chi2)				
Selected	3.85*		3.90*	
Not selected	14,719	14,719	1,476	1,475
Total	8,983		1,373	
	23,702		2,849	

*** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05 # P < .10

Source: LFS RMF Ireland 2022; UK LFS 2022.

Note: Excludes self-employed. Those missing in predictor variables are included in dummies but not shown in the table. The selection models exclude employees who are missing on earnings.

4.3 WORKING FROM HOME

Since the pandemic, the ability to work from home (WFH) has become more widespread and has become a more pertinent dimension of workplace flexibility. It is important to note that the questions on remote working/working from home in the respective labour force surveys are different. The question asked in Ireland was the following:

Thinking about the four weeks ending Sunday, have you done any work at home for your job? If yes, how often did you work at home in those four weeks? 1. At least half of the days worked. 2. Less than half of the days worked but for at least one hour.

From these responses, the CSO derived a variable that split respondents into those who always, sometimes or never worked from home.

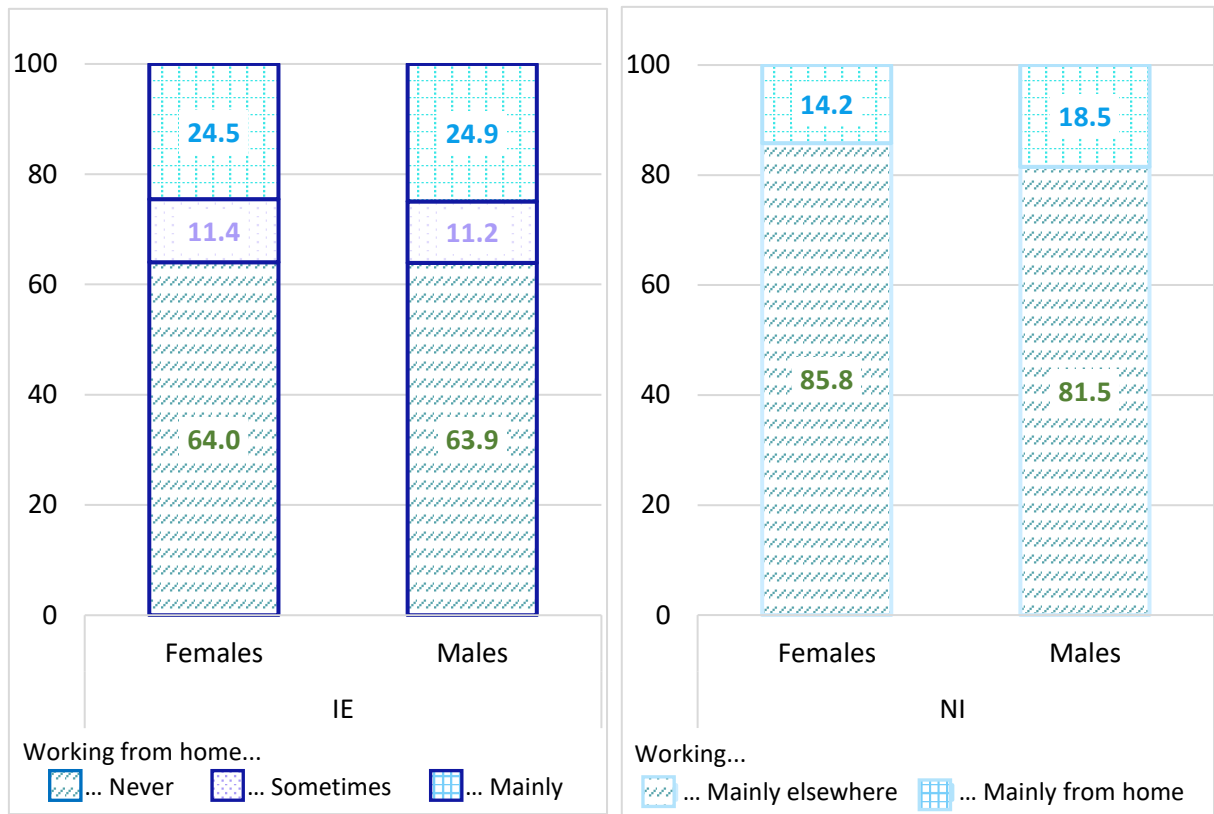
In Northern Ireland, the question asked was:

In your main job, do you work mainly: 1. In your own home; 2. In the same grounds or buildings as your home; 3. In different places using home as a base; 4. Or somewhere quite separate from home?

Those answering 1, 2 or 3 were counted as working from home in line with ONS publications (ONS, 2022).

Overall, in Ireland, 36 per cent of the employed population work from home: 24.5 per cent usually work from home and 11.4 per cent sometimes work from home. There is no significant difference between females (36%) and males (36.1%). In Northern Ireland, overall, 16.4 per cent of the employed population work mainly from home. Males are significantly more likely to mainly work from home (18.5%) than females (14.2%).

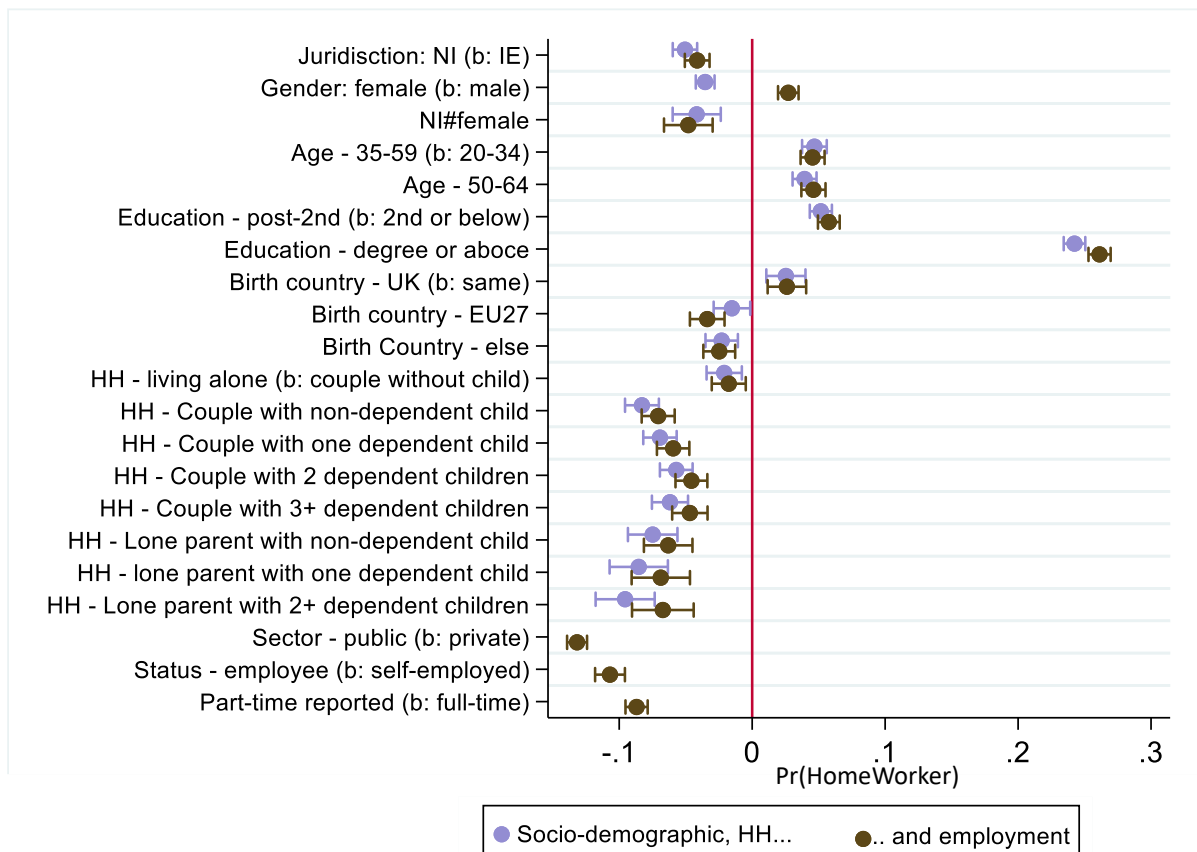
FIGURE 4.2: SHARE OF THE EMPLOYED POPULATION WORKING FROM HOME, BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, 2022 (%)



Sources: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. Sample restricted to the employed population. N-IE: 48,756. N-NI: 10,982.
 Note: Differences across working from home categories and jurisdiction are all significant. Differences across sex are not significant in Ireland.

