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# The workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881

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## Abstract

*This article investigates the characteristics of the workhouse populations in Lancashire in 1881. The analysis is based on the snapshot view provided by the 1881 census and, despite the limitations of such an approach, this large-scale survey reveals significant variations in the experience of poverty and local relief policies in a largely industrial region that had been at the forefront of the anti-poor law movement. The workhouse populations are shown to be diverse, and contrast markedly with pauper populations previously studied. Lancashire's Poor Law Unions are divided into three types: conurbation, urban industrial and rural. These three groups appear to represent three different patterns of workhouse residency. The workhouse populations in rural Lancashire are broadly similar to those discussed elsewhere, being dominated by elderly males. However, urban industrial workhouse populations contained large numbers of adults of working age and the absence of children from workhouses in the conurbation is particularly striking.*

## Introduction

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 provided England and Wales with one of the iconic institutions of the nineteenth century—the workhouse. The legislation was designed to remove outdoor relief from able-bodied men, who were to be offered indoor relief where they would live in worse conditions than those experienced by labourers in their own homes. The implementation and evolution of the post-1834 Poor Law has attracted considerable attention from historians, although we are still some distance from fully understanding the nuances of its operation. It is apparent that the 1834 Act did not necessarily herald a major discontinuity with the past, and that local and regional variations continued to be one of the defining characteristics of welfare.<sup>1</sup> The second half of the nineteenth century continued to see significant welfare reform and in no sense was the New Poor Law a static welfare system. Local variations and the widespread continuation of outdoor relief were facilitated by the discretionary powers of Boards of Guardians, which led Rose to suggest that for the first three decades of its operation the New Poor Law was something of a failure. Indeed, a relief crisis in London and Lancashire in the 1860s ‘forced a searching re-examination’ of the poor relief system, resulting in the

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1 For recent articles that emphasise this point see N. Goose, ‘Poverty, old age and gender in nineteenth-century England: the case of Hertfordshire’, *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), 351–84; S. A. King, ‘We might be trusted: female Poor Law Guardians and the development of the New Poor Law: the case of Bolton, England, 1880–1906’, *International Review of Social History*, 49 (2003), 27–46; Christine Seal, ‘Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper Unions, 1851–1911’, *Family and Community History*, 13 (2010), 83–100.

continued evolution of welfare policy and strategy in the final third of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

The crusade against outdoor relief in the 1870s was one of the consequences of this re-examination and resulted in a reduction of the number on outdoor relief in most of the country.<sup>3</sup> This was a repressive campaign which led to punitive measures against both the deserving and undeserving poor.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, contemporary social enquiry led to a deeper understanding of poverty and philanthropic and humanitarian work resulted in tangible welfare improvements.<sup>5</sup> Research has shown that the poor were not necessarily passive, stigmatised victims of the welfare system. Indeed, the workhouse was one of a range of welfare measures open to the poor of which many willingly, and voluntarily, availed themselves.<sup>6</sup>

Until relatively recently, historians of the New Poor Law largely concentrated on policy, legislation, the work of the Poor Law Commission and its successors the Poor Law Board and Local Government Board, opposition to the Poor Law, and conditions within workhouses. Unfortunately, Karel Williams's damning criticism that 'anecdotes are all-pervasive in the recent history of the new Poor Law' still resonates.<sup>7</sup> For all the work discussing attitudes towards poverty, concepts of poverty and welfare and the evolution of legislation and policy, there is a paucity of studies firmly grounded in empirical quantitative analysis.

This article attempts to redress the balance with a focus on the workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881. The analysis is based on the enhanced dataset of the 1881 Census Enumerators' Books (CEBs) as supplied by the UK data archive at the University of Essex.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, a snapshot has its limitations, not least the absence of any longitudinal analysis that would allow us to discuss change over time. However, studies based on CEBs rather than the census reports or the voluminous reports of the Poor Law Commissioners or Local Government Board facilitate closer analysis of a wider range of factors at various

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2 M.E. Rose, 'The crisis of poor relief in England, 1860–1890', in W. J. Mommsen ed., *The emergence of the welfare state in Britain and Germany* (London, 1981), 50–70. Here at 54.

3 M. MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy and the crusade against outrelief', *Journal of Economic History*, 3 (1987), 603–25.

4 E.T. Hurren, *Protesting about pauperism. Poverty, politics and poor relief in late-Victorian England, 1870–1900* (Woodbridge, 2007).

5 G. Finlayson, *Citizen, state and social welfare in Britain, 1830–1990* (Oxford, 1994); S. King, *Women, welfare and local politics, 1880–1920: 'we might be trusted'* (Brighton, 2006).

6 L. Murdoch, *Imagined orphans: poor families, child welfare and contested citizenship in London* (New Brunswick, 2006), 92–119. See also G.R. Boyer and T.P. Schmidle, 'Poverty among the elderly in late Victorian England', *Economic History Review*, 62 (2009), 249–78, which shows a north/south divide in the extent to which the workhouse test acted as a deterrent.

7 K. Williams, *From pauperism to poverty* (London, 1981), 83.

8 K. Schürer, and M. Woollard, *1881 census for England and Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man (enhanced version)* [computer file]. Genealogical Society of Utah, Federation of Family History Societies, [original data producer(s)]. Colchester, Essex: UK Data Archive [distributor], November 2000. SN: 4177.

levels of aggregation. Moreover, the 1881 census offers an opportunity to undertake research at an important juncture in the evolution of the New Poor Law, coming after a decade of the crusade against outdoor relief and at a time when most of the large Union workhouses in Lancashire had been built following a major phase of construction in the 1860s and 1870s.

The following analysis of the 22,000 paupers recorded in Lancashire workhouses in the 1881 census represents the largest pauper population studied to date. It demonstrates that the defining characteristic of the workhouse populations in Lancashire's 30 Poor Law Unions is diversity, and that generalisations about the characteristics of those in receipt of indoor relief based on national or county averages can mask considerable local variation. Of course, broad sweeps and general trends can help us to understand the bigger picture, but the nuanced understanding of the implementation and evolution of Poor Law policy can emerge only as a result of careful and detailed local analysis.

### Historiography

There is a voluminous literature on the New Poor Law, although recent years have seen something of a move away from general discussions of policy and legislation to more focused local and regional studies of particular aspects of the implementation, politics and effectiveness of welfare, producing some pioneering work.<sup>9</sup> Murdoch, for instance, has placed the relief of children within the context not only of Victorian concepts of childhood, but at the crossroads of family life, welfare, citizenship and the power of the state. She argues that there was a discrepancy between the literary views of the orphaned or deserted child and the reality of the temporarily institutionalised child whose parents maintained a supervisory role despite the disruption to family life and the best efforts of reformers to deny these parental rights.<sup>10</sup> Lees has also focused on family life, arguing that the Poor Law encouraged the temporary dissolution of families for the purpose of receiving relief. Fluidity in household composition and diverse sources of income, including welfare, ultimately helped preserve families in the long run.<sup>11</sup> Both Murdoch and Lees focus on London, which, as King observes, was an 'oddity' in terms of poor relief.<sup>12</sup> The pauper host dwarfed that found anywhere else in the country and the proportion on indoor relief was higher in London than elsewhere. Green's recent study

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9 M.A. Crowther, *The workhouse system, 1834–1929: the history of an English social institution* (London, 1981); Felix Driver, *Power and pauperism: the workhouse system 1834–1884* (Cambridge, 1993); D. Fraser ed., *The New Poor Law in the nineteenth century* (London, 1976); Williams, *From pauperism to poverty*.

10 Murdoch, *Imagined orphans*.

11 L.H. Lees, 'The survival of the unfit: welfare policies and family maintenance in nineteenth-century London', in P. Mandler ed., *The uses of charity: the poor on relief in the nineteenth-century metropolis* (Philadelphia, 1990), 68–91.

12 S. King, *Poverty and welfare in England, 1700–1850* (Manchester, 2000), 13.

illuminates the difficulties of implementing and maintaining the New Poor Law in London, yet frustratingly it does not extend beyond the crisis of the 1860s.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to these persuasive arguments regarding the confluence of policy and practice, institution and individual, state and society, there is also a small, but growing, literature seeking to analyse, interpret and quantify nineteenth-century workhouse populations, with further work being carried out on almshouses and their residents. These studies have, however, focused on relatively small rural communities or individual Poor Law Unions in southern English counties and little work has been done on the workhouse populations of northern counties.

Digby's influential study of workhouses and poor relief in nineteenth-century Norfolk remains the fullest investigation. This work demonstrated that workhouses did not always live up to their mythical 'Bastille' reputation: 'the workhouse was compatible with welfare, and the guardians were more than just grinders of the poor', Digby writes.<sup>14</sup> In this study, Digby established one of the themes of subsequent studies: local variation in Poor Law practice (and deviation from central policy) as the product of both innovation and tradition. Nevertheless, while Digby's study is widely quoted it lacks a statistical base beyond that to be gleaned from a succession of parliamentary reports. While such reports contain a lot of useful data, her approach is that of the qualitative social historian, and numbers tend to support, rather than drive, her argument.

