

Contingent Work

EMPLOYMENT FACTS FROM ACTEW



What is Contingent Work?

- Contingent work includes permanent part-time*, temporary part-time, temporary full-time, and self-employment.
- Although contingent work includes a wide spectrum of employment scenarios, typically it is work that is not secure, pays a low wage, and rarely provides benefits. ^[1, 2, 3]
- It is also known as "precarious" ^[1], "vulnerable" ^[4], or "non-standard" ^[5].

The Rise of Contingent Work in Canada

- Contingent employment increased dramatically in the early 1990s. ^[1, 6, 7] Currently almost one-third of Canadian workers are employed contingently ^[1] with higher rates in some areas, like Toronto ^[3].
- Temporary employment has increased almost twice as much as permanent employment. It accounted for approximately one-fifth of employment growth from 1997 to 2003. ^[7]

What's Wrong with Contingent Work?

- Contingent workers are not fully protected or supported by Canadian employment and labour laws and policies, which are designed around the full-time permanent model of employment. ^[4, 8]
- Contingent workers are less likely to have access to workplace-specific benefits, such as health plans ^[9] and union coverage ^[1, 8], and government-related benefits, such as Employment Insurance (EI) ^[8, 9, 11], the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board ^[9], and the Canadian Pension Plan ^[10].
- While exact numbers vary, two-thirds ^[11] to three-quarters ^[9] of contingent workers have no financial compensation when they are sick.
- Contingent workers are more likely to suffer work related injuries ^[9, 12] and report high levels of stress due to the unpredictability of their work schedules, availability of employment, and income ^[9, 11].
- Contingent workers are paid much less on average than non-contingent workers. ^[8, 3]

* Part-time is defined as 30 hours/week or less by the Employment Standards Act, 2000

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- Workplaces and industries that tend to hire contingent workers are less likely to be regulated, resulting in more opportunity for violations of health and safety regulations, discrimination, and harassment. ^[9, 13]
- Contingent workers are at greater risk of unemployment. ^[6, 11]

Women More Likely Than Men to Be Contingent Workers

- Among women, 43% of those of a visible minority and 37% of non-visible minorities are contingent workers. In comparison, 27% of white men and 28% visible minority men are contingent workers. ^[8]
- Women working part-time made up 27% of the total Canadian workforce in 2004. In comparison, part-time male employees made up 11% of the workforce. ^[5] Women account for about 7 in 10 of all part-time employees, a figure that has changed little since the 1970's. ^[5] More than a quarter of women working part-time do so because they cannot find full-time work. ^[5, 2]
- In 2004, 14% of women worked temporarily, compared with 12% of men. ^[5] Almost one-third of young women, age 15-24, who work are employed temporarily. ^[5]

Marginalized Groups More Likely to Work Contingently

- Racialized people are more likely to work contingently. ^[9] Of all groups of workers, women of colour are the least likely to be employed all year and have the fewest weeks of employment per year. ^[14] Well more than half of immigrant women who arrived in Canada between 2001 and 1991 work part-time. ^[5]
- Young people, especially young women, are more likely to work contingently. 68% of employed women and 59% of employed men aged 15-24 do contingent work. ^[8]
- Older women are more likely to work contingently. 30% of women aged 55-64 are part-time permanent or temporary workers compared with 11% of men. ^[8]

Forms of Contingent Work

There are many forms of contingent work and some are far more insecure and low paying than others ^[15]. Women are more likely to work in the most precarious situations ^[8, 15] and always receive lower hourly wages than men ^[16]:

Full-time Temporary:

- Of all contingent workers, full-time temporary workers are most likely to gain full-time permanent employment. ^[6] This is the form of contingent work that women are least likely to do; only 44% of full-time temporary workers are women. ^[8]
- A temporary full-time worker makes on average \$4 less an hour than a permanent full-time worker. ^[8]

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Part-Time Permanent:

- Almost three quarters of part-time permanent workers are women ^[8], although women's hold on this work is declining. ^[16] In 2001, 17% of all women workers, compared with 5% of all male workers, held part-time permanent jobs. ^[8]
- A part-time permanent worker makes on average \$6 less an hour than a full-time permanent worker. ^[8]

Part-Time Temporary:

- Women are almost twice as likely as men to be part-time temporary workers. ^[16] The exception is among youth, age 15-24, where women account for only slightly more of these workers than men. ^[8]
- A part-time temporary worker makes on average \$7 less an hour than a full-time temporary worker. ^[8]
- Although part-time temporary workers are covered by EI, because they must work the same number of hours as all other employees to qualify they rarely are able to access EI training grants and loans – unless they can demonstrate that they are completely unemployed. ^[9]

Own-Account Self-Employed or Independent Contractor:

- These are self-employed workers who do not employ others. ^[15] While women's self-employment has dramatically increased in recent decades, women are much less likely than men to be self-employed employers. ^[16] The majority of self-employed women are in the own-account category. ^[16]
- Own-account self-employed women make much less than men. ^[16] 62% of self-employed women are own-account and unincorporated; in 2000, almost two-thirds of these women made less than \$20,000. ^[16]
- The own-account self-employed are not covered by employment standards or collective bargaining legislation in most Canadian jurisdictions, ^[15] have no benefits, and must provide for their own pensions, sick or maternity leaves ^[9]. Employers who hire independent contractors download costs of training, insurance and equipment onto these workers. ^[9]

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