

# The Changing Importance of Lifetime Jobs in the United Kingdom

1) Author's Name (corresponding author): Xavier St-Denis

Email: [xavier.st-denis@ucs.inrs.ca](mailto:xavier.st-denis@ucs.inrs.ca)

Institute/Affiliation: Institut national de la recherche scientifique, Centre Urbanisation Culture  
Société

Address: Montréal, Québec, Canada

Lifetime jobs are generally considered a central feature of the postwar labour market and contrasted with insecure and unstable jobs predominant in the post-Fordist economy. This paper argues that the literature would gain from more precise data on the prevalence of lifetime jobs. Using a new methodological approach, this article finds that the share of UK workers who held a lifetime job in the postwar era was low, with important variations across sociodemographic groups. The importance of long-term jobs, but not lifetime jobs, has decreased among men born between 1947 and 1966, partly driven by decreasing job stability during youth.

Keywords: lifetime jobs; job stability; job security; flexible employment; careers; standard employment relationship; internal labour markets.

## 1. Introduction

Fundamental socio-economic transformations such as globalization, financialization, deunionization, and labour law reforms starting in the 1980s have been associated with an employer-driven flexibilization of the employment relationship across Liberal Market Economies (LMEs) such as the UK, the US and Canada. Scholars have pointed at the increasing precariousness of jobs and instability in career trajectories as a result of these changes (Kalleberg 2009; Vosko, MacDonald, and Campbell 2009). Research on the adaptation of workers and the change in norms in reaction to these transformations have also focused on the emergence of boundaryless (Arthur and Rousseau 1996), protean (Hall 1996) or portfolio (Fraser and Gold 2001) career models, emphasizing the growing importance of inter-firm mobility in career trajectories (in contrast with orderly upward mobility within the hierarchy of bureaucratic organizations), workers' responsabilization for their employability, and a free agency approach to career management (see Barley and Kunda 2004).

This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the [Version of Record](#). Please cite this article as [doi: 10.1111/ilr.12190](https://doi.org/10.1111/ilr.12190).

This depiction of the contemporary labour market is generally contrasted with the postwar, or Fordist, labour market. In the postwar labour market, a certain share of workers employed in core segments of the labour market held stable jobs obtained through defined paths and providing promotion ladders, training opportunities, and seniority-based protections against layoffs and a certain overall degree of job security (Cappelli 1999b; 2001; Doeringer and Piore 1971; Grimshaw et al. 2001), often called internal labour markets (ILMs) or captured by the label “standard employment relationship” (SER). These jobs are generally described as permanent and open-ended.

A large number of studies associate these jobs with the *prospect* of spending one’s career within only one or two organizations, using such terms as jobs for life (Grimshaw et al. 2001), career jobs (Cappelli 1999a; Jacoby 1999a), organizational careers (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Hall 1996), lifetime jobs (Muffels and Luijkx 2008; Stone 2006) or employment with a single firm, and describe recent labour market transformations as a shift away from them. The debate is often framed in the following terms (my italics), linking rising job insecurity with the end of jobs for life:

‘[N]umerous sociological studies and journalistic accounts highlight the rise of uncertainty and insecurity in working people’s lives. [...] These studies suggest that *most workers can no longer expect to be employed by a single firm for their entire career*. Many older workers are being forced either to change jobs mid-career or accept an early and often poorly pensioned retirement, despite their expectations of career stability.’ (Stone and Arthurs 2013, 6)

Such a description faces two limitations. First, only a subset of all workers – those employed in core sectors or organizations – held “good”, stable jobs (Cappelli 2001; Jacoby 1999a; Kalleberg and Sorensen 1979; Osterman 1996; Reich, Edwards, and Gordon 1973). However, there are gaps

in the literature when it comes to estimating the prevalence of lifetime jobs associated with employment in such sectors. Second, many authors associate ILMs with lifetime jobs because of the permanent, open-endedness nature of the employment contract and the expectation of job security. It is not clear how long the careers of workers holding these jobs do last, and the focus is more on formal or informal protections against job loss than actual retention or separation probabilities. This is especially true in LMEs, where weak legislated job security regulations offer limited formal protections against layoffs. In addition, the comparative capitalisms literature has emphasized the importance of inter-firm mobility and external flexibility for economic performance (Hall and Soskice 2001), meaning that workers may be incentivized to change employers despite holding secure jobs.

This leaves an important question unanswered: what share of workers were employed under *lifetime* jobs? This question is important because it identifies “lifetime jobs” as a concept distinct from stable or secure jobs in general. I therefore ask whether it is accurate to characterize the postwar period as a time period when a large share of workers spent their whole career progressing within a single organization, or alternatively, whether researchers should make a more restricted use of the term lifetime jobs. To answer this research question, I rely on three complementary survey data sources from the UK, a LME that has been the focus of studies on lifetime jobs and experienced important labour market transformations since the 1980s.

This paper makes two distinct contributions. First, I present a novel estimation method using cross-sectional tenure data to estimate the share of workers who held a lifetime job in different birth cohorts, and overcomes several important limitations in the measurement of lifetime jobs. The results of this estimation method are validated using a combination of three UK datasets. Second, I use the results provided by this method to contribute to the description of the career

trajectories of the last cohorts to have been active participants to the postwar labour market. I show that results using a strict definition of lifetime job, reaching 30 or more years of tenure between 45 and 64, suggest that only a small share of the overall UK labour force born between 1947 and 1952 did hold a “job for life” (20.2% for men and 7.7% for women). I find important variation by educational attainment, immigration status, ethnicity, and marital status (for women). I also use a less restrictive threshold more widely used in the literature: reaching 20 or more years of tenure between 45 and 64. I find that 39.6% of men and 27.1% of women held such jobs. Under both definitions, only a minority of workers did hold “lifetime” jobs, but the results also emphasize the importance of a conceptual distinction between lifetime jobs (30+ years) and what may rather be called long-term jobs (20+ years). While several workers achieve relatively stable employment in the second half of their active life, the share of workers who did spend the majority of their career within a single organization is small. Finally, I provide partial evidence on more recent cohorts that suggests some decrease in the importance of long-term jobs (20+ years), but not lifetime jobs (30+ years) in recent decades, partly driven by more instability over the first half of the active life of younger cohorts.

## **2. Review of the literature**

In the decades before 1920, employment is generally characterized as unstable, with promotions and dismissals in industrial firms often left at the discretion of foremen (Jacoby 1999b) and high employee mobility and turnover (Jacoby 1983). Over the postwar era, a new career model is generally assumed to have emerged, centered around lifetime jobs, organizational careers and structured job ladders, paving the way for research on career dynamics and behaviours in large bureaucratic organizations (Glaser 1968; Whyte 1956). For example, approximately 50% of US jobs were expected to last 20 or more years in 1978 (Hall 1982), a stark difference with the end of



the 19th century when that number may have been 25% for some groups of men, and much lower for certain segments of the labour market (e.g. foreign-born workers and women) (Carter 1988).

Since the 1980s, the sociology of work has focused its attention on the shift of the pendulum back towards increased job insecurity and a greater role of the market rather than bureaucracy (and the associated organizational job ladders) in structuring employment relationships (Cappelli 1999a; Kalleberg 2009). Several studies have also focused on how in reaction to those transformations, workers have adopted new career models emphasizing mobility between organizations, employability on the external labour market, resilience and versatility, with a focus on individual self-directedness rather than organizational hierarchies in the management of one's career (Arthur and Rousseau 1996; Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth 2006; Hall 1996; Sullivan and Baruch 2009). In that regard, changes in career patterns can be understood as resulting from both an increase in employer-driven job insecurity and a related increase in employee-driven job mobility to adapt to growing insecurity. This recent literature makes broad statements characterizing careers in the postwar era as unfolding in a single organization and structured around secure, lifetime employment, in contrast with precarious, unstable or boundaryless careers of the New Economy. In this section, I review the existing empirical evidence on the matter in order to evaluate such claims. I argue that such stylized descriptions focus on a career model that may have applied to only a minority of workers, making necessary a direct measure of the prevalence of lifetime jobs.

### **2.1. The traditional employment relationship and its transformation**

A large portion of the studies on the transformation of employment relationships over the past three to four decades concurrently use a heterogeneous set of concepts to describe the predominant feature of traditional careers in the postwar labour market: permanent (full-time, dependent)

employment, long-term jobs, organizational careers, jobs for life, career jobs, etc. In all cases, the underlying concern is about a shift away from a model of employment relationships where most jobs would be “lifetime jobs”. Nevertheless, I argue that the literature leaves us without a clear description of the importance of lifetime jobs in the postwar labour market, and with an incomplete theoretical toolkit to study the shift away from them associated with the transition to a more flexible labour market.

A widely used measure of the departure from a “lifetime jobs” model is declining job tenure duration or increasing job separation rate.

‘If a “job for life” has ceased to exist, and if job moves have become increasingly frequent, job tenure (the duration of employment with a single employer) and job separation rates (the rate at which individuals are leaving their jobs or are being dismissed by their employer) estimated for the entire economy should show significant trends.’ (ILO 1996, 27)

In that context, the terms stable, secure, long-term, and lifetime jobs are often used in a casual way, although there is often a non-trivial mismatch between this terminology and the data and research design adopted by different studies. This is especially true about the debate on job stability in the UK. Many studies ask about the departure from, or decline of the “job for life” or traditional organizational career model (Burgess and Rees 1998; Doogan 2001; Gregg and Wadsworth 2002, 111), but operationalize their research question by estimating the change in the share of workers with more than 5 years or 10 years of job tenure duration (see also Bachmann and Felder 2018; Farber 1995; Rodrigues and Guest 2010). Such research designs assume rather than demonstrate the importance of lifetime jobs at baseline, and decreases in job tenure durations or retention rates provide a proxy, but not direct evidence, of a shift away from lifetime jobs.