Digby provides little quantification of the workhouse population, then, and this task has been left to a number of subsequent local studies. Page pioneered the study of workhouse populations through the census in his study of the Leicester workhouse population in 1881. Despite his unfortunate inclusion of staff and visitors amongst the inmates in a number of his tables, he nevertheless convincingly, if unsurprisingly, highlights the importance of the workhouse to certain groups—'the aged, children, the infirm, casual workers and labourers'. Indeed, Leicester workhouse was overwhelmingly dominated by the young, the unmarried and the widowed.<sup>15</sup> The work on Leicester has recently been extended by a useful study of the treatment of sick children in Leicester.<sup>16</sup>

The recent tranche of articles in *Local Population Studies* follows Hinde and Turnbull's study of two workhouses in Hampshire.<sup>17</sup> They demonstrated how the workhouse

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13 D.R. Green, *Pauper capital: London and the Poor Law, 1790–1870* (Farnham, 2010).

14 A. Digby, *Pauper palaces: the economy and Poor Law of nineteenth-century Norfolk* (London, 1978), 229.

15 S. Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society*, 63 (1989), 85–95.

16 A. Negrine, 'The treatment of sick children in the workhouse by the Leicester Poor Law Union, 1867–1914', *Family and Community History*, 13 (2010), 34–44.

17 A. Hinde and F. Turnbull, 'The populations of two Hampshire workhouses, 1851–1861', *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), 38–53.

population was not simply a product of poverty or destitution, but the consequence of policy decisions regarding how to relieve different categories of paupers. Goose's study of Hertfordshire concludes that variations between Unions could be a product of policy differences and local economic disparities. The prevalence of unmarried and widowed men, agricultural labourers and poor elderly men is very stark: Goose offers this as a corrective for the view that institutional care was insignificant for the elderly.<sup>18</sup>

Jackson's study of Kent workhouse populations in 1881 demonstrated broad uniformity of experience between Kent, Hampshire, Hertfordshire and Leicester. Generally, workhouses were dominated by the elderly and the young, males predominated and admissions were seasonal with a significant winter peak.<sup>19</sup> Jackson followed his survey of Kent in 1881 with a more focused article on the Medway Union workhouse in the period 1876–1881. This study usefully reminds us that census populations of workhouses are not necessarily typical of admissions to those institutions. By way of example, he points to an excess of females in the census population, and an excess of males in the admissions registers—the product of women forming a higher proportion of long-term inmates.<sup>20</sup> Audrey Perkyns' detailed study of children admitted to Milton Workhouse shows the variations of experience even within one Union, highlighting that the workhouse was one of a range of welfare 'options' for children.<sup>21</sup> Perkyns has demonstrated some of the possibilities of a detailed examination of admissions and discharge registers, although the methodological difficulties are addressed more fully by Rosemary Hall.<sup>22</sup> These articles indicate that much more work remains to be done on admissions and discharge registers, not least because of the insight they can provide into the priorities of workhouse authorities, the social and economic conditions of sections of the poor population and the dynamics of welfare needs. Such issues are merely hinted at by analysis of the census population.

Another local study by Christine Seal has compared the workhouse populations in Cheltenham and Belper between 1851 and 1911. With its longer chronological coverage and comparison of disparate Unions some distance apart, Seal's work is able to address issues not covered in those articles which focus on a single Union or group of contiguous Unions in a single census year. She is able to demonstrate the contrasting structure of the

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18 N. Goose, 'Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), 52–69. See also Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender'; D. Thomson, 'Workhouse to nursing home: residential care of elderly people in England since 1840', *Ageing and Society*, 3 (1983), 43–69.

19 D.G. Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), 51–66.

20 D.G. Jackson, 'The Medway Union Workhouse, 1876–1881: a study based on the admission and discharge registers and the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), 11–32.

21 A. Perkyns, 'The admission of children to the Milton Union Workhouse, Kent, 1835–1885', *Local Population Studies*, 80 (2008), 59–77.

22 R. Hall, 'The vanishing unemployed, hidden disabled, and embezzling master: researching Coventry Workhouse registers', *Local Historian*, 38 (2008), 111–21.

workhouse populations in 1851 and the increasing dominance of the institutionalised elderly population by 1911.<sup>23</sup>

A growing, but related, area of research is that of almshouses and their inmates. This is largely a product of a Family and Community Historical Research Society project led by Anne Langley with Nigel Goose as academic advisor, and has spawned a number of studies. Goose and Moden's work on Doughty's Hospital in Norwich, for instance, and Leivers' study of Derbyshire workhouse and almshouse populations, both offer insights into the mixed economy of welfare in the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

This spate of recent work notwithstanding, it remains apparent that the emphasis has very largely been on southern rural counties, and that research into workhouse populations in northern counties has been limited. There are frequent references to the anti-Poor Law movement in northern counties, and it is widely accepted that the New Poor Law was resisted here by ratepayers, guardians and paupers.<sup>25</sup> The welfare needs of the urban industrial population of Lancashire were quite unlike those of most other counties, not least because of the difficulties of providing indoor relief to the destitute in times of economic downturn. The effects of the Irish famine of the 1840s or the cotton famine of the 1860s were not to be ameliorated by workhouses and, as Midwinter memorably described it, 'The creation of a workhouse test in Lancashire largely proved a fiasco'.<sup>26</sup> Some specialist work has been done on narrow aspects of Poor Law administration in Lancashire, including Julie-Marie Strange's work on pauper burial, and Steven King's work on female Poor Law Guardians, which provides insights into the relationship within the local administration and between the local administration and the paupers they served.<sup>27</sup>

To some extent, the relative neglect of the workhouse population and the focus on policy, dispute and dissent is understandable. Workhouse inmates were a minority, not only of

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23 Seal, 'Workhouse populations'.

24 N. Goose, 'Victorian and Edwardian almspeople: Doughty's Hospital, Norwich, 1837–1911', *Local Population Studies*, 84 (2010), 71–81; N. Goose and L. Moden, *A history of Doughty's Hospital, Norwich, 1687–2009* (Hatfield, 2010); C. Leivers, 'Housing and the elderly in nineteenth-century Derbyshire: a comparison of almshouse and workhouse provision', *Local Population Studies*, 83 (2009), 56–65.

25 D. Ashforth, 'The urban Poor Law', in Fraser, *New Poor Law*, 128–48; Crowther, *Workhouse system*, 30–53; Driver, *Power and pauperism*, 112–31; N. C. Edsall, *The anti-Poor Law movement, 1833–44* (1971); E.C. Midwinter, *Social administration in Lancashire, 1830–1860: Poor Law, public health, police* (Manchester, 1969), 15–26.

26 E.C. Midwinter, 'State intervention at the local level: the New Poor Law in Lancashire', *Historical Journal*, 10 (1967), 106–12. Here at 110–11. On poor relief in Manchester in the 1840s see H.M. Boot, 'Unemployment and Poor Law relief in Manchester, 1845–50', *Social History*, 15 (1990), 217–28. On the impact of the cotton famine on poor relief see M. Rose, 'Rochdale Man and the Staylybridge riot: the relief and control of the unemployed during the Lancashire Cotton Famine', in A. Donajgrodzki ed., *Social control in nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977), 185–206.

27 J.-M. Strange, 'Only a pauper whom nobody owns: reassessing the pauper grave, c.1880–1914', *Past and Present*, 178 (2003), 148–75; King, 'We might be trusted'; King, *Women, welfare and local politics*.

the population at large but also of the pauper population. Despite declining levels of outdoor relief during the later nineteenth century, workhouse inmates represented just 22 per cent of paupers in England in 1880, up from 15 per cent in 1871.<sup>28</sup> The annual return to the Local Government Board shows that in Lancashire on 1 July 1880 there were 22,558 paupers in workhouses and 50,641 in receipt of outdoor relief, although indoor relief accounted for more than half of the expenditure.<sup>29</sup> Lancashire's paupers were more likely to be in receipt of indoor relief than paupers from any other region outside of London and the south east.<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, and for reasons not fully explained by Mackinnon, Lancashire and Cheshire, which comprised the Registrar General's North West Region, bucked the national trend, and restrictions on outdoor relief had a lower impact here on overall expenditure.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, given the fact that the workhouse was such a potent symbol of nineteenth-century welfare provision, it is surprising that more attention has not been paid to those who resided there, however temporarily. It is certainly the case that contemporaries spent a great deal of time amassing statistics that counted and categorised workhouse inmates. Indeed, central and local government produced thousands of pages of tables on who received relief, in what form and at what cost. The groups that caused particular anxiety were the able-bodied poor and children. The workhouse test was not applied equally and consistently across space and time, however, and some groups found it easier to get outdoor relief than others due to legitimate concerns that the workhouse might not be appropriate for some individuals. Contemporary opinions were, of course, divided, but parliamentary committees, Royal Commissions, pamphleteers and journalists were much more prepared to make bold assertions about the morality of the poor and the corrupting influence of the workhouse environment than many historians would be.

### Lancashire's workhouses in 1881

Identifying the workhouses in the census, and establishing their overall population, is not necessarily straightforward. The Poor Law Unions that were established after 1834 had a complex institutional structure with most failing to provide a single Union workhouse for several decades. No new workhouses were built in Lancashire or Yorkshire in the 1840s, for instance.<sup>32</sup> Workhouse provision evolved through the middle decades of the century and many purpose-built Union workhouses were constructed

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28 *Tenth annual report of the Local Government Board*, BPP 1881 XIV [C.2982]; MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy'.