Due to the differences in wording (Figure 4.2), we focus on the group mainly working from home and contrast this group to all other workers. However, we caution that the measures are still not identical.

FIGURE 4.3: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING FROM HOME, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



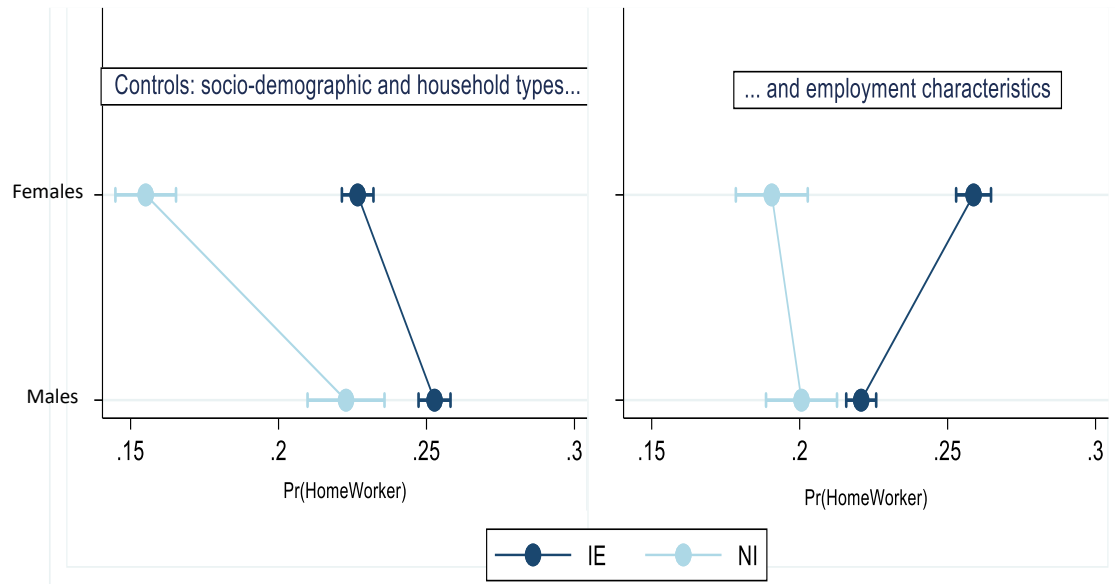
Sources: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE: 48,429. N-NI: 10,920.
 Note: Visualisation based on marginal effects of working from home. b indicates base/reference category

Living in Northern Ireland significantly decreases the probability of working from home, all things being equal. The effect of sex on the predictive probability of working from home changes when employment characteristics controls are added (sector, employee v. self-employed, and part-time). Females are 4 percentage points *less* likely than males to work from home, controlling for socio-demographic and household characteristics, but 3 percentage points *more* likely to do so when adding employment characteristics. This suggests that it is because females work in jobs that are less likely to be done from home (public sector, employee, part-time) that explains their overall lower rates of working from home. The effect of other covariates on the probability of working from home does not change significantly. The NI#Female estimate shows that females in Northern Ireland are significantly less likely to work from home than females in Ireland.

Overall, the gender gaps in working from home are greater in Northern Ireland than in Ireland (Figure 4.4). When employment characteristics are not controlled, males are significantly more likely than females to work from home (Figure 4.4, panel 1). When adding employment characteristics as controls, in both jurisdictions, the probability of working from home increases for females, while the probability for males decreases. It leads to females and males no longer having a significantly

different probability of working from home in Northern Ireland (Figure 4.4, panel 2). In Ireland, females' probability of working from home overtakes that of males.

FIGURE 4.4: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING FROM HOME BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND SEX, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



Sources: LFS Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of working from home based on the interaction between jurisdiction and sex, controlling for age, education, place of birth, household types (panel 1) as well as sector, professional status, and working hours reported (panel 2).

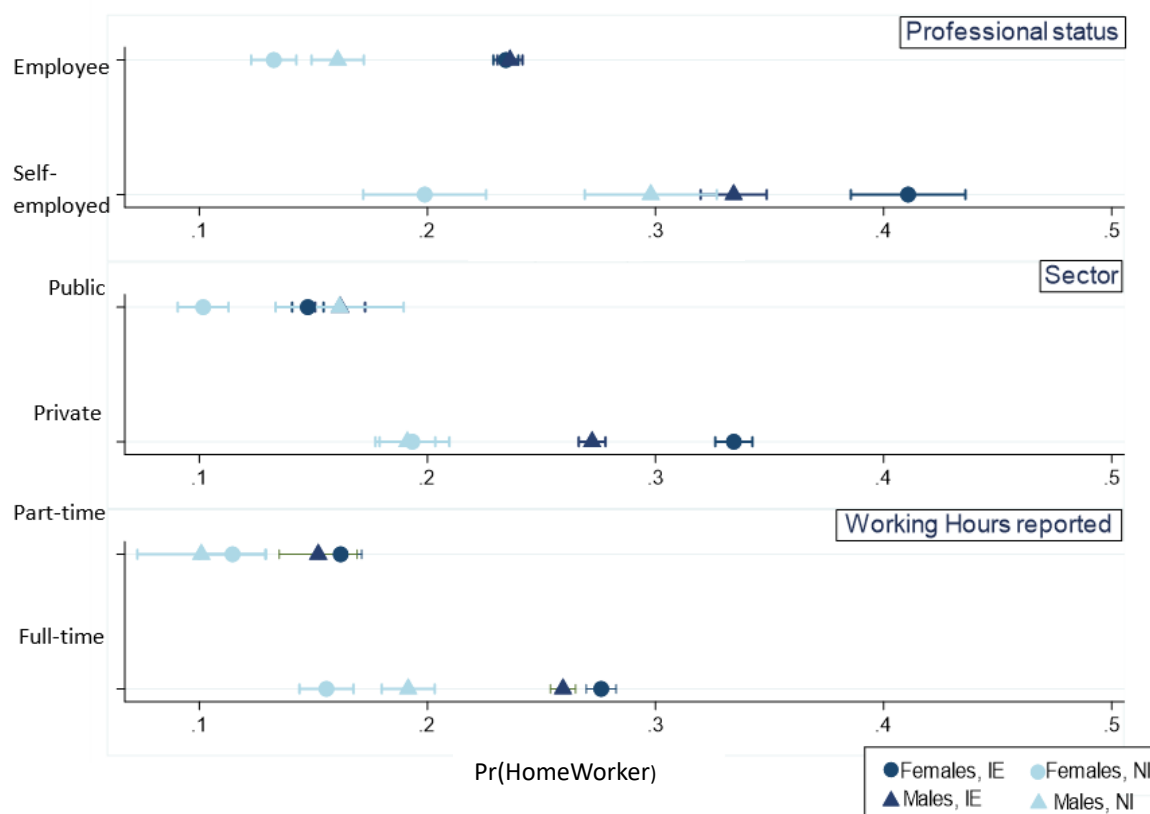
Overall, employees are much less likely to mainly work from home than the self-employed, and those in the public sector (which includes the education and health sectors) are much less likely to work mainly from home than those in the private sector. However, the nature of these relationships varies by sex and jurisdiction.

