

FEATURE

Bryce Millard and Andrew Machin
Office for National Statistics

Characteristics of public sector workers

SUMMARY

This article presents analysis of public sector employment, and makes comparisons with the private sector, using data from the Labour Force Survey. It looks at characteristics which differentiate people employed in these sectors, comparing proportions of public and private sector workers in different groups: by sex, age, ethnicity, disability, full and part-time working, usual hours worked, job tenure, union membership, occupation and level of qualifications. The article also explains some of the limitations of the data used and the methodology used to derive the estimates.

This article is part of a series providing analysis of public sector employment (PSE) statistics. Previous recent articles have focused on trends and regional estimates. The article provides further information on the characteristics of public sector employees, and updates some earlier analysis.

Estimates based on returns from public sector organisations are the preferred source of official UK statistics on the level of, and trends in, public sector employment. But these can provide only limited information on the characteristics of public sector employees. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) provides a wealth of information about people which cannot be obtained from business sources. The LFS is therefore used to provide comparisons of characteristics of public and private sector workers, although some adjustments are made to the data to compensate for known deficiencies in the distinction between public and private sector workers in the survey.

Use of LFS data for analysis of public sector employment

The LFS is a large household survey carried out continuously across the UK, sampling over 50,000 households every quarter. It provides the main headline measures of employment for the whole economy.

But analysis of the LFS by public/private classifications, as for analysis of employment by industry, has a number of limitations.

LFS public/private sector and industry classifications are made on the basis of survey respondents' views about the organisations for which they work. As a consequence, they are likely to suffer from reporting error as well as the figures not corresponding to the National Accounts definition used to produce PSE estimates from administrative sources. For example, according to the National Accounts definition, university staff and GPs should be classified into the private sector, while at present they remain in the public sector according to the definition applied within the LFS.

The raw LFS estimates of public sector employment are around one million higher than those from the PSE. The LFS estimates are therefore adjusted to match more closely National Accounts definitions and to be more in line with the data obtained from public sector employers. Even so, the adjusted LFS PSE estimates are still higher, and the difference between estimates from the two sources has grown over recent years, as discussed in the recent article on regional PSE estimates. The approximate adjustments which have been made to the LFS public/private sector data are described in the Technical Note.

Box 1**Notes and definitions**

The public sector is made up of employees, including those employed on government employment and training schemes. The private sector includes the self-employed and unpaid family workers.

Annual data from the LFS are based on four-quarter averages. Those for 1997 to 2005 are based on seasonal quarters: winter (December to February), spring (March to May), summer (June to August) and autumn (September to November). For 2006 they are based on calendar quarters: January to March (Q1), April to June (Q2), July to September (Q3), and October to December

(Q4), reflecting a change to the main reporting periods for LFS microdata (see also Technical Note).

All tables are based on LFS data. In addition, the figures in Tables 2 and 4 are also constrained so that they are consistent overall with the percentages of people employed who work in the public (or private) sector, according to the ONS published PSE series, that is, also using overall estimates of PSE from public sector organisations. The annual data on this basis relate to the second quarter (June), seasonally adjusted from 1999 but not seasonally adjusted before 1999.

Analysis of characteristics of public sector workers and comparisons with the private sector

Sex

Table 1 compares the percentages of male and female workers in the public and private sector from 1997 to 2006. There are nearly twice as many women (65 per cent in 2006) as men (35 per cent) working in the public sector. This pattern of male and female employment is the opposite of that which is found within the private sector, where there is a greater proportion of men compared with women (59 per cent and 41 per cent in 2006, respectively). While there has been an increase of 2 percentage points in the proportion of public sector employees who are women (and a corresponding reduction for men) over the period 1997 to 2006, the pattern for male and female employees within the private sector has been stable over the same period.

Looking at the data in a different way (see **Table 2**), the proportion of women who were employed in the public sector was 29 per cent in 2006, an increase from 27 per cent in 1997, while the proportion of men working in the public sector has been relatively constant at around 13 per cent.

Age

According to **Table 3**, 74 per cent of those working within the public sector in 2006 are over 35 years of age, compared with 62 per cent of those working in the private sector. There is relatively little difference in the proportions aged 25 to 34 (20 per cent and 22 per cent respectively) while the proportion of public sector workers who are aged under 25 is much lower than among private sector workers (6 per cent compared with 16 per cent).