Related studies focus on nonstandard jobs and their temporary or insecure nature (Houseman and Osawa 2003). Others such as Vosko et al. (2009) use the broader concept of precarious work instead of a dichotomy between permanent and temporary work. Most of these studies argue that the labour market of OECD countries has moved away from permanent jobs or the standard employment relationship (SER) as the traditional form of employment. Permanent jobs or the SER concepts designate a long-lasting or “formally indefinite” employment relationship (Vosko, Zukewich, and Fudge 2003), a job with an expectation of permanence and protection against job loss (Grimshaw et al. 2001; Osterman 1996). As such, Vosko et al. (2003) emphasize that ‘[u]nder the standard employment model, a worker has one employer, works full year, full time on the employer's premises, enjoys extensive statutory benefits and entitlements, and *expects to be employed indefinitely* [my italics].’ Relatedly, the boundaryless or protean career literature emphasizes the existence of a psychological contract bounding employees and their firm and exchanging job security for loyalty as a foundation of organizational careers (Hall 1996; Rousseau 1995).

Many depictions of the postwar labour market cast doubt on how widespread lifetime jobs were. Early on, sociologists recognized that the career model of the Organization Man described in Whyte (1956) was restricted to a small share of white collars and technicians in certain large firms with stable growth perspectives (Wilensky 1968). Contributions to segmented and dual labour market theory emphasized the existence of secondary labour markets for low-skilled workers, where employers were unlikely to offer secure jobs and structure employment around job ladders, firm-provided training and seniority-based pay and promotions (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Reich, Edwards, and Gordon 1973). In the postwar labour market, professions characterized by transferable skills and credentials, and occupations with labour allocation and remuneration

controlled by craft unions also left little incentives for employee retention and bounding careers to specific firms (Spilerman 1977). Osterman (1996) notes that turnover was also relatively high for jobs that were structured around ILMs. One exception is managers, who tended to be insulated from involuntary job losses (Cappelli 1992). Similarly, Hall (2002, 20) estimates that the share of employment accounted for by large, visible firms (AT&T, IBM, etc.) that were likely to offer a psychological contract of lifetime employment to their employees was likely to stand below 5%. In other words, while it is possible that many jobs in the postwar labour market were characterized by stability in the relatively long-term, there are many reasons to expect that a large number of jobs did not follow a lifetime job model. Instead, lifetime employment in a single firm may have become a model both for aspirational reasons and because it was a feature of large, prestigious organizations.

I therefore argue that authors focusing on recent labour market transformations tend to conflate a shift away from stable (long-term) or permanent jobs with a shift away from lifetime jobs, and remain unclear on the importance of lifetime jobs at baseline. Even in studies that do not explicitly refer to lifetime employment (Kalleberg 2009; Vosko, MacDonald, and Campbell 2009), it remains unclear what stable, long-term, or secure jobs implies in terms of career trajectories and job duration. Accordingly, the first contribution of this paper is to provide evidence that will allow researchers to avoid the use of competing and overlapping terms for the characterization of the postwar labour market model, and allow a clear interpretation and conceptualization of the labour market transformations that took place since that time, especially regarding the (changing) importance of lifetime jobs.

## **2.2. Existing evidence on the importance of lifetime jobs**

Besides conceptual issues, an important obstacle to assessing the importance of lifetime jobs comes from the challenges associated with measurement. Some research has provided data on how many times individuals change job on average at a specific period of their lives (Bernhardt et al. 1999). Although we know that most job changes occur within the first decade following labour market entry (Booth, Francesconi, and Garcia-Serrano 1999; Topel and Ward 1992), this literature provides little direct results on the likelihood of holding a job that will last a lifetime once the early job shopping period is over. A related measurement issue comes from the fact that a large proportion of the research looking at job stability and career patterns has focused on job spells rather than the career trajectory of individuals, using a varieties of measures that might give an accurate portrait of the state of the labour market, but not of what typical individual career trajectories look like. For example, a large portion of this research relies on elapsed job tenure duration with a worker's current employer to measure the duration of ongoing job spells (Farber 1995; 2010; Gregg and Wadsworth 2002; Hollister and Smith 2014), but not on the share of individuals who will hold a job spell of a specific duration over their career. Focusing on ongoing job spells left-censors past jobs and right-censors both future jobs and the length of the ongoing job when that job spell is completed (some proportion of young workers observed with new, short-tenure jobs will persist and reach long tenure durations).

A few scholars have attempted to overcome these methodological limitations and asked how important lifetime jobs are. In the US, Hall (1982) finds that after their early career years of job shopping are over, 50% of men are in jobs that are likely to last 20 or more years (his definition of lifetime jobs, which he also characterizes as long-term jobs). Burgess and Rees (1997) apply Hall's approach on UK data and find that 24% (43%) of men and 12% (18%) of women are in jobs that will last 30 or more years (20 or more years), with proportions substantially higher among 31-60

years old employees. One limitation of this approach is that the universe is ongoing job spells rather than the overall workforce, leaving aside currently non-employed labour force participants.

Hall's estimation method relies on the assumption that the retention rate for all jobs remains stable over time and across cohorts. Accordingly, his results mostly rely on a single 1978 cross-section to estimate the share of workers at age  $a$  with an elapsed job tenure duration  $d$  who will reach a specific job tenure duration  $d+t$  at age  $a+t$  by looking at the share of respondents who are currently at age  $a+t$  and reached a job tenure duration of  $d+t$  years in the same cross-section. Therefore, it assumes that younger cohorts will have the same career patterns as older cohorts. This core assumption of cross-cohort similarity in career trajectories is problematic given findings of a decrease in average job tenure duration (Farber 2010; Hollister and Smith 2014).

More recently, Stevens (2008) used retrospective surveys and found that the average job tenure duration for the longest job every 58-62 years old men has held in the US was 21 years in 1969 and remained stable until 2002. In addition, she finds that just above half of all men in these age groups reach 20 or more years of tenure and approximately 25% reach 30 years. She also finds little change in the importance of lifetime jobs except for the most recent cohorts. These results have the advantage of relying on completed job spells, which avoids the censoring problems and do not require the assumption made in Hall (1982) about the stability of retention rates over time. The findings use three standalone surveys with different designs and no guarantee that they will be conducted regularly over time or that similar data sources are available in other countries (unlike labour force surveys).

In light of this discussion, the second aim of this paper is to develop a measure of lifetime jobs that is based on widely available cross-sectional data such as labour force surveys but relaxes the assumptions made in Hall (1982).

### **3. Data and estimation methods**

This paper presents a new cohort-based estimation method using the cross-sectional elapsed job tenure variable available from a typical labour force survey. I rely on the UK Labour Force Survey, a quarterly survey of private addresses for Great Britain as a whole that includes a tenure question since 1992 without interruption. I compare the results of this estimation method with those obtained from retrospective work life history data from the English Longitudinal Survey of Ageing (ELSA) and the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS). The results of the validation exercise are presented as an Appendix (see online Supplemental Information for a description of the data sources).

#### **3.1. Cross-sectional estimation method**

This paper will consider two definitions of a lifetime job: first, a job that reached a duration of 20 or more years, or second, a job that reaches a duration of 30 or more years, in both cases while the respondent is 45 to 64 years old. The first definition more closely corresponds to what is called either lifetime or long-term jobs in the literature (see Hall, 1982). Under that definition, somebody who held a job for 20 years between 45 and 65, or between 30 and 50, would be considered to hold a lifetime job, although that job represents merely half of a worker's active life. The second definition is a more restrictive definition of a lifetime job, which better corresponds to the literal meaning of the term "lifetime job": a job that is held for the vast majority of a worker's active life (e.g. from 25 to 55 years old).

Using the above definitions, I am able to estimate the share of individuals who will ever hold a lifetime job in a given birth cohort.<sup>1</sup> The main advantage of my approach is that it does not need to make the assumption that there is no change in the retention rate over time because it estimates cohort-specific lifetime jobs rates without relying on data from previous cohorts. Equally important is that the method solves the left- and right-censoring problems inherent to the use of cross-sectional elapsed job tenure duration measures used in most of the literature, and provides results for which the unit is the individual (or career) rather than the job spell. Finally, results that are comparable across cohorts because the UK LFS is designed to provide reliable time-series with comparable samples across years.

First, I take all sample respondents in cohort  $c$  at the lower age bound, 45 years old, and use the proportion of all these respondents with 20 or 30 or more years of elapsed tenure at that age as the baseline proportion for that cohort. This captures the share individuals in the cohort who hold a lifetime job at age 45, or  $\frac{n_{B,c}^{t \geq d}}{n_{B,c}}$ , where  $B$  is baseline age 45 years old and  $t$  is a job tenure of duration  $d$  (20 or 30 years). The sample frequencies,  $n$ , are weighted frequencies.

Second, I compute the share of all individuals in the same cohort who reach exactly 20 or 30 years of tenure at 46 years old. At that age, this cohort can be found among the sample respondents of the following cross-section. Individuals born in 1947 (cohort  $c=1947$ ) will be 45 years old in the 1992 cross-section, and 46 years old in 1993 cross-section. All individuals who reach exactly

---

<sup>1</sup> I do not include self-employed workers among employees, and code them as having a job tenure duration of zero, because self-employed workers does not have the same worker-firm relationship dynamics as a dependent employee status. Indeed, most forms of self-employment are associated with precarious work (Vosko, Zukewich, and Fudge 2003) or with being an employer.