In Northern Ireland, self-employed males are more likely to work from home than self-employed females but in Ireland, the reverse is true (Figure 4.5, panel 1). Females working in the private sector in Ireland are significantly more likely than males in the private sector to work from home (Figure 4.5, panel 2). However, in Northern Ireland, females and males in the private sector have the same probability of working from home. In Northern Ireland, males in the public sector are more likely to work from home than females in the public sector. However, in Ireland the probability of working from home is the same for females and males in the public sector.

Full-time workers are more likely to work mainly from home than part-time workers in both Ireland and Northern Ireland (Figure 4.5, panel 3). However, the gap between full- and part-time workers is much wider in Ireland. There is no significant gender difference among part-time workers within countries. Among full-time

workers in Northern Ireland, males are more likely to mainly work from home, but the reverse is true for full-time workers in Ireland, where it is females who are more likely to work from home.

FIGURE 4.5: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING FROM HOME BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND EMPLOYMENT CHARACTERISTICS, FOR EACH SEX, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



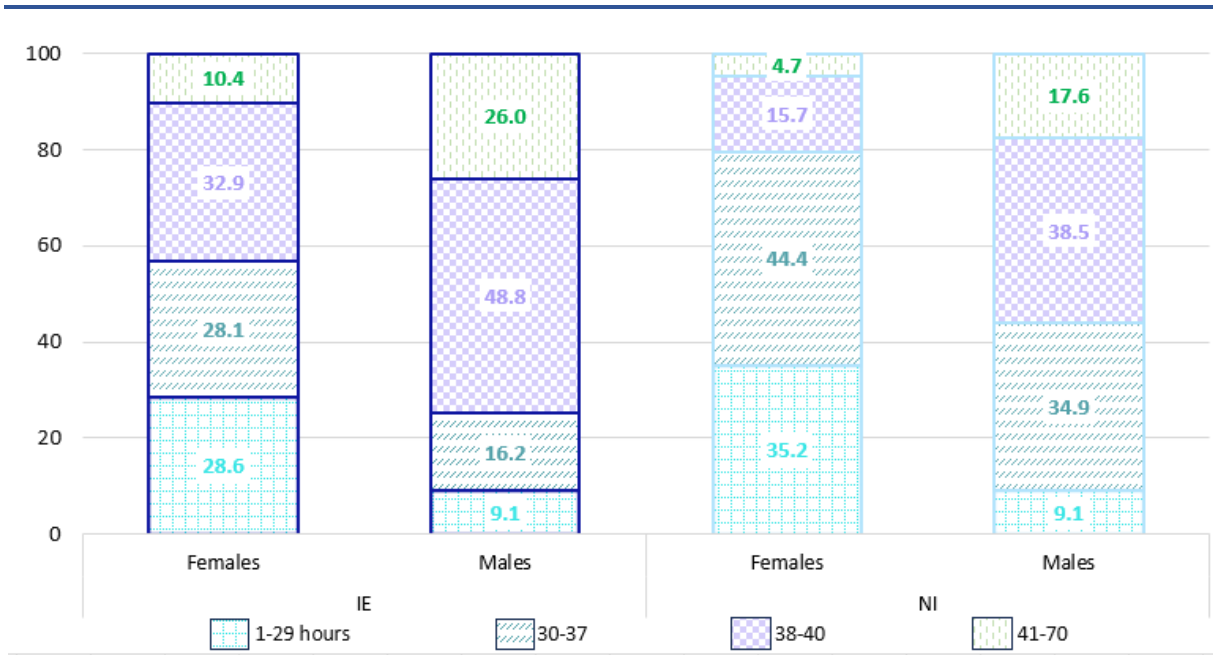
Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of working from home based on the interaction between sector and jurisdiction (panel 1); professional status and jurisdiction (panel 2); working hours reported and jurisdiction (panel 3), for females and males separately, controlling for age, place of birth, sector, and professional status.

4.4 WORKING HOURS

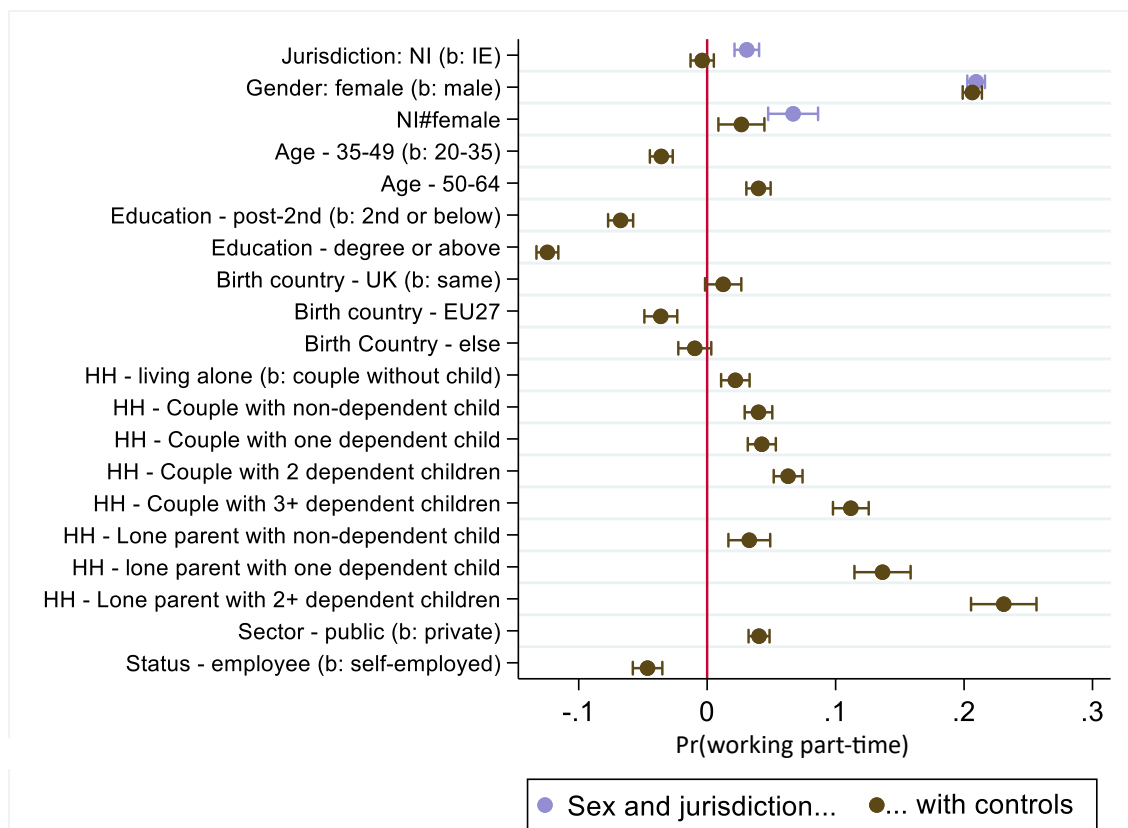
In Ireland, the employed population works longer hours than in Northern Ireland. A higher share of the employed worked between 1 and 37 hours in Northern Ireland per week (62 per cent) compared to Ireland, where a wider share of the employed worked between 38 and 70 hours per week (60 per cent). Across gender, similar patterns are observed across jurisdictions, with a higher share of males than females in the 38+ hours categories. In both jurisdictions, the widest gender gap in usual hours is found in the share of those working part-time (19.5 percentage points in IE and 26 in NI). The smallest gap is found for individuals working 30–37 hours per week (7 percentage points in IE and 10 in NI).

