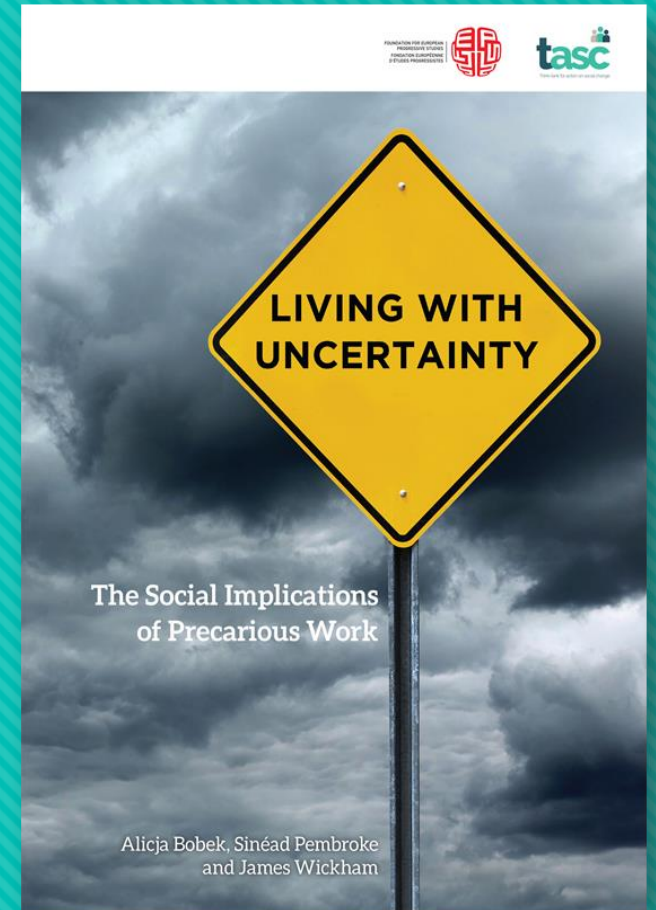


Living with uncertainty: The social implications of precarious work



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FEPS-TASC

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Aim of the project

The aims of the project were to look at:

- The extent and forms of precarious work in Ireland today
- The social implications of precarious work for young people's lives.



Definition of precarious work

- The ILO reported, “There are no agreed official definitions of what constitutes precarious employment” (ILO 2012: 29).
- Subjective insecurity’, (the extent to which workers worry that they may lose their jobs) versus ‘objective insecurity’, (contractual temporariness.)
- For the purpose of this project, focus on the employment relationship itself (objective insecurity) rather than on the experience of work (subjective insecurity).

Method

- This was investigated through a mixed-methods approach, which included:
- **statistical analysis** of CSO data and **qualitative in-depth interviews** with 15 significant informants and 40 precarious workers.

Life/work Situation	Part-time (irregular)	Self-employment no employees	Temporary contract	More than one type of precarious work
Single				
Single with child/children				
In a relationship				
In a relationship with child/children				

Method

Recruitment criteria for precarious workers included:

- Men and women,
- 18-30
- living in Ireland
- Employed (or have been employed) on:
 - Part-time If-and-when/zero-hour basis,
 - On a fixed term contract,
 - Self-employed/ solo-self employed.



