

Non-standard work on the rise

Harvey Krahn

Most employed Canadians still have only one full-time, permanent paid job, although the relative size of this majority is slowly declining as various forms of non-standard work become more common. Part-time work has been increasing since the middle of the century, but the trend accelerated during the 1981-82 recession and again in the recession that ushered in the 1990s. Own-account self-employment¹ rates have been slowly rising, and temporary or contract work arrangements are also becoming more common. In addition, the proportion of workers holding more than one job has risen since the early 1980s.

Employers in both the private and public sectors have attempted to increase their flexibility and reduce costs by making greater use of part-time, temporary or contract labour.² Some workers – students and young parents, for example – may prefer the flexibility of part-time or temporary work;³ others, particularly professionals, may enjoy the greater autonomy of self-employment. However, faced with a difficult labour market, many take such jobs involuntarily (Noreau, 1994) or work at a second job to “make ends meet.” The advantages of non-standard work are frequently offset by less job security, lower pay and fewer fringe benefits (Krahn, 1992). Consequently, the growth and distribution of non-standard jobs affect levels and patterns of labour market inequality.⁴

This article uses data from Statistics Canada’s annual General Social Survey (GSS) and the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS). LFS estimates are used to

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Methodology and definitions

The 1994 General Social Survey (GSS, Cycle 9) contacted approximately 11,500 Canadians. The study included a main sample of 10,000 respondents aged 15 and older and a sub-sample of 1,500 individuals aged 55 to 74. The data were weighted to the non-institutionalized population aged 15 and older in the 10 provinces. Cycle 4 (1989) surveyed 9,338 Canadians aged 15 and older. Both surveys were conducted by telephone and had high response rates (80% in 1989 and 81% in 1994).⁶

The analysis covers only employed persons aged 15 to 64. Individuals usually working less than 30 hours per week (at all jobs, if holding more than one) are defined as part-time workers. Anyone holding more than one job (whether full- or part-time, self-employed or paid) is classified as a multiple jobholder. Among the self-employed, own-account workers (who have no paid employees) are distinguished from employers (who have one or more paid employees) and labelled non-standard workers.⁷ Temporary or contract workers are those reporting a job with a specific end-date. The analysis of such workers is restricted to paid workers, since temporary or contract work has a different connotation for the self-employed. (In the case of persons holding more than one job, the main job – that is, the one with the most hours – is used to identify own-account and temporary or contract workers.)

outline the long-term expansion of part-time employment in the Canadian economy. GSS results are used to focus on the developments in part-time work, temporary or contract work, own-account self-employment and multiple jobholding between 1989 and 1994. Data are analyzed by age, sex and industry (see *Methodology and definitions*).⁵

For industry comparisons, a 10-category classification is used. Agriculture is distinguished from other natural resource-based industries (forestry, fishing, mining and utilities). These two industry groups, along with construction and manufacturing, constitute the goods-producing sector. The service sector is sub-divided into 6 categories: distributive services (transportation, communications and wholesale trade); business services (finance, insurance and services to business management); social services (education, health and welfare); public administration; retail trade; and other consumer services (food and beverage, accommodation, recreational, and other personal services). Retail trade and other consumer services are considered “lower-tier” services because employment in these industries is associated with lower pay, fewer benefits, less job security, and lower skill requirements than employment in the other, “upper-tier,” service industries.⁸

In addition to the part-time employment estimates, many other GSS results used in this study have counterparts from the Labour Force Survey. For reasons of sampling variability, questionnaire design, methodology, and so on, estimates from the two sources will differ. However, these differences are not large enough to alter the conclusions drawn.

Part-time employment

From 1976 to 1994, the proportion of workers employed part time climbed significantly, from 11% to 17% (LFS data). This trend underestimates part-time job creation, however, since many individuals holding several part-time jobs are classified as full-time workers (those working 30 or more hours