FIGURE 4.6: USUAL HOURS WORKED PER WEEK BY SEX AND JURISDICTION, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022 (%)



Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE: 48,756. N-NI: 19,982.
 Note: All shares, across hours, jurisdiction and gender are significantly different, except between jurisdiction for males working 1 to 29 hours.

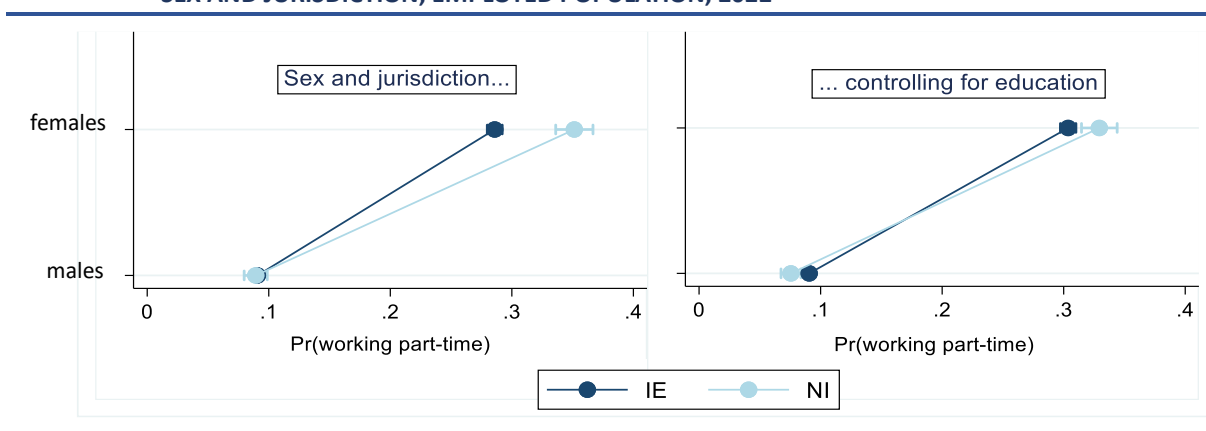
FIGURE 4.7: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING PART-TIME, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022. N-IE: 46,624. N-NI: 8,351.
 Note: Visualisation of contrast of predictive margins of part-time employment. b indicates base category

Using respondents' self-reported usual hours per week, part-time work is defined as individuals working less than 30 hours per week. Sex has the strongest effect on the probability of working part-time. Being female increases the probability of working part-time by 21 percentage points, all things being equal. Living in Northern Ireland, compared to living in Ireland, significantly increases the probability of working part-time. Figure 4.8 shows that the effect is driven by gaps in females' part-time employment rates across jurisdictions. Yet, this effect disappears when controlling for education (graph not shown). Figure 4.8 suggests that educational levels explain the lower part-time rates of females in Ireland.

FIGURE 4.8: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING PART-TIME BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN SEX AND JURISDICTION, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

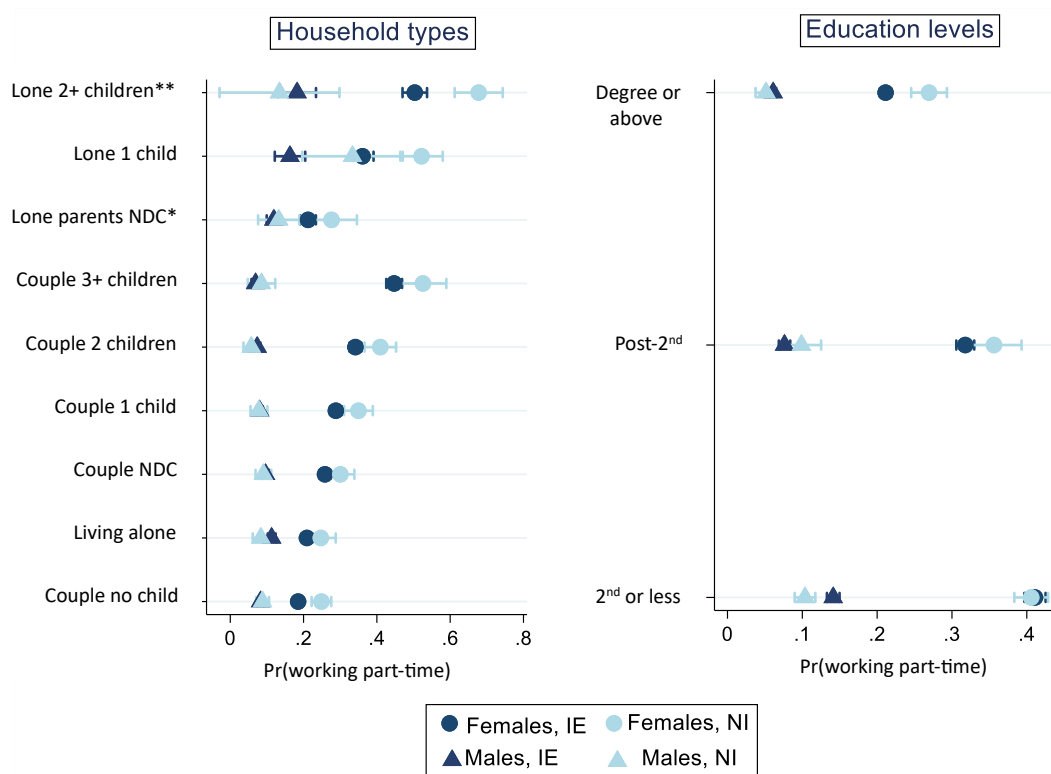
Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of working part-time based on the interaction between jurisdiction and sex.

The effect of education on the probability of working part-time is stronger in Ireland than in Northern Ireland (Figure 4.8, panel 1). In fact, in Ireland, the probability for both females and males significantly decreases as education level increases. In Northern Ireland, the probability significantly decreases for females and males with a degree or above, compared to those without. In both jurisdictions, the effect of education on the probability of working part-time is stronger for females than males. Low-educated females are much more likely to work part-time than low-educated males; the gender gap narrows as educational level increases.

In addition to education, household type has the strongest effect on the probability of working part-time. Compared to couples without children, any other household configuration significantly increases the probability of working part-time (Figure 4.9). Also, the probability of working part-time increases as the number of children increases. Compared to a couple without children, living as a lone parent with one dependent child increases the probability of working part-time by 14 per cent, while having two dependent children increases it by 23 per cent.

The effect of household type on the probability of working part-time is much stronger for females than males (Figure 4.9, panel 2). For females, an increase in the number of children significantly increases the probability of working part-time. For males, few significant changes are recorded in the probability of working part-time based on household type. The effect of the number of children among lone mothers is stronger in Ireland than in Northern Ireland. For other household types, the effect is similar in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In both jurisdictions, females living as a lone parent with two or more children have the highest probability of working part-time. The household types associated with the lowest probability are: living as a couple without children, alone, and as a lone parent with non-dependent children in both jurisdictions, along with couples with non-dependent children in Northern Ireland.

FIGURE 4.9: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING PART-TIME BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS FOR EACH SEX, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



*NDC: non-dependent child **children or child: dependent children (19 years old and less)

Source: LFS Ireland 2022 and LFS UK 2022.
 Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of working part-time based on the interaction between education and jurisdiction (panel 1) and household types and jurisdiction (panel 2), for females and males separately, controlling for age, place of birth, sector, and professional status.

