



SOCIAL POLICY, SOCIAL JUSTICE

SOCIOL 103

Lecture 8:

Welfare and work:

Welfare-to-work policies

4 April 2008

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Lecture outline

- How have policies for unemployed people changed in recent years?
 - Social democracy – what did the focus on govt responsibility ignore?
 - Neoliberalism - what does the focus on individual responsibility ignore?
 - Where does the current government sit?

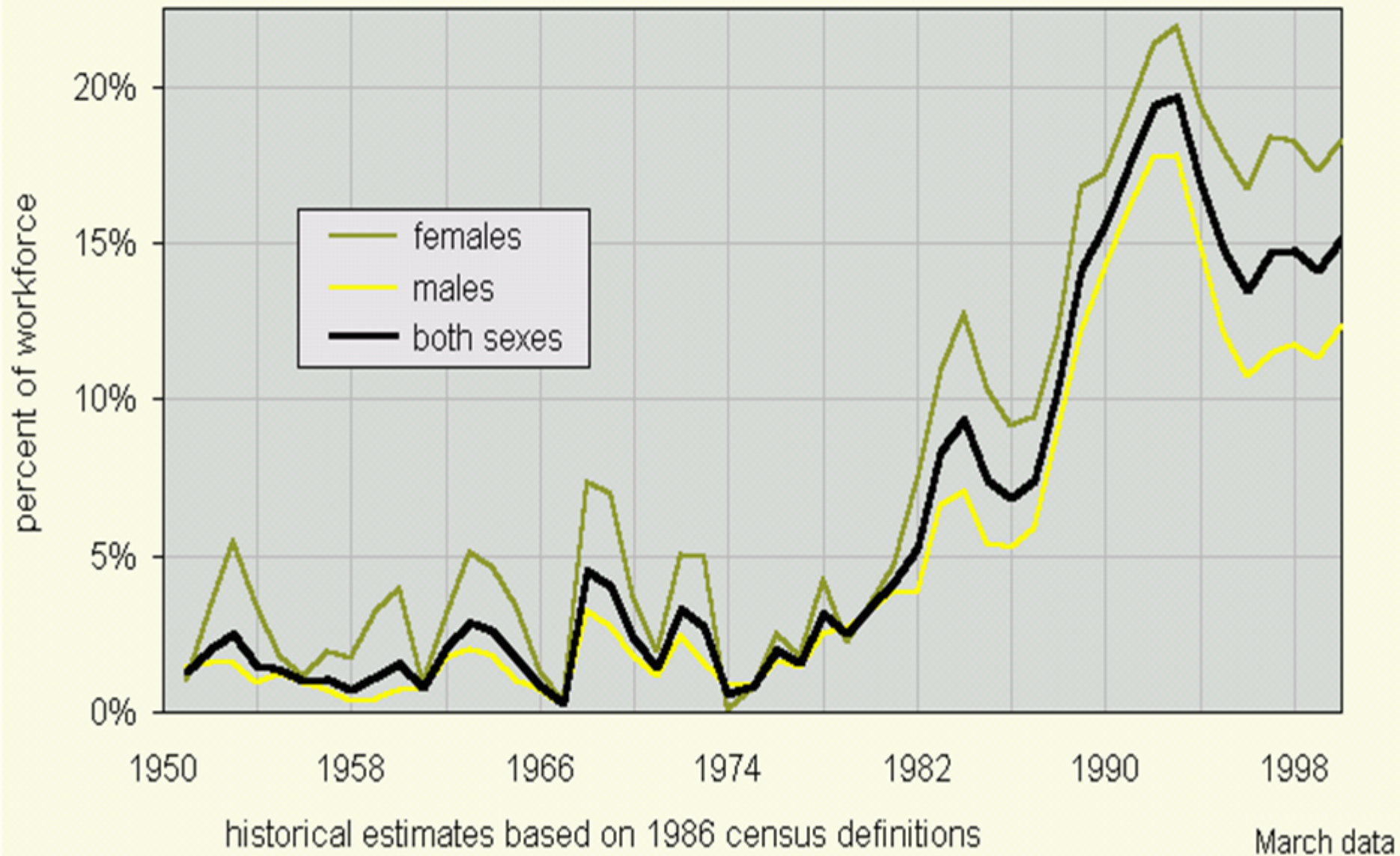
Social democracy and un/employment

- Work regarded as a *right of citizenship*
- Causes of unemployment thought to be structural
- Goals of high productivity/economic growth *and* solidarity requires full employment policy
 - tariffs/trade barriers
 - wage regulation
 - free health & education
 - wage subsidies and direct employment schemes

What did the focus on government responsibility for work ignore?

- Work as a citizen's responsibility
- Changing nature of work
e.g. deindustrialisation
- Changing economic circumstances

New Zealand Unemployment



Neoliberalism and un/employment

- Work regarded as a *responsibility of citizenship*
- Cause of unemployment thought to be a ‘cultural deficit’ which leads to ‘welfare dependency’
- Goals of high productivity/economic growth *and* social cohesion requires eliminating ‘welfare dependency’
 - Reduce/restrict benefits
 - Encourage ‘self-reliance’ through ‘workfare’ policies e.g. work-for-the-dole and work activity testing

New Zealand's un/employment policies 1990s

- 1985 direct job-creation and wage-subsidy schemes abolished
- 1987 Access training became primary form of active employment assistance
- 1991 formal job search test introduced with sanctions

New Zealand's un/employment policies 1990s

- 1997 work-test requirements more stringent, variety of tests including voluntary participation in Community Task Force
- 1998 National introduced Community wage = all UE recipients could be subject to being required to work in return for their benefit
- 1998 'Towards a Code of Social and Family Responsibility' proposed a contract of 11 key expectations focused largely on parenting skills of beneficiaries