20 or 30 years of tenure at 46 years old are “new” lifetime job holders: individuals who were not captured as individuals with a lifetime job in the previous cross-section. I do the same for each of the following cross-section until I reach the cross-section where the cohort members reach the upper age bound: 64 years old ( $a=64$ ). The proportion of the cohort sample that has reached exactly the 20 or 30 years job tenure duration threshold is calculated for each cross section (corresponding to each new year of age  $a$  of cohort members), or  $\frac{n_{a,c}^{t=d}}{n_{a,c}}$ .

Third, these age-specific proportions are added to the baseline proportion for cohort  $c$ . The estimation method is summarized in the following equation,

$$SL_c = \frac{n_{B,c}^{t \geq d}}{n_{B,c}} + \sum_{a=46}^{64} \frac{n_{a,c}^{t=d}}{n_{a,c}},$$

where the total proportion  $SL_c$  is the share of individuals who reached 20 or 30 years of tenure or more between 45 and 64 years old.

### 3.2. Limitations

This estimation method has a few limitations. First, the 45 years old lower bound excludes those who might have reached 20 or 30 or more years of tenure before they reached 45. This is likely to be a very small proportion of all cohort members, especially for the 30 years threshold. Furthermore, if a job ends before a respondent reached 45 years old, it is conceptually reasonable to exclude it from the “lifetime jobs” category. The upper age bound is fixed at 64 to prevent double-counting when the definition of lifetime job is based on a duration of 20 years or more.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> There are 20 cross-sections between 45 years old and 64 years old. If a cohort member reaches a job tenure duration of 20 years or more at 45 years old and finds a new job immediately, that individual would be able to accumulate another 20 years of tenure by 65 years old, creating an upward bias in the estimate. Moreover, reaching the threshold

Second, this method relies on the assumption that each cross-section is a statistically representative sample of the same sub-population, and therefore of the cohort of interest. This assumption might be incorrect if there is a change in the cohort composition as a result of demographic processes such as migration and mortality. Adjustments applied to account for these potential sources of bias are described in the Appendix.

Third, a practical limitation to the method presented here comes from the requirement for a substantial number of consecutive cross-sections, each with a job tenure question providing data on the exact number of years during which respondents have been working for their current employer. In the case where I am trying to estimate the share of individuals in cohort  $c$  who reached 20+ or 30+ years of tenure between 45 and 64 years old, 20 consecutive cross-sections are required. The UK Labour Force Survey includes the same job tenure question that provides the exact elapsed job tenure duration since 1992 (“In which year did you start working (continuously) for your current employer?”). Therefore, it is possible to obtain estimates for the share of individuals who ever had lifetime jobs starting with the 1947 cohort ( $1992-45=1947$ ), who reached 64 years old in 2011 ( $1992+19=2011$ ).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 How many people get a lifetime job?

The data allows estimating the share of individuals who have reached 20 or 30 or more years of tenure between 45 and 64 for the 1947-1952 birth cohorts.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 shows that 20.2% of men

---

after normal retirement age for the first time implies some instability during most of one’s adulthood, which is not consistent with conceptualizations of the lifetime jobs model.

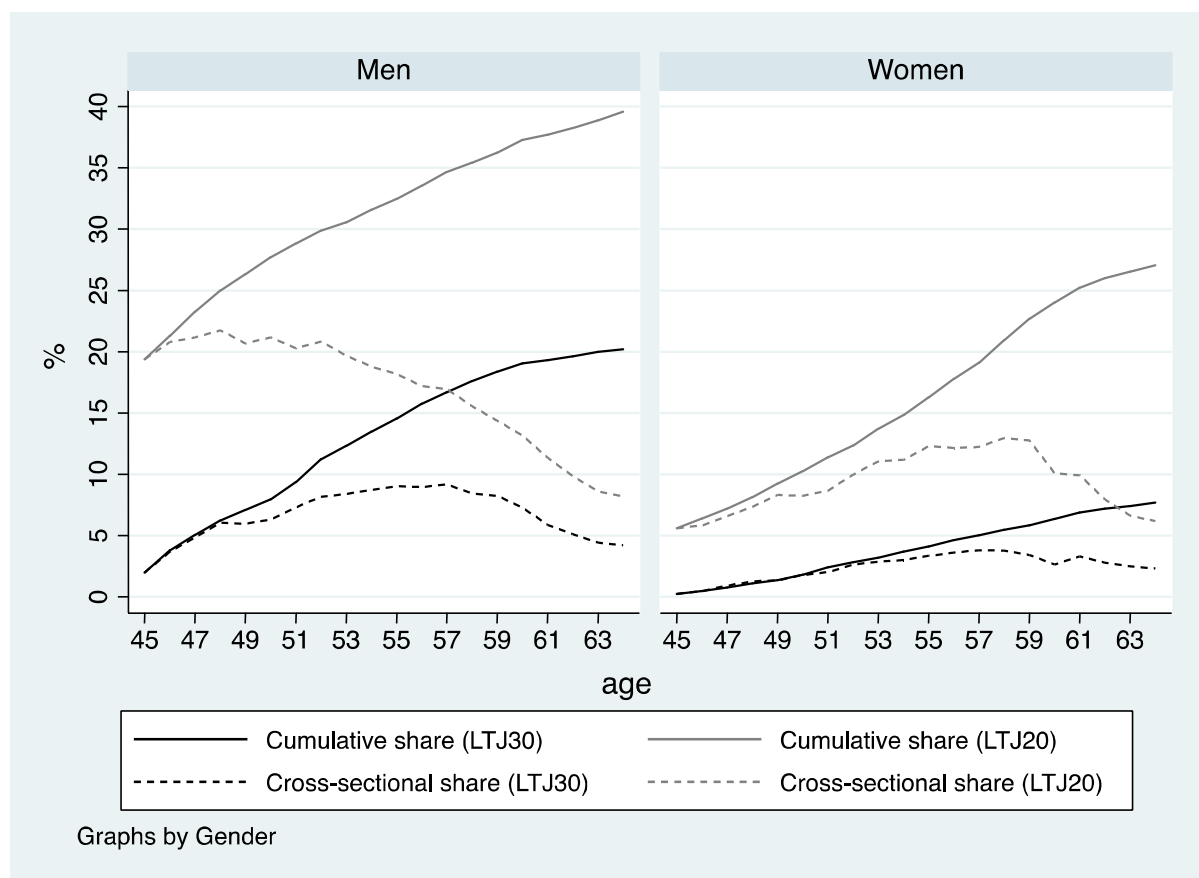
<sup>3</sup> Information on sample size is provided in Table A5, which reports the number of observations by birth cohort.

have reached the 30+ years of job tenure threshold and 39.6% have reached the 20+ years threshold. Results show a curvilinear relationship with age: only a small share of men reach a lifetime job after 60. On the other hand, only 7.7% of all women reach the 30+ years of job tenure threshold between 45 and 64 years old, or a bit more than one third of the share of men who do so. In addition, 27.1% of women reach the 20+ years threshold during the same age interval. The gap with men is smaller in this case. Moreover, the results for both definitions of lifetime jobs show that the slope flattens out later than for men, suggesting that women start building seniority with a single employer in jobs that become long-term later than men, likely following labour market re-entry after childbirth. Differences between men and women might also be driven by the fact that some women in these cohorts never entered the labour market or withdraw permanently from it into domestic work after childbirth.<sup>4</sup> Gendered occupational segregation pushing women towards part-time, lower quality jobs may also explain gender differences in the prevalence of lifetime jobs (see England 2005).

---

<sup>4</sup> Table A2 shows that at 45 years old, 1% of men never worked for pay after turning 20. In the case of women, 2.9% never worked for pay after 20 years old, and 4.8% worked for pay between 20 and 30, but not after 30. In addition, some individuals, men or women, have never participated in the labour market for reasons other than childbirth or marriage, such as disability or other personal attributes. In the absence of longitudinal data providing complete work histories, it is not possible to directly account for this.

**Figure 1. Share of individuals who reached or exceeded a job tenure duration of 20 and 30 years by age, 1947-1952 birth cohorts**



LTJ: lifetime job.

Source: LFS.

Finally, Figure 1 plots cross-sectional data for the share of cohort members at each age who are currently in job spells with an elapsed job tenure duration of 20+ or 30+ years. It shows an important and growing gap between this measure of job tenure in ongoing jobs and the one provided by the estimation method I present in this paper. This demonstrates that the new estimation method helps to obtain accurate results on how widespread lifetime jobs are by solving the left- and right-censoring problems.

In the Appendix, I conduct a validation exercise. Table A1 demonstrates that the cross-sectional estimation method provides estimates that are comparable to results provided by retrospective data

from the ELSA for comparable cohorts and can be considered as a reliable method to estimate the share of individuals who held a lifetime job in a given cohort. In addition, the LFS is purposely developed to measure change over time in a way that is more consistent than the standalone retrospective survey samples. A final advantage of the LFS is its much larger sample size than longitudinal surveys, as shown in Table A1, allowing for the analyses of smaller sub-groups.