4.5 OCCUPATIONAL POSITION

[In the Standard Occupation Classification (SOC)] jobs are classified into groups according to the concept of ‘skill level’ and ‘skill specialisation’ (SOC, 2010).

Managers, directors, senior officials, and professionals are occupations requiring a ‘significant amount’ or ‘high level of’ ‘knowledge and experience’ (ONS, 2010).

In both Ireland (23 per cent) and Northern Ireland (21 per cent), professional is the largest occupational group among employed individuals. It is also, in both jurisdictions, the largest occupational group for females (27% in IE and 24% in NI) and the second largest for males (20% in IE and 19% in NI). In both jurisdictions, a larger share of males than females are employed as managers, directors, and senior officials. Gender gaps in this occupation are respectively 3.8 percentage points in Ireland and 4.4 percentage points in Northern Ireland. As noted above, working in professional/managerial occupations is sometimes used as a measure of job quality, as workers in these jobs typically have higher wages and prestige, greater security and better career prospects (McGinnity et al., 2021).

TABLE 4.3: OCCUPATIONAL POSITION (SOC) BY JURISDICTION AND SEX, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022 (%)

	Ireland			Northern Ireland		
	All	Females	Males	All	Females	Males
Professional	23.2	26.9	19.9	21.3	24.3	18.6
Managers, directors and senior officials	9.2	7.2	11.0	7.7	5.4	9.8
Associate professional and technicals	13.7	13.1	14.4	10.6	10.2	10.9
Administrative and secretarial	10.6	17.1	4.8	10.9	15.3	6.9
Skilled trades	12.2	2.5	20.9	10.6	1.4	19.0
Caring, leisure and other services	8.4	14.0	3.3	9.0	15.2	3.3
Sales and customer services	6.7	8.8	4.7	8.1	9.9	6.5
Process, plant and machine operatives	7.7	2.9	12.1	6.9	1.8	11.6
Elementary	8.2	7.6	8.7	14.8	16.4	13.3

Source: LFS Ireland 2022 and LFS UK 2022. N-IE: 48,429. N-NI: 10,924.

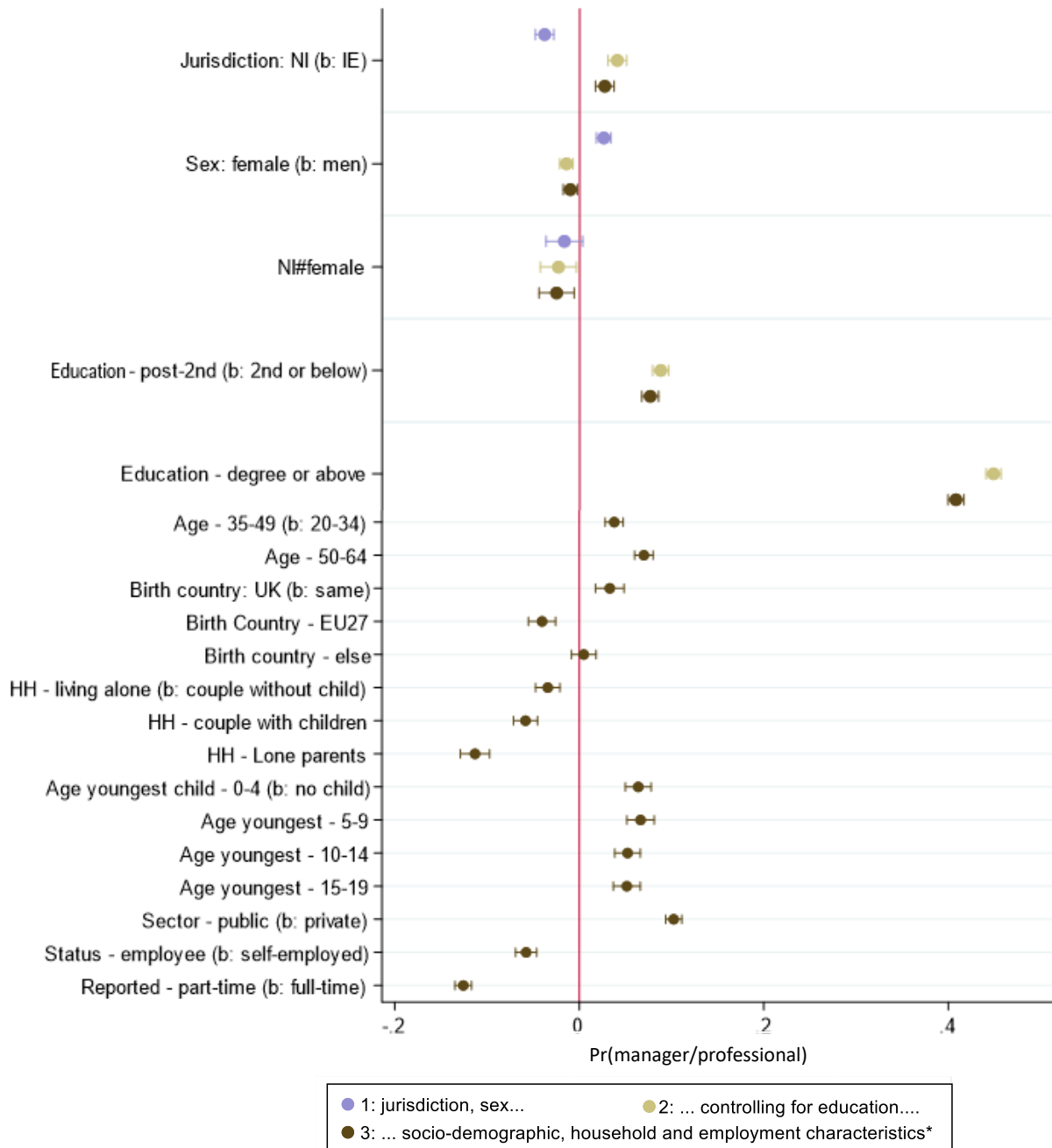
The other occupations require either a ‘general education’, a period of ‘training’, or both (CSO, 2010). In both jurisdictions, skilled trades have the widest gender gap, with a difference of 18.5 percentage points in Ireland and 17.6 percentage points in Northern Ireland. While it is the main occupational group for males (21% in IE and 19% in NI), it is the lowest for females (3% in IE and 1% in NI). Males are also over-represented among process, plant and machine operatives (9.2 percentage points in IE and 9.8 in NI). Both occupations involve ‘physical duties’ (CSO, 2010).

In contrast, females are over-represented in administrative and secretarial occupations (12.3 percentage points in IE and 8.4 in NI), in caring, leisure and other services (10.7 percentage points in IE and 11.9 in NI), and in sales and customer services (4.1 percentage points in IE and 3.4 in NI). All three occupations are 'client-oriented' (CSO, 2010). A similar share of females and males work in associate professional and technical occupations and in elementary occupations.

The effect of sex and jurisdiction on the probability of working as a manager or professional changes when controls are added (Figure 4.10). Considering model 1, without controls, living in Northern Ireland, compared to Ireland, decreases the probability of working as a manager/professional by 4 percentage points. When controlling for education, those living in Northern Ireland have a higher probability of being in a managerial or professional position (model 2). When controlling for employment characteristics, the effect of jurisdiction on occupations slightly decreases (model 3).

