

Health, Freedom and Work in Rural Victoria

Final Draft of Research Report

December 2011

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Acknowledgements

This research was funded by an Australian Research Council Linkage Project grant (LP0776719) in partnership with VicHealth. We gratefully acknowledge the support of VicHealth and the Australian Research Council in making this study possible. We would also like to thank the following individuals and organisations for their assistance during the recruitment phase of this study: Karen Kyle (Bendigo Trades Hall and Labour Council), Graham Shearer (Ballarat Trades Hall and Labour Council), Danielle Archer (Victoria Trades Hall and Labour Council), the Maritime Workers' Union of Australia, WIRE, Jeremy Smith (National Tertiary Education Union), Peter Steele (the Australian Education Union), Tim Corney (Incolink), Serena Attana and Lainie Vaughan (Tartura Milk Co-Op), Kerry Mori (Master Builders' Association of Victoria), Jim Reid (CEPU), Leo Walsh (St Vincent de Paul Society Shepparton), and Trish Nolan (CentaBrace Employment Services).

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Executive Summary

People's health is profoundly influenced by the social circumstances in which they grow up, live, and age (WHO, 2008, p.1). One of the key areas of social organisation that influences health is work. Good employment and working conditions, for example, 'can provide financial security, social status, personal development, social relations, and self-esteem', all of which contribute to health (WHO, 2008, p. 72). By contrast, work environments that elicit stress or which expose workers to dangerous chemicals and toxins undermine health via material and psychosocial pathways.

The material pathways through which working conditions affect health are the immediate physical, chemical, and biological hazards that workers are directly exposed to in their jobs, such as poisonous chemical products, toxins, smoke fumes, mineral dust, infectious diseases and viruses (e.g. doctors and laboratory technicians), and physically demanding work tasks (e.g. heavy lifting and muscle strain from repetitive tasks). But working conditions also affect people's health via less immediate, psychosocial pathways. These include the quality of social support that is available within the work role, the opportunities that work affords for people to exercise decision-making, and the experience of job insecurity, which recent studies suggest, may be even more damaging to health than job loss itself (Clougherty et al., 2010, p. 115).

The quality of people's experience of the psychosocial work environment is important for health because of the effect that it has on people's positive experience of self and, in particular, on their experience of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Siegrist, 2005, p. 1034). This is illustrated by the association between health and low job control which, in repeated studies is linked to increased risk of cardiovascular illness, poorer self-related health, and depression (Joan Benach et al., 2007, p. 81). The exercise of control over work is good for health because it 'represents an opportunity to exercise judgement' and so 'enhances the individual's feelings of efficacy and ability to cope with the environment' (Karasek, 1979, p. 303). Control over work thus promotes health by providing 'a sense of personal effectiveness, so that the worker feels responsible for shaping his or her life and feels an ability to affect the world' (Levine & Rizvi, 2005, p. 104). But work can also promote health by providing workers with a sense of social inclusion and self-worth, each of which are important for self-esteem (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1466).

Labour regulation in OECD countries following WWII sought to secure the significance of work in people's lives as a source of identity, self-esteem, and social recognition by offering workers greater protection from the vagaries of market forces and establishing a regime of employment-related benefits and entitlements. In recent decades, however, there has been a major transformation in the social organisation of work towards more flexible and less secure forms of employment such as temporary and contract work that exclude workers from many of the benefits enjoyed by fulltime, ongoing workers. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in Australia, where the proportion of the workforce engaged in atypical or non-standard work (30% to 40%) is particularly high by OECD standards (Campbell & Burgess, 2001, p. 173) and where growth in non-standard work has been outpacing growth in permanent, ongoing employment for almost 20 years (Rafferty & Yu, 2010, pp. 44–5). Around 20 percent of the Australian labour force, for example, is now employed on a casual basis (i.e. they have no access to paid leave entitlements) while a further 10 percent work as independent contractors (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 3). Besides the large number of

casual employees and independent contractors in the workforce, many full-time employees (as many as 274,000) are employed on a fixed-term, rather than ongoing, basis (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 30). These workers' jobs may be far from secure if, for example, the duration of their employment tenure is very short (e.g. less than a year).