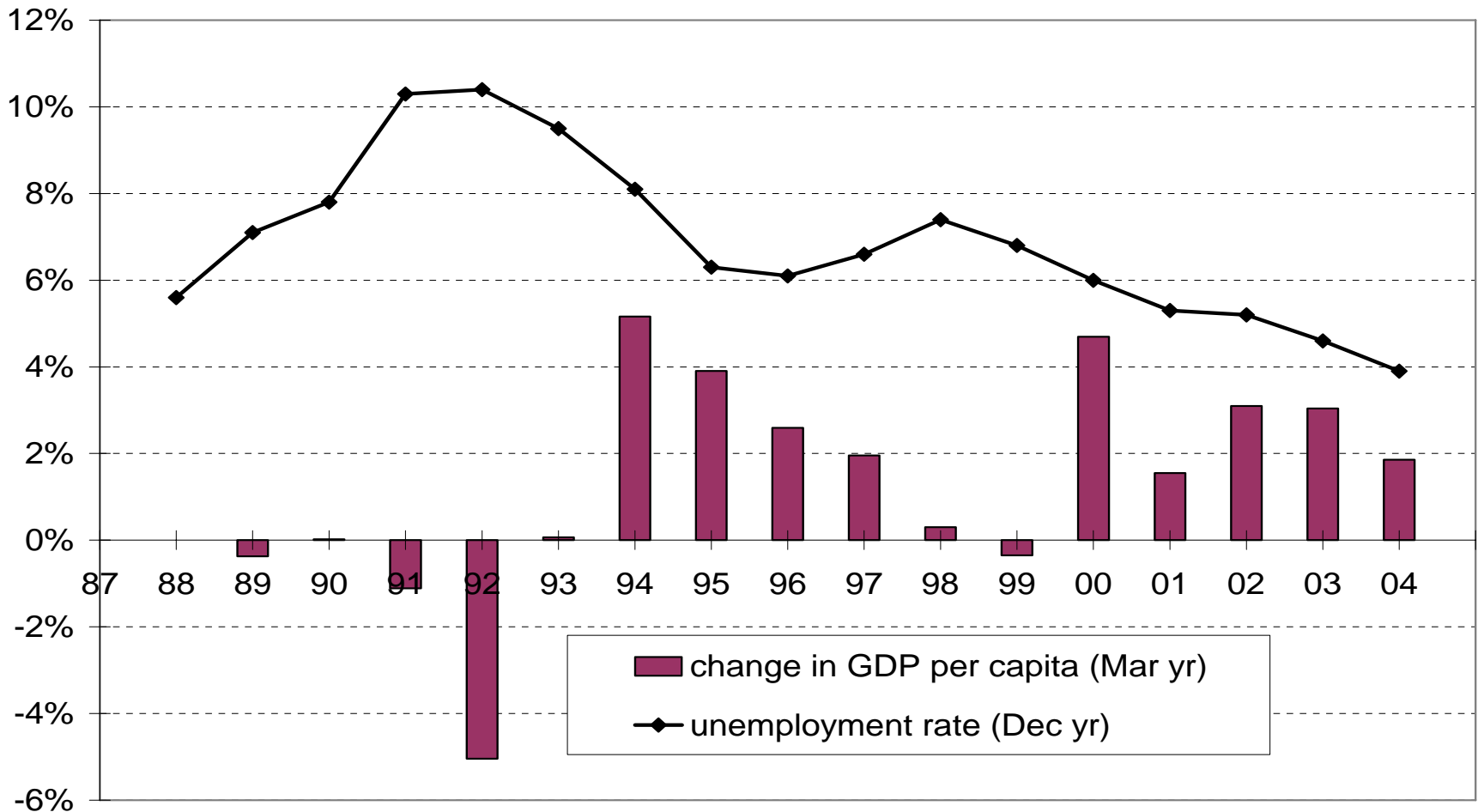
What does the focus on individual responsibility for work ignore?

- Figures about 'welfare dependency' are misleading: most unemployment is short-term
- Little evidence that the unemployed have a 'cultural deficit'
 - Dean and Taylor (1992) found those on benefits stronger attachment to work than work values of those in paid work – same values, not different
- Tension between:
 - Desire to encourage 'self-reliance' through *coercive* means that *remove* choice from individuals
 - Desire for 'one standard of citizenship' when citizenship 'conditional' for beneficiaries only?

What does the focus on individual responsibility ignore?

- Structural issues that constrain individual 'choice'
 - Policy choices made by governments
 - Economic system no longer able to create decent, long-term jobs
 - Gendered division of labour
 - Systemic racism in labour market
 - *Society* creates disability

Real GDP per capita annual changes and unemployment rates, 1988 to 2004



Sourced from Perry 2007: 31
Source: Statistics New Zealand

New Zealand's un/employment policies 1999+

- 1999 abolished Community Wage
- 2003+ introduced Jobs Jolt package combining training with greater case management and clearer obligations
- 2005+ new 'work-first' approach for ALL types of benefit recipients (not just the unemployed)

- Minimum wage increases
- 2002 Paid parental leave introduced
- 2004 'Working for Families' introduced

} Aim to 'make work pay'

Lecture summary

- Since the 1980s we have seen:
 - Employment programmes focusing on transforming individuals rather than the labour market
 - A shift from welfare rights to individual responsibility/obligations
- But the correlation between current low unemployment and this focus on individual responsibility is not clear-cut when we account for contextual factors
- Thus debates around and solutions for ‘welfare dependency’ are more complex than they seem