There have been increases in the proportions of workers aged over 35

between 1997 and 2006, in both the public and private sectors, especially for those aged 50 or over. The proportions aged under 25 have changed little, while there has been a decline in both the public and private sectors in the proportions aged 25 to 34. These changes mainly reflect changes in the workforce as a whole.

Looking at the percentages another way, in terms of proportions of those in particular age groups who work in the public sector, **Table 4** shows how this proportion tends to increase with age. The lowest proportion in 2006 is 5 per cent, for 16 to 17 year olds, rising to 24 per cent for the 35 to 49 year olds and 23 per cent for those aged 50 or over. **Table 4** also shows that the main change in these proportions from 1997 to 2006 has been an increase in the proportion of workers aged 50 or over who are employed in the public sector, from 20 per cent to 23 per cent.

Ethnicity

Table 5 shows the percentages of those employed within the public and private sectors who belong to different ethnic groups. Of those employed within the public sector in 2006, 8 per cent were from non-white ethnic groups, the same as for those working in the private sector. The main difference between the public and private sector is that the former tends to have a slightly lower proportion of their workforce from the Asian or Asian British group (3 per cent in 2006 compared with 4 per cent for the private sector) while the opposite is true for Black or Black British workers (3 per cent compared with 2 per cent).

The earliest period for which a breakdown by ethnicity is available on a consistent basis from the LFS is 2001. There has been an increase in the percentage of employees in the non-white ethnic group within the public sector, from

6 per cent to 8 per cent over the period 2001 to 2006, which is mainly accounted for by a rise in the Asian or Asian British and Other ethnic groups. These changes reflect general changes in the workforce, as there have been very similar changes in the proportions of those in the non-white ethnic group within the private sector over the same period.

Disability

In 2006, 14 per cent of employees within the public sector had a long-term disability compared with 13 per cent of those working in the private sector. Disability estimates are only available from the LFS from 1998. **Table 6** shows that there has been an increase over the period 1998 to 2006 of almost 3 percentage points in the proportions of both the public and private sector workers with a long-term disability.

Full and part-time working

According to **Table 7**, the majority of employees within both the public and private sector worked full time in 2006 (71 per cent in the public sector, compared with 76 per cent in the private sector). While nearly a third (29 per cent) of those employed in the public sector worked part time in 2006, a quarter (25 per cent) of those employed in the private sector did so. These proportions have been nearly constant for the past ten years. From 1997 to 2006, there was a 1 percentage point fall in the proportion of part-time employees in the public sector, while in the private sector there was a rise of 1 percentage point in the proportion of part-time workers over the same period.

Usual hours worked

Table 8 shows that a higher proportion of public sector workers (22 per cent in 2006) usually work for 16 to 30 hours, compared

with private sector workers (17 per cent in 2006). Those employed in the public sector are less likely to work long hours. In 2006, 14 per cent of workers in the public sector had usual weekly hours exceeding 45 hours, compared with 22 per cent in the private sector. The private sector has, however, seen a faster decline in the proportion working over 45 hours, by some 7 percentage points compared with 1 percentage point in the public sector between 1997 and 2006.

Looking at these figures on usual hours for males and females separately, Table 8 also shows that the above differences are concentrated among men. There is relatively little difference among women in the pattern of hours worked in the public and private sectors. But 69 per cent of men working in the public sector usually worked 31 to 45 hours per week in 2006, compared with 57 per cent in the private sector. At the same time, 22 per cent of men in the public sector worked more than 45 hours, while 31 per cent of men employed in the private sector did so. The latter proportion has declined sharply and steadily since 1997, from 41 per cent, while the proportion usually working over 45 hours has declined less steeply for men in the public sector, and has changed relatively little among women in both sectors.

Job tenure

Table 9 shows comparisons of the proportions of public and private sector workers, for different age bands, according to length of job tenure, for 2006. Of those employed within the public sector, 40 per cent overall have been with their employer for more than ten years, compared with 28 per cent in the private sector. This difference is mainly explained by the differences for those aged 35 or over. While 45 per cent of those within the public sector aged 35 to 49 have been with their employer for over ten years, 34 per cent of those of the same age in the private sector have been with their employer for that long. Among those aged 50 or over, 60 per cent of those working in the public sector have stayed with their current employer for more than ten years, compared with 51 per cent of those in the private sector.