About the Study

This study documents these developments in the social organisation of work as they have been experienced by workers in rural and regional Victoria and explores the implications for workers' autonomy and social participation and, through this, their health. A total of 72 people took part in this study, including 46 (64%) casual employees, 12 (17%) independent contractors, 6 (8.3%) fixed-term contract employees, and 8 (11%) permanent "irregular" workers. This last group self-identified as casuals during the recruitment stage, although they do not fall strictly under the Australian Bureau of Statistics measure of casual employment since they are formally entitled to holiday and sick pay, albeit on a pro rata basis. However, these workers had highly uncertain work schedules and their income and shifts varied substantially from week to week. Workers who participated in this study took part in a series of three interviews between September 2009 and September 2011. These interviews lasted for an average of 40 minutes and interviewees were asked about the relationship between their employment contract and their ability to exercise autonomy in the workplace and control over their life, as well as their social participation and status within the workplace.

This study focuses on the lived experiences of workers in rural and regional areas for a number of reasons. Firstly, one significant aspect of non-standard work in Australia is that these employment arrangements are more common in rural and regional areas than in urban locations (Louie, 2006, p. 478; Productivity Commission Research Paper, 2006, p. 49). This suggests that workers in these areas stand to be particularly affected by the rise in non-standard work in Australia. Moreover, workers in regional and rural areas are potentially more vulnerable to the effects of non-standard work not only because of the higher incidence of non-standard work arrangements in non-metropolitan areas but also because living in a rural or regional location rather than a major urban centre is likely to affect people's experience of non-standard work. One issue is the greater scarcity of employment opportunities in rural and regional areas.¹ This greater scarcity of employment opportunities in rural and regional areas may exacerbate the job insecurity associated with certain forms of non-standard work.

A further reason why this study is particularly concerned with recent growth in non-standard work arrangements in regional and rural areas stems from the ongoing crisis in rural health. The 2007-08 National Health Survey shows that incidences of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and poor mental health are higher in rural and regional areas than in major cities.² While the National Health Survey does not speculate on the reasons why this is the case, these illnesses are all associated with working in a hazardous psychosocial work environment. Although the disparity in incidences of these diseases between metropolitan and rural/regional areas is unlikely to be explained solely by the higher

¹ For example, unemployment in the Loddon-Mallee (Mildura; Swan Hill) and Goulburn-Ovens-Murray (Shepparton) regions is 6 percent—20 percent higher than in the Melbourne metropolitan region, which has an unemployment rate of 5 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011)

² In relation to the disparity in health outcomes between rural/regional and metropolitan Victoria, see <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/promotion/index.htm>

incidence of non-standard work in non-metropolitan areas, understanding how the work environment shapes people's exposure to health risks can offer important insights into the role that shifts in the social organisation of work can play in mediating the incidence of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and depression in regional and rural areas.

Motivations behind growth in non-standard work

The rise of non-standard employment reflects the growing popularity of the 'flexible firm' model of business organization in which the workforce is divided into two broad categories of worker: a core group of competent full-time permanent employees who attend to the day to day operation of businesses and a flexible group of peripheral workers employed on an irregular basis to enable businesses to 'react quickly and efficiently to fluctuating market conditions' (Lenz, 1996, p.556; (Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2002, p. 152). This use of flexible workers is celebrated as enabling employers to adjust more quickly to changing market conditions while avoiding the risk of fixed labour costs and expensive employee benefits during periods of reduced demand (Tomba et al., 2007, p. 211). At the same time, it is also argued that the trend towards flexible and non-standard employment 'reflects workers' preference for flexibility' (Tsumori, 2004, p. 1). But critics argue that the shift away from the standard model of full-time, ongoing employment has been almost entirely employer driven with the result that workers 'have come to bear the burden of organizational and economic performance as never before' (Scott, 2004, p. 145).