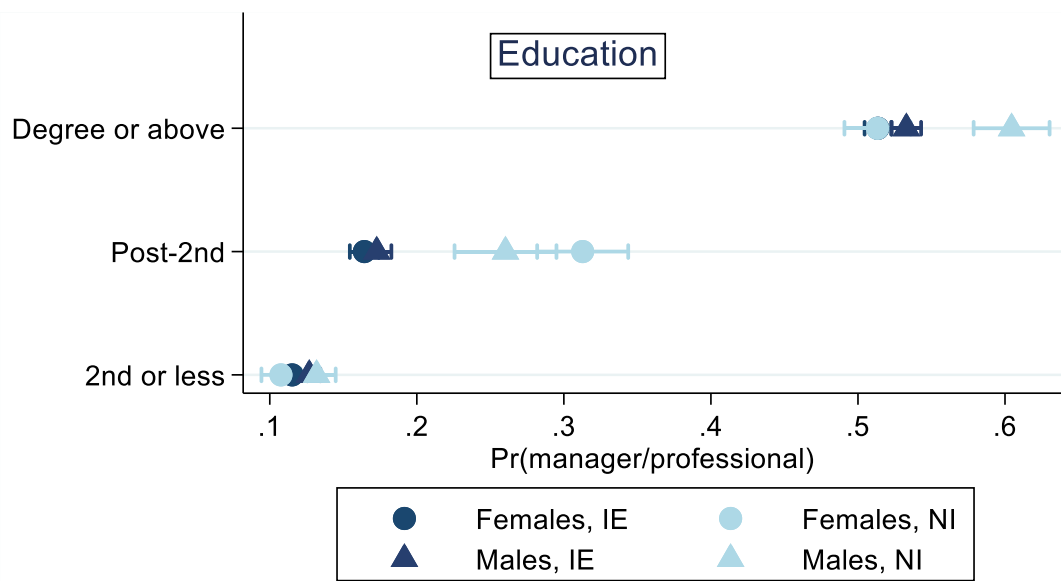
Being female is associated with a 4 per cent increase in the probability of working as a manager/professional (model 1). When including controls for education, the effect of being female becomes negative – women's probability of being in a managerial/professional position is two percentage points lower than men (model 2). When controlling for socio-demographic, household and employment characteristics, being female decreases the probability of being a manager/professional by 1 per cent.

FIGURE 4.10 PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING AS A MANAGER OR PROFESSIONAL, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



Source: LFS Ireland 2022 and LFS UK 2022. Sample restricted to the employed population. N-IE: 48,429. N-NI: 10,920.
 Note: Visualisation of contrast of predictive margins of working as a manager or professional. b indicates base(reference) category. Model 3 has been run with age of the youngest child and household types separately. The significance does not change and the effect of the youngest child on occupation is slightly higher when household is not controlled for.

FIGURE 4.11: PREDICTED PROBABILITY OF WORKING IN A PROFESSIONAL/MANAGERIAL OCCUPATION BASED ON THE INTERACTION BETWEEN JURISDICTION AND EDUCATION FOR EACH SEX, EMPLOYED POPULATION, 2022



Source: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the predictive margins of working as a professional/manager based on the interaction between education and jurisdiction, for females and males separately, controlling for age, place of birth, households, age of youngest child, sector, professional status, and hours reported.

Across both jurisdictions and sex, an increase in the educational level significantly increases the probability of working as a manager/professional (Figure 4.11). At the secondary and below level, none of the differences are statistically significant. At the post-secondary level, those living in Northern Ireland have a higher probability of working as a manager/professional than those in Ireland. At the tertiary level, men in both jurisdictions have a higher probability of working as a manager/professional, though the gender gap is wider in Northern Ireland.

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has looked at the quality of employment in terms of four dimensions – low pay, working from home, working hours and occupational position. In both Ireland and Northern Ireland, women are more likely to be in the low-paid category, are more likely to work part-time and are over-represented in professional, administrative and caring/other services. However, the size of this gap varies across jurisdictions and across different groups. The gender difference in low pay is somewhat larger in Ireland than in Northern Ireland and in neither jurisdiction is this difference explained by education or socio-demographic factors. Low pay is more prevalent among younger women, and (in Ireland) lone mothers and migrant women. In Ireland, older women (aged 50–64) are less likely to be low-paid, but this is not the case in Northern Ireland. Working part-time is associated with lower (hourly) pay, while working in the public sector has a protective effect.

Women in Northern Ireland are more likely to work part-time (<30 hours per week) than those in Ireland, a pattern that is explained by lower educational levels in Northern Ireland. In both jurisdictions, the gender gap in part-time work is much lower among those with higher qualification levels. For women, the likelihood of working part-time increases with the number of children, with the highest rates of part-time work found among lone mothers with larger families.

Gender differences in occupational positions is a feature of both jurisdictions. Focusing on higher-level jobs (managerial or professional groups), levels are lower in Northern Ireland than in Ireland, a pattern explained by lower levels of education there. However, rates of professional/managerial employment are higher in Northern Ireland than might be expected given the educational profile of the working-age population. Women are more likely than men to work in professional/managerial jobs, which is related to their higher levels of education, on average. Those with lower levels of education, younger workers, couples with children, lone parents and part-time workers are less likely to work in professional/managerial jobs.

Working from home is the one case where gender has a differential effect in Ireland and Northern Ireland. In Ireland, women and men are equally likely to work from home, while men's levels are higher than women's in Northern Ireland. However, these differences must be interpreted with some caution due to the difference in the measure used.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

5.1 SUMMARY

Labour force participation

Gender continues to play a significant role in the labour market in Ireland, North and South, yet there are both differences and commonalities in how gender shapes participation and conditions of employment. The recent period since the 1990s has been marked by rising female labour market participation in both jurisdictions, fuelled by changing expectations about gender roles, rising educational levels, a growing need for two salaries to meet housing and other costs, alongside changes in family formation, the policy environment and labour market context. This rise in female employment was dented by the economic shock of the Great Recession in 2008, and the pandemic in 2020. The effect of the recession was particularly sharp in Ireland, but neither of these shocks knocked female participation off its longer-term trajectory.

Female employment was historically higher in Northern Ireland compared to Ireland but there was a convergence post-pandemic. In 2022, the female labour market participation and employment rates were higher in Ireland, compared to Northern Ireland. The gender gap in participation in the labour market is smaller in Northern Ireland – but this is mainly because of lower participation rates for men there. There are important differences in the structure of the labour market, and in the educational and institutional contexts, between Ireland and Northern Ireland, that shape labour market experiences. Economic conditions have also diverged in recent years, due to factors such as differences in multinational investment in Ireland and differences in productivity. It is not possible with the type of data we have to disentangle the effects of economic growth and policy differences in determining the current levels of female employment in Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, our analysis points to a range of common influences on female labour participation but also to some important differences.

Labour market inclusion

Similar factors are associated with labour market inclusion in both jurisdictions. Educational qualifications **are the single most influential factor for female participation in the labour market and is an important predictor of all the indicators of employment quality that we consider.** Female graduates are much more likely to be in the labour market than those with secondary-level

qualifications. Having a low educational level is a greater barrier to participation for women in Ireland compared to Northern Ireland.

Women with lower educational qualifications are also significantly more likely to be low-paid, to work part-time, and to be excluded from professional and managerial positions, and are less likely to have the opportunity to work from home. Those with degree-level education are advantaged on all these indicators. These patterns are evident in both settings and for women and men. However, we find that male graduates are more likely to occupy professional or managerial positions than their female counterparts, and that this gender gap is wider in Northern Ireland.

Age also shapes female labour market participation in both settings. However, it has a greater influence in Northern Ireland, with **higher gaps in participation of younger and especially older women in Northern Ireland.**

Women with young children are less likely to participate in the labour market than women without children in both settings. However, having older children appears to be more of a restriction on participation for mothers in Northern Ireland.