As shown by Table 10, the average length of job tenure is greater in the public sector than in the private sector, across all age groups. The overall average length of job tenure in 2006 was 10.1 years within the public sector, compared with 7.7 years for private sector workers.

Union membership

Of those employed in the public sector in 2006, 60 per cent said they were members of a trade union, while in the private sector only 16 per cent of employees were union members (see Table 11). Union membership among public sector workers fell by 1 percentage point over the period 1997 to 2006, while the private sector saw a fall of 3 percentage points over the same period.

Occupation

Table 12 shows the different occupational make-up of public and private sector workers in 2006.

Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of the public sector workforce is composed of those working within professional (23 per cent), associate professional and technical (24 per cent), and administrative and secretarial (17 per cent) occupations. In contrast, half as many (32 per cent) of private sector workers are in these occupations (professional with 10 per cent, associate professional and technical with 11 per cent and administrative and secretarial with 11 per cent).

While only 5 per cent of public sector employees are in skilled trades, sales and customer service, and process plant and machine operatives occupations, 33 per cent of private sector workers belong to these occupations.

Of those in the public sector, 8 per cent are employed as managers and senior officials, compared with 17 per cent of people working in the private sector.

While 12 per cent of men in the public sector are in jobs as managers and senior officials, the proportion among women is only 6 per cent. There is a similar difference in the private sector: 20 per cent compared with 14 per cent, respectively.

Highest qualification

Table 13 shows the proportions of those working in the public and private sectors in 2006 broken down according to highest qualifications attained. Nearly half those working in the public sector are educated to degree level (32 per cent) or other higher education beyond A level or equivalent (16 per cent), while just over a quarter overall (19 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively) of those employed in the private sector have these qualifications.

REFERENCES

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CONTACT

✉ elmr@ons.gsi.gov.uk

Table 1
Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by sex

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Men	Women	All
Public			
1997	37.1	62.9	100.0
1998	37.2	62.8	100.0
1999	36.5	63.5	100.0
2000	36.5	63.5	100.0
2001	35.6	64.4	100.0
2002	35.0	65.0	100.0
2003	35.1	64.9	100.0
2004	34.8	65.2	100.0
2005	34.9	65.1	100.0
2006	34.8	65.2	100.0
Private			
1997	58.9	41.1	100.0
1998	58.7	41.3	100.0
1999	58.8	41.2	100.0
2000	58.7	41.3	100.0
2001	58.9	41.1	100.0
2002	58.9	41.1	100.0
2003	59.0	41.0	100.0
2004	59.2	40.8	100.0
2005	59.0	41.0	100.0
2006	58.9	41.1	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Table 2
Proportions of people working in the public and private sectors: by sex

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Men	Women	All
Public			
1997	13.3	27.0	19.5
1998	13.2	26.7	19.3
1999	12.9	26.8	19.2
2000	12.9	26.8	19.2
2001	12.8	27.3	19.4
2002	12.7	28.0	19.7
2003	13.0	28.4	20.0
2004	13.0	28.9	20.3
2005	13.1	28.9	20.4
2006	13.0	28.6	20.2
Private			
1997	86.7	73.0	80.5
1998	86.8	73.3	80.7
1999	87.1	73.2	80.8
2000	87.1	73.2	80.8
2001	87.2	72.7	80.6
2002	87.3	72.0	80.3
2003	87.0	71.6	80.0
2004	87.0	71.1	79.7
2005	86.9	71.1	79.6
2006	87.0	71.4	79.8

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey and data from public sector organisations (ONS)