29 BPP 1881 XIV, Appendix C, table 55, 324–5, Appendix D, table 63, 345–6.

30 MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy', 618.

31 MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy', 621–4.

32 Ashforth, 'Urban Poor Law', 133.

before 1881. However, they were not always located within the Poor Law Union they served. Moreover, the welfare landscape and social reform provision altered dramatically over the course of the nineteenth century as institutions proliferated and welfare policy developed.

The complexity of institutional provision in Lancashire is suggested by the 1881 census report. Whereas one institution might serve multiple purposes in some Unions, others were served by a range of public and charitable bodies. Some places, such as Bolton, had separate vagrants' wards; Warrington had a workhouse school which the census report claims contained both children and adults. Manchester had two workhouses: New Bridge in Manchester housed just 202 individuals in 1881 and was described as the 'Workhouse and casual wards' in the census report. The main Manchester workhouse, housing 2,850 in 1881, was in Crumpsall, a civil parish in the sub-district of Cheetham, which was in the district of Prestwich. Prestwich Union, which was initially part of Manchester Union, had its own separate workhouse housing 271 inmates in 1881, although a range of other institutions, especially for poor children, were located in former workhouses in both the Manchester and Prestwich Unions. The situation in Liverpool was also complex, with a parish workhouse in Liverpool itself, along with two workhouses in the neighbouring Poor Law union of West Derby, a 'temporary workhouse' listed in the census report, plus a variety of orphanages, industrial schools, reformatories and hospitals within the conurbation. Each of these institutions housed individuals who might otherwise, and in other locations, be found in workhouses. Nor should we forget the wide range of charitable and philanthropic institutions and individuals which formed an important part of the overall welfare provision.<sup>33</sup>

Table 1 shows the workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881. The registration districts are divided into three groups: conurbation, urban industrial and rural. These divisions are used throughout this article and therefore require some explanation. First, they are indicative terms only and the divides are not always particularly sharp. The 'conurbation' districts are those Unions dominated by the built-up areas of Liverpool and Manchester (see Figure 1). The urban districts are all concentrated in the industrial zone south of Preston and Blackburn and east of Wigan, Prescot and Warrington. Almost all of these urban Unions contained extensive rural areas, but all were dominated both demographically and economically by an urban-based industrial population. North of the River Ribble and on the south-west Lancashire plain the character of the county alters, and here large, sparsely populated rural Unions dominate. The urban centres of the north of the county are on a much smaller scale than those found further south and even the rapidly developing heavy industry in Barrow-in-Furness was a mere speck in a vast rural hinterland extending into the modern day Lake District National Park.

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33 *1881 Census of England and Wales, Vol II, Area, houses and population*, BPP 1883 LXXIX [C.3563], 509–512; A. Miller, *Poverty deserved: relieving the poor in Victorian Liverpool* (Birkenhead, 1988).



## The workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881

**Table 1 Workhouse populations comparing CEB with census report, 1881**

Registration district	Workhouse	CEB	Census report
<b>Conurbation</b>			
Chorlton	Barlow Moor, Withington	1,663	1,791
Liverpool	Brownlow Hill	3,156	3,153
Manchester	Crumpsall in Prestwich Union	2,856	2,850
Manchester	New Bridge	202	202
Prestwich	Crumpsall	271	271
Salford	Eccles New Road	1,459	1,459
Salford	Pendleton, workhouse infirmary	249	249
Toxteth Park	Smithdown Rd, Toxteth Park	635	635
West Derby	Mill Road, Everton	416	416
West Derby	Rice Lane, Walton on the Hill	1,722	1,693
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>12,629</b>	<b>12,719</b>
<b>Urban industrial</b>			
Ashton under Lyne	Ashton under Lyne	769	770
Barton upon Irwell	Green Lane, Patricroft	162	162
Blackburn	Haslingden Rd, Blackburn	726	726
Bolton	Fishpool, Farnworth	1,060	1,059
Burnley	Briercliffe Rd, Burnley	275	279
Bury	Jericho, Bury	622	599
Chorley	Eaves Lane, Chorley	135	208
Leigh	Leigh Rd, Leigh	279	266
Oldham	Rochdale Rd, Northmoor	849	845
Prescot	Warrington Rd, Whiston	476	494
Preston	Watling Street Rd, Fulwood	742	740
Rochdale	Marland, Castleton	640	640
Warrington	Lovely Lane, Warrington	380	380
Wigan	Frog Lane, Wigan	511	511
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>7,626</b>	<b>7,679</b>
<b>Rural</b>			
Barrow-in-Furness	Roose	124	124
Clitheroe	Chatburn Rd, Clitheroe	123	124
Fylde	Kirkham	149	149
Garstang	Bowgreave, Garstang	29	29
Haslingden	High Pikelaw	280	280
Lancaster	Quernmoor Rd, Lancaster	96	105
Lunesdale	Hornby	37	37
Ormskirk	Ormskirk	275	313
Ulverston	Stanley St, Ulverston	253	255
<b>Sub total</b>		<b>1,366</b>	<b>1,416</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>21,621</b>	<b>21,814</b>

**Source:** Individual CEBs and *Census of England and Wales, 1881, Vol. II, Area, houses and population*, BPP 1883 [C.3563], 509–512.

Figure 1 Lancashire's Poor Law Unions, 1881



Notes : Not to scale. Base map courtesy of Dr Alan Crosby and the Friends of Lancashire Archives

To establish the population of these workhouses, the figure given in the 1881 census report has been compared with that found in the enumerators' books (Table 1). The slight discrepancies are for the most part insignificant, although some workhouses are worthy of further explanation. It is likely that the compilers of the census report miscounted for workhouses in Bury and Rice Lane, West Derby. The larger discrepancies for Chorley, Chorlton and Ormskirk are likely to be due to missing CEBs or missing pages. Indeed, the CEB for Chorley workhouse specifically states that pages 7, 8 and 9 are missing, which would account for up to 75 people.<sup>34</sup>

Lancashire's workhouses varied dramatically in size, reflecting the economy and settlement type. At the time of the 1881 census both Liverpool and Manchester had workhouse populations in excess of 3,000 whereas Garstang and Lunesdale workhouses had 29 and 37 inmates respectively. However, the total population of the 33 workhouses under scrutiny in this article amounted to 21,621 in 1881, representing 0.6 per cent of the 3.48 million individuals enumerated in the registration county of Lancashire.

We must be careful not to treat Lancashire as a single entity. It was a diverse county with a varied economy and landscape, and a range of settlement types and welfare regimes. Table 2 shows the ratio of indoor to outdoor paupers in Lancashire's 30 Poor Law Unions in January 1881. Overall, paupers in the Liverpool and Manchester conurbations were more likely to receive indoor relief than paupers in other Unions, but with 66 indoor paupers to every 100 receiving outdoor relief, they were still in a minority. However, the policy and practice towards outdoor relief in Manchester and Liverpool is certainly suggested by these data, although it must also be noted that the proportion of the population enumerated in the workhouse was considerably higher in both Liverpool and Manchester compared with the rest of the county. For most of the urban industrial Unions, outdoor relief recipients outnumbered indoor paupers 3:1. The clear exception is Preston. A protracted debate unfolded in Preston about the nature of poverty and the most effectual means of its remedy for 30 years following the passing of the 1834 Act. The Preston Union had avoided building a Union workhouse and adapted pre-1834 institutions alongside continued widespread use of outdoor relief. Local debate about running of the Poor Law coincided with considerable national debate. Joseph Livesey, the liberal temperance reformer, argued in a letter to the editor of the *Preston Chronicle* in May 1864 that there was not 'the shadow of necessity for a new workhouse', suggesting that such a venture would be an 'irretrievable blunder' which the ratepayers could not afford. It had been suggested that this could have been partly paid for by reducing pauper inmates' food allowance by one seventh.<sup>35</sup> In the same issue of the *Preston Chronicle*, local historian and journalist Anthony Hewitson explained,

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34 RG 11/4221 f.130, 6. The CEB pages contain 25 people per page so 75 is the maximum number of missing people.

35 'The new Union workhouse', *Preston Chronicle*, 7 May 1864.