While acknowledging the benefits of flexible employment arrangements for a small number of workers, critics argue that the shift towards temporary and flexible employment has been driven by neo-liberal social and economic policies that have rendered employment conditions more precarious for the vast majority of workers (Evans & Gibb, 2009, p. 16). The result has been a return to labour as commodity (Barbara Pocock, Prosser, & Bridge, 2005, p. 459; Schmidt, 2006; Standing, 2008) and the emergence of situation of '*systematic insecurity*' (Standing, 2008, p. 19), as workers have been forced into forgoing entitlements and into taking on more temporary and uncertain jobs for the sake of increasing the competitiveness of business and industry. This has resulted in 'the growth of poor-quality and health damaging forms of employment' (Quinlan et al., 2010, p. 301). This is because non-standard forms of employment are characterised by *employment uncertainty experiences*—irregular and intermittent work scheduling, short and limited job tenure, financial insecurity—while workers who are employed under non-standard employment contracts are also subject to a number of *employment status differences* in the way they are treated at an institutional and personal level. For example, non-standard workers are often formally excluded from paid leave entitlements and regulatory protections that ongoing workers are entitled to, while temporary and contract workers may also be excluded from participating fully in work-related meetings, social events, and training because they are not permanent employees. These employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences have the potential to undermine workers' positive self-experience (or psychosocial health) while also putting pressure on workers to undertake more hazardous tasks and to adopt riskier health behaviours.

Material Pathways

Repeated international studies show that temporary workers 'are exposed to more hazardous working conditions, work more often in painful and tiring positions, are more exposed to intense noise, [and] perform more often repetitive movements.' There is also evidence to suggest that they

‘suffer from a higher risk of occupational injuries as compared with permanent employees’ (Joan Benach et al., 2007, p. 90). For example, a review by Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle of research into the OHS impacts of temporary employment found that, in more than 80 percent of studies, these work arrangements were associated with ‘increased risk of injury, disease, and hazard exposure’ as well as ‘reduced knowledge of occupational health and safety issues and regulatory responsibilities’ (Lewchuk, de Wolff, King & Polanyi, 2005, p. 8; Quinlan, Mayhew & Boyle, 2001; see also Quinlan & Mayhew, 2001, pp. 5–6).

Fatigue from frequent changes in the scheduling of work and from work intensification pressures caused by the lack of job security is also another major health concern affecting non-standard workers. Non-standard workers may feel under pressure to be seen to be performing because of the ease with which they can be dismissed compared to other workers. For example, in a previous qualitative study of casual employment in Australia, casual workers in some sectors reported that feeling like they were expendable increased work intensification pressures (Barbara Pocock et al., 2005, p. 465). In addition, workers in this study who were reliant on the income from their employment reported taking on tasks that permanent employees would refuse to do because they felt they had no choice.

Coming to Work Sick

One of the most significant ways in which working in non-standard employment can materially impact on workers’ health is that non-standard workers can feel under pressure to come to work even when they are sick or injured. As McNamara argues in a study of the hidden costs of casual employment in Australia, ‘[j]ob insecurity and especially the fear that absence from work or even refusal to do overtime might increase the likelihood of redundancy, means that some workers may avoid taking time off when ill’ (McNamara, 2006, p. 26). The financial costs of missing a day’s work through sickness or injury can also be a further source of motivation for presenteeism, especially for casuals and independent contractors who are formally excluded from sick leave entitlements. This is particularly likely to be an issue for workers who experience high scheduling uncertainty as these workers may not be in a position to afford to take time off, even when sick, if they do not work many shifts on a regular basis.

With the exception of fixed-term employees and permanent irregular workers—who were entitled to paid sick leave, albeit on a pro rata basis—presenteeism was common among the workers who took part in this study, especially among casuals who either could not afford to take time off when sick or who were afraid to do so for fear that they would lose shifts.

Putting Health on Hold

Income uncertainty from the irregular and intermittent scheduling of work not only motivated those interviewed to come to work sick or injured, many of those interviewed explained that they would also regularly put-off looking after their health because they had more urgent needs and couldn’t afford the costs of managing their health. This was particularly true of permanent irregular workers and casual employees in the reluctant casual group, who were the workers with the most intermittent and uncertain work scheduling. These workers reported regularly forgoing health and dental care either because they couldn’t afford the costs involved of going to the doctor, having surgery, or going to the dentist, or, if they could afford the costs, they were worried that work might

dry up in the near future and they would need to rely on their savings to get them through a period of under- or unemployment.