Table 3
Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by age

United Kingdom	Percentages					
	16-17	18-24	25-34	35-49	50+	All ages
Public						
1997	0.6	6.2	25.9	43.9	23.3	100.0
1998	0.5	5.9	23.9	44.7	25.0	100.0
1999	0.5	5.9	23.1	44.8	25.6	100.0
2000	0.5	6.1	22.5	44.5	26.4	100.0
2001	0.5	6.3	21.2	44.5	27.4	100.0
2002	0.5	6.5	20.7	44.6	27.6	100.0
2003	0.5	6.5	21.1	43.8	28.1	100.0
2004	0.5	6.3	21.1	44.0	28.1	100.0
2005	0.4	6.0	20.8	44.1	28.7	100.0
2006	0.5	5.8	19.8	44.1	29.8	100.0
Private						
1997	3.1	13.5	26.3	34.4	22.7	100.0
1998	3.0	13.4	26.3	34.2	23.1	100.0
1999	2.8	13.4	25.9	34.5	23.5	100.0
2000	2.8	13.3	25.2	35.0	23.7	100.0
2001	2.8	13.5	24.5	35.2	24.1	100.0
2002	2.8	13.5	23.6	35.6	24.5	100.0
2003	2.7	13.5	22.6	35.9	25.2	100.0
2004	2.7	13.7	22.1	36.0	25.5	100.0
2005	2.5	13.6	21.8	36.2	25.8	100.0
2006	2.3	13.8	21.7	36.2	26.0	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 4
Proportions of people working in the public and private sectors: by age

United Kingdom						Percentages
	16–17	18–24	25–34	35–49	50+	All ages
Public						
1997	4.5	10.3	19.3	23.6	19.9	19.5
1998	4.3	9.5	18.2	23.7	20.2	19.3
1999	4.0	9.4	17.5	23.7	20.7	19.2
2000	4.4	9.8	17.5	23.3	20.9	19.2
2001	4.3	10.1	17.4	23.4	21.5	19.4
2002	4.2	10.5	17.7	23.6	21.7	19.7
2003	4.5	10.9	18.6	23.5	21.9	20.0
2004	4.3	10.5	19.7	23.7	21.9	20.3
2005	4.0	10.3	19.6	23.8	22.1	20.4
2006	4.7	9.6	18.8	23.6	22.5	20.2
Private						
1997	95.5	89.7	80.7	76.4	80.1	80.5
1998	95.7	90.5	81.8	76.3	79.8	80.7
1999	96.0	90.6	82.5	76.3	79.3	80.8
2000	95.6	90.2	82.5	76.7	79.1	80.8
2001	95.7	89.9	82.6	76.6	78.5	80.6
2002	95.8	89.5	82.3	76.4	78.3	80.3
2003	95.5	89.1	81.4	76.5	78.1	80.0
2004	95.7	89.5	80.3	76.3	78.1	79.7
2005	96.0	89.7	80.4	76.2	77.9	79.6
2006	95.3	90.4	81.2	76.4	77.5	79.8

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey and data from public sector organisations (ONS)

Table 5
Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by ethnicity

United Kingdom								Percentages
	White		Non-white				Total non-white	All
	Mixed	Asian or Asian British	Black or Black British	Chinese	Other ethnic group			
Public								
2001	94.3	0.5	2.4	2.2	0.2	0.5	5.7	100.0
2002	93.9	0.4	2.8	2.1	0.2	0.6	6.1	100.0
2003	93.5	0.4	2.8	2.3	0.2	0.7	6.5	100.0
2004	93.0	0.6	3.1	2.3	0.3	0.8	7.0	100.0
2005	92.8	0.6	3.2	2.2	0.3	1.0	7.2	100.0
2006	92.2	0.7	3.1	2.6	0.2	1.2	7.8	100.0
Private								
2001	94.4	0.5	2.9	1.5	0.3	0.4	5.6	100.0
2002	93.8	0.5	3.2	1.5	0.4	0.6	6.2	100.0
2003	93.5	0.6	3.3	1.5	0.4	0.7	6.5	100.0
2004	93.0	0.6	3.4	1.7	0.3	0.9	7.0	100.0
2005	92.5	0.6	3.7	1.7	0.4	1.1	7.5	100.0
2006	91.9	0.6	4.0	1.8	0.4	1.3	8.1	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 6

Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by disability

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Long-term disabled	Not long-term disabled	All
Public			
1998	11.5	88.5	100.0
1999	12.1	87.9	100.0
2000	11.9	88.1	100.0
2001	12.3	87.7	100.0
2002	13.6	86.4	100.0
2003	13.3	86.7	100.0
2004	13.7	86.3	100.0
2005	13.8	86.2	100.0
2006	14.2	85.8	100.0
Private			
1998	10.6	89.4	100.0
1999	11.4	88.6	100.0
2000	11.8	88.2	100.0
2001	11.9	88.1	100.0
2002	12.7	87.3	100.0
2003	12.7	87.3	100.0
2004	13.2	86.8	100.0
2005	13.1	86.9	100.0
2006	13.1	86.9	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 7

Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by full and part-time status

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Full-time	Part-time	All
Public			
1997	69.7	30.3	100.0
1998	69.7	30.3	100.0
1999	70.1	29.9	100.0
2000	69.7	30.3	100.0
2001	69.4	30.6	100.0
2002	69.6	30.4	100.0
2003	69.7	30.3	100.0
2004	69.9	30.1	100.0
2005	70.9	29.1	100.0
2006	70.7	29.3	100.0
Private			
1997	76.5	23.5	100.0
1998	76.4	23.6	100.0
1999	76.3	23.7	100.0
2000	76.1	23.9	100.0
2001	76.4	23.6	100.0
2002	75.8	24.2	100.0
2003	75.3	24.7	100.0
2004	75.6	24.4	100.0
2005	75.6	24.4	100.0
2006	75.5	24.5	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 8

Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by sex and total usual weekly hours worked

United Kingdom	Percentages					
	0-5 hours	6-15 hours	16-30 hours	31-45 hours	Over 45 hours	All
Male						
Public						
1997	0.7	1.9	4.6	67.1	25.7	100.0
1998	0.6	2.1	4.9	65.6	26.8	100.0
1999	0.6	2.3	4.9	65.9	26.3	100.0
2000	0.6	2.2	4.7	65.8	26.7	100.0
2001	0.5	2.2	4.8	66.3	26.2	100.0
2002	0.7	2.4	5.2	64.9	26.8	100.0
2003	0.7	2.5	5.0	66.3	25.5	100.0
2004	0.6	2.3	5.7	67.5	24.0	100.0
2005	0.6	2.1	6.2	67.6	23.5	100.0
2006	0.6	2.4	6.1	68.8	22.1	100.0
Private						
1997	0.9	3.2	5.5	49.1	41.3	100.0
1998	0.9	3.2	5.6	50.7	39.6	100.0
1999	0.9	3.3	6.0	51.8	38.0	100.0
2000	0.8	3.2	6.1	52.3	37.6	100.0
2001	0.7	3.3	6.2	53.1	36.7	100.0
2002	0.7	3.5	6.8	53.9	35.1	100.0
2003	0.8	3.5	7.3	54.6	33.8	100.0
2004	0.7	3.4	7.6	55.5	32.7	100.0
2005	0.7	3.5	7.7	56.2	31.9	100.0
2006	0.7	3.5	7.8	56.8	31.1	100.0
Female						
Public						
1997	2.2	11.6	29.2	47.2	9.8	100.0
1998	2.3	11.7	29.1	46.5	10.5	100.0
1999	2.3	11.2	28.4	47.2	10.9	100.0
2000	2.0	11.4	29.3	46.6	10.7	100.0
2001	1.8	10.5	30.2	46.3	11.2	100.0
2002	1.8	9.9	30.4	46.6	11.5	100.0
2003	2.0	9.7	29.9	47.6	10.7	100.0
2004	1.8	9.3	30.0	48.5	10.4	100.0
2005	1.6	8.7	29.6	49.7	10.4	100.0
2006	1.6	9.1	29.6	49.3	10.3	100.0
Private						
1997	3.5	15.0	26.4	44.5	10.7	100.0
1998	3.4	14.6	26.8	45.3	10.0	100.0
1999	3.3	14.2	27.5	45.3	9.8	100.0
2000	3.1	13.7	28.1	45.4	9.7	100.0
2001	2.8	13.0	28.4	46.2	9.7	100.0
2002	2.7	13.0	28.7	45.9	9.6	100.0
2003	2.6	13.5	29.3	45.4	9.2	100.0
2004	2.6	13.0	29.4	45.8	9.2	100.0
2005	2.6	12.6	29.5	46.0	9.3	100.0
2006	2.8	12.4	29.5	46.1	9.2	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 8 - *continued***Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by sex and total usual weekly hours worked**