Note that the 1947-1952 cohorts spent their early years in the 1960s and 1970s, decades that are associated with the postwar labour market model. More than half of their active labour force years was spent in the 1980-2000 period. The 1952 cohort members were 20 years old in 1972, towards the end of what is associated with the postwar labour market in the UK, about a decade before Conservative governments started overhauling employment protection legislations and battling trade unions (see Emmenegger 2014). To assess the impact of this feature of the data, it is possible to consider the results for the 1928-1933 BHPS cohort. Table A1 shows that 25.0% of men reached the 30 years threshold by the time they reached 60 and at 45.5%, a much higher share of them reached the 20 years threshold. While not directly comparable with LFS results, the BHPS results from this cohort show only small differences with LFS results for the 1947-1952 LFS cohorts (a possible negative trend) and lead to qualitatively similar conclusions, although the BHPS cohorts did spend almost all of their working lives on the postwar labour market. I consider these cohorts as a reasonable baseline for investigating change over time in comparisons with cohorts who entered the labour market when the shift towards a flexible employment model had already been under way for a decade (see section 4.3, below), although this may lead to an underestimation of the actual size of an eventual decrease. Due to important differences in the design of the three datasets, it is not possible to estimate the size of that eventual bias.

#### **4.2 Who gets a lifetime job?**

Part of the early literature on job stability has focused on labour market segmentation and the unequal access to stable career trajectories, especially for low-skill workers, women and minorities (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Reich, Edwards, and Gordon 1973). In segmented and dual labour markets theory, one of the main criteria to distinguish core and peripheral segments is indeed job security or stability. In this section, I explore the variation in the probability of holding a lifetime job across the labour force.

The cross-sectional estimation method allows computing the share of individuals who will reach or exceed the job tenure duration threshold (20 or 30 years) for groups that have a stable denominator across cross-sections. In other words, because the method relies on repeated cross-sections where respondents differ from one sample to the other, the distribution of time-invariant characteristics<sup>5</sup> will remain stable over time within the sample margins of error.

In Table 1, I present estimates for the share of individuals who reached or exceeded a lifetime job threshold between 45 and 64 years old in the 1947-1952 birth cohorts by educational attainment, marital status, immigration status and ethnicity.<sup>6</sup> First, I find important variations

---

<sup>5</sup> In case when characteristics are time-invariant, group denominators are not constant across annual samples, and it is not possible to obtain reliable estimation results because of a lack of information of an individual's previous status. For example, individuals initially working in assembly line occupations at 45 years old may change occupation over their life course, even within employers, and reach the lifetime job threshold as a manager.

<sup>6</sup> Education is not strictly time-invariant, but only a very small percentage of individuals increase their education level between 45 and 64. This is unlikely to significantly bias the results. For marital status, the largest source of bias due to variation over time would be separation, divorce and becoming a widow. Only a small portion of individuals enters their first marriage between 45 and 64 years old. Accordingly, I distinguish between never married and all individuals

based on educational attainment. Men with secondary education follow the average trend, with 20.5% of them reaching or exceeding the 30-years job tenure threshold between 45 and 64, and 40.4% reaching or exceeding the 20-years threshold. The percentage drops for men with no or primary education (to 14.4% and 30.8% for each threshold, respectively). The share for men with tertiary education is higher (27.0% and 49.4% for each threshold, respectively). Overall, this is consistent with the fact that low-skill individuals are more likely to be laid off in the UK (Booth, Francesconi, and Garcia-Serrano 1999), and therefore less likely to hold on to a job for their whole working life. The results for women follow a similar pattern. Finally, workers with a tertiary education are unlikely to hold blue-collar jobs, suggesting that lifetime jobs are more widespread among white-collar, professional, or managerial workers in these cohorts.

---

who were “ever” married (including common law couples and those who divorced or became widows) and assume time invariance for that variable after 45 years old.

**Table 1. Percentage of 1947-1952 cohort members to reach or exceed the lifetime job tenure duration threshold between 45 and 64 years old, by sociodemographic category**

Job tenure threshold:	Men		Women	
	30 years	20 years	30 years	20 years
Primary/None (NVQ 0-1)	14.4 %	30.8 %	4.4 %	19.9 %
Secondary (NVQ 2-3)	20.5	40.4	8.4	29.4
Tertiary (NVQ 4-5)	27.0	49.4	14.7	41.2
Ever Married	20.3	39.8	7.3	26.7
Never Married	19.0	37.0	16.6	35.1
UK-born	21.2	40.6	7.7	27.7
Foreign-born	8.8	28.0	6.4	20.6
White	20.7	40.0	7.6	27.4
Non-white	9.1	29.5	11.7	21.3

n=12,655.

Source: LFS.

Second, I find that 16.6% of never married women reach or exceed the 30-years job tenure threshold between 45 and 64 years old and 35.1% reach or exceed the 20-years threshold, close to the estimate for never married men at 19.0% and 37.0% respectively. Conversely, married women remain less integrated to the labour market for their whole career. Only 7.3% of them reach or exceed the 30-years threshold and 26.7%, the 20-years threshold. The difference by marital status for men is much smaller and of the opposite sign.

This may be explained by the fact that married women in the UK are more likely to have interrupted their career following childbirth (Gregg, Gutiérrez-Domènech, and Waldfogel 2007). Since the LFS only asks about dependent children under 19 in the household, it is not possible to estimate whether parental status is really driving the trends described above: several 45-64 years old mothers have children living outside of the household. However, the share of women who were



ever married and became mothers is high. On the other hand, never married women might either be single mothers or non-mothers. Marital status is therefore a rough proxy for motherhood, but does offer a distinction between (once) attached and never attached women. For this reason, I interpret the low estimates for married women (in contrast with never married mothers) as evidence of the role of family formation and motherhood-related dynamics, including mothers' job and occupational segregation, in explaining the low overall share of women reaching the two thresholds.

Finally, Table 1 shows that foreign-born and non-white individuals in the 1947-1952 birth cohorts hold lifetime jobs at much lower rates than UK-born individuals, especially for men. This is possibly due to a combination of two factors. First, foreign-born individuals might have entered the UK labour market at an age when they could not accumulate 20 or 30 years of job tenure, especially with an initial period of integration and job shopping/matching. Note that foreign-born individuals who arrived in the UK at or after 45 years old are excluded. Second, immigrants and minorities have been prevented from progressing on certain job ladders (Doeringer and Piore 1971; Granovetter 1988, 206; Reich, Edwards, and Gordon 1973), limiting their opportunities and incentives at accumulating seniority.

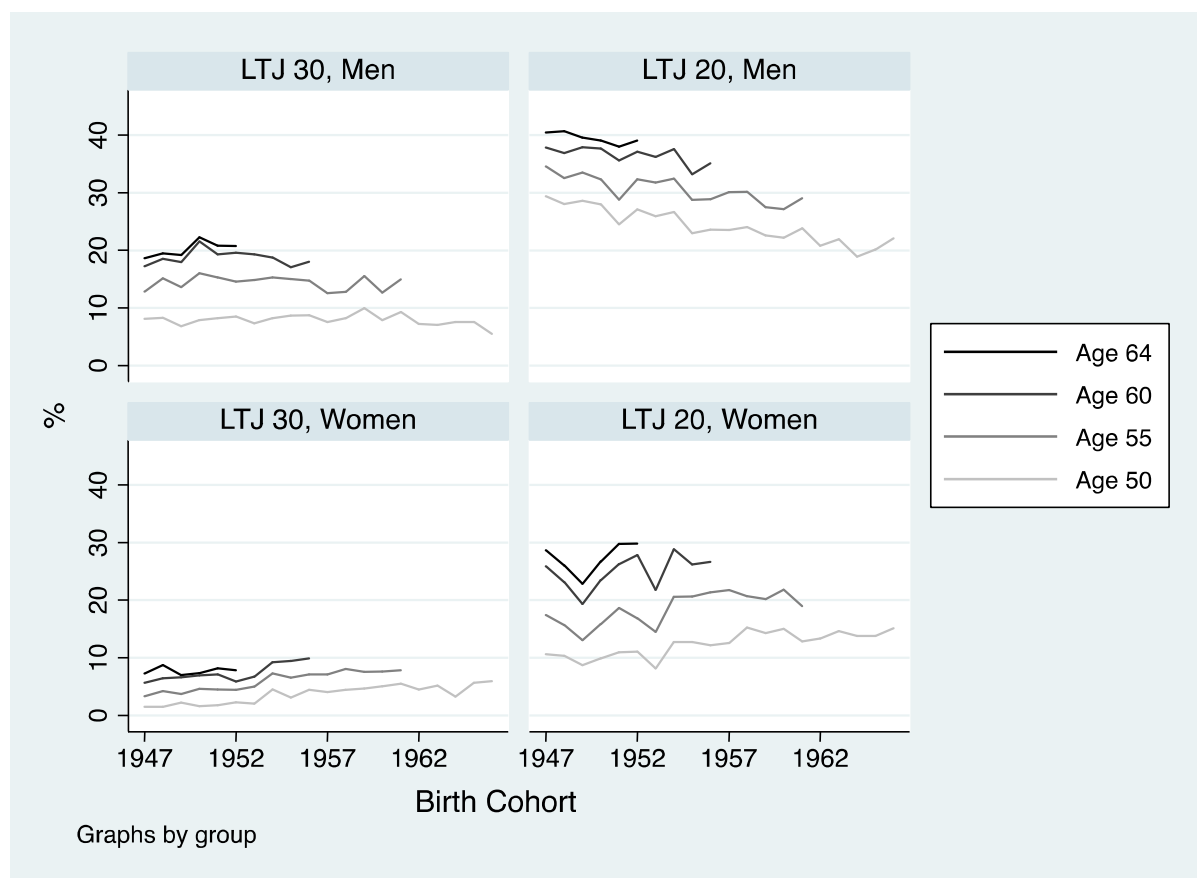
### **4.3 Change over time**

Based on the advantages associated with the cross-sectional estimation method discussed above, I investigate whether there has been a decrease in the importance of lifetime jobs in the UK. It does not allow producing consistent results for cohorts born before 1947. However, it does offers consistent and accurate estimates for all subsequent cohorts, with estimates will only cover part of the 45-64 years of age interval for younger cohorts. Fixing an upper age bound below 64 requires less cross-sections to obtain a cohort estimate, allowing the inclusion of more cohorts at the

expense of estimating right-censored proportions. Using data from the 1992-2016 waves of the LFS, it is possible to estimate the share of individuals who have reached the job tenure thresholds or above at 60 for the 1947-1956 cohorts. As shown in Section 4.1, only a small proportion of all men and women reach 30 years of tenure after 60, and it is unlikely that the restriction of the upper age bound to 60 years old will significantly influence the results. It is then possible to fix the upper age bound at 55 and obtain estimates for the 1947-1961 birth cohorts, and at 50 for the 1947-1966 birth cohorts. This yields partial estimation results that allow comparing a larger number of cohorts, but at a younger age.

