



# Contradictions in the Desire to Work Past Pension Age

Rethinking Retirement presentation ,  
Manchester, 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011  
*Ben Baumberg, SSPSSR (University of Kent)*

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# Later Working and the Changing Nature of Work

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# In this presentation

- **‘Working conditions’ and ‘health’ frequently mentioned** (esp Phillipson & Smith 2005 but also e.g. Irving et al 2005, Loretto et al 2005, Porcellato et al 2010, Vickerstaff 2006)
  - But (i) not systematised; (ii) aspects marginalised
- **Here address:**
  1. The nature of fitness-for-work
  2. The effect of working conditions
  - 3. Structural factors and work**
  - 4. Implications for policy**

# **WHAT IS (UN)FITNESS-FOR-WORK?**

# Survey evidence

<b>Family &amp; Working Lives Survey 1994/5</b>	<b>Workers</b>	<b>Inactive</b>
Unable to work, even part-time	-	64%
Not able to work full-time	17%	14%
Off work for 20+ days a year	16%	9%
Have to break several times/day	11%	10%
Difficult to work in certain places	19%	13%
Less productive	18%	11%
Not allowed to drive certain vehicles	9%	5%

*BB analysis of weighted FWL 1994/5 data, base=849 individuals reporting a work-limiting disability, respondents could choose >1 response*

# A useful typology

(From my qualitative research)

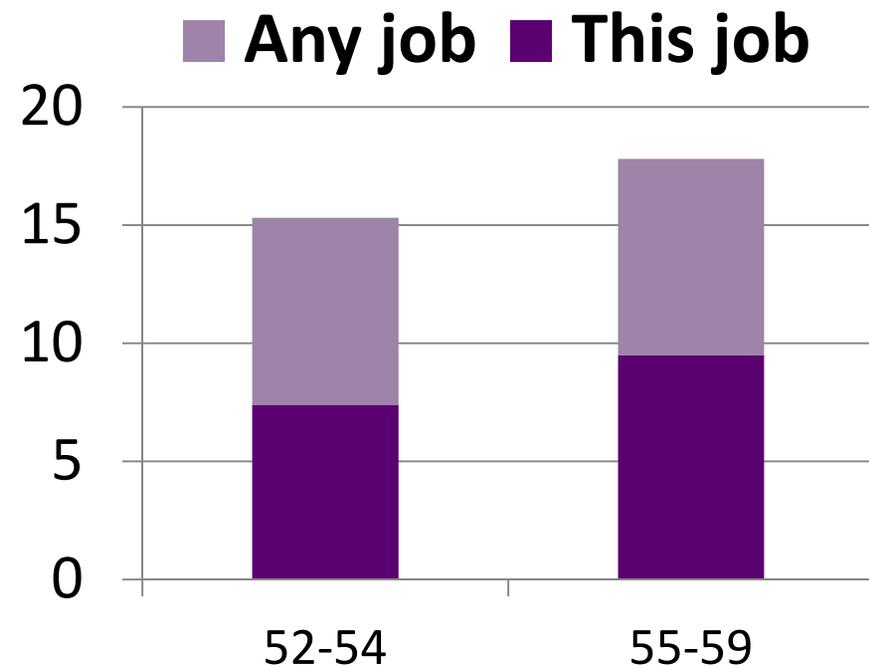
- **Types of limitations**
  - **Absolute** limitations – *‘literally unconscious or asleep’* (Sidney Webb, cited by Gulland 2011)
  - **Task-specific** limitations
  - **Interpersonal** limitations
  - **Demands-dependent** limitations
  - **Performance** limitations
- **Temporal dimension**

# **WHY DO WORKING CONDITIONS MATTER?**

# Why fitness-for-work matters

- Not straightforward health (Brown & Vickerstaff 2011) but the *interaction* of work and health
- People with identical health **do not have same FFW**

*>Work-limiting disability among part-time women (ELSA 2004 Table 3A.17)*



# Mechanisms

- **Task-specific limitations** – physicality, functional multiskilling
- **Demands-dependent limitations:** Possible task → Impossible job
- **Control**
  - Return to self-employment below
  - Taking breaks, **'Adjustment latitude'** (Johansson et al 2004)  
*"If you're in pain you're not going to work as fast, [but] I still do the same amount of work, maybe the next day I work harder"* - Yvette