**Table 2 Numbers on indoor and outdoor relief, Lancashire, January 1881**

Registration district	Indoor	Outdoor	Total	Indoor paupers per 100 outdoor paupers	Union population	Inmates as % of Union population
<b>Conurbation</b>						
Chorlton	1,863	3,067	4,930	61	258,226	0.7
Liverpool	4,042	4,072	8,114	99	210,164	1.9
Manchester	3,866	1,574	5,440	246	148,794	2.6
Prestwich	347	1,048	1,395	33	121,287	0.3
Salford	1,706	4,215	5,921	40	181,526	0.9
Toxteth Park	706	1,814	2,520	39	117,028	0.6
West Derby	2,405	6,733	9,138	36	359,273	0.7
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>14,935</b>	<b>22,523</b>	<b>37,458</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>1,396,298</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Urban Industrial</b>						
Ashton under Lyne	864	1,473	2,337	59	154,526	0.6
Barton upon Irwell	217	689	906	31	72,815	0.3
Blackburn	780	2,041	2,821	38	175,954	0.4
Bolton	1,106	3,624	4,730	31	192,405	0.6
Burnley	317	2,335	2,652	14	118,331	0.3
Bury	692	2,021	2,713	34	129,608	0.5
Chorley	219	703	922	31	47,730	0.5
Leigh	288	952	1,240	30	56,318	0.5
Oldham	813	1,723	2,536	47	168,461	0.5
Prescot	685	2,768	3,453	25	117,960	0.6
Preston	920	799	1,719	115	129,160	0.7
Rochdale	662	2,112	2,774	31	121,912	0.5
Warrington	516	936	1,452	55	70,218	0.7
Wigan	504	3,014	3,518	17	139,918	0.4
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>8,583</b>	<b>25,190</b>	<b>33,773</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>1,695,316</b>	<b>0.5</b>
<b>Rural</b>						
Barrow-in-Furness	139	491	630	28	47,259	0.3
Clitheroe	113	431	544	26	23,502	0.5
Fylde	168	405	573	41	40,910	0.4
Garstang	29	228	257	13	12,375	0.2
Haslingden	295	1,067	1,362	28	95,293	0.3
Lancaster	115	345	460	33	40,838	0.3
Lunesdale	39	97	136	40	7,132	0.5
Ormskirk	334	1,028	1,362	32	83,212	0.4
Ulverston	260	1,093	1,353	24	43,681	0.6
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>1,492</b>	<b>5,185</b>	<b>6,677</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>394,202</b>	<b>0.4</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,010</b>	<b>52,898</b>	<b>77,908</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>3,485,816</b>	<b>0.7</b>

**Source:** *Return of paupers in receipt of relief on the 1st day of January 1881*, BPP 1882 [339], 14; 1881 Census of England and Wales, Vol. II, *Area, houses and population*, BPP 1883 [C.3563], 449.

One large workhouse would have a more deterrent effect than the honey-suckle fronted places we now have. It would be a bigger and more tremendous embodiment [sic] of pauperism—that repulsive idea which we all associate with workhouses would be more tangible. It would strike the eye more acutely and would impress the mind more seriously and definitely. We do not wish to

make workhouses like prisons, or chambers for the reception of disciplinarian horrors. But it is absolutely necessary that they should not be particularly pleasant places.<sup>36</sup>

The arguments against the workhouse ultimately failed and following the construction of a large Union workhouse with a capacity of 1,500 in 1865–1868, Preston, along with Manchester, Salford and Liverpool, acquired a reputation as an anti-outdoor relief union.<sup>37</sup>

Workhouses in rural Unions were considerably smaller, although the proportion of the population in receipt of indoor relief was comparable with the urban industrial Unions, and significantly below the national level of 0.71 per cent in 1880–1882.<sup>38</sup> However, outdoor relief remained the prevailing method of welfare here, with a ratio of indoor to outdoor paupers in line with the national figure of 30:100.<sup>39</sup>

### Age and sex profile of workhouse populations

As Table 3 demonstrates, the age profile of Lancashire's workhouse populations in 1881 shows some marked contrasts with those of other areas. This is particularly the case with the large institutions in the conurbations, where children were much less commonly found, than in the workhouses of Belper, Hertfordshire and Kent. Conversely, the number of adults is higher in both conurbation and urban industrial Unions. The same patterns hold true for both males and females. The pattern for elderly inmates is more difficult to determine, with more uniformity between elderly men across all Unions and relatively lower levels of elderly females in all workhouses, except those in the Lancashire conurbations and Cheltenham.

Goose's study of Hertfordshire in 1851 showed that workhouses there were dominated by men in all age groups, with that dominance becoming particularly pronounced among the elderly.<sup>40</sup> Although Jackson does not give clear data on sex ratios, the same general pattern clearly holds true for the eight workhouses he studied, although he also noted marked variations between workhouses.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in his subsequent analysis of the admissions and discharge registers of the Medway Union Workhouse he noted the predominance of females over males.<sup>42</sup> Table 4 shows the sex ratio by age group for Lancashire workhouses and indicates that the situation was rather more complex here. Children will be dealt with separately below, but for adults there is a clear pattern. As they aged, men became

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36 'Every-day gossip about anything and anybody anywhere', *Preston Chronicle*, 7 May 1864.

37 D. Hunt, *History of Preston* (Preston, 1992), 204; MacKinnon, 'English Poor Law policy', 624.

38 Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender', 355.

39 Calculated from Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender', 355.

40 Goose, 'Workhouse populations'.

41 Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations', 51–66.

42 Jackson, 'The Medway Union Workhouse'.

**Table 3 Age profiles of workhouse populations in Lancashire, Belper, Cheltenham, Hertfordshire and Kent, 1881**

	Males			Females			Total			Workhouse populations
	0–14 %	15–59 %	60+ %	0–15 %	15–59 %	60+ %	0–14 %	15–59 %	60+ %	
Conurbation	17	42	40	14	49	37	15	46	39	12,614
Industrial	26	38	36	23	51	26	24	44	32	7,620
Rural	28	31	41	32	46	22	29	37	34	1,364
All Lancashire workhouses	21	40	39	18	49	33	19	45	36	21,598
Belper	30	27	43	41	42	17	34	33	33	229
Cheltenham	23	30	47	21	38	41	22	33	44	401
Hertfordshire workhouses (1851)	32	31	37	36	41	23	34	35	32	1,884
8 Kent workhouses	33	24	43	36	27	27	35	29	36	1,937

**Sources:** CEBs (see note 8); Derbyshire figures from Clive Leivers, 'Housing the elderly in nineteenth-century Derbyshire: a comparison of almshouse and workhouse provision', *Local Population Studies*, 83 (2009), 59; Hertfordshire figures from Nigel Goose, 'Workhouse populations in the mid-nineteenth century: the case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), 56–7; Kent figures from D. G. Jackson, 'Kent workhouse populations in 1881: a study based on the census enumerators' books', *Local Population Studies*, 69 (2002), 57–60; Cheltenham and Belper data from Christine Seal, 'Workhouse populations in the Cheltenham and Belper Unions, 1851–1911', *Family and Community History*, 13, 2, 2010, Tables 1 and 4.

**Table 4 Sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) of Lancashire workhouse population, Lancashire, 1881**

	Age group					All ages	N
	0–14	15–29	30–44	44–59	60+		
Conurbation	119	65	77	98	99	92	12,614
Urban industrial	137	62	81	132	172	123	7,620
Rural	142	83	103	158	297	163	1,364
Lancashire workhouses	129	65	80	112	124	106	21,598
All Lancashire	98	92	92	88	80	94	3,481,213
4 Derbyshire workhouses (1881)			⏟		280	127	1,188
Hertfordshire workhouses (1851)	132	105	120		238	149	1,884
8 Kent workhouses (1881)					199	125	1,937
Leicester (1881)						142	911

**Sources:** see Table 3; Stephen Page, 'Pauperism and the Leicester workhouse in 1881', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society*, 63 (1989), 89.

**Note:** the numbers of workhouse inmates varies from the figures given in Table 1 due to some individuals being of indeterminate sex. The fifteen-year age groups used in this and subsequent tables are used in most of the available secondary literature on workhouse populations. Although this makes census analysis straightforward and facilitates comparative work, these age groups were not those used in contemporary classifications of the poor. Most significantly, these age groups do not match those used by workhouse authorities or in parliamentary reports.

progressively more likely to be found in the workhouse than women in all settlement types. However, despite this consistent overall pattern the three settlement types reveal very different experiences. In the conurbations women outnumbered men in all adult age groups, albeit only slightly among those over 44. In the urban industrial workhouses women outnumbered men in young adulthood, but men increasingly and significantly outnumbered women from their mid-40s onwards. In the rural workhouses men outnumbered women by age 30 and in old age male workhouse inmates outnumbered females by three to one. Of course, these aggregations might mask significant differences between workhouses, but they are indicative of a consistent pattern of an increasing male presence in workhouse population in older age groups, with this pattern becoming more marked where industry was less important to the local economy.

### *Children*

Table 5 shows the number and sex ratio of the under 15s in the 33 Lancashire workhouses in 1881. It is apparent that there was a diversity of experience, although the numbers of children in some rural workhouses are too low to be of any statistical significance. Whereas children aged 0–14 formed 37 per cent of Lancashire's population in 1881, 20 per cent of the Lancashire workhouse populations were in this age group.<sup>43</sup> This contrasts with 34 to 46 per cent noted for workhouses in Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire in 1851 and 1861, and is again lower than the 28 to 36 per cent reported for Bakewell, Belper, Cheltenham and Leicester in 1881.<sup>44</sup> There were also significant variations within Lancashire. Overall, children formed 15 per cent of the inmates in the conurbations, 24 per cent in the urban industrial districts and 29 per cent in the rural districts. In four workhouses—Ormskirk, Leigh, Warrington and Barrow-in-Furness—children formed between one third and one half of all inmates, which contrasts markedly with institutions in Manchester and Liverpool where around 10 per cent of workhouse inmates were children, undoubtedly reflecting the plethora of industrial schools, reformatories, orphanages and charitable organisations in these places. In urban-industrial Unions children formed 18 to 28 per cent of the workhouse population in most textile districts and reached their highest levels in the Unions of Bolton, Leigh, Salford, Leigh, Warrington and Wigan, each of which were influenced to a lesser or greater extent by coal mining.