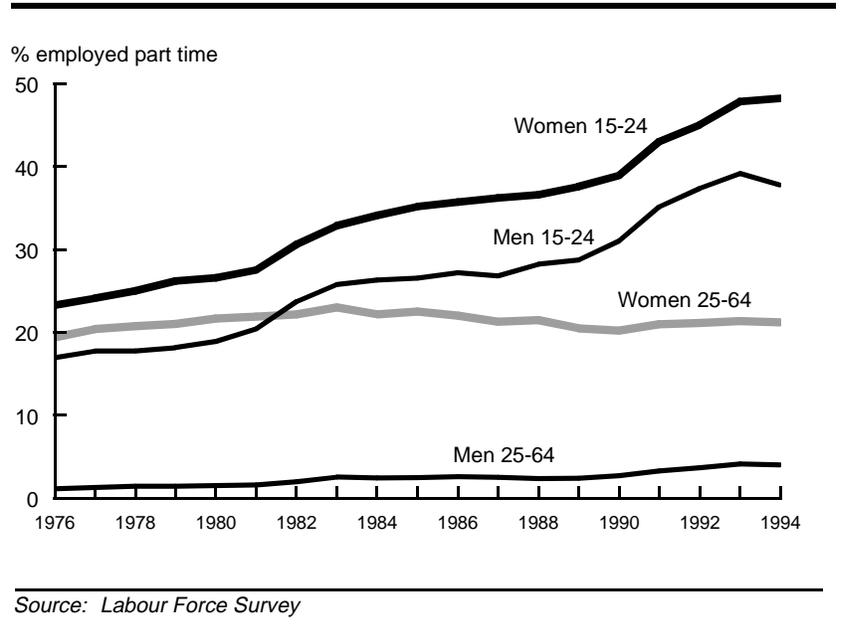
weekly at all jobs combined), and the number of multiple jobholders has been increasing (Pold, 1994). Between 1976 and 1994, the number of part-time jobs actually increased at an average rate of 6.9% annually, compared with 1.5% for full-time jobs. By 1994, 23% of all jobs were part-time, although only 17% of all workers were classified as such.⁹

Part-time rates increased slowly during the 1970s, followed by a sharp jump coinciding with the 1981-82 recession (from 13% in 1981 to 15% in 1983). Between 1983 and 1990, the part-time rate changed very little. But the 1990-92 recession pushed the rate to 17% in 1993.¹⁰ Over the long term, involuntary part-time work also increased, from 12% of part-time workers in 1976 to 23% in 1990 and 36% in 1994.

Rising part-time employment was experienced largely by 15 to 24 year-olds (Chart A), whose rates shot up dramatically during the two recessions. No doubt, many young part-timers are students, for whom a job with fewer hours may be preferable. However, the difficult labour market over the past several years has led to a substantial decline in labour force participation by young people, from 69% in 1990 to 63% in 1994. At the same time, enrolments in postsecondary institutions have risen and young people appear to be remaining in school longer. Corresponding declines in the number of youths employed full time, from 1.6 million in 1990 to 1.2 million in 1994, may partly reflect the growth in involuntary part-time employment and rising school attendance.

Part-time employment for male workers aged 25 to 64 has also increased, but from a much lower base. In contrast, rates for women in this age group have stayed relatively constant.

Chart A
Part-time employment has been rising among youths since the early eighties.



Nevertheless, GSS data show that in 1994 women aged 15 to 64 were still three times as likely as their male counterparts to be working part time (Table 1). Between 1989 and 1994, part-time rates rose slightly for men (from 7% to 8%) but declined marginally for women (25% in 1989 and 24% in 1994).¹¹ By 1994, about 2 million Canadians aged 15 to 64 were working part time, while almost 11 million were full-time workers.

To some extent, part-time work continues to be a service-sector phenomenon (Table 2). In 1989, roughly one-third of workers in the lower-tier services (retail trade and other consumer services) were employed part time, although the proportion had declined slightly by 1994. In these sectors, uneven levels of demand (peak hours for shopping, entertainment and restaurants) provide a strong incentive for using part-timers. The high rates in the upper-tier social services (24% and 22% in 1989 and

1994, respectively) show that this sector also continues to rely heavily on part-time workers (in teaching and nursing, for example).

Multiple jobs

Partly because of rising part-time rates, multiple jobholding has also become more common. Between 1989 and 1994, the proportion of employed 15 to 64 year-olds with more than one job rose from 5% to 7% (Table 1).¹² By 1994, close to one million (944,000) working-age Canadians were holding two or more jobs.

In 1989, few age and sex differences were apparent among multiple jobholders, with the exception of lower rates among 45 to 54 year-old women and 15 to 24 year-old men. But by 1994, women in all age groups – particularly those aged 15 to 24 – had higher rates of multiple jobholding. In fact, one in eight (124,000) women in this age group reported more than one job in 1994.