# Job demands and control

- **Quantitative literature of effects of D-C on:**
  - Fitness-for-work, e.g. WAI (van den Berg et al 2009)
  - Retirement expectations (e.g. Volanen et al 2010)
  - Sickness absence – strong evidence for control, mixed for demands (e.g. Rugulies et al 2007)
  - Incapacity benefits (9 of 12 control, 1 of 10 demands), nearly exclusively Nordic. **My own UK research:**
    - #1: Whitehall II cohort & health-related job loss
    - #2: BHPS and incapacity benefits, using occupational averages
- ➔ **A causal effect?** Controls, common method bias

# Other job characteristics

- **Physicality**
- **Self-employment & control** (Jones 2006 & below)
- **Interpersonal limitations** – not just ‘emotional demands’ but esp. managers (Ballard et al 2008)
- **Influences on health** – effort-reward imbalance, organisational justice, role conflict, management style, skill discretion, job insecurity, shift work...

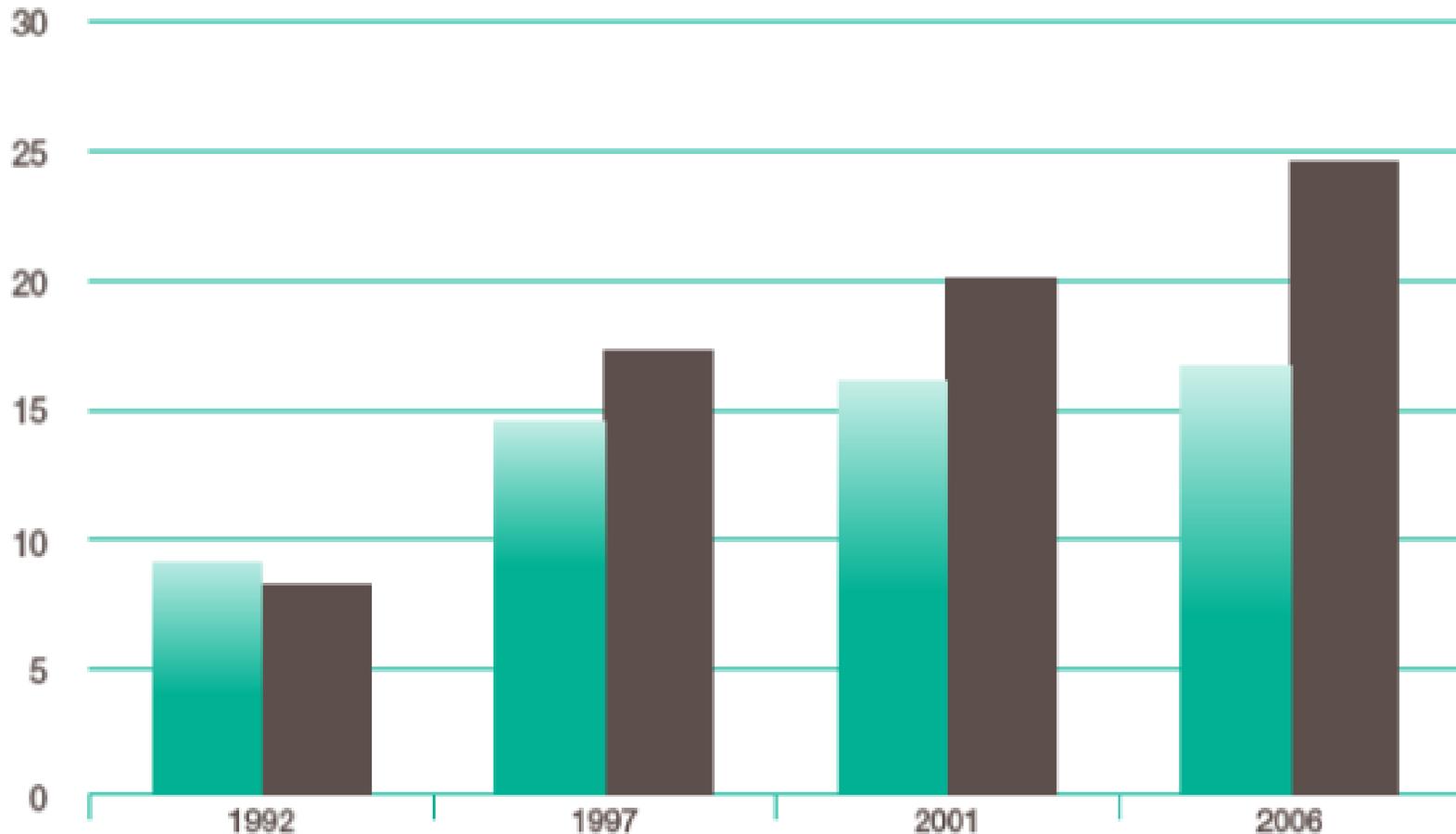
# Beyond fitness-for-work?