In almost all Lancashire workhouses, boys significantly outnumbered girls. This may have been because boys were less likely to be at risk of abuse in the workhouse environment than girls, or because girls were more valuable in the domestic environment. Crompton has argued that whereas pubescent girls were at risk of being drawn into prostitution by

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43 1881 *Census of England and Wales, Vol. III. Ages, condition as to marriage, occupations, and birth-places of the people*, BPP 1883 LXXX [C.3722], 319.

44 Hinde and Turnbull, 'Populations of two Hampshire workhouses', 42; Seal, 'Workhouse populations', 92.

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**Table 5 Children aged 0–14 in Lancashire workhouses, 1881**

Workhouse	All		Male		Female		Sex ratio
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
<b>Conurbation</b>							
Chorlton	348	21.0	209	26.0	139	16.2	150
Liverpool Brownlow Hill	353	11.2	173	11.7	180	10.7	96
Manchester (Crumpsall)	260	9.1	142	10.4	118	7.9	120
Manchester (New Bridge)	4	2.0	2	1.5	2	2.8	100
Prestwich	24	8.9	17	13.8	7	4.7	243
Salford	462	31.7	253	35.0	209	28.4	121
Salford (Pendleton)	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0
Toxteth Park	155	24.5	89	27.8	66	21.1	135
West Derby (Mill Road)	62	15.0	33	14.9	29	15.0	114
West Derby (Rice Lane)	277	16.1	139	16.6	138	15.7	101
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>1,945</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>1,057</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>888</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Urban industrial</b>							
Ashton under Lyne	172	22.4	94	23.3	78	21.5	121
Barton upon Irwell	16	9.9	6	6.5	10	14.5	60
Blackburn	127	17.5	79	19.5	48	15.0	165
Bolton	304	28.7	168	31.6	136	25.8	124
Burnley	56	20.4	36	21.4	20	18.7	180
Bury	99	15.9	61	16.9	38	14.6	161
Chorley	25	18.8	14	19.4	11	18.0	127
Leigh	109	39.1	62	39.5	47	38.5	132
Oldham	195	23.0	124	26.6	71	18.6	175
Prescot	65	13.7	37	12.7	28	15.1	132
Preston	181	24.4	113	28.7	68	19.6	166
Rochdale	165	25.8	83	24.0	82	27.9	101
Warrington	187	49.2	108	48.9	79	49.7	137
Wigan	159	31.1	90	31.0	69	31.2	130
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>1,860</b>	<b>24.4</b>	<b>1,075</b>	<b>25.6</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>23.0</b>	<b>137</b>
<b>Rural</b>							
Barrow-in-Furness	67	54.9	43	54.4	24	55.8	179
Clitheroe	23	18.7	13	14.3	10	31.3	130
Fylde	48	32.2	33	34.4	15	28.3	220
Garstang	8	27.6	3	17.6	5	41.7	60
Haslingden	53	18.9	30	18.6	23	19.3	130
Lancaster	22	22.9	13	21.0	9	26.5	144
Lunesdale	5	13.5	5	21.7	0	0.0	0
Ormskirk	97	35.3	57	32.6	40	40.0	143
Ulverston	78	30.8	38	26.8	40	36.0	95
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,206</b>	<b>19.5</b>	<b>2,367</b>	<b>21.3</b>	<b>1,839</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>129</b>

**Source:** CEBs (see footnote 8).

**Note:** The value in column 3 is the proportion of the total workhouse population; the values in columns 5 and 7 are the proportions of the total male and female populations respectively. The sex ratio is the number of men per 100 women.



older 'unchaste women', boys faced 'no comparable danger'.<sup>45</sup> Orphaned and illegitimate children might also be treated differently according to their sex and—especially for girls—domesticity and appropriate gender roles were deemed to be essential to 'the poor children's evolution ... into potential citizens'.<sup>46</sup> Various alternatives to the corrupting influence of the workhouse system were proposed, including the cottage system and boarding girls out into an environment where they would learn the skills and virtues of domesticity which would serve them, and society, rather better than the workhouse.<sup>47</sup> According to the Local Government Board report for 1880, the cottage system was making inroads in Lancashire, with 450 children in cottage 'homes' in Bolton and Chorlton in 1880. In addition to these the report drew attention to 'several hundreds' of children who were 'sent out to be "adopted"' by foster parents. This was not a pecuniary arrangement and lay outside of the relief system, but it was suggested that the 'inducement to take the children lies in the hope of future service from them'.<sup>48</sup>

Without detailed nominal record linkage it is impossible to detect the kinship networks that may have been available to workhouse children, as the census does not record whether they entered the workhouse with parents or if they had parents alive outside of the house. Perkyns has demonstrated the possibilities of such an approach and her detailed study of child admissions to Milton Union Workhouse in the period 1835–1885 shows that there were a variety of experiences within Kent. Whereas 23 per cent of all children in Kent workhouses in March 1849 were orphans, this figure rose to 42 per cent of child inmates in Milton Workhouse.<sup>49</sup> However, Perkyns also notes that in the period 1835–1885 the number of boys and girls aged 2–9 admitted to Milton Union Workhouse was identical, with a slightly higher proportion of boys in the 10–15 age group (sex ratio 113). This she put down to the relative ease with which girls could find employment.<sup>50</sup>

Further analysis of the sex ratio in five-year age groups might help us to explain the predominance of boys over girls in Lancashire's workhouses. Table 6 shows that the sex ratio of the workhouse population was markedly different from that of the Lancashire population at large. There was a marked trend in the sex ratio of pauper children with an excess of boys that increased in each age group 0–4, 5–9 and 10–14, followed by a dramatic reversal in the age groups 15–19 and 20–24 where young women became numerically dominant. Girls might have found themselves working in the domestic environment either within the birth family or as part of the wider family or community from a young age.<sup>51</sup> As girls became potentially useful in the domestic environment from the age of 10

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45 F. Crompton, *Workhouse children* (Stroud, 1997), 38.

46 Murdoch, *Imagined orphans*, 10.

47 Driver, *Power and pauperism*, 65–105; Anon., 'Pauper girls', *Westminster Review*, n.s. 37 (1870), 461–76, *passim*.

48 *Tenth annual report of the Local Government Board. 1880–81*, BPP 1881 XIV [C.2982], Appendix B, 172–4.

49 Perkyns, 'Admission of children', 64.

50 Perkyns, 'Admission of children', 66.

51 E. Higgs, *Domestic servants and households in Rochdale, 1851–1871* (New York, 1986).

**Table 6 Sex ratio (number of males per 100 females) of Lancashire workhouse population in five year age groups, 1881**

Age group	Lancashire workhouse population		Lancashire population	
	Sex ratio	N	Sex ratio	N
0–4	113	1,322	99	486,035
5–9	122	1,549	99	419,399
10–14	157	1,335	98	364,771
15–19	75	662	94	339,619
20–24	54	933	92	322,280
25–29	69	1,054	95	286,553
30–34	75	1,131	95	239,338
35–39	75	1,117	94	207,763
40–44	91	1,189	93	185,765
45–49	104	1,025	90	144,355

**Source:** CEBs (see footnote 8).

they became less common in the workhouse. However, the decline in the number of boys was more precipitous, as the number of 15–19 year old inmates was less than half the number of 10–14 year olds and the sex ratio fell by a similar proportion. It is clear that once the age of 15 was attained able-bodied males would have found it extremely difficult to obtain relief.

At the aggregate level we can only speculate as to causation. The most striking aspect of this analysis is the diversity among Lancashire Unions in the proportion of children found in their workhouses. These varying proportions and sex ratios in different Unions defy simple explanation. However, these data do serve as a warning to those who would seek to offer general assessments of the Poor Law as it was administered in large regions. The yardstick for measuring the effectiveness and appropriateness of welfare provision is undoubtedly local, and the answers lie in the detailed assessment of conditions within individual Unions.

### *Adults*

Table 7 shows the workhouse population in the age group 15–59. Forty-five per cent of the Lancashire workhouse populations were adults of working age. This compares with a figure of around 40 per cent in Basingstoke and Winchester, and 35 per cent in Hertfordshire in 1851.<sup>52</sup> They were most common in the conurbations (45.8 per cent) and least common in the rural districts (36.8 per cent). In the conurbations the sex ratio was in the favour of women, with a more mixed pattern in the urban industrial districts. Broadly speaking, the larger the settlement the more likely it was for adult women to be found in the workhouse. There are undoubtedly several reasons for these patterns, full elucidation of which would require detailed work with the registers of individual workhouses as well

<sup>52</sup> Hinde and Turnbull, 'Populations of two Hampshire workhouses', 41; Goose, 'Workhouse populations', 56.