Table 1
Non-standard employment by age and sex

	Total employment		Part-time		Temporary *		Multiple jobholders		Own account **	
	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994
	'000									
Both sexes	12,468	12,799	1,905	1,972	799	970	635	944	858	1,147
Women	5,535	5,764	1,400	1,379	408	433	302	486	327	486
15-24	1,091	923	437	425	136	152	66	124	31	--
25-34	1,654	1,555	332	258	110	116	98	126	84	118
35-44	1,427	1,700	327	360	98	82	89	140	108	148
45-54	906	1,147	193	209	45	70	26	65	69	151
55-64	457	439	111	126	--	--	--	30	35	48
Men	6,933	7,035	505	593	391	537	333	458	531	661
15-24	1,151	1,043	352	380	151	161	48	73	57	51
25-34	2,057	1,952	72	87	112	177	104	142	126	156
35-44	1,805	1,913	--	54	52	110	86	126	154	193
45-54	1,183	1,473	--	32	27	62	73	72	117	133
55-64	736	654	36	40	48	27	--	45	77	128
	% of total employment †									
Both sexes	100	100	15	15	8	9	5	7	7	9
Women	100	100	25	24	8	8	5	8	6	8
15-24	100	100	40	46	13	17	6	13	3	--
25-34	100	100	20	17	7	8	6	8	5	8
35-44	100	100	23	21	8	6	6	8	8	9
45-54	100	100	21	18	6	7	3	6	8	13
55-64	100	100	24	29	--	--	--	7	8	11
Men	100	100	7	8	7	9	5	7	8	9
15-24	100	100	31	36	14	16	4	7	5	5
25-34	100	100	4	4	6	10	5	7	6	8
35-44	100	100	--	3	4	7	5	7	9	10
45-54	100	100	--	2	3	5	6	5	10	9
55-64	100	100	5	6	9	6	--	7	10	20

Source: General Social Survey (Cycles 4 and 9)

* Excludes the self-employed.

** Self-employed workers without paid employees.

† For temporary workers, this calculation excludes the self-employed.

Many of them were probably holding two (or more) part-time jobs, given that the part-time employment rate for 15 to 24 year-olds was very high (46%).

The highest rate of multiple jobholding in 1989 (10%) was found among workers employed in other consumer services (Table 2). In 1994, the highest rates were in retail trade and social services (both 10%). These trends indicate that pressures or enticements to take a second job are no longer restricted to those employed in the lower tiers of the labour market.

Own-account self-employment

In 1989, 7% of 15 to 64 year-old workers were self-employed on their own account (that is, they had no paid employees). A similar proportion were employers (with one or more paid employees). By 1994, the proportion of employers had declined marginally (to 6%), while that of own-account workers had increased (to 9%), continuing a long-term trend (Crompton, 1993). In 1994, well over one million working-age Canadians were "their own boss," without the additional help of employees.

As in 1989, men in 1994 were still more likely than women to work on their own account, but only slightly so (9% of working men versus 8% of working women). In fact, among 45 to 54 year-old workers, the proportion who were self-employed without paid help was higher for women (13%) than for men (9%). In contrast, 20% of employed men aged 55 to 64 were own-account workers (up from 10% in 1989), compared with only 11% of women this age (up from 8%).

Table 2
Non-standard employment among 15 to 64 year-olds by industry *

	Total employment		Part-time		Temporary **		Multiple jobholders		Own account ***	
	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994	1989	1994
	'000									
All industries †	12,468	12,799	1,905	1,972	799	970	635	944	858	1,147
Agriculture	278	369	--	50	--	--	--	--	124	190
Natural resource-based	818	759	--	--	28	58	--	--	--	--
Manufacturing	1,779	1,560	71	62	73	90	88	75	39	32
Construction	626	671	35	52	69	95	--	58	81	151
Distributive services	1,326	1,366	89	105	50	72	54	75	86	120
Business services	1,337	1,556	135	179	52	78	78	107	123	229
Social services	2,050	2,317	484	521	184	273	143	225	77	86
Public administration	1,124	908	74	47	90	99	41	54	--	--
Retail trade	1,628	1,613	515	472	88	52	59	160	117	91
Other consumer services	1,337	1,584	424	456	136	128	130	124	152	219
	% of total employment ††									
All industries	100	100	15	15	8	9	5	7	7	9
Agriculture	100	100	--	14	--	--	--	--	45	51
Natural resource-based	100	100	--	--	4	8	--	--	--	--
Manufacturing	100	100	4	4	4	6	5	5	2	2
Construction	100	100	6	8	17	22	--	9	13	23
Distributive services	100	100	7	8	4	6	4	5	6	9
Business services	100	100	10	12	5	6	6	7	9	15
Social services	100	100	24	22	10	13	7	10	4	4
Public administration	100	100	7	5	8	11	4	6	--	--
Retail trade	100	100	32	29	7	4	4	10	7	6
Other consumer services	100	100	32	29	13	11	10	8	11	14