The fact that people in non-standard work are putting off managing their health and working sick reveals an important structural issue. Workers in stable employment who earn a regular income have the material resources necessary to invest in managing their health so as to protect themselves from falling sick or from developing an illness. Moreover, should they fall sick, workers in stable, ongoing employment, can take time off work to rest and recuperate without having to stress about getting future work or having to worry about how they are going to afford to pay future bills. However, workers in insecure employment who experience employment uncertainty and who are dependent on the income from their employment do not have the same means to invest in managing and protecting their health, while the economic costs should they fall ill can be severe, especially given their exclusion from paid leave entitlements.

One notable issue, from this perspective, is that very few of those who took part in the study had income protection insurance to cover themselves financially should they be unable to work through sickness or injury. Some independent contractors did have income protection insurance as they needed this to insure themselves against a work-related injury or illness since, because they were not employees, they were not formally covered under Work Cover. Moreover, the major clients of independent contractors often insisted that independent contractors have income protection insurance before they would hire them. However, other non-standard workers rarely could afford income protection coverage and some reported that they couldn't take out income protection insurance as they had no secure income to protect.

Concealing Injuries at Work

In addition to motivating non-standard workers to come to work sick or injured, the fear of job loss may also motivate non-standard workers to conceal any work-related injuries or accidents they experience for fear that reporting any OH&S concerns or incidents may jeopardise future shifts or contracts (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 335). For example, a study of temporary workers in Sweden found that while workers suffered ill-effects from exposure to toxins, they refused to report their concerns because they feared that doing so would jeopardise future employment contracts (Aronsson, 1999 cited in Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 335). This was something that workers in this study also had experienced.

Psychosocial Pathways I: Effects on Workers' Autonomy and Control

Non-standard employment arrangements not only have the potential to expose workers to a range of additional material health risks, such as increased risk of incurring a work-related injury or motivating health damaging behaviours within the workplace (presenteeism/work intensification), the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard work arrangements can also give rise to a number of additional sources of psychosocial stress.

The Debilitating Effects of Intermittent and Uncertain Work Schedules

Job insecurity is one obvious source of psychosocial stress that non-standard workers are particularly vulnerable to, while the intermittency of temporary and contingent work 'also presumes periods of underemployment and unemployment' which are damaging to health (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 339).

The fear of job loss, however, is not the only source of non-standard workers' employment uncertainty experiences or the only threat to workers' sense of self-efficacy. The intermittent and uncertain scheduling of work and the consequent effects on workers' earnings are an additional source of employment uncertainty for non-standard workers that can have devastating consequences for their autonomy and experience of self-efficacy.

Scheduling uncertainty and limited job tenure can undermine workers' autonomy and control over their life in a number of ways. Firstly, as Facey and Eakin argue, 'constantly changing work schedules or last minute calls to work can disrupt personal and family routines and impede a worker's ability to plan even mundane activities such as doctor visits, extracurricular activities such as exercise, or participating in community life' (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 339).

Their lack of control over work scheduling was a key issue for workers in this study. Workers who were reliant on the income from their job weren't in a position to turn down any shifts that were offered to them, firstly because they couldn't afford, financially, to do so; but, secondly, because they were worried about recriminations if they said no to any shifts that were offered to them. The dominant experience among those who were dependent on their work was a sense of powerlessness. Those who raised questions about pay or work scheduling were simply told that if they weren't happy with their hours or pay they could go.

Taking Time Off

One of the dominant themes that emerged during the interviews was the difficulty that non-standard workers faced in taking time off from work. Those who had other sources of income or who had a partner with an ongoing, fulltime job were regularly able to take time off, as were fishermen, who could take time off between voyages particularly as they were confident of being able to return to work again. Moreover, some reluctant casuals who had a supportive boss were similarly able to plan time off, particularly if they had been in their role for a number of years.

Unless they worked regular hours and had been in their job for a number of years, workers who were reliant on their job were rarely in a position to take any length of time off. Some were afraid to take time off in case it jeopardised getting future work or, if there was a possibility of shifts becoming available during a planned holiday, they felt they couldn't afford to knock back the work. Others simply couldn't afford to take any time off because they were not getting enough shifts in the first place to go without work while it was available. Even a number of permanent irregular employees—who receive holiday pay on a pro rata basis—were unable to take any significant break from their work because the amount of shifts they were getting was so minimal.