## The workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881

**Table 7 Adults aged 15–59 in Lancashire workhouses, 1881**

Workhouse	All		Males		Females		Sex ratio
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
<b>Conurbation</b>							
Chorlton	652	39.3	289	36.0	363	42.3	79
Liverpool Brownlow Hill	1,723	54.6	775	52.5	948	56.4	81
Manchester (Crumpsall)	1,386	48.6	620	45.3	766	51.5	80
Manchester (New Bridge)	90	44.6	32	24.6	58	80.6	55
Prestwich	122	45.0	46	37.4	76	51.4	60
Salford	673	46.2	289	40.0	384	52.2	75
Salford (Pendleton)	52	21.1	6	11.5	46	23.6	13
Toxteth Park	234	37.0	107	33.4	127	40.6	84
West Derby (Mill Road)	256	61.8	138	62.4	118	61.1	116
West Derby (Rice Lane)	591	34.4	260	31.1	331	37.6	78
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>5,779</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>2,562</b>	<b>42.3</b>	<b>3,217</b>	<b>49.0</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Urban industrial</b>							
Ashton under Lyne	319	41.6	138	34.2	181	49.9	76
Barton upon Irwell	71	43.8	38	40.9	33	47.8	115
Blackburn	363	50.1	170	42.0	193	60.3	88
Bolton	437	41.2	180	33.8	257	48.7	70
Burnley	117	42.5	64	38.1	53	49.5	120
Bury	337	54.2	183	50.7	154	59.0	118
Chorley	53	39.8	20	27.8	33	54.1	60
Leigh	105	37.6	46	29.3	59	48.4	78
Oldham	412	48.5	202	43.3	210	55.0	96
Prescot	227	47.7	126	43.3	101	54.6	124
Preston	310	41.8	138	35.0	172	49.6	80
Rochdale	258	40.3	129	37.3	129	43.9	100
Warrington	102	26.8	47	21.3	55	34.6	85
Wigan	224	43.8	113	39.0	111	50.2	101
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>3,335</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>1,594</b>	<b>37.9</b>	<b>1,741</b>	<b>50.9</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Rural</b>							
Barrow-in-Furness	37	30.3	22	27.8	15	34.9	146
Clitheroe	51	41.5	38	41.8	13	40.6	292
Fylde	49	32.9	25	26.0	24	45.3	104
Garstang	14	48.3	8	47.1	6	50.0	133
Haslingden	138	49.3	66	41.0	72	60.5	91
Lancaster	40	41.7	24	38.7	16	47.1	150
Lunesdale	12	32.4	4	17.4	8	57.1	50
Ormskirk	83	30.2	46	26.3	37	37.0	124
Ulverston	78	30.8	33	23.2	45	40.5	73
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>36.8</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>31.4</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>45.6</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,616</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>4,422</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>5,194</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>85</b>

**Source:** CEBs (see footnote 8).

as knowledge of the local institutional provision for care during and after childbirth. It would, of course, also require detailed knowledge of the variations in female employment patterns across Lancashire for both single and married women, and of the age, sex and marital status profile of the population of individual Poor Law Unions. Such analysis is far beyond the scope of this current article, and some tentative speculations will have to suffice.

There was a higher proportion of adult paupers in Lancashire workhouses compared with other studies to date, and this is especially the case for adult males (see Table 2, p. 48, above). However, Lancashire did not experience the endemic poverty that was the product of under-employment characteristic of some rural counties. In fact, in July 1881 Lancashire had the lowest proportion of the population in receipt of relief in England and Wales, at just 2.04 per cent, and was part of a group of contiguous counties—including, Cheshire (2.19 per cent), Derbyshire (2.41), Nottinghamshire (2.24), Shropshire (2.41) and the West Riding of Yorkshire (2.45)—experiencing lower levels of pauperism than other counties.<sup>53</sup> The national average was 2.97 although many south Midland and south-western counties had levels of pauperism between 4 and 5 per cent.<sup>54</sup> Whether this pattern reflects distributions of poverty, the generosity of welfare regimes across the country, or the extent to which poor relief was stigmatised within distinctive regional cultures is a perennial problem for historians of the Poor Law. However, with just about full employment during times of ‘normal’ economic conditions in Lancashire and other industrial counties, the lower proportion of the population in receipt of relief appears to have strong connections with broader economic structures and conditions.

So within a culture where out-relief continued to prevail and where there was a low proportion of the population in receipt of relief, why did Lancashire workhouses house a large proportion of adults of working age? In part this is a mathematical product of the lower proportion of child inmates in Lancashire, so some caution is required. However, it may have been the case that, after the initial opposition, the workhouse test was being applied more stringently in Lancashire than elsewhere, leading both to fewer paupers in the population, and a higher proportion of those paupers in receipt of indoor relief. This was undoubtedly the case in the large anti-outdoor relief Unions of Manchester, Liverpool and Preston.

The sex ratio of the inmates requires some further analysis. It is clear that women formed a higher proportion of adult indoor paupers, but they also formed a higher proportion of those in receipt of outdoor relief. On 1 July 1881 there were 22,245 indoor paupers in Lancashire and 49,209 in receipt of outdoor relief. Of the latter, 20,441 were women over

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53 *Poor rates and pauperism. Return (B.). Paupers relieved on 1st July 1881.* BPP 1881 LXXVIII, 2–5. The other two counties that constituted those with the lowest proportion of paupers were Durham and Middlesex, with 2.29 and 2.33 per cent respectively.

54 BPP 1881 LXXVIII, 2–5.

16, compared with 6,895 adult males and 21,761 children under 16.<sup>55</sup> Women were clearly either vulnerable to poverty due to desertion, widowhood, childbirth and family responsibility compared with men, or they were more likely to be granted relief. Of course, these possibilities are not mutually exclusive, and this gender dimension of poverty and poor relief could prove fruitful ground for further research, building on the work already done in this area by Goose.<sup>56</sup> It is worthy of note that women dominated the workhouse to a greater extent in districts where opportunities for female work in textiles and domestic service were at their highest, although there are exceptions. Indeed, in the Unions where textiles was a significant industry adult women workhouse inmates outnumbered adult men. This was true in Blackburn, Bolton, Chorley, Leigh, Oldham and Preston, while Burnley, Bury, Rochdale and Wigan are exceptions to this pattern. The marital status of these women will be explored below, but clearly the sex ratio is not to be explained by simple generalisations about the female labour market in industrial towns.

### *The elderly*

As other studies have shown, as the nineteenth century progressed workhouses became increasingly dominated by the elderly who, for obvious reasons, had particular welfare needs associated with physical decline. For some, their welfare needs were met within families, and kinship, co-residency or employment were clearly the preferred methods of supporting the elderly who could not maintain economic independence in other ways.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, studies of workhouse populations in southern rural counties point to the 'prominence' of elderly men in workhouses and the withdrawal of outdoor relief from able-bodied men, resulting in a large proportion of elderly males being in receipt of indoor relief.<sup>58</sup> In terms of the workhouse populations within Lancashire there was clearly a very diverse experience (see Table 8). Many of the large general workhouses were dominated by the elderly. Only in Barrow-in-Furness workhouse was the proportion of elderly under one fifth. The elderly formed more than one third of the inmates in 21 workhouses, and they formed two fifths in eight. In the workhouse infirmary at Pendleton, Salford, the elderly formed 79 per cent of the inmates.

Elderly inmates were predominately male although there are some broad trends across the three settlement types. Males and females were roughly equal in number in the conurbation workhouses as a group, with only New Bridge and Pendleton significantly deviating from parity. In the urban industrial districts the sex ratio among the elderly was

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55 BPP 1881 LXXVIII, 2–5.

56 Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender', *passim*.

57 Michael Anderson, *Family structure in nineteenth-century Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1971); David Thomson, "'I am not my father's keeper": families and the elderly in nineteenth-century England', *Law and History Review*, 2 (1984), 265–86.