Sectoral analysis of precarious work

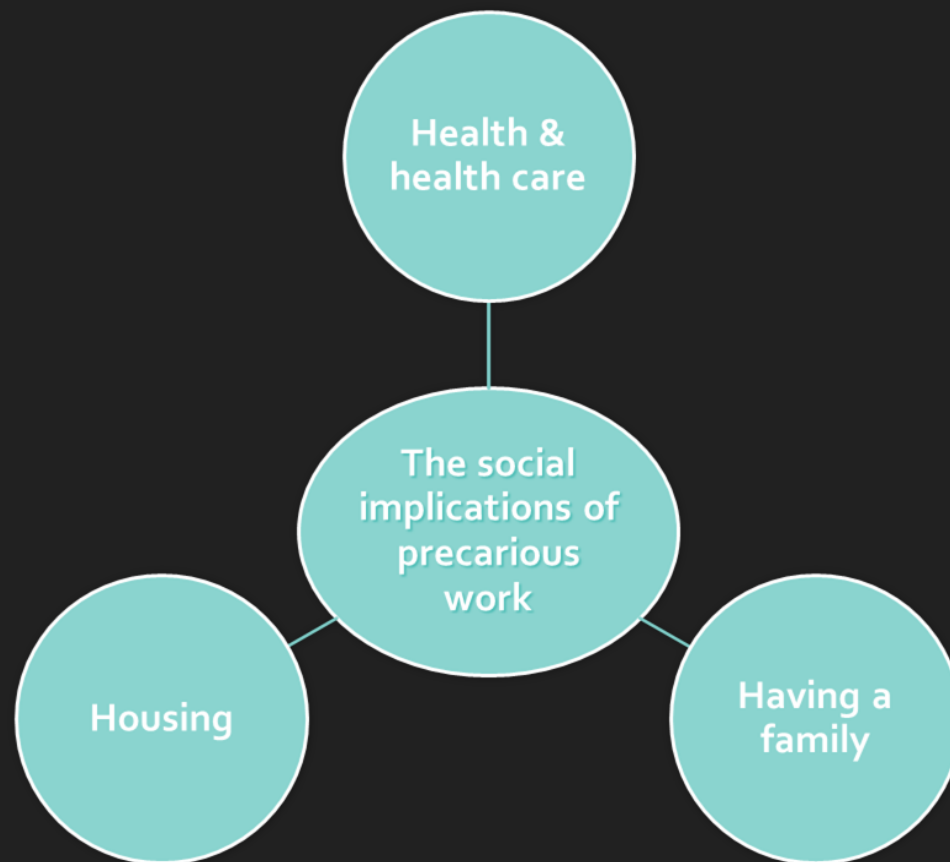
Table 3.1. Non-standard employment in selected NACE sectors

	Part time	Temp	Solo self-employment (as proportion of overall self-employment)	Overall self-employment
Construction	16.30%	11.50%	72%	35%
Wholesale and Retail	33.30%	8%	42%	12%
Accommodation	38.50%	11.20%	35%	11%
Transportation and storage	15.50%	4.80%	80%	15%
Admin and support	35.20%	9.20%	72%	12%
Human Health	32.30%	7.20%	65%	5%
Education	23.50%	12%	81%	5%
Other	38.70%	11.30%	76%	26%
National average	24	7.7	72	16

Source: CSO, QHNS Database (own calculations)

Note: highlighted cells indicate rate of non-standard employment higher than national average, with darker shades assigned for cells with very high rates

Findings



Health and accessing healthcare services



I had terrible mental health issues! And it was all work related. Like, very, very bad anxiety. It's the mental health that does it worst, and depression really hits. And you wouldn't expect work to have that effect on you, but it really did. I think mental health is the biggest thing, and the stress of not knowing.

Sara, temporary commercial archaeologist



I didn't want to annoy people; I wanted to keep my job. So I went into work anyway (after bicycle accident) even though I was concussed.

Linda, temporary legal researcher

- “sickness presenteeism” (Virtanen 2003), where workers still come in when sick
- This is common in precarious employment, even when it is paid.



Between the doctor's appointment, the antibiotics and the 4 days off work, it was approaching 600 euros that I will never see back again

Elaine, temporary commercial archaeologist

- Can't afford to be sick.
- Most precarious workers are not entitled to paid sick leave.
- The triple burden of taking unpaid sick leave, seeing a GP and medication.



I remember the feeling of, shit what am I going to do, I don't have enough money to do me for the next week?! I didn't even have 40 euros a week to buy food. It would have had to come down to one or the other: food or inhaler.

Barbara, temporary (fixed term) lecturer

- Asthma was one such chronic health condition that came up numerous times during the course of the interviews.
- when a person on a precarious contract has a recurring or chronic health condition, then accessing healthcare services becomes a long-term financial burden that cannot be avoided.

Housing



I was homeless for 3 months, because my last landlord he wanted to sell the house, so we had to move out. And then I was looking for a house for 3 months and I just couldn't find anywhere! Like I was sleeping in my boyfriend's house, and at the weekends I'd go home or stay in another friend's house, just to keep it looking like it was normal."

Linda

- Hidden Homelessness was experienced by most precarious workers we interviewed at one point or another in their rental lives.



We've been in this apartment for 6 years, and we started in the place at 700 per month and we're now on 1200! So both this year and the last time it was increased, we've tried to think of changing, but it's a pointless exercise of spending a week crazily looking for a place, which looks better, cheaper, or even if it's priced equally or higher but it's a better apartment, it's just not possible. And then we end up just saying that we'll accept the increase and stay for another year and then we'll see.

Martha, postdoctoral researcher on a fixed term contract

- The rental crisis means that precarious workers are in an even more vulnerable position because of the double precarity they face: insecure employment and insecure housing.