Source: General Social Survey (Cycles 4 and 9)

* For industry inclusions see Methodology and definitions.

** Excludes the self-employed.

*** Self-employed workers without paid employees.

† Includes workers who did not state their industry of employment.

For temporary workers, this calculation excludes the self-employed.

Own-account self-employment continues to be the preserve of older workers, perhaps because they have more of the experience, skills, capital, and contacts required to succeed in their own business. In some cases, older displaced workers may have more difficulty than younger individuals in finding paid employment, with self-employment the only alternative.

As expected, own-account self-employment was very high in agriculture (51% in 1994, Table 2). Almost one in four (23%) workers in the construction industry were in

this category, along with 15% of those working in the upper-tier business services and 14% of workers in the lower-tier consumer services. With the exception of consumer services, where large numbers of young workers are employed, this industry pattern generally mirrors the age-distribution of self-employment described earlier. The largest increases in own-account workers between 1989 and 1994 occurred in construction and in business services, sectors where it might be easier (compared with manufacturing or social services, for example) to start a business.

Temporary or contract work

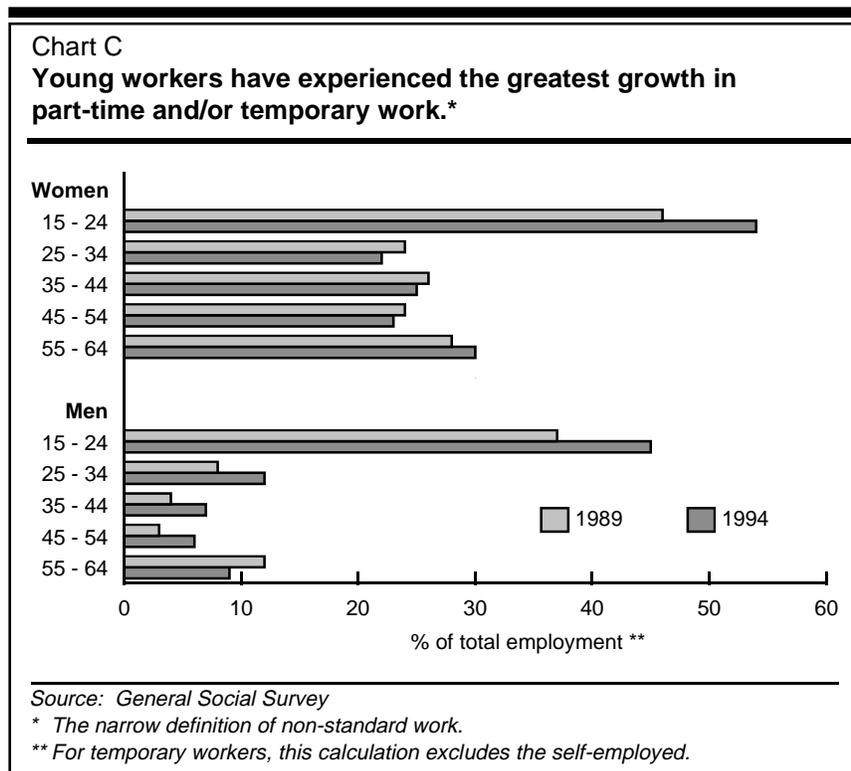
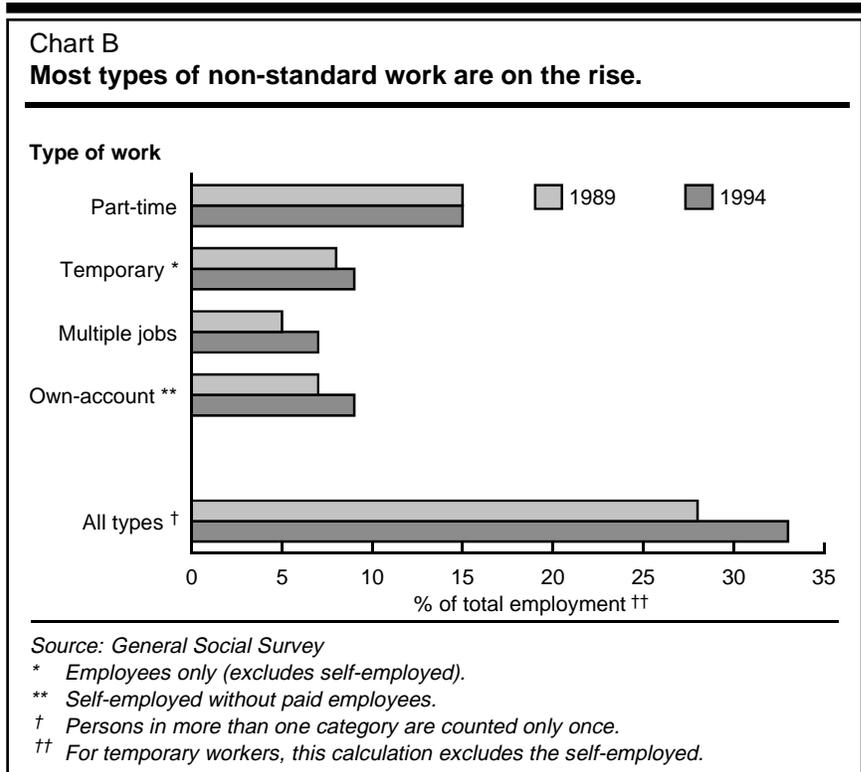
The analysis of temporary or contract work is restricted to employees (85% of all working 15 to 64 year-olds), because the concept of a temporary job is not particularly meaningful for the self-employed. In 1989, 8% of employees (799,000) identified themselves as temporary workers (in a job with a specified end-date). By 1994, almost one million (970,000) or 9% of all 15 to 64 year-old employees were in temporary or contract positions.¹³