58 Goose, 'Poverty, old age and gender', 378; Goose, 'Workhouse populations'.

**Table 8 Pauper inmates aged 60 and over in Lancashire workhouses, 1881**

Workhouse	Total		Over 59		Females		Sex ratio
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
<b>Conurbation</b>							
Chorlton	661	39.8	305	38.0	356	41.5	86
Liverpool Brownlow Hill	1,080	34.2	527	35.7	553	32.9	95
Manchester (Crumpsall)	1,208	42.3	606	44.3	602	40.5	101
Manchester (New Bridge)	108	53.5	96	73.8	12	16.7	800
Prestwich	125	46.1	60	48.8	65	43.9	92
Salford	323	22.2	181	25.0	142	19.3	127
Salford (Pendleton)	195	78.9	46	88.5	149	76.4	31
Toxteth Park	244	38.5	124	38.8	120	38.3	103
West Derby (Mill Road)	96	23.2	50	22.6	46	23.8	109
West Derby (Rice Lane)	850	49.5	438	52.3	412	46.8	106
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>4,890</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>2433</b>	<b>40.2</b>	<b>2,457</b>	<b>37.4</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>Urban industrial</b>							
Ashton under Lyne	276	36.0	172	42.6	104	28.7	165
Barton upon Irwell	75	46.3	49	52.7	26	37.7	188
Blackburn	235	32.4	156	38.5	79	24.7	197
Bolton	319	30.1	184	34.6	135	25.6	136
Burnley	102	37.1	68	40.5	34	31.8	200
Bury	186	29.9	117	32.4	69	26.4	170
Chorley	55	41.4	38	52.8	17	27.9	224
Leigh	65	23.3	49	31.2	16	13.1	306
Oldham	242	28.5	141	30.2	101	26.4	140
Prescot	184	38.7	128	44.0	56	30.3	229
Preston	250	33.7	143	36.3	107	30.8	134
Rochdale	217	33.9	134	38.7	83	28.2	161
Warrington	91	23.9	66	29.9	25	15.7	264
Wigan	128	25.0	87	30.0	41	18.6	212
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2,425</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>1532</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>26.1</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Rural</b>							
Barrow-in-Furness	18	14.8	14	17.7	4	9.3	350
Clitheroe	49	39.8	40	44.0	9	28.1	444
Fylde	52	34.9	38	39.6	14	26.4	271
Garstang	7	24.1	6	35.3	1	8.3	600
Haslingden	89	31.8	65	40.4	24	20.2	271
Lancaster	34	35.4	25	40.3	9	26.5	278
Lunesdale	20	54.1	14	60.9	6	42.9	233
Ormskirk	95	34.5	72	41.1	23	23.0	313
Ulverston	97	38.3	71	50.0	26	23.4	273
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>461</b>	<b>33.8</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>40.8</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>297</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,776</b>	<b>36.0</b>	<b>4,310</b>	<b>38.8</b>	<b>3,466</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>124</b>

Source: CEBs (see footnote 8).

heavily in favour of men, with all but two workhouses having a sex ratio above 160. The rural workhouses were overwhelmingly dominated by men, the sex ratio never falling below 270.

A full explanation of the overwhelming dominance of men in rural workhouses would require access to admissions and discharge registers, detailed analysis of household structures and a much deeper understanding of the economic strength of the rural family in later nineteenth-century Lancashire. Clearly, these objectives are beyond the scope of the current article. However, an examination of the occupational structure of the 345 men aged 60 and over residing in the workhouses in Barrow-in-Furness, Clitheroe, Fylde, Garstang, Haslingden, Lancaster, Lunesdale, Ormskirk and Ulverston reveals some significant differences between this group and men of the same age residing outside of the workhouse. These 345 men represented 40 per cent of the male workhouse population and this age group was therefore significantly over-represented in the workhouse. Analysis of the occupational structure of this age group shows that the workhouse population was drawn from a relatively narrow economic base, albeit with 22 per cent of male paupers over 59 recording no occupation. Not surprisingly, agricultural labourers were the predominant workhouse group, with almost one quarter of males over 59 recording this occupation, compared with 10 per cent of males of the same age outside the workhouse. Conversely, farmers were by far the biggest economic group among elderly males outside the workhouse, forming 17 per cent, with no workhouse inmates recording their occupation as farmer. The ability of farmers to maintain economic independence into old age and the comparative inability of agricultural labourers to do likewise is immediately apparent. So although Lancashire's system of family farming enabled agriculture to prosper and created a distinct economic and social structure, despite their relatively small numbers agricultural labourers were still vulnerable to poverty in old age to a much greater extent than elderly men in urban areas.<sup>59</sup> This is consistent with the experience of agricultural labourers in Hertfordshire in 1851.<sup>60</sup>

### The marital status of workhouse populations

A spouse is the first and closest member of a kinship group, and being married introduces the possibility of a wider kinship group in the form of the affinal family. Marital status, therefore, is likely to be a crucial determinant of the social and economic

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59 On the composition of the rural workforce in nineteenth-century Lancashire see A. J. Gritt, 'The "survival" of service in the English agricultural labour force: lessons from Lancashire, c.1650–1851', *Agricultural History Review*, 50 (2002), 25–50; A. Mutch, 'The "farming ladder" in north Lancashire, 1840–1914: myth or reality?', *Northern History*, 27 (1991), 162–83; M. Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm: family and household economy in nineteenth-century Lancashire', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), 157–95.

60 Goose, 'Workhouse populations'.

**Table 9** Proportion of unmarried and widows in Lancashire population, 1881

Male	Male	Female
All ages	65.3	66.9
Under 15	100.0	100.0
15–19	99.4	97.3
20–24	75.6	65.7
25–34	32.2	30.8
35–44	17.3	24.1
45–54	17.2	32.1
55–64	24.6	47.9
65+	46.1	72.9

**Source:** 1881 Census of England and Wales, *Vol. III. Ages, condition as to marriage, occupations and birth-places of the people*, BPP 1883 LXXX [C.3722], 338.

stability of families and individuals. Indeed, from a welfare perspective, the presence of a spouse is likely to be pivotal. There has been some debate regarding the role of the family and kin in the history of welfare under both the Old and New Poor Laws. In the very different settings of early nineteenth-century Garstang (Lancashire) and mid-nineteenth century London, King and Lees have shown how household structures were loose and impermanent, and yet kin maintained a clear role regardless of the contrasting welfare regimes and prevailing ideology underpinning relief policies.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, in addition to the absence of the supporting functions of kinship groups which might place the unmarried at an economic disadvantage, policy governing workhouse admissions explicitly incorporated marital status. Widowed women with children, for instance, were often seen as unfortunate and were consequently shown some compassion in the form of outdoor relief. Unmarried mothers, on the other hand, were more likely to be offered the house.<sup>62</sup> Marriage was almost universal in the second half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the proportion of ever-married men and women in the English and Welsh population was 85 per cent in the age group 35 to 44 and 89 per cent in the 45 to 54 age group in 1881. For Lancashire the figures were 84 per cent and 91 per cent.<sup>63</sup> While there is an important distinction to be made between never-married and widowed individuals, for present analysis they will be treated as ‘single’—

61 S. A. King, ‘The English protoindustrial family: old and new perspectives’, *History of the Family*, 8 (2003), 21–43; Lees, ‘Survival of the unfit’. The autobiography of Benjamin Shaw also demonstrates the impermanence of household structures coupled with the strength of kinship in early industrial Lancashire: A. Crosby ed., *Family records of Benjamin Shaw, mechanic of Dent, Dolphinholme and Preston, 1772–1841* (Chester, 1991).

62 Hinde and Turnbull, ‘Populations of two Hampshire workhouses’, 49.

63 BPP 1883 LXXX [C.3722], Table 3, v and Table 7, 336.



that is, without a current spouse. That is not to deny, however, that widows and widowers were more likely to have wider living family, including children and grandchildren.

Table 9 shows the proportion of 'single' people in the entire Lancashire population in 1881 by age group. This indicates that more than three quarters of all men aged 25 to 64 were married. The proportion of married women was somewhat lower, the result of earlier widowhood for women. These figures need to be borne in mind when considering the marital status of workhouse inmates.

Table 10 shows the proportion of unmarried and widowed males in Lancashire workhouses in 1881. It is apparent that, with very few exceptions, between 65 and 90 per cent of the adult male workhouse population was without a spouse. The pattern is reasonably consistent across settlement type and age groups, although the ratio of unmarried to widowed, masked by these figures, undoubtedly did vary. Married men formed a higher proportion of the workhouse population in the conurbations, but to a very large extent they managed to stay out of the workhouse even into old age. Whereas elderly men dominated rural workhouses, and single men were always more vulnerable to poverty than their married peers, it is clear that unmarried and widowed elderly males were a particularly vulnerable group.

The experience of women was slightly different from that of men (Table 11). Whereas there was relative uniformity between the three settlement types, it is also clear that there was a distinct age-specific pattern. Married women are significantly represented in the 30 to 44 age group, forming around one third of the women in this age group overall, albeit with considerable variations in the smaller populations of the rural workhouses. A proportion of these women will have been admitted due to childbirth. Thereafter, the proportion of married women in the workhouse population declines to under 20 per cent in the 44 to 59 age group and below 10 per cent among those over the age of 59.

The additional vulnerability of single men can be demonstrated by a closer examination of the rural population (Table 12). Fifteen per cent (54) of male inmates over 59 were married; almost two fifths (131) of male inmates over 59 were never married. Crucially, this represents half of all males in that age group who had remained unmarried. This contrasts markedly with the elderly female experience where only 5 per cent of unmarried women were workhouse inmates, although they formed more than one quarter of the elderly females in the workhouse. Of the widowed males, one fifth of such individuals were in the workhouse, compared with under 5 per cent of widowed females. However, almost two thirds of elderly female inmates were widows. Marital status was clearly a key determinant of relief. Overall, regardless of settlement type, age and, to a lesser extent, sex, the unmarried were much more likely to find themselves in receipt of indoor relief than their married counterparts.