Lone parents are disadvantaged in both settings but lone parenthood acts as a greater barrier to participation in Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, there is a gap of 15.5 percentage points in the participation rate of lone mothers and mothers in couples, compared to a gap of 5.6 percentage points in Ireland. Comparing those of the same age cohort, educational level and nationality, lone mothers have a 73 per cent probability of being in the labour market in Ireland compared to 66 per cent in Northern Ireland.

Lone parents also experience poorer employment conditions. Even after taking into account education levels, sector and part-time status, lone mothers are significantly more likely to be low-paid, though the effect is not significant in Northern Ireland due to small numbers for the earnings analysis. Lone parents are also significantly less likely to occupy higher-skilled occupations at each level of education.

There is a stark difference in the rates of participation among those living alone or with non-relatives. This group experience much lower access and attachment to the labour market in Northern Ireland. This is partially explained by the age and education profile of this group, but we also see that a high portion of those living alone in Northern Ireland are unable to work due to a long-term sickness or disability.

Nationality is associated with stronger variation in women's participation rates than men's participation, especially in Northern Ireland. Compared to being a national, being born in the EU27 is associated with higher participation, while being a non-EU migrant is associated with lower participation.

Job quality

Gender differences are also apparent in job quality, evidenced by rates of part-time working, low pay, working from home, and occupational positions. Women are more likely to work part-time compared to men; however, the rates of part-time work are significantly higher in Northern Ireland. Given that part-time work is associated with a high risk of low pay in both settings, this gendered pattern of working hours also has implications for gender pay differentials. **We find that the higher rates of part-time working among women in Northern Ireland are linked to educational level. Women with tertiary-level education are equally likely to work full-time in both settings.**

Women's greater concentration in public sector employment, where there is a greater formalisation of human resource practices, higher access to flexible working, greater pay transparency, and narrower pay differentials has been an important factor in narrowing the gender pay gap (Barrett et al., 2022) and providing women with access to better employment conditions. Here we find that public sector employment is associated with a lower risk of low pay (for women and men) and with a greater probability of occupying professional or managerial jobs. However, we find those in public sector jobs are less likely to work mainly from home, which is likely related to the dominance of education and health roles that cannot be done remotely. Men in the public sector in Northern Ireland are more likely to work from home than women. Further research with better measures of remote working is necessary to explore these patterns in greater detail and to spell out their suggested consequences, in terms of flexibility and visibility.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

The main limitations of this research emerged from the data. Following Brexit, Northern Ireland is no longer included in the European Labour Force Survey. Comparative analysis across the island thus requires pooling and harmonising different datasets. It has also led to some divergence in the way questions are asked, which can result in discrepancies in the responses. This is the case for the data on working from home. Additionally, in the case of care and earnings, data for Ireland and Northern Ireland could not be pooled. To overcome this limitation, we ran the same set of models in the UK and Irish data sets and compared the results side by side.

Additionally, the analysis is limited in some cases by the quality and availability of data. For Northern Ireland, the earnings data in the Labour Force Survey are limited³⁴. Earnings questions were asked only to employees, and among these, the response rate is circa 26% (N: 2,578). The labour force data also lack key variables in one or other of the jurisdictions, which prevents us from analysing barriers to labour force participation mentioned in the consultation and identified in previous research. Ethnicity, race, sexuality, disability, Traveller background, and rurality could not be explored in this research. Lastly, respondents are asked for their sex with a binary possible answer 'male' and 'female'. Thus, the study explores self-defined sex, with male and female as possible answers; there is no information on gender identity.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Ireland and the UK are often described as having similar welfare and family regimes. However, this comparative report has **highlighted important differences in their tax and welfare systems, family support, education and labour market policies, differences that have implications for the level and nature of employment among women and men in the two jurisdictions.**

In both systems, higher levels of education are associated with higher employment rates and better-quality jobs for women and men. Differences in employment rates, levels of part-time work and access to professional/managerial jobs relate to lower levels of educational qualifications in Northern Ireland than in Ireland. This pattern provides further evidence of the consequences of higher rates of early school leaving in Northern Ireland and the role of the transfer test system in reinforcing educational inequality (see Smyth et al., 2022). The movement of a significant cohort of young adults from Northern Ireland to other parts of the UK for higher education, and the fact that many do not return, also has significant implications for the overall educational profile of the population in Northern Ireland (Smyth and Darmody, 2023). **While significant improvements in the initial educational system would be needed to bring about large-scale change, access to lifelong learning, along with related supports and guidance, could play an important role in enhancing job quality among women (and indeed men), an issue highlighted by policy stakeholders.**

In both Ireland and Northern Ireland, lone parents and older women are less likely to access the labour market, though the scale differs across jurisdictions. Where lone mothers are in paid employment, they are more likely to work part-time and to be in lower-paid and lower-skilled jobs. Rates of employment for lone parents are lower in Northern Ireland, perhaps surprisingly given the greater

³⁴ As noted in Chapter 4, other sources of earnings data are available for NI.

emphasis on labour market activation, even for those with very young children, and suggests that factors beyond welfare incentive or disincentives to work are important. Childcare costs have been found to be a stronger barrier for lone mothers (Russell et al., 2018), highlighting the importance of subsidies for early years provision.

What is even more striking is the much lower employment rates among older women in Northern Ireland. The reason for this pattern cannot be readily explained using the factors analysed here but is consistent with the higher rates of inactivity and receipt of disability payments among the older population in Northern Ireland found by Devlin et al. (2023) and with growing rates of inactivity among older age groups post-pandemic in the UK as a whole (Boileau and Cribb, 2022). Employment policy has rarely explicitly focused on older people, but these patterns point to the need for further research and policy development in relation to this group.

As well as differences, there are strong commonalities between Ireland and Northern Ireland in the gendered nature of care and its consequences for access to employment, especially high-quality jobs. Previous research has outlined the nature of early childhood care and education in the two jurisdictions (Curristan et al., 2023). **In both jurisdictions, female labour force participation rates decline, and levels of part-time employment increase with increasing numbers of dependent children.** However, the analyses presented here show that **barriers to employment are not limited to the mothers of pre-school children, suggesting a role for after-school as well as pre-school care.** In the consultation, stakeholders emphasised the need to challenge the traditional devaluing of care and to move towards more flexible ways of combining paid employment and care, highlighting the role of individual employers as well as national policy. The forthcoming Constitutional referendum on gender equality, family and care in Ireland is likely to prompt further debate on the issue, though the extent to which any amendment will be of symbolic value or translate into enforceable measures remains to be seen.

Part-time work can be seen as a form of flexibility though the analyses show a penalty in terms of lower pay in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. It is difficult to capture other forms of flexibility in the data used here. Existing research (Dickey and Miller, 2023; Köppe, 2019; CSO, 2023a) shows much lower take-up of paternity than maternity leave, pointing to the need for information and initiatives at employer level to support take-up. However, ability to work from home is one potential metric. Here **we see much lower rates of working from home among women in Northern Ireland, largely because they are concentrated in customer-facing service work. While the findings suggest the potential to increase access to remote working in both jurisdictions, some stakeholders expressed caution about the potential implications for women's visibility in securing promotion.**

In conclusion, **the study points to the value of comparing neighbouring systems in understanding gender differences in employment. Unpacking commonalities and differences in the level and quality of paid employment provides insights into the complex interaction of tax, welfare, family support, education and labour market policies and their effects on the gender gap, providing evidence for mutual policy learning.**

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1: WEIGHTS

	Weight types	Weight adjustment
IE	Population weights	Adjusts for age, sex, region, nationality, and non-response adjustments, based on quarterly Census of population data. ³⁵
	Population weights	Adjusts for tenure and non-response bias ³⁶
NI	Income weights	Adjusts for age, sex, full-time/part-time, SOC, Standard Industrial Classification Industry Sector (GICS), and Government Office Region ³⁷

APPENDIX 2: PREDICTIVE PROBABILITY OF LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT, WORKING-AGE POPULATION, 2022



Sources: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

Note: Visualisation of the contrast margins of labour force participation and employment respectively.