Fixed-term employees were in a better position than most other non-standard workers in that their work patterns were more regular and they also were entitled to paid holiday leave. Nonetheless, those who worked on short-term contracts still reported difficulties taking time off which stemmed from the short-term nature of their employment contracts.

Financial Impacts of Insecure Work

Employment uncertainty and the irregular scheduling of work can further hinder workers' control over their lives by affecting their financial security. For example, as Facey and Eakin argue, 'unpredictable earnings might mean constant anxiety about meeting financial obligations' and

‘undermine a worker’s ability to fulfil social roles (for example, as provider), which may have negative personal and social effects’ (2010: 337).

Getting into Debt

While some workers in the study were well-off financially—usually the workers who had other sources of household income—those in seasonal work who were reliant on the income from their employment were typically struggling to get by and many were building up mounting debts from periods of under- or unemployment. The financial insecurity they were experiencing was causing many in the study to postpone spending money on items such as servicing the car and even dental and medical treatment.

Difficulties Borrowing Money and Long-Term Impacts on Home Ownership

It is not only in the short-term that employment uncertainty experiences may create difficulties for non-standard workers in exercising control over their lives. There are also longer-term consequences for workers’ ability to exercise control over their lives from working in jobs where work is scheduled on an intermittent and uncertain basis. For example, the short-term duration of their employment contracts and their lack of guarantee of ongoing work may make it more difficult for non-standard workers to borrow money from banks and other financial institutions in order to purchase a house or car. This has previously been identified as a key concern for casual workers in Australia (Macdonald & Holm, 2002, p. 32) while a 2008 US study of the effect of temporary employment on assessment accumulation similarly found that ‘temporary employment reduces both the probability of homeownership and the value of the home for those who are owners’ (McGrath & Keister, 2008, p. 216). These concerns with respect to the effects of non-standard and temporary employment on home ownership are supported to an extent by the experiences of workers who took part in this study.

Many casuals and permanent irregular workers who were the primary income earner in their household were reluctant to borrow money or to take out a mortgage because they didn’t feel that banks would lend them money. Some non-standard workers did manage to secure a mortgage. However, these workers typically had been in jobs that provided a reasonably steady income for at least two to three years prior to going for a loan. Hence they were able to present lenders with a history of earnings and demonstrate their ability to service a loan.

Superannuation and Retirement

Another key area of concern for non-standard workers’ long term autonomy and control over their lives is superannuation. In the long term, as Facey and Eakin argue, ‘income uncertainty might affect quality of life in old age because it hinders early financial or retirement planning’ (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 337). While the issue of superannuation has not received as much attention in the literature as other aspects of non-standard working arrangements, it is critical to understanding the long-term consequences of growth in non-standard work for workers’ control over their lives, particularly in old age. This is because Australia has shifted the burden of welfare provision in old age onto workers via the introduction of mandatory superannuation contributions. The problem, within the context of recent shifts in the social organisation of work, is that the superannuation scheme is largely modelled on the standard model of full-time, ongoing employment (O’Brien & Burgess, 2004, pp. 179–80).

Workers in non-standard or insecure employment—the majority of whom are women—are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to accumulating superannuation and planning for their retirement. Firstly, the intermittent nature of much insecure work makes it difficult for insecure workers to accumulate superannuation as ‘it is difficult to sustain an ongoing accumulation of contributions if periods of employment are interspersed with periods of unemployment or being outside of the labour force’ (O’Brien & Burgess, 2004, p. 181). Related to this is the fact that many insecure workers have variably weekly earnings, while those working part-time hours may not receive enough shifts in a given pay period to trigger mandatory employer contributions. Insecure workers’ superannuation contributions can also often be spread across multiple funds. As a consequence, what little super they have is consumed in administration fees.