**Table 10** Proportion of unmarried and widowed males in workhouse population by age group, Lancashire, 1881

Workhouse	Age group			
	15–29	30–44	45–59	60+
<b>Conurbation</b>				
Chorlton	90.1	74.7	68.4	68.2
Liverpool Brownlow Hill	88.9	72.8	66.8	76.0
Manchester (Crumpsall)	91.8	73.6	70.0	74.5
Manchester (New Bridge)	87.5	100.0	77.8	84.4
Prestwich	91.7	42.9	75.0	70.0
Salford	93.8	67.0	56.2	72.9
Salford (Pendleton)	100.0	–	40.0	73.9
Toxteth Park	100.0	74.3	67.3	71.8
West Derby (Mill Road)	79.5	61.3	75.0	68.0
West Derby (Rice Lane)	91.5	63.8	63.4	77.4
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>90.1</b>	<b>71.1</b>	<b>66.4</b>	<b>74.4</b>
<b>Urban industrial</b>				
Ashton under Lyne	90.5	87.5	62.3	77.9
Barton upon Irwell	85.7	77.8	77.3	85.7
Blackburn	97.1	78.7	71.6	63.5
Bolton	86.7	81.8	71.4	78.7
Burnley	90.9	94.4	79.4	89.6
Bury	97.4	75.4	70.7	83.6
Chorley	100.0	100.0	100.0	92.1
Leigh	100.0	90.9	88.2	98.0
Oldham	89.7	85.9	72.6	87.1
Prescot	89.3	90.9	74.1	78.1
Preston	90.0	86.0	61.5	79.7
Rochdale	96.7	77.4	69.1	73.1
Warrington	100.0	52.9	50.0	77.0
Wigan	100.0	78.1	89.7	77.1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>92.9</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>71.8</b>	<b>79.3</b>
<b>Rural</b>				
Barrow-in-Furness	100.0	50.0	100.0	75.0
Clitheroe	71.4	87.5	93.3	85.0
Fylde	100.0	87.5	88.9	86.8
Garstang	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Haslingden	100.0	72.0	69.7	75.4
Lancaster	100.0	100.0	94.1	80.0
Lunesdale	–	–	100.0	85.7
Ormskirk	90.0	80.8	100.0	91.7
Ulverston	100.0	100.0	100.0	83.1
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>83.2</b>	<b>87.5</b>	<b>84.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>91.2</b>	<b>75.7</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>76.9</b>

**Source:** CEBs (see footnote 8).

## The workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881

**Table 11 Proportion of unmarried and widowed females in workhouse population by age group, Lancashire, 1881**

Workhouse	Age group			
	15–29	30–44	45–59	60+
<b>Conurbation</b>				
Chorlton	85.5	68.2	81.8	93.8
Liverpool Brownlow Hill	81.8	66.2	84.7	95.6
Manchester (Crumpsall)	82.0	70.5	84.7	90.5
Manchester (New Bridge)	92.3	81.3	87.5	100.0
Prestwich	85.2	75.0	72.0	86.2
Salford	78.5	66.9	75.4	88.0
Salford (Pendleton)	100.0	92.3	93.5	93.3
Toxteth Park	89.7	67.3	89.7	89.2
West Derby (Mill Road)	87.5	62.5	83.3	93.5
West Derby (Rice Lane)	89.3	65.6	79.2	91.2
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>83.6</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>82.8</b>	<b>92.2</b>
<b>Urban industrial</b>				
Ashton under Lyne	84.4	68.9	85.2	85.6
Barton upon Irwell	90.0	55.6	71.4	92.3
Blackburn	88.5	75.0	78.9	88.6
Bolton	77.1	77.0	80.8	90.2
Burnley	88.9	70.0	83.3	91.2
Bury	83.3	67.2	86.7	88.4
Chorley	100.0	53.8	92.3	76.5
Leigh	52.9	65.4	93.8	81.3
Oldham	79.7	64.6	87.5	92.9
Prescot	89.2	73.2	78.3	87.5
Preston	86.0	72.4	73.8	91.3
Rochdale	82.1	55.2	68.8	67.5
Warrington	80.0	63.6	89.5	87.5
Wigan	75.9	71.4	89.8	87.5
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>82.3</b>	<b>68.5</b>	<b>82.5</b>	<b>87.0</b>
<b>Rural</b>				
Barrow-in-Furness	25.0	50.0	100.0	100.0
Clitheroe	100.0	100.0	71.4	77.8
Fylde	66.7	78.6	85.7	92.9
Garstang	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Haslingden	84.2	70.0	68.2	91.7
Lancaster	100.0	57.1	100.0	88.9
Lunesdale	100.0	66.7	100.0	83.3
Ormskirk	69.2	71.4	77.8	95.7
Ulverston	100.0	63.2	55.6	84.6
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>84.1</b>	<b>69.1</b>	<b>75.4</b>	<b>89.7</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>83.2</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>82.4</b>	<b>90.8</b>

**Source:** CEBs (see footnote 8).

**Table 12 Marital status in Lancashire rural districts, 1881**

	Workhouse inmates aged 60+		Registration district population aged 60+	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Unmarried	131	31	262	531
Married	54	12	1,655	1,211
Widowed	154	73	736	1,673
Indeterminate	6	–	8	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>2,661</b>	<b>3,428</b>

**Source:** CEB (see footnote 8).

## Conclusion

This article has attempted to break new ground by tackling the characteristics of a large, mostly urban, industrial pauper workhouse host—large in scale and diverse in character—while also providing useful comparisons with previous studies. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to fill the gaps in our knowledge regarding the nature and characteristics of nineteenth-century workhouse populations, and how these varied over time and space, both in Lancashire and elsewhere.

This study has revealed some significant aspects of the workhouse populations of Lancashire in 1881. Previous studies have focused on southern and Midland counties, where, in many areas, an over-supply of agricultural labour and low wages led to demographic regimes and economic landscapes that were quite different from those to be found in Lancashire. Lancashire’s relatively high-wage, low-unemployment economy, and the continuing importance of outdoor relief in many Unions, are reflected in the low proportions of the population in receipt of relief, and in the composition of the workhouse populations. Indeed, many significant contrasts between the pauper inmates of Lancashire and elsewhere have been highlighted. We have also shown that there were significant variations within Lancashire, and that the three broad settlement types—conurbation, industrial town and rural union—had contrasting workhouse populations. The workhouse population of ‘prime working age’ was higher in Lancashire than elsewhere, and was particularly high in the conurbations. This may be a product of the more stringent application of the workhouse test in Lancashire compared with elsewhere, which might also have contributed to lower proportions of pauperism in the county. There were very low proportions of child inmates recorded. Boys significantly outnumbered girls in the workhouse populations in all settlement types, with a predominance of females from age 15. Within the adult population there was a was a predominance of women in the conurbations and in most of the urban industrial Unions, albeit with some marked variations between individual Unions and an excess of men from age 45, which increased into old age, across almost all Unions. The dominance of men in the elderly workhouse population was particularly marked in the rural Unions.

Marital status has also been revealed as a significant factor determining relief with married men and women being much less likely to be workhouse inmates than their unmarried counterparts. Indeed, in rural districts unmarried elderly male agricultural labourers were particularly vulnerable, with one half of all single men over 60 being found in workhouses. This might not at first seem to be a surprise, and is entirely consistent with what others have found for rural populations. However, the literature on the agricultural workforce in nineteenth-century Lancashire has emphasised the prevalence of family labour, farm service and high wages for agricultural labourers.<sup>64</sup> It is clear that more work needs to be done on the standard of living, living conditions, lifetime opportunities and prosperity of Lancashire's agricultural labourers in the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

But we should not let rural workhouses and their apparent similarity with rural conditions elsewhere blind us to the fact that Lancashire *was* different. The scale of urban workhouses, and their concentration within a relatively small district in the south of the county, is unparalleled outside London. In January 1881 there were 41 Poor Law Unions with more than 1,000 paupers on indoor relief, of which 24 were in London. Six of the remaining 17 were in Lancashire, and no other county had more than two such Unions.<sup>65</sup> The sheer scale of these institutions renders them worthy of much deeper investigation than they have hitherto received. Feeding, clothing and medically treating such large numbers of paupers required complex logistical solutions, and the management and administration of these institutions was thus complex by nineteenth-century standards. Undoubtedly, this is the reason why many Lancashire workhouses are well documented. Census studies such as this can take us so far, but it is not possible to separate the myriad factors that influenced the characteristics of the pauper populations. Indeed, working with the census alone it is not possible to determine if the patterns are due to demographic trends within the wider population, broad economic conditions, or local policy and practice. Only detailed analysis of local records, undertaken within the context of the statistical base offered by parliamentary papers and census returns, will allow us to begin to unpick these layers.

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64 Gritt, "'Survival' of service"; Mutch, "'Farming ladder'"; Winstanley, 'Industrialisation and the small farm'.

65 The non-metropolitan Unions with more than 1,000 paupers in receipt of indoor relief in January 1881 were as follows (numbers on indoor relief in brackets): Croydon, Surrey (1,230); Brighton, Sussex, (1,285); Portsea Island, Hampshire (1,250); West Ham, Essex (1,141); Bristol, Gloucestershire (1,347); Barton Regis, Gloucestershire, (1,147); Wolverhampton, Staffordshire (1,022); West Bromwich, Staffordshire (1,041); Birmingham, Warwickshire (2880); Liverpool, Lancashire (4,042); West Derby, Lancashire (2,405); Bolton, Lancashire (1,106); Chorlton, Lancashire (1,863); Salford, Lancashire (1,706); Manchester, Lancashire (3,866); Leeds, Yorkshire WR (1,300); Sheffield, Yorkshire WR (1,336). *Return of paupers in receipt of relief on the 1st day of January 1881*. BPP 1882 LVIII [339].