

Precarious work, precarious lives: How policy can create more security^[1]

Author: Pembroke, S.

Source: Think-tank for action on social change

Format: Report

Publication Date: 7 Nov 2018

AVAILABILITY

Access full PDF online^[2]

Introduction

Precarious work is a complex concept; it is not just about low-waged work (as not all types of precarious work are low-waged), but includes other factors such as the uncertainty of tenure, working hours, and the frequency of pay. In short, it is the unpredictability of income, the instability of employment and the lack of or limited access to social security that makes precarious work 'precarious'. Therefore, policy interventions must address these issues.

This report examines five major policy areas and the scope for policy interventions.

These are employment protection, social protection, health, housing, and childcare.

These policy areas were identified following four focus group sessions with precarious workers, and 20 interviews with policy experts.

What is precarious work?

There are many definitions and understandings of the concept of precariousness.

However, the main features identified by Vosko (2010) are, 'work for remuneration characterised by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory elements.'

In Ireland, the employment relationships with the highest risk of precariousness are part-time, zero-hour/ if-and when, temporary and solo self-employment. The most recent data from Eurostat's Labour Force Survey (LFS)¹ revealed that as a percentage of total employment, part-time work stands at 19.7 per cent, temporary work stands at 8.4 per cent, temporary agency work stands at 2.4 per cent, self-employment stands at 13.3 per cent and solo self-employment (as a percentage of overall self-employment) stands at 68.5 per cent.

An overhaul in how we provide childcare services in Ireland

We must also remember that precarious working conditions do not only just affect an individual, but very often their family. Therefore, this report recommends public, sustainable funding of childcare services by providing direct capitation grants, similar to that of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme operated by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and in primary and secondary schools by the Department of Education and Skills. This scheme would also entail educators' wages/salaries being paid directly by the State. Therefore, this report recommends:

1. Increase investment for childcare and early years' sector.
2. Develop and publish an early years' strategy.
3. Move towards publicly funding regulated childcare services through direct capitation grants.
4. Regulations for income assessment under the Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) need to take into consideration uncertain income and rental/mortgage expenses.
5. Working conditions in the early years and childcare services sector need to be improved.
6. Support and regulate other forms of childcare such as childminders.
7. Paid parental leave.

Region: Europe^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/19/01/precarious-work-precarious-lives-how-policy-can-create-more>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/19/01/precarious-work-precarious-lives-how-policy-can-create-more> [2] https://www.tasc.ie/assets/files/pdf/precarious_workersweb_version.pdf [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/region/europe>