- **Working conditions & job satisfaction** (e.g. Phillipson & Smith 2005, Clayton 2010): enjoyment & autonomy
- **But linked to health/slowing down** (Crawford):
  - Risk to health (Pond et al 2010) not ability to work
  - Physical pain (Khaled)
  - Exhaustion – family/social impact
- **Hence working through incapacity** (cf. Brown & Vickerstaff 2011), combinations of push & pull factors (Irving et al 2005)

# **STRUCTURAL INFLUENCES ON WORK**

# Rise in job strain

(high-demands, low-control)



Taken from Green 2009

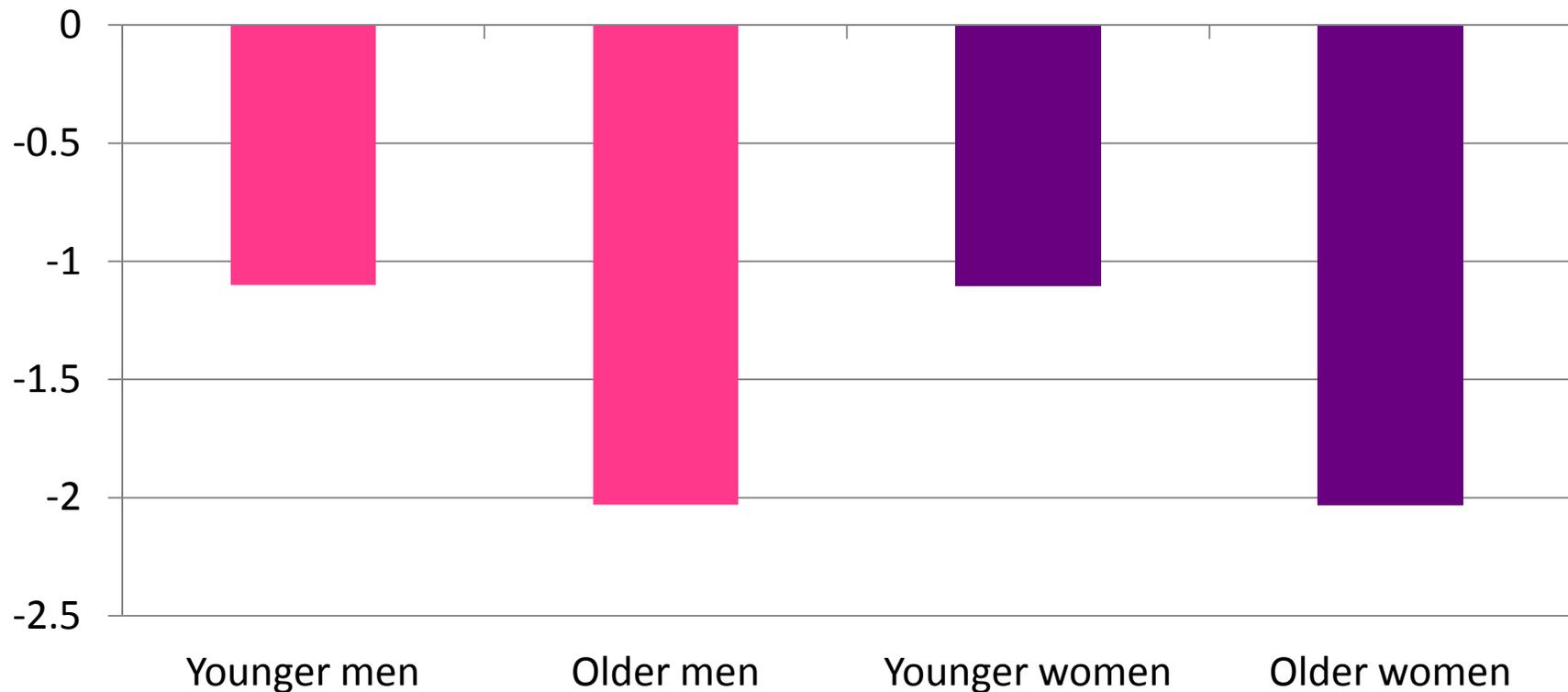
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# A systematic look at trends