Younger employees were more likely than middle-aged or older

employees to be in temporary or contract jobs in 1989 or 1994, but this age pattern became more pronounced over the five-year period. By 1994, roughly one in six employees aged 15 to 24 (17% of women and 16% of men) were in limited-term jobs. In contrast, only 5% to 7% of both women and men aged 35 or older held temporary or contract positions.

In both years examined, low rates of temporary employment were found in manufacturing, distributive services and business services. In contrast, high rates were seen for employees in construction (over one in five employees in 1994), social services, and other consumer services, as well as public administration.

The relatively high rates of temporary employment in social services (13% in 1994) and public administration (11%) are noteworthy. Together, these two non-market sectors accounted for 30% of



all employees aged 15 to 64 but 38% of all temporary or contract workers. The public sector appears to have become more reliant on this form of non-standard work.

Varieties of non-standard work

Four types of non-standard work have been examined in this study. However, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, many part-time workers are in temporary jobs. With overlaps taken into account, 33% of 15 to 64 year-olds who were employed in 1994 (at the time the survey was carried out) were engaged in at least one of the four types of non-standard work, up from 28% in 1989 (Chart B). A more restrictive definition of non-standard work that includes only part-time and temporary work still leaves 21% of 15 to 64 year-old workers in non-standard employment in 1994, compared with 19% in 1989.

The international scene

The increase in non-standard work is not unique to Canada: employers in other industrialized countries have also been relying more on non-standard workers, although the definitions, patterns and rates may vary. For example, part-time rates have already exceeded 30% in the Netherlands, 25% in Norway, 20% in Australia, Denmark, New Zealand and Great Britain, and they approach 20% in the United States.¹⁴ In Japan, Denmark and Portugal, rates of temporary employment had risen above 10% by

the late 1980s (Piotet, 1988; Brodsky, 1994). Compared with Great Britain, higher proportions of young workers hold non-standard jobs in Canada. In turn, British women are much more likely than their Canadian counterparts to be in non-standard jobs (Green, Krahn and Sung, 1993). These trends are the result of strategic choices by both employers and workers, many of whom appear to have accepted non-standard work involuntarily.¹⁵

Whatever the measurement used, in 1994 youths were over-represented among non-standard workers, even more than they had been in 1989. Under the broader definition, the proportion of 15 to 24 year-old women in non-standard employment jumped from 49% to 64% in the five years. The equivalent increase for young men was 41% to 52% (Table 3). More strictly defined, the rate of non-standard work for young women rose from 46% to 54%, compared with 37% to 45% for young men (Chart C).

