

Does temporary employment contribute to health inequalities?

FACTSHEET

Based on a literature review produced by
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Erasmus University Medical Center Rotterdam, for the Equity Action project
[PDF complete review](#)

This factsheet summarises the main findings of a literature review – *Flexibility of the labour market and health inequalities* – which looked at the effect of temporary employment on health inequalities.

A significant percentage of the European workforce is currently working under temporary employment contracts. There is debate about whether such temporary employment contributes to health inequalities.

The review aimed to:

- investigate the association between temporary employment and different measures of health.
- analyse whether observed health inequalities are more prevalent in specific subgroups
- investigate which specific aspects of flexibility of the labour market contribute to health inequalities across different countries.

The review looked at 21 publications in the international literature, which investigated the influence of temporary work on health.

Key findings

- Temporary employees had an increased morbidity, such as mental health problems and injuries, compared to permanent employees. Mortality was also higher among temporary workers.
- Workers with a low socioeconomic status may be particularly vulnerable to the adverse health effects of temporary employment.
- There were differences between countries that may be explained by differences in the level of employment protection and income security between European regions.
- The adverse health effects of temporary work may be more profound among specific subgroups and in specific European regions. However, due to the small number of studies from different European regions and among specific subgroups, more research is needed to corroborate the results of this meta-analysis.



Main conclusions

To reduce health inequalities among employed people across different types of employment, the ‘flexicurity model’ is recommended. This model includes:

- flexible contractual arrangements
- a focus on lifelong learning to ensure employability of workers
- active labour market policies to ease the transition to new jobs, and
- a modern social security system that provides adequate income support and facilitates labour market mobility.

For more information

Flexibility of the labour market and health inequalities: A literature review

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Available from: www.equityaction-project.eu