As shown in Figure 2, I find no clear evidence of change over time in the share of men who reach or exceed the 30-year job tenure threshold. At all ages, the estimation results show important cross-cohort variation, but it does not seem to follow a clear downward trend. It remains a bit below 20% at 60 years old, around 15% at 55, and around 8% at 50 years old. The results relying on the less conservative definition of lifetime jobs (long-term jobs) tell a different story. Here, the share of men reaching or exceeding the 20-years job tenure duration threshold clearly decreases over time, especially when considering partial results at lower ages. This suggests a negative time trend for long-term jobs.

**Figure 2. Change in the share of individuals who reached or exceeded a job tenure duration of 20 or 30 years by age, 1947-1966 birth cohorts**



LTJ: lifetime job.

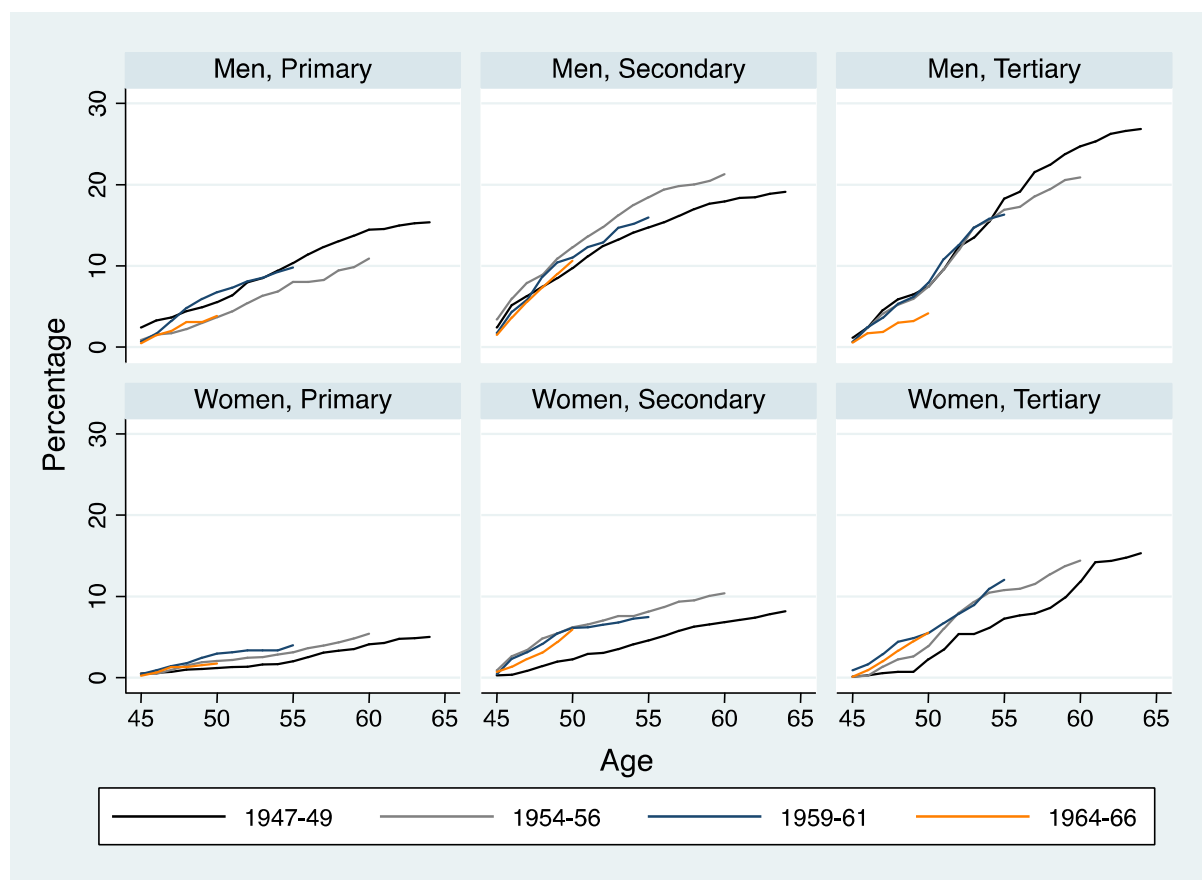
Source: LFS.

For women, the estimation results show similar trends for both definitions of lifetime jobs. First, starting approximately with the 1953 birth cohort, the results in the two bottom panels of Figure 2 show an increase in the share of women who reach or exceed the 20- and 30-years job tenure thresholds. The share of women who reached or exceeded the 30-years job tenure thresholds between 45 and 60 years old nearly doubled from just above 5% for the 1947 birth cohort to 10.0% for the 1956 birth cohort. The increase is smaller when using 20 years as the lifetime job tenure threshold. These estimates for women are largely consistent with previous findings in liberal market economies (Gregg, Gutiérrez-Domènech, and Waldfogel 2007; Hollister and Smith 2014).

As women become increasingly attached to the labour market and experience less frequent and shorter interruptions during their family formation years, they become more likely to have stable employment. Changes in the occupational and industry composition of women's employment may also play a role.

In Figures 3 and 4, I present additional results by education. The results show little difference across groups except for low-skill women, who do not show the same increase in the share of lifetime jobs and long-term jobs than more educated women. In addition, men with a secondary education appear to experience an increase in the probability of holding a lifetime job (30+ years). Note that this category encompasses a wide variety of credentials because of changes in classifications and variables over time. It is possible that a shift towards skills and credentials associated with a higher probability of holding a lifetime job has taken place within this category.

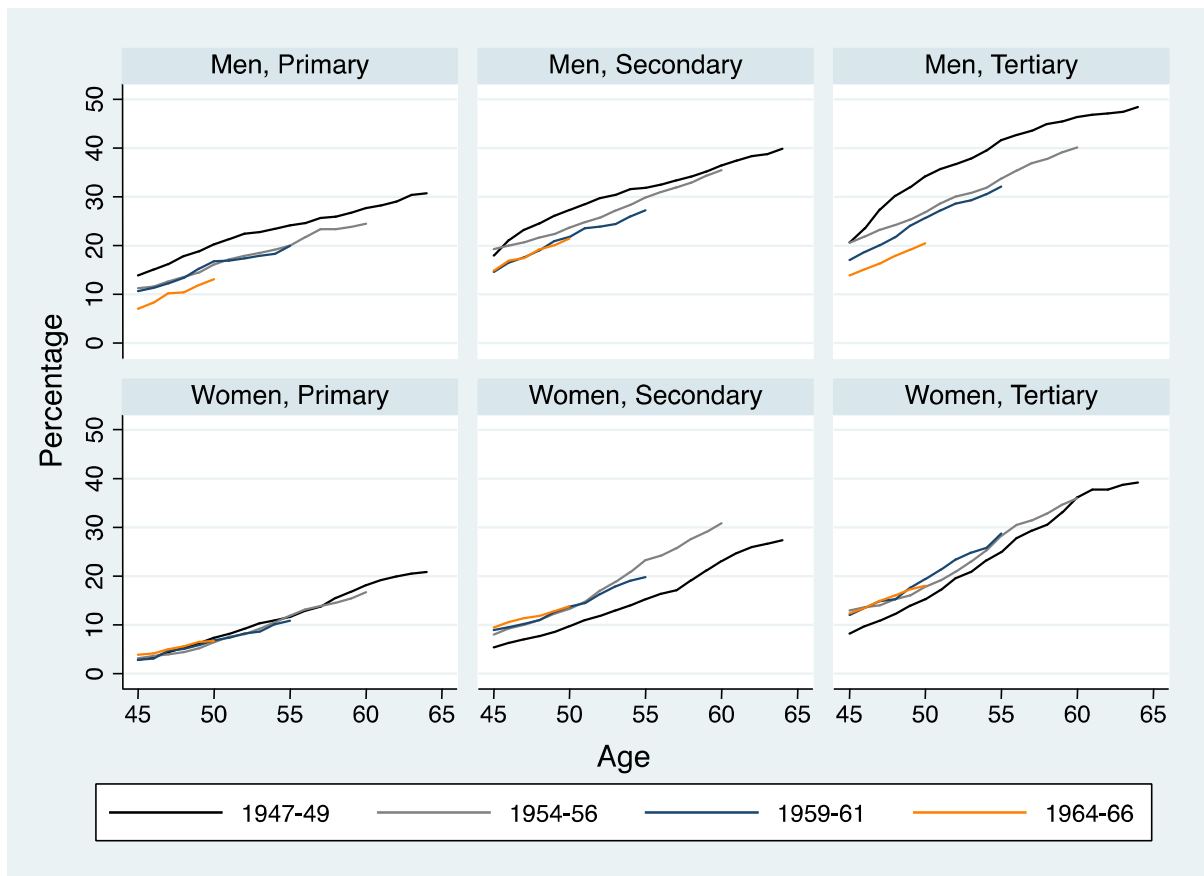
**Figure 3. Change in the share of individuals who reached or exceeded a job tenure duration of 30 years by education, 1947-1966 birth cohorts**



Note: Educational attainment measured at 45 years old.