United Kingdom						Percentages
	0-5 hours	6-15 hours	16-30 hours	31-45 hours	Over 45 hours	All
All						
Public						
1997	1.6	8.1	20.1	54.5	15.7	100.0
1998	1.6	8.2	20.1	53.6	16.5	100.0
1999	1.7	8.0	19.9	54.0	16.5	100.0
2000	1.5	8.1	20.4	53.5	16.5	100.0
2001	1.4	7.6	21.2	53.4	16.5	100.0
2002	1.4	7.3	21.6	52.9	16.8	100.0
2003	1.5	7.2	21.2	54.1	15.9	100.0
2004	1.4	6.9	21.7	55.0	15.1	100.0
2005	1.3	6.4	21.5	55.9	14.9	100.0
2006	1.3	6.8	21.5	56.1	14.4	100.0
Private						
1997	2.0	8.0	14.1	47.2	28.7	100.0
1998	1.9	7.9	14.4	48.4	27.3	100.0
1999	1.9	7.8	14.9	49.1	26.3	100.0
2000	1.7	7.6	15.2	49.5	26.0	100.0
2001	1.5	7.3	15.4	50.2	25.5	100.0
2002	1.5	7.4	15.9	50.6	24.6	100.0
2003	1.5	7.6	16.4	50.8	23.7	100.0
2004	1.5	7.4	16.6	51.5	23.1	100.0
2005	1.5	7.3	16.7	52.0	22.5	100.0
2006	1.6	7.2	16.8	52.4	22.0	100.0

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 9

Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by age and length of job tenure, 2006

United Kingdom	Age	Job tenure	Percentages	
			Public	Private
	Under 25			
		Less than 5 years	92.4	93.6
		Greater than 5 but less than 10 years	7.6	6.4
		Greater than 10 years	0.0	0.0
	25 to 34			
		Less than 5 years	62.6	66.9
		Greater than 5 but less than 10 years	25.5	22.4
		Greater than 10 years	11.9	10.7
	35 to 49			
		Less than 5 years	35.4	44.7
		Greater than 5 but less than 10 years	19.7	21.3
		Greater than 10 years	44.9	34.0
	50 or over			
		Less than 5 years	23.2	30.9
		Greater than 5 but less than 10 years	16.4	18.0
		Greater than 10 years	60.3	51.0
	All ages			
		Less than 5 years	40.7	53.8
		Greater than 5 but less than 10 years	19.1	18.3
		Greater than 10 years	40.2	27.9

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 10

Average length of job tenure in the public and private sectors: by age, 2006

United Kingdom	Years	
Age	Public	Private
Under 25	1.8	1.7
25-34	4.7	4.2
35-49	10.4	8.3
50 or over	15.0	13.3
All ages	10.1	7.7

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 11

Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by trade union membership

United Kingdom	Percentages		
	Union member	Non-union member	All
Public			
1997	60.8	39.2	100.0
1998	60.4	39.6	100.0
1999	59.9	40.1	100.0
2000	60.6	39.4	100.0
2001	59.9	40.1	100.0
2002	60.1	39.9	100.0
2003	59.4	40.6	100.0
2004	59.3	40.7	100.0
2005	59.0	41.0	100.0
2006	59.5	40.5	100.0
Private			
1997	19.0	81.0	100.0
1998	18.4	81.6	100.0
1999	18.3	81.7	100.0
2000	17.9	82.1	100.0
2001	17.7	82.3	100.0
2002	17.3	82.7	100.0
2003	17.1	82.9	100.0
2004	16.3	83.7	100.0
2005	16.3	83.7	100.0
2006	15.8	84.2	100.0

Notes:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 12
Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by occupation and sex, 2006

United Kingdom							Percentages
Occupation	Public			Private			
	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	
Managers and senior officials	12.2	5.8	8.0	19.5	13.8	17.1	
Professional occupations	23.5	21.9	22.5	12.2	7.5	10.3	
Associate professional and technical	27.5	22.1	24.0	10.7	12.2	11.3	
Administrative and secretarial	10.4	20.7	17.2	3.8	20.4	10.7	
Skilled trades occupations	4.9	0.7	2.2	21.4	2.3	13.6	
Personal service occupations	6.5	19.0	14.7	1.6	12.3	6.0	
Sales and customer service occupations	0.6	1.0	0.9	5.3	16.2	9.8	
Process plant and machine operatives	3.9	0.3	1.5	13.5	2.9	9.1	
Elementary occupations	10.4	8.5	9.2	11.9	12.4	12.1	
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

Table 13
Proportions employed within the public and private sectors: by highest level of qualification and sex, 2006