As might be expected, students are more likely to have non-standard employment (60% and 51% using the broader and narrower definitions, respectively). However, significant numbers of non-students also have non-standard work arrangements. In 1994, 29% of 15 to 64 year-old employed non-students were engaged in broadly defined non-standard work and 16% had part-time and/or temporary work.

Under both definitions and in all age categories examined, women reported higher rates of non-standard work than men in 1989 as well as 1994. However, based on the more restrictive definition, the female-male difference shrank over the five-year period. In both years, 29% of 15 to 64 year-old women were employed either part

time or temporarily. Rates of non-standard work increased for the youngest and oldest age groups,

but declined marginally for women aged 25 to 54. Among men, in contrast, the overall proportion working part time or temporarily rose from 11% to 14%, with increases in all but the oldest age group.

Under the broader definition, which includes multiple jobholders and own-account self-employed workers, agriculture led the other industries in providing non-standard employment in both 1989 and 1994. The narrower definition places agriculture in the middle of the industry ranking, leaving the lower-tier services (retail trade and other consumer services) and the upper-tier social services at the top of the list.

**Table 3
Combinations of non-standard employment by age, sex and industry**

	Definition 1 *		Definition 2 **	
	1989	1994	1989	1994
	% of total employment †			
Total	28	33	19	21
Women	35	40	29	29
15-24	49	64	46	54
25-34	30	33	24	22
35-44	35	37	26	25
45-54	31	35	24	23
55-64	35	41	28	30
Men	22	27	11	14
15-24	41	52	37	45
25-34	18	25	8	12
35-44	16	22	4	7
45-54	19	19	3	6
55-64	22	30	12	9
Industry ††				
Agriculture	54	65	9	19
Natural resource-based	10	14	6	10
Manufacturing	13	14	8	9
Construction	28	45	16	20
Distributive services	19	23	10	11
Business services	24	33	12	15
Social services	35	39	28	30
Public administration	16	21	13	16
Retail trade	40	42	34	31
Other consumer services	48	47	36	32

Source: General Social Survey (Cycles 4 and 9)

* One or more of part-time work, temporary work, own-account self-employment, or multiple jobholding (people in more than one category are counted only once).

** Part-time and/or temporary work only (people in both categories are counted only once).

† For temporary workers, this calculation excludes the self-employed.

For industry inclusions see Methodology and definitions.

Conclusion

Non-standard work has become more common in Canada as well as in other industrialized nations (see *The international scene*). Although the majority of Canadian workers are still employed in one full-time permanent paid job, the rates of part-time work, temporary work, own-account self-employment and multiple jobholding all increased between 1989 and 1994. While non-standard employment in 1989 was already widespread in social services, retail trade and other consumer services, by 1994 it had also become more prevalent in the goods-producing sector and the remaining service industries.

Women are much more likely than men to have non-standard employment. But as part-time and temporary work arrangements have spread, the proportion of men with such employment has risen, thus narrowing the difference between the sexes.

Rates of non-standard work have increased most, however, for young workers, whose labour force participation rates have fallen. Furthermore, their wages have continued to deteriorate relative to those of older workers.¹⁶

In 1989, the Canadian economy was relatively strong but about to slip into a serious and long recession. By 1994, the recession had ended, unemployment rates were falling, and total employment had finally exceeded the level reached in 1990. However, if previous patterns of change in various forms of non-standard work can be taken as a guide – for example, part-time rates remaining around 15% throughout the strong-growth years of the 1980s – non-standard work is unlikely to decline in the next few years despite improvements in the economy. □

Notes

1 Refers to self-employed workers who do not have paid help.

2 See Pinfield and Atkinson (1988), Pollert (1988), Polivka and Nardone (1989), Stoffman (1991), Tilly (1991), Betcherman et al. (1994:48) and Brodsky (1994).