Source: LFS

**Figure 4. Change in the share of individuals who reached or exceeded a job tenure duration of 20 years by education, 1947-1966 birth cohorts**



Note: Educational attainment measured at 45 years old.

Source: LFS

#### 4.4 Decomposition

Do composition effects drive these trends? As seen in section 4.2, there are important group differences in the probability of holding a lifetime job. The distribution of individuals across certain groups (composition) has changed over time (reported in Table A3), which might be reflected in the observed trends in Figure 2. I account for this change using a standard composition-adjustment method. In addition to characteristics used in Table 1, I perform decomposition analyses for the share of employees at 45 years old in each cohort. Only individuals who are

employed at baseline age are able to reach the job tenure threshold before 64, and any shift in the share of employees across cohorts might have a compositional effect. Following the same logic, I hold constant the share of individuals with at least 5 and 10 years of job tenure duration at 45 years old. Descriptive statistics by cohort are reported in Table A4.

Table 2 shows change between the baseline 1947-49 cohorts estimate and the most recent cohort for which estimation results are available at different ages, divided in the within- and between-groups components. The “within” component shows change in the share of individuals who have reached each lifetime job tenure threshold between the baseline and the most recent cohort, holding group proportions constant at baseline levels. The “between” component shows the effect of shifts in the proportion of individuals in different group categories across cohorts on the results observed for the most recent cohorts – also called a composition effect. The sum of the within and between components equals to the observed percentage point change reported in Figure 2. The decomposition method is described in more details in the Appendix.

**Table 2. Decomposition analysis of change in the share of cohort members to reach or exceed the lifetime job tenure duration thresholds**

	20 years threshold						30 years threshold					
	Age 50 (1947-49 to 1964-66)		Age 55 (1947-49 to 1959-61)		Age 60 (1947-49 to 1954-56)		Age 50 (1947-49 to 1964-66)		Age 55 (1947-49 to 1959-61)		Age 60 (1947-49 to 1954-56)	
	Within	Between	Within	Between	Within	Between	Within	Between	Within	Between	Within	Between
	Men											
Education	-9.4	1.1	-6.7	1.1	-3.3	1.1	-1.0	0.1	-0.1	0.6	-0.6	0.7
Marital status	-8.3	-0.2	-5.5	-0.2	-2.3	-0.1	-0.9	0.0	0.5	-0.2	0.1	-0.1
Immigration status	-7.6	-0.9	-5.2	-0.9	-2.1	-0.6	-0.6	-0.4	0.8	-0.4	0.4	-0.4
Race	-7.7	-0.8	-4.9	-0.8	-1.9	-0.5	-0.8	-0.2	0.8	-0.5	0.5	-0.5
Initial share of employed workers	-8.3	-0.1	-6.7	1.1	-3.1	0.8	-0.9	0.0	-0.1	0.6	-0.4	0.4
Initial share of workers with 5+ years of tenure	-2.9	-5.4	-0.4	-5.2	1.6	-3.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
Initial share of workers with 10+ years of tenure	-2.3	-6.0	0.3	-5.9	1.6	-3.9	1.2	-2.0	3.5	-3.0	2.0	-2.0
	Women											
Education	1.3	3.1	1.6	3.4	1.7	2.8	1.9	1.3	2.6	1.3	2.1	1.2
Marital status	4.1	0.1	4.9	0.0	4.6	0.3	3.3	-0.1	4.0	0.1	3.4	0.0
Immigration status	4.7	-0.5	5.4	-0.5	5.0	-0.4	3.4	-0.2	4.4	-0.3	3.4	-0.1
Race	4.9	-0.6	5.6	-0.6	5.1	-0.3	3.5	-0.3	4.4	-0.3	3.5	-0.1
Initial share of employed workers	4.6	-0.3	4.4	0.6	4.2	0.3	3.3	-0.1	3.7	0.2	3.2	0.1
Initial share of workers with 5+ years of tenure	1.6	2.7	2.4	2.5	-2.2	6.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Initial share of workers with 10+ years of tenure	1.6	2.7	2.3	2.6	-2.2	6.7	2.3	1.0	3.0	1.0	0.9	2.4

Notes: Values represent change from baseline (1947-1949 birth cohorts), in percentage points. Initial shares correspond to the shares at baseline age, when cohort members were 45 years old.  
n=36,162.

Source: LFS.



I find very little sociodemographic composition effects, with a “between” term lower than 1 percentage point in most cases. This is especially true for the 30-years tenure threshold. This suggests that the observed trends are not mainly driven by shifts in the distribution of individuals across sociodemographic groups. A notable exception is education, which attenuated the negative change for men at 60 years old and accounts for a substantial share of the positive change for women for both thresholds. This can be interpreted as an increase in the probability of holding a lifetime or long-term job driven by a shift towards higher levels of education among women, a trend visible in Table A3. Note that this effect is driven by both the size of the compositional change and the size of the lifetime jobs gap between different levels of educational attainment.

Finally, I find little effects for initial employee shares, but important effects for the initial share of individuals with at least 5 or 10 years of tenure. This last part accounts for the full decrease in the share of men reaching 20 or more years of tenure by 55 or 60 years old. In all cases, the proportion of men reaching a lifetime job would have been higher had the initial shares remained at the 1947-49 cohort levels. Meanwhile, increased job stability at 45 years old among women accounts for a large proportion of the increase in the prevalence of lifetime jobs among women, and counteracted a within-group decrease in the share of women reaching 20+ years of tenure by 60 years old.

## **5. Conclusion**

How important were lifetime jobs in the UK for cohorts who spent a large part of their working lives on the postwar labour market? This paper shows that among men born in 1947-1952, who entered the labour market in the late 1960s or early 1970s, only a small proportion held a lifetime job. In addition, the threshold used to define what is a lifetime job matters. About 40% men have reached at least 20 years of tenure between 45 and 64 years. This threshold more closely corresponds to long-term, rather than lifetime employment with the same employer. Choosing a more literal and restrictive definition of a lifetime job as a job that lasts for the majority of a worker's active life, or 30 or more years, I reach conclusions that differ in substantial ways. In this case, approximately 80% of men in the 1947-1952 birth cohorts *did not* hold a lifetime job. Maternity leave and other family policies became available in the UK after women in the 1947-1952 birth cohorts reached family-formation age, and labour force participation remained low for women throughout the 1960s-1980s (Gregg, Gutiérrez-Domènech, and Waldfogel 2007). Consequently, only a small proportion of women in these cohorts had access to lifetime jobs, even using the least conservative definition.

The results for women, but also for immigrants, non-whites and least educated workers, add to the literature on labour market segmentation. Disaggregated results suggest that core, secure jobs associated with lifetime jobs and seniority-based job ladders were more easily available to well-educated native-born men. This piece of evidence needs to be taken into consideration in attempts to describe the postwar "lifetime jobs" model. If such a model existed, it certainly did not characterize the labour market opportunities and career experience of workers with less than a tertiary education, which includes most blue-collar workers, and of minority groups. In that sense, the lifetime jobs model may best describe the career paths of high-status workers in visible or

prestigious firms rather than the path most frequently observed, the same way the boundaryless career model is represented with Silicon Valley IT workers (as in Saxenian 1994).

Furthermore, the findings presented here suggest that long-term and lifetime jobs might be two different types of jobs, and that researchers should use caution and specify what they mean by expressions such as “a job for life” or “permanent, full-time dependent employment” rather than conflating these terms or making a casual use of them, including when discussing the departure from a lifetime jobs or SER model. More generally, the findings allow to re-think what elements defined the employment relationship in the postwar labour market. With regards to methods, this paper has provided a new cross-sectional estimation method leading to results that are relatively consistent with those obtained from retrospective data sources.

Finally, this paper contributes to directly answer questions about a shift away from the postwar model of lifetime jobs and towards increased career instability. The results for men suggest that an enduring core of workers in younger cohorts is able to reach or exceed the 30-years job tenure threshold at similar rate than older cohorts. Beyond this core, there is clear evidence of a decrease in the share of men who are able to reach or exceed the 20-years job tenure threshold, by almost 5% at 60 years old, and a departure from a long-term jobs model. This is consistent with existing evidence of dualism (Burgess and Rees 1997; Gregg and Wadsworth 1995), but more data is required to identify the source of this divergence. At the same time, women’s career patterns remain dissimilar to men’s in the youngest birth cohorts when it comes to long-term and lifetime jobs, suggesting a persistent role of motherhood-related penalties, occupational segregation, and other sources of labour market disadvantage. Decomposition results show that the decrease in the share of men who are able to reach or exceed the 20-years job tenure threshold is largely driven by a diminishing share of 45 years old workers holding a relatively stable job (10+ years of tenure).