United Kingdom							Percentages
Level of qualification	Public			Private			
	Men	Women	All	Men	Women	All	
Degree level or equivalent	35.5	30.8	32.4	20.0	18.0	19.2	
Higher education	11.5	18.0	15.7	7.8	8.1	7.9	
GCSE A level or equivalent	22.5	15.8	18.1	30.2	20.5	26.2	
GCSE Grades A to C or equivalent	15.9	21.3	19.4	18.7	29.9	23.3	
Other qualifications	8.7	8.5	8.6	13.5	12.6	13.2	
No qualifications	5.8	5.7	5.7	9.8	10.9	10.3	
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	

Note:

See Notes and definitions in Box 1.

Source: Labour Force Survey

TECHNICAL NOTE**Method of producing PSE and private sector employment estimates from the LFS**

Estimates of PSE, and private sector employment, according to the various characteristics analysed in this article, are produced using LFS microdata, based on corresponding average estimates for the four quarters of each year. These averages use seasonal quarters up to 2005 and calendar quarters for 2006, reflecting the change to the main reporting periods used for the LFS microdata. Analysis suggests that this does not introduce any important discontinuity, making a difference generally well within 1 per cent for annual PSE estimates overall.

LFS public/private sector classifications suffer from some reporting error and the data do not correspond to the National Accounts definition which is used for the official ONS PSE series. Some adjustments are therefore made to the LFS microdata to bring the estimates as close as possible to the National Accounts definition.

The LFS asks respondents two questions to define whether someone is employed in the public or private sector. Firstly, those in work in the week before the interview are asked whether the organisation that they worked for was either:

- a private firm or business or a limited company, or
- some other kind of organisation

If respondents answer that it was some other kind of organisation then they are asked 'what type of non-private organisation was it?'. Their response is then coded as one of the following by the interviewer:

- a public limited company (plc)
- a nationalised industry/state corporation
- central government or Civil Service
- local government or council (including police, fire services and local authority-controlled schools/colleges)
- a university or other grant-funded establishment (including 'opted-out' schools)
- a health authority or NHS Trust
- a charity, voluntary organisation or trust
- the armed forces, or
- some other kind of organisation

If respondents state that they work for a plc, or for a charity, voluntary organisation or trust, they are classified as a private sector worker in the LFS. Respondents who report that they are self-employed or an unpaid family worker are also classified as private sector workers. Other respondents are classified as public sector workers.

Given the way that the LFS classifies people to the public and private sector, respondents can end up being classified as working in the public sector when really they are in the private sector according to National Accounts definitions. An example is employees of public-funded bodies such as universities and further education colleges who are classified as being in the public sector according to the LFS. However, universities and further education colleges are, in fact, part of the private sector in the National Accounts as they are not controlled by government. Employees working for agencies and/or contractors, carrying out work for a public sector organisation, can also classify themselves as working in the public sector in the LFS when in reality they belong to the private sector, as their employer is a private sector organisation.

The data used here to analyse characteristics of workers in the public and private sectors are therefore adjusted, to be more in line with National Accounts definitions, by reclassifying, where necessary, workers who stated that they worked for a university or other grant-funded institution, or as agency temporary workers, from the public sector into the private sector.

Note that GPs (including dentists) and their practice staff, in the LFS, are coded to the private or public sector depending on whether they do mainly private work or NHS work even though, in the National Accounts, they are considered to be part of the private sector because they are self-employed. However, those who are allocated to the public sector in the LFS cannot be reclassified to the private sector as they cannot be distinguished from others, such as doctors and dentists working in hospitals that are part of the public sector.

When making comparisons in terms of proportions of workers with particular characteristics who are employed in the public and private sectors, for example, the percentage of employed women who work in the public sector, as in Tables 2 and 4, it is important to make further small adjustments to the data beyond the reclassifications described above. This is in order to make the figures more comparable with overall percentages based on the published PSE estimates derived from returns from public sector organisations. The LFS data are thus finally constrained so that the overall public/private sector split is consistent with ONS's main published PSE figures. Note that these adjustments are not necessary for cross-sectional analysis within sectors. They have no effect on the estimated proportions of public or private sector workers with particular characteristics, which is the basis of much of the analysis in this article, for example, the percentage of public sector employees who are women.