A further issue for casual employees, though less so for other non-standard workers, is that they are often prevented from utilising tax-efficient mechanisms, such as salary sacrificing, for making additional superannuation contributions. Notably, the workers least likely to be receiving or making any superannuation contributions in this study were independent contractors. Independent contractors differ from casual employees, fixed-term employees, and permanent irregular employees in that, as self-employed workers, they are responsible for making their own superannuation contributions. Their superannuation contributions are supposed to be factored into the prices they charge their clients. However, in reality, only two out of the twelve independent contractors that were interviewed made regular superannuation contributions. Some preferred to invest in land or property instead. Other contractors who were reliant on the income from their contracting work simply couldn’t afford to put aside money for their retirement.

The obstacles that non-standard workers face with regard to the accumulation of superannuation have the potential to expose these workers to considerable financial hardship when they are beyond working age, especially as most insecure workers are employed in relatively low-paid jobs. There is thus a very real danger that the proliferation of non-standard work arrangements may exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities as income gaps widen in retirement as a consequence of non-standard workers’ reduced savings opportunities. Women stand to be particularly adversely affected by these changes, not only because they are over represented in non-standard forms of work but also because they are more likely to work in part-time employment and to leave the labour force to care for children or relatives (O’Brien & Burgess, 2004, p. 183).

Career Progression and Occupational Mobility

Another aspect of non-standard employment with long-term consequences for workers’ autonomy is the exclusion of non-standard workers from employer-provided skills training and professional development—a function of the employment status differences associated with non-standard work.

According to an Australian study on casual employment and skills training carried out in 2000, while almost 70 percent of permanent employees had undergone some form of professional development in the previous 12 months to the study, only 50 percent of casual employees had participated in professional development during that same period (Watson et al. 2003 cited in Economic Development Committee, 2005, p.123). A more recent study suggests that the gap in employer-provided training is widening, both in terms of the amount of training received as well as the quality of content (Richardson & Liu, 2006, pp. 27–8). Tellingly, what predicted levels of employer-provided training in this latter study was not the average number of hours worked per week but the casual

contract itself. Moreover, it is not just casual workers in Australia who face obstacles pursuing professional development and training. Independent contractors—who must pay for their own professional development—also report low rates of participation in professional development activities. A survey of independent contractors by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists, and Managers Australia carried out in 2004, for example, found that less than 50 percent of engineers surveyed had participated in more than 15 hours of professional development during the previous 12 months even though they are required by the Institute of Engineers, Australia to do a minimum of 50 hours professional development each year (APESMA, 2004). This is confirmed by the experiences of independent contractors in this study, who rarely undertook professional development or skills-training. Many could neither afford the time nor the money to attend professional development, particularly as this would mean missing out on paid work.

Even independent contractors who were de facto employees in the sense that they always worked for the same client found that they received little support from their employer. Many of those interviewed felt that they would have far greater opportunities to undertake professional development were they permanent employees rather than non-standard workers.

The diminished professional development and training opportunities available to non-standard workers increases the risk that workers in insecure employment will end up trapped in poorer quality jobs with limited opportunities to exercise control over work tasks (i.e. health damaging jobs). Moreover, diminished professional development and training opportunities undermine non-standard workers' occupational mobility with long-term consequences for their financial security, particularly in later life.

Psychosocial Pathways II: Impact on Self-Esteem and Social Participation

Social integration and participation has long been known to be beneficial for health, as is evidenced by the lower risk of mortality associated with having friends, with having close family relationships, and with regular participation in community organisations (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, p. 161). Supportive social networks are good for health partly because 'having other people available for support and assistance can enhance coping and provide a buffer against stress.' But more than that, there is also evidence to suggest that 'simply being part of a supportive social network reduces stress, even if other people do not provide explicit emotional or practical assistance' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 508). This is because having friends and participating regularly in social groups gives people 'a sense of confidence, of reassurance and of self-confirmation, whereas being rejected or not having friends fills one with self-doubt and causes confidence to evaporate' (R. Wilkinson, 1999a, p. 54). Moreover, participation in supportive social networks also enables people to develop a sense of belonging, itself an important bulwark against anxiety and depression (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 506). One of the criticisms of non-standard employment arrangements is that the employment uncertainty and status inequalities that are often associated with these arrangements work to undermine the social