Therefore, the departure from the long-term jobs model might be due to greater instability over the early career rather than an increased risk of separation later in a worker's active life.

## References

- Arthur, Michael B, and Denise M Rousseau. 1996. *The Boundaryless Career a New Employment Principle for a New Organizational Era*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bachmann, Ronald, and Rahel Felder. 2018. "Job Stability in Europe over the Cycle." *International Labour Review* 157 (3): 481–518. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ilr.12117>.
- Barley, Stephen R., and Gideon Kunda. 2004. *Gurus, Hired Guns, and Warm Bodies: Itinerant Experts in a Knowledge Economy*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Bernhardt, Annette, Martina Morris, Handcock Mark S., and Marc A. Scott. 1999. "Trends in Job Instability and Wages for Young Adult Men." *Journal of Labor Economics* 17 (S4): S65–90. <https://doi.org/10.1086/jole.1999.17.issue-s4>.
- Booth, Alison L., Marco Francesconi, and Carlos Garcia-Serrano. 1999. "Job Tenure and Job Mobility in Britain." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 53 (1): 43–70.
- Briscoe, Jon P., Douglas T. Hall, and Rachel L. Frautschy DeMuth. 2006. "Protean and Boundaryless Careers: An Empirical Exploration." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 69 (1): 30–47. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2005.09.003>.
- Burgess, Simon, and Hedley Rees. 1997. "Transient Jobs and Lifetime Jobs: Dualism in the British Labour Market." *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 59 (3): 309–28. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0084.00068>.
- . 1998. "A Disaggregate Analysis of the Evolution of Job Tenure in Britain, 1975–1993." *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 36 (4): 629–655. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8543.00111>.
- Cappelli, Peter. 1992. "Examining Managerial Displacement." *The Academy of Management Journal* 35 (1): 203–17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256479>.
- . 1999a. "Career Jobs Are Dead." *California Management Review* 42 (1): 146–67.
- . 1999b. *The New Deal at Work: Managing the Market-Driven Workforce*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- . 2001. "Assessing the Decline of Internal Labor Markets." In *Sourcebook of Labor Markets*, edited by Ivar Berg and Arne L. Kalleberg, 207–45. Springer US.
- Carter, Susan B. 1988. "The Changing Importance of Lifetime Jobs, 1892–1978." *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* 27 (3): 287–300. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-232X.1988.tb01008.x>.
- Doeringer, Peter B., and Michael J. Piore. 1971. *Internal Labor Markets and Manpower Analysis*. Heath.
- Doogan, Kevin. 2001. "Insecurity and Long-Term Employment." *Work, Employment & Society* 15 (3): 419–41. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170122119093>.
- Emmenegger, Patrick. 2014. *The Power to Dismiss: Trade Unions and the Regulation of Job Security in Western Europe*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

- England, Paula. 2005. "Gender Inequality in Labor Markets: The Role of Motherhood and Segregation." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 12 (2): 264–88. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxi014>.
- Farber, Henry S. 1995. "Are Lifetime Jobs Disappearing? Job Duration in the United States: 1973-1993." Working Paper 5014. National Bureau of Economic Research. <http://www.nber.org/papers/w5014>.
- . 2010. "Job Loss and the Decline in Job Security in the United States." In *Labor in the New Economy*, edited by Katharine G. Abraham, James R. Spletzer, and Michael Harper, 223–62. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <http://www.nber.org/chapters/c10822>.
- Fraser, Janet, and Michael Gold. 2001. "'Portfolio Workers': Autonomy and Control amongst Freelance Translators." *Work, Employment & Society* 15 (4): 679–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/095001701400438152>.
- Glaser, Barney G., ed. 1968. *Organizational Careers: A Sourcebook for Theory*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315125909-6>.
- Granovetter, Mark. 1988. "The Sociological and Economic Approaches to Labor Market Analysis." In *Industries, Firms, and Jobs*, edited by George Farkas and Paula England, 187–216. Springer Studies in Work and Industry. Springer US. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-3536-6\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-3536-6_9).
- Gregg, Paul, Maria Gutiérrez-Domènech, and Jane Waldfogel. 2007. "The Employment of Married Mothers in Great Britain, 1974–2000." *Economica* 74 (296): 842–864. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0335.2006.00574.x>.
- Gregg, Paul, and Jonathan Wadsworth. 1995. "A Short History of Labour Turnover, Job Tenure, and Job Security, 1975-93." *Oxford Review of Economic Policy* 11 (1): 73–90.
- . 2002. "Job Tenure in Britain, 1975–2000. Is a Job for Life or Just for Christmas?" *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics* 64 (2): 111–134. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0084.00015>.
- Grimshaw, Damian, Kevin G. Ward, Jill Rubery, and Huw Beynon. 2001. "Organisations and the Transformation of the Internal Labour Market." *Work, Employment & Society* 15 (1): 25–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170122118760>.
- Hall, Douglas T. 1996. "Protean Careers of the 21st Century." *Academy of Management Perspectives* 10 (4): 8–16. <https://doi.org/10.5465/ame.1996.3145315>.
- . 2002. *Careers In and Out of Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Hall, Peter A., and David Soskice. 2001. *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*. Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hall, Robert E. 1982. "The Importance of Lifetime Jobs in the U.S. Economy." *American Economic Review* 72 (4): 716–24.
- Hollister, Matissa N., and Kristin E. Smith. 2014. "Unmasking the Conflicting Trends in Job Tenure by Gender in the United States, 1983–2008." *American Sociological Review* 79 (1): 159–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122413514584>.
- Houseman, Susan N., and Machiko Osawa, eds. 2003. *Nonstandard Work in Developed Economies: Causes and Consequences*. Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute.
- ILO. 1996. *World Employment 1996/97. National Policies in a Global Context*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.
- Jacoby, Sanford M. 1983. "Industrial Labor Mobility in Historical Perspective." *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* 22 (2): 261–82. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-232X.1983.tb00267.x>.

- . 1999a. “Are Career Jobs Headed for Extinction?” *California Management Review* 42 (1): 123–45.
- . 1999b. *Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism since the New Deal*. Princeton, N.J.; Chichester: Princeton University Press.
- Kalleberg, Arne L. 2009. “Precarious Work, Insecure Workers: Employment Relations in Transition.” *American Sociological Review* 74 (1): 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400101>.
- Kalleberg, Arne L., and Aage B. Sorensen. 1979. “The Sociology of Labor Markets.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 5 (1): 351–79. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.05.080179.002031>.
- Muffels, Ruud, and Ruud Luijkx. 2008. “Labour Market Mobility and Employment Security of Male Employees in Europe: ‘trade-off’ or ‘flexicurity’?” *Work, Employment & Society* 22 (2): 221–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017008089102>.
- Osterman, Paul. 1996. *Broken Ladders: Managerial Careers in the New Economy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Reich, Michael, Richard C. Edwards, and David M Gordon. 1973. “Dual Labor Markets: A Theory of Labor Market Segmentation.” *American Economic Review* 63 (2): 359–65.
- Rodrigues, Ricardo A, and David Guest. 2010. “Have Careers Become Boundaryless?” *Human Relations* 63 (8): 1157–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726709354344>.
- Rousseau, Denise M. 1995. *Psychological Contracts in Organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Saxenian, AnnaLee. 1994. *Regional Advantage: Culture and Competition in Silicon Valley and Route 128*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Spilerman, Seymour. 1977. “Careers, Labor Market Structure, and Socioeconomic Achievement.” *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (3): 551–93.
- Stevens, Ann Huff. 2008. “Not so Fast: Long-Term Employment in the United States, 1969–2004.” In *Laid off, Laid Low: The Political and Economic Consequences of Employment Insecurity*, edited by Katherine S. Newman, 28–55. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Stone, Katherine V. W. 2006. “Thinking and Doing—the Regulation of Workers’ Human Capital in the United States.” *Socio-Economic Review* 4 (1): 121–38. <https://doi.org/10.1093/SER/mwj035>.
- Stone, Katherine V. W., and Harry W Arthurs. 2013. *Rethinking Workplace Regulation: Beyond the Standard Contract of Employment*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Sullivan, Sherry E., and Yehuda Baruch. 2009. “Advances in Career Theory and Research: A Critical Review and Agenda for Future Exploration.” *Journal of Management* 35 (6): 1542–71. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309350082>.
- Topel, Robert H., and Michael P. Ward. 1992. “Job Mobility and the Careers of Young Men.” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 107 (2): 439–79.
- Vosko, Leah F., Martha MacDonald, and Iain Campbell, eds. 2009. *Gender and the Contours of Precarious Employment*. London: Routledge.
- Vosko, Leah F., Nancy Zukewich, and Judy Fudge. 2003. “Precarious Jobs: A New Typology of Employment.” *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 4 (10).
- Whyte, William H. 1956. *The Organization Man*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Wilensky, Harold L. 1968. "Careers, Life-Styles, and Social Integration." In *Organizational Careers: A Sourcebook for Theory*, edited by Barney G. Glaser, 50–53. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315125909-6>.

## A. Appendix

### A1. Adjustments to estimation method

One important potential limitation to the estimation method presented in this paper is that the denominator for a given age cohort is drawn from a new cross-sectional sample at every age between 45 and 64 years old. The size of the denominator must remain constant for the age-specific cohort proportions to be added together without any bias in the proportions. For example, the size of the denominator for a given birth cohort (the total number of individuals in the birth cohort) may shrink because of mortality or emigration. This would lead to an upward bias in the age-specific share of cohort members reaching 20 or 30 years of tenure because the cohort denominator at age  $a$  is smaller than the denominator at baseline age, 45 years old. The reverse is true for immigration.