Results are statistically different between labour force participation and employment for those aged 50–64 and for lone parents.

³⁵ Labour Force Survey codebook for anonymised microdata files (CSO, 2022).

³⁶ Review of the LFS and APS Reweighting Policy (LFS and APS Steering Group, 2018).

³⁷ Labour Force Survey, User Guide, Volume1: LFS Background and Methodology (2022).

APPENDIX 3: MODELS OF EMPLOYMENT, WORKING-AGE POPULATION IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND, 2022 (CONTRAST OF PREDICTIVE MARGINS)

Contrast of predictive margins	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Jurisdiction – NI (ref: IE)	-0.044***	0.012**	0.011**	0.014***	0.017***
Sex – female (ref: men)	-0.104***	-0.122***	-0.121***	-0.114***	-0.115***
Sex gaps in NI vs IE	0.035***	0.052***	0.052***	0.052***	0.053***
Education level (ref: below secondary)					
Post-secondary		0.175***	0.165***	0.157***	0.158***
Degree or above		0.245***	0.235***	0.224***	0.226***
Age (ref: 20–34)					
35–49			0.043***	0.035***	0.033***
50–64			-0.056***	-0.064***	-0.072***
Place of birth (ref: same as place of residence)					
UK			-0.016*	-0.014*	-0.012***
EU27			0.054***	0.047***	0.052***
Outside UK and EU27			-0.057***	-0.059***	-0.057***
Household type (ref: couple without children)					
Living alone				-0.097***	-0.096***
Couple with children...					-0.023***
... non-dependent children only				-0.03***	
... 1 dependent child				0.013*	
... 2 dependent children				0.007	
... 3+ dependent children				-0.045***	
Lone parents...					-0.122***
... non-dependent children only				-0.108***	
... 1 dependent child				-0.076***	
... 2+ dependent children				-0.159***	
Age of youngest child (ref: no dependent children)					
0–4					-0.008
5–9					-0.002
10–14					0.037***
15–19					0.048***
Observations	76,913	76,913	76,913	76,913	76,913

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Sources: LFS AMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

APPENDIX 4: MODELS OF LOW PAY FOR FEMALES IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND, EMPLOYEES, 2022

Low-paid (margins) Females only	Ireland			Northern Ireland		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Educational level (ref: lower than secondary)						
Post-secondary	-0.049***	-0.047***	-0.046***	- 0.146***	-0.149***	- 0.144***
Degree or above	-0.247***	-0.253***	-0.244***	- 0.221***	-0.222***	- 0.219***
Age (ref: 20–34)						
35–49	-0.142***	-0.137***	-0.124***	-0.098**	-0.105**	-0.081**
50–63	-0.138***	-0.151***	-0.139***	-0.0052	-0.084**	-0.057*
Place of birth (ref same as place of residence)						
UK ³⁸	0.004	0.017	0.018	0.044	0.045	0.045
EU27 ³⁹	0.137***	0.136***	0.137***	-0.014	-0.015	-0.016
Non-EU	0.066***	0.063***	0.071***	-0.006	-0.013	-0.008
Age of the youngest child (ref: no dependent children)						
0–4		-0.0116			-0.022	
5–9		-0.034**			-0.008	
10–14		-0.001			0	
15–19		0.006			0.105**	
Household type (ref: couple without children)						
Living alone	0.024		0.022*	0.000		0
Couple with children	0.022*			0.044		
Couple with non-dependent children			0.051***			0.076
Couple with 1 dependent child			0.026*			0.074*
Couple with 2 dependent children			-0.003	0.084**		-0.016*
Couple with 3+ dependent children			-0.021			-0.023
Lone parent	0.0744***					
Lone parent with non-dependent children			0.075***			0.114*
Lone parent with 1 dependent child			0.070***			0.053
Lone parent with 2+ dependent children			0.066***			0.085
Sector – private (ref: public)	0.086***	0.085***	0.086***	0.055**	0.049**	0.054**
Reported – part-time (ref: full-time)	0.124***	0.132***	0.128***	0.088***	0.104***	0.093***
Observations	14.106	14,106	14,106	1,435	1,435	1,435

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Sources: LFS RMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

³⁸ UK for Northern Ireland: Wales, England, and Scotland.

³⁹ EU27 in Ireland excludes Ireland.

APPENDIX 5: EARNINGS CHECKS – NORTHERN IRELAND

	Median Hourly Pay	
	ASHE ⁴⁰	LFS
	£	£
All	13.50	12.51
Male	14.04	13.51
Female	12.92	11.82
Full-time	14.99	13.11
Part-time	10.68	10.42
Female full-time	14.67	12.39
Female part-time	10.60	10.52
Male full-time	15.38	13.74
Male part-time	10.70	10.00
Unadjusted gender pay gap	8.0%	12.5%

Sources: ASHE for Northern Ireland, 2022; LFS UK, 2022.

Both sets of data are collected by the UK Office for National Statistics, who note that ‘the accuracy and detail of earnings information captured by the LFS falls short of that obtained by ASHE’, but that the greater range of personal and household characteristics collected alongside earnings in the LFS broaden its potential uses. They also note that the earnings questions in the LFS are asked only to employees and only in 40 per cent of the interviews carried out in each quarter. The achieved sample for the LFS earnings questions is usually around 9,000, compared with approximately 150,000 respondents on ASHE.

⁴⁰ ASHE headline statistics for Northern Ireland | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nirsra.gov.uk).

APPENDIX 6: EARNINGS CHECKS – IRELAND

Median	Structure of Earnings Survey ⁴¹	LFS ²
	€	€
All	19.60	21.20
Male	20.11	22.15
Female	19.00	20.03
Full-time	21.40	22.50
Part-time ¹	15.24	15.69
Unadjusted gender pay gap	5.5%	9.5%

***** p < .001 ** p < .01 * p < .05 # P < .10**

Sources: Structure of Earnings Survey for Ireland, 2022; LFS RMF Ireland, 2022, own analysis.

Notes: 1 Full-time/part-time status is based on the respondent's own perception.

2 Excluding outliers as described in Chapter 2.

APPENDIX 7: PREDICTORS OF LOW PAY FOR WOMEN IN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND: MARGINAL EFFECTS WITH AND WITHOUT CONTROLLING FOR SELECTION

Low pay	Ireland		Northern Ireland	
	Margins with selection	Without selection	Margins with selection	Without selection
Education (ref: secondary or below)				
Post-Secondary	-.113***	-0.046***	-0.294***	-0.149***
Degree or above	-.387***	-0.279***	-0.437***	-0.216***
Age (ref: 20–34)				
35–49	-.153***	-0.148	-0.143***	-0.102***
50–63	-.140***	-0.165	-0.015	-0.065**
Place of birth (ref: same as place of residence)				
UK	0.014	0.014	0.049	0.059
EU27	.154***	0.164***	-0.023	-0.018
Non-EU	.068***	0.069***	-0.012	-0.003
Sector (ref: public) – private				
Part-time (ref: full-time)	.118***	.117***	0.094***	0.098***
Household type (ref: other)				
Lone parent	.059***	.049***	0.05	0.054
Couple parent	-0.012	-0.027**	0.035	0.027

Sources: LFS RMF Ireland 2022; LFS UK 2022.

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