- **Systematic data review** (44 survey waves)
  - Inconsistencies – sensitivity (e.g. WiB)
  - **1990s:**
    - ↑ working hard/fast | other smaller deteriorations
    - ↓ control over pace/effort | ↑ say over decisions at work
    - ≈ physical demands
  - **1980s** unclear, **2000s** mixed/stable
- **Other trends** – job satisfaction (control?), work commitment, commitment to employer

# Commitment to organisation

**Change 1992-2000 (scale score)**



White 2009 using Employment in Britain 1992 & Working in Britain 2000;  
younger vs. older cut-off at 44

# Broader working conditions

- **Ideal worker** (Foster & Wass 2011)
- **Light work**

*“In the past, companies would see it as their duty to keep long-time employees through to retirement even if they got sick - they'd have them mowing the lawn in front of the company. Now that's gone.”*

Mark Pearson, head of social policy at the OECD, 2008

[http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e7c1d5f2-0dab-11dd-b90a-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick\\_check=1#axzz1Ke605XJI](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/e7c1d5f2-0dab-11dd-b90a-0000779fd2ac.html?nclick_check=1#axzz1Ke605XJI)

- **Social climate at work** ('bullying') as effect of enforcing productivity requirements? Sarah (in own research), see also Salin 2003

# The limits of accommodations

- **Strong evidence of effectiveness** (e.g. Franche et al 2005)
- **But limits of ‘reasonable adjustments’** (Sainsbury et al 2008; Davidson 2011; Foster & Wass, submitted; Walker & Fincham 2011 etc.)
  - “Wary of setting a precedent” to other workers, **productivity** is dominant concern
  - Adjustments unlikely for **recruitment**
  - **Changing already-existing work organisation – deviations from *a priori* ideal worker** (Foster & Wass)
  - Control in **self-employment** – but risks & demands
- ➔ **Flexible working unavailable to many workers** (Phillipson & Smith 2005; Loretto et al 2005)

# Inequalities in flexibility

- **Current employer**
  - Control at work (not just ‘flexibility’ part-time)
  - Accommodations – ‘two nations’
  - Managing performance / absence
- **The incapacity trap** – beyond ‘hidden unemployment’ (Beatty/Fothergill, Houston/Lindsay)
  - **Catch-22**: not fit enough to do jobs they can get, not employable enough to get jobs they could do

# **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

# The limits of 'flexible working'

- **A valuable approach – but with limits:**
  - **Reduced hours** most common (e.g. Young & Bhaumik 2011) and effective (M. Jones 2007) – but workers pay the price (Vickerstaff 2010), inconsistently available
  - **Line managers** have discretion (Vickerstaff 2006) in piecemeal response to immediate pressures – but also severely constrained
- **Other responses**
  - Change definition of 'reasonable adjustments'?
  - Retention incentives?
  - Recruitment incentives? Quotas ? Extend Access to Work (cf. Sayce)?

# Changing jobs in Britain

- *“Perhaps the key question should not be whether an individual is fit for work, but whether the work is fit for the individual” -Annie Irvine, 2011*
- **A challenging agenda...** (cf. Phillipson & Smith 2005)
  - Beyond skills supply to skills demand
  - Exhortation - Workplace audits (Gallie 2002) / Workplace Commission (Foresight 2008) , Quality of Working Life movement (cf. Finland; Maltby 2011)
  - Institutions & incentives (Payne & Keep 2003; Osterman 2011)
  - Public sector reform (mutuals?)

# Final thoughts

- Working conditions → **FFW** → Retirement
  - Esp where **changing jobs** is hard
- Not just about individual manager exceptions to work role, but affected by **structural factors**
- Retirement **trends** therefore affected by wider changes in work
- For policy
  - **Meso-level policies** constrained (but still valuable)
  - **Macro-level policies** valuable (but difficult)

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# INEQUALITIES

*Research and reflection from both sides of the Atlantic*

<http://inequalitiesblog.wordpress.com>

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