In the case of deaths, the bias can come from the fact that mortality will diminish the size of the cohort as it ages. Consequently, the denominator when  $a$  is closer to the upper age bound is smaller than the denominator when  $a$  is closer to the lower age bound. This might lead to an upward bias in the estimates. I correct this by dividing the denominator at each age  $a$  by a factor  $\gamma_a$  equal to 1 minus the product of all age-specific death rates between baseline age and age  $a$ . The formula is  $\gamma_{a,c} = 1 - \prod_{i=45}^a D_{i,c}$ , where  $D_{i,c}$  are age-specific death rates for cohort  $c$ . This re-inflates the denominator back to its size when cohort members were at baseline age.

Emigration is a source of upward bias the same way death is, while the opposite is true for immigration. I correct for immigration excluding all foreign-born individuals who established themselves in the UK when they reached 45 years old or older since these respondents were not part of the population at baseline. However, there is no straightforward way to correct for emigration, which remains a small potential source of bias (emigration is low).



## A2. Decomposition method

The decomposition method used in this paper relies on the following equation:

$$SL_2 - SL_1 = \sum_{i=1}^g \gamma_{1,i} (SL_{2,i} - SL_{1,i}) + \sum_{i=1}^g SL_{2,i} (\gamma_{2,i} - \gamma_{1,i}).$$

It divides change over time into a “within” component,  $\sum_{i=1}^g \gamma_{1,i} (SL_{2,i} - SL_{1,i})$ , and a “between” component,  $\sum_{i=1}^g SL_{2,i} (\gamma_{2,i} - \gamma_{1,i})$ . These components sum to the total change in the share of individuals who have reached each lifetime job tenure threshold between the baseline ( $SL_1$ ) and the most recent cohort ( $SL_2$ ). The within component provides descriptive evidence on the change in the probability of holding a lifetime job with group proportions constant at baseline levels. In other words, it is a counterfactual result that shows what the change would be net of changes in the distribution of a characteristics in the population. The “between” component quantifies the size of the “compositional” effect on the total change. In other words, it shows the effect of the observed shift in the proportion of individuals in different group categories across cohorts on the results observed for the most recent cohorts. In the equation,  $\gamma_{1,i}$  and  $\gamma_{2,i}$  are proportions for each group category  $i$  (education level, immigration status, etc.) in year 1 and 2.

## A3. Validation

In this section, I conduct validity checks of the estimates from the cohort-based cross-sectional method, using retrospective data from the ELSA and the BHPS. The retrospective data from ELSA was collected in 2007, allowing to use the 1942-1947 (at 55 and 60 years old) and 1947-1952 (at 55 years old only) cohort groups as comparators to the LFS 1947-1952 cohorts (at 55 and 60 years old). The 1942-1947 and 1947-1952 cohorts partially overlap and are close in time, so the effect of change over time should be relatively small, enabling cautious comparisons of estimates from these two surveys. The BHPS provides data for the 1928-1933 birth cohorts, who were 60-65 years

old when data was collected in 1993. I exclude all foreign-born individuals who established themselves in the UK after they reached 45 years old in all surveys.

Table A1 shows the results for men and women from these different data sources. The ELSA results for the 30-years job tenure duration threshold are very similar to the LFS estimates, especially at 55 years old when data for the 1947-1952 cohort is available from both datasets. Nevertheless, the results for the 20-years job tenure duration threshold show some differences between the datasets. For men, the share of cohort members who reach or exceed the 20-years job tenure threshold is higher in the ELSA than the LFS.

Finally, the retrospective results for the 1928-1933 BHPS cohorts are slightly higher for the 30-years threshold than other data sources, and for the 20-years threshold – except for the ELSA 1942-47 cohorts. The differences may be due to change over time given the number of years separating the BHPS birth cohorts from the LFS and ELSA birth cohorts. There are no equivalent differences across data sources for women.

**Table A1. Percentage of cohort members to reach or exceed the lifetime job tenure duration thresholds at 55 and 60, by data source**

Threshold:	Men			Women		
	30 years	20 years	n	30 years	20 years	n
<b>Percentage at 55 years old</b>						
BHPS 1928-1933 (retro)	19.1 %	36.9 %	302	4.1 %	14.4 %	332
ELSA 1942-1947 (retro)	14.8	38.4	752	2.5	14.1	856
ELSA 1947-1952 (retro)	14.1	34.8	742	5.1	16.0	899
LFS 1947-1952 (cross-sectional)	14.5	32.5	6,131	4.1	17.8	6,524
<b>Percentage at 60 years old</b>						
BHPS 1928-1933 (retro)	23.4	43.5	295	5.1	20.7	323
ELSA 1942-1947 (retro)	19.3	43.4	752	3.5	21.1	856
LFS 1947-1952 (cross-sectional)	19.0	37.3	6,131	6.4	25.1	6,524

Note: For the BHPS, subsample observation counts  $n$  based on the sum of the cohort sizes at indicated age. For the ELSA, subsample observation counts  $n$  calculated from the retrospective work life history file conducted at Wave 3. For the LFS, subsample observation counts  $n$  calculated as the sum of respondents age 45 in the baseline cross-section (cohorts are pooled).

Sources: LFS, BHPS and ELSA.

**Table A2. Share of respondents who have never worked, 1947-1952 birth cohorts**

	Men	Women
Worked after 20 years old	99.0	92.3
Worked after 20 years old, never worked after 30 years old	0.6	4.8
Never worked after 20 years old	0.4	2.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Note: Information measured when respondents are 45 years old.

Source: LFS.

**Table A3. Distribution of sociodemographic characteristics at 45 years old by birth cohort**

	Primary education	Secondary education	Tertiary education	Never married	Foreign- born	Non- white
1947	43.3	36.8	19.9	6.7	7.4	2.7
1948	42.2	36.0	21.9	5.7	9.2	3.9
1949	40.7	36.6	22.7	6.3	8.9	4.5
1950	39.9	36.6	23.5	6.3	10.1	4.9
1951	39.8	35.7	24.5	7.4	9.4	5.6
1952	36.1	38.7	25.2	7.2	9.4	5.1
1953	34.1	40.3	25.6	8.1	9.6	5.3
1954	33.0	40.2	26.9	7.8	9.7	5.4
1955	31.2	39.3	29.6	8.8	10.7	6.7
1956	30.7	40.4	28.9	9.3	11.9	8.2
1957	32.5	41.1	26.4	9.2	10.6	6.0
1958	27.5	45.9	26.6	8.9	10.9	7.1
1959	26.6	46.4	27.0	10.5	12.6	8.9
1960	25.1	46.7	28.2	9.9	13.4	8.8
1961	24.2	45.8	30.0	10.2	12.3	8.1
1962	25.2	44.7	30.1	12.0	11.4	9.6
1963	22.4	46.6	31.0	11.3	12.1	9.8
1964	22.8	44.3	32.9	11.5	12.2	9.8
1965	21.4	44.6	34.0	12.3	12.0	9.7
1966	19.2	44.2	36.6	13.4	14.8	9.5

Note: Characteristics of individuals at 45 years old. All reported values are percentages.

Source: LFS.

**Table A4. Distribution of employment and job tenure duration at 45 years old by birth cohort**

Birth cohort	Men			Women		
	Share of employees	Job tenure duration of 5+ years	Job tenure duration of 10+ years	Share of employees	Job tenure duration of 5+ years	Job tenure duration of 10+ years
1947	69.1	48.1	40.4	69.4	34.9	20.3
1948	66.9	45.0	38.0	69.7	37.0	20.4
1949	68.4	46.7	37.1	69.5	40.3	21.1
1950	68.3	46.5	37.2	70.3	39.6	19.7
1951	64.4	42.6	32.5	68.1	41.7	23.0
1952	67.8	44.0	34.3	69.6	40.9	21.8
1953	72.6	46.6	36.9	70.5	38.6	20.4
1954	70.3	44.3	37.0	71.7	40.3	26.0
1955	72.0	45.6	37.5	68.5	37.7	26.6
1956	70.6	42.4	34.9	70.0	40.3	28.0
1957	70.4	43.4	37.2	72.0	37.2	23.5
1958	72.2	45.9	34.4	72.6	38.7	23.8
1959	71.3	46.7	34.5	68.0	37.4	23.2
1960	70.8	41.7	32.1	74.5	40.1	24.8
1961	74.2	46.7	33.8	72.7	38.3	21.8
1962	73.2	44.8	33.1	70.8	39.6	21.5
1963	72.2	47.2	33.0	71.4	41.6	25.1
1964	69.9	41.1	30.1	70.0	42.1	24.4
1965	70.9	45.5	31.9	68.4	36.9	24.3
1966	66.5	45.2	31.1	66.6	40.3	25.8

Note: Characteristics of individuals at 45 years old. All reported values are percentages. Self-employed not included among employees and job tenure set to zero.

Source: LFS.

**Table A5. Number of LFS observations by birth cohort, 1947-1966**

Birth cohort	Number of observations
1947	2418
1948	2403
1949	2108
1950	1993
1951	1912
1952	1821
1953	1862
1954	1766
1955	1694
1956	1699
1957	1724
1958	1716
1959	1701
1960	1684
1961	1613
1962	1717
1963	1704
1964	1662
1965	1522
1966	1443

Note: Values are based on the count of respondents age 45 in each annual LFS cross-section.

Source: LFS.