3 See Sunter (1992), Crompton (1993) and Logan (1994). Logan notes that some voluntary part-time workers may be unavailable for full-time work because of family responsibilities, illness or injury. Duffy and Pupo (1992) suggest that many young mothers working part time voluntarily might prefer full-time employment if they had access to quality child care and/or if fathers took on more family responsibilities.

4 See the Economic Council of Canada (1990) on non-standard work and labour market inequality in Canada. In an analysis of data from the United States, Polivka and Nardone (1989) used the term “contingent work” to emphasize the employment insecurity of some forms of non-standard work. Brown and Scase (1991) talk about “poor work” when commenting on non-standard work trends in the United Kingdom.

5 See Krahn (1991) for a discussion of non-standard work (based on Cycle 4 data) that also includes an analysis of part-year work (typically, nine months or less annually in the main job). Since Cycle 9 did not collect information on part-year work, comparisons over time of this form of non-standard work are not possible.

In their analyses of data from the 1991 Survey of Work Arrangements, both Sunter (1993) and Galarneau (1994) use the term “non-standard” to describe shiftwork, since weekday “9 to 5” jobs have been the typical employment schedule. Non-standard work arrangements, including shiftwork, are also described in Siroonian (1993). However, because questions about shiftwork were included in Cycle 9 but not in Cycle 4, this form of non-standard work is not examined here.

6 Cycle 4 data were collected in January and February of 1989, while Cycle 9 data were collected throughout 1994. Because of seasonal variations in employment arrangements, this methodological difference may have some effect on the 1989-94 trends discussed in this paper.

7 Both own-account workers and employers may have unpaid family workers helping in the family business, farm or professional practice.

8 See Krahn (1992) and Krahn and Lowe (1993: 69-72) for a discussion of this industrial classification system. This typology resembles the Economic Council of Canada’s (1990) classification scheme that separates the goods-producing sector from “dynamic services” (distributive and business services), “traditional services” (retail trade and other consumer services), and “non-market services” (education, health and welfare, and public administration).

9 The proportion of full-time employees working long hours (50 or more per week) has also increased over the years (Cohen, 1992). These trends indicate a polarization of employment in terms of hours worked. Furthermore, since individuals working long hours tend to be better educated and typically report higher incomes, whereas part-time workers are generally among the less well paid, these two trends highlight a slow increase in earnings inequality. See Morissette, Myles and Picot (1993) and Sunter and Morissette (1994) on trends in hours worked by Canadians.

10 The 1989 and 1994 GSS estimates of part-time employment among 15 to 64 year-olds in Table 1 are both 15% and so do not reflect this most recent increase seen in LFS data. In 1989, only 0.3% of employed 15 to 64 year-old GSS respondents failed to provide information on their full-time/part-time status. By 1994, this figure had risen to 1.8%. This difference may partly account for the lower-than-expected 1994 GSS part-time estimate.

11 Williams (1995) reports a moderate increase in men’s part-time rates in the United States between 1982 and 1990, but a significant decline in women’s part-time rates. Nevertheless, in the United States, as in Canada, the part-time rate is still considerably higher among women than men.

12 Cohen (1994) reports a somewhat lower rate of multiple jobholding (5.1%), perhaps because the 1993 Labour Force Survey estimate includes all employed individuals aged 15 and over, as opposed to the 1994 GSS estimate, which excludes workers over 64. In contrast, the 1989 multiple jobholding rate in the United States was 6.2% (Stinson, 1990).

13 The 1991 Survey of Work Arrangements (SWA) estimated that 5% of employees aged 15 to 64 were in temporary jobs (Siroonian, 1993). The difference may be due to the SWA’s six-month cut-off, compared with the GSS, which counted any job with a specific end-date as a temporary job.

14 See Tilly (1991) for part-time trends in the United States, and Kmitch (1994) for rates in other industrialized countries.

15 See Kmitch (1994) on legislative protection for part-time workers, Brodsky (1994) on some of the social costs of increased reliance on non-standard workers, and Feldman, Doeringhaus and Turnley (1994) on the costs and challenges of managing temporary workers.

16 See Morissette, Myles and Picot (1993) on the growing wage gap between younger and older workers, and Sunter (1994) on the declining labour force participation among youths.

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