I'm still living at home with my mum and dad, and brother...I'd love to move but not a hope I'd be able to afford it.

Eva, part-time if-and-when retail worker

- Forced infantilisation – unable to live an independent life outside of the family home.



Family formation



I would really think twice about planning a family because I know how it is out there, and I don't want to bring children to the world when I can't cope financially. I don't want to have to worry about not having food for my kids the next day. Last week I only had 31 euro in my account, that could happen any other time.

Rosie, Teaching Fellow in a university on a fixed term contract

- Many precarious workers spoke about postponing having children until their situation changed to something more secure.



I'm ten years there and I have literally never worked the same hours, the same days, week-on, week-off. My children, especially when they were younger, you'd have to get somebody to collect them from school and then they'd get their dinner at like 5 o'clock, sometimes they weren't getting it until I'd get home at 9. That's the way it was. It is very, very wrong.

Zoe, part-time if-and-when retail worker

- Obligated to accept any shifts and therefore have difficulties with organizing formal childcare around her hours.

When my first one was born I gave up working because it was just cheaper to do it that way. And then when we moved to another country and everything was free, so we didn't have to worry about that. And then when we came back here I worked part-time. So my children did the ECCE and then we paid for an hour every day, and my wages just about covered it. So I just worked part-time in order to pay. Next January I'll probably have to give up working again because it's just not worth my while; we can't afford it. My wages don't cover childcare.

Peter, English Language Teacher on a temporary contract

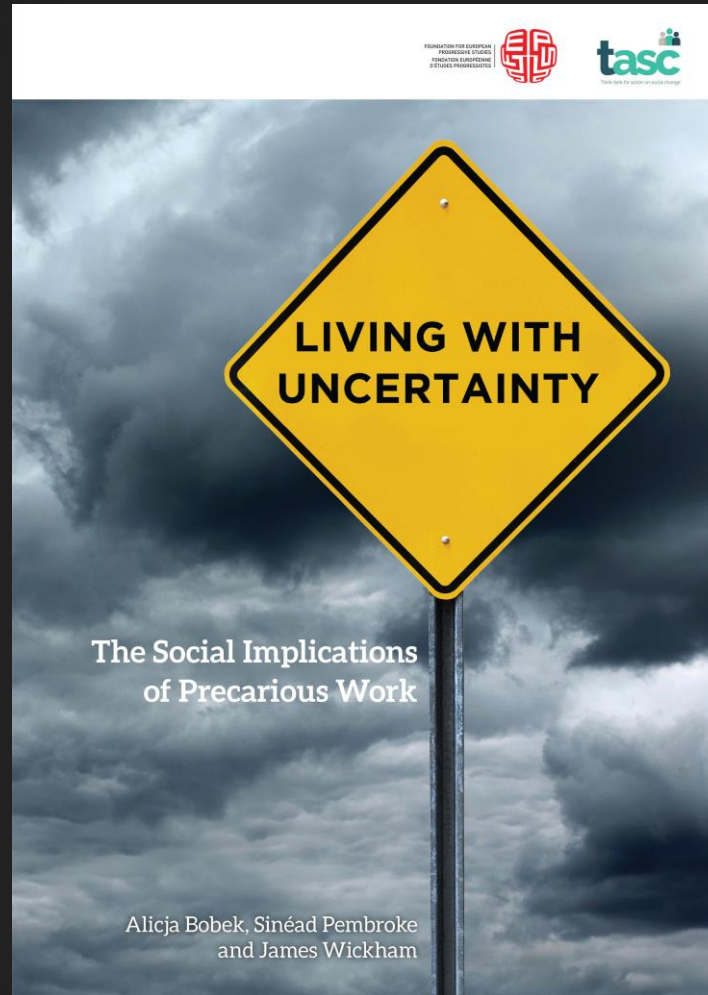
- Formal childcare is unaffordable.
- Forces some to give up work.



Conclusion

- Precarious work creates a dependency on other people, and forced infantilisation, not able to have an independent life. But **what if you don't have no one else to depend on?**
- Precarious workers **can't afford to access healthcare**, particularly primary healthcare services. Accessing primary care services and no paid sick leave make being ill unaffordable.
- Precarious workers are **having to make a choice about whether to have children or not**, even though they really want children.
- Precarious workers **can't buy, rent is increasing and dependent on "nice landlords", forcing many to live at home and "hidden homelessness"**.
- Ultimately, precarious work practices create **precarious lives**.

Thank you



LIVING WITH UNCERTAINTY

The Social Implications of
Precarious Work

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