



Changes in precarious employment in the United States:

A longitudinal analysis

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What is the issue?

Precarious employment (PE) is an important public health issue. Broadly defined as the accumulation of multiple unjust aspects of employment quality, PE is often characterized by unpredictable work schedules, irregular hours, low wages, few benefits, and limited workplace protections. Most prior studies do not capture the holistic experience of U.S. workers and the interrelation of the various aspects of employment quality, such as hours and wages. Our employment affects many aspects of our lives, and precariously employed workers may be at a higher risk of poor physical and mental health. Therefore, it is essential to investigate long-term trends in PE.

This study uses a multidimensional measure to illustrate changes in precarious employment in the United States over time.

What was done? How?

Employment data, collected between 1988 and 2016 from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth and the Occupational Information Network database, was used to analyze changes in PE. Researchers constructed a multidimensional measure of PE among 7,568 individuals. Their multidimensional measure of PE was based on seven employment-related dimensions:



1

Material rewards



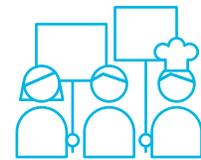
2

Work time arrangements



3

Stability



4

Worker's rights



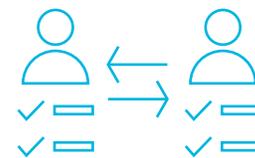
5

Collective organization or empowerment



6

Interpersonal relations



7

Training and employability opportunities

For each dimension, respondents were given a score between 0-1. A total PE score (PES) was calculated by summing the scores of each dimension.

What was found?

Precarity scores were highest over time for:

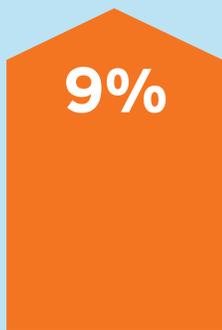


PES increases (1988 to 2016)

41% of all respondents had some increase in their level of precarity



OVERALL
increase
in PES



These findings are consistent with literature, which finds Americans are experiencing increased workloads, longer workdays and growing job insecurity.

What does this mean and for whom?



Precarious employment trends show increases for people of color, both women and men, people at all education levels and both people of lower and higher incomes, meaning that worsening employment quality is widespread in the United States. Increases in PE suggest that worker health is at stake and a pervasive public health issue. A better understanding of these trends can help us identify the role that work may play in widening health inequities and inform interventions and policies designed to improve the lives of workers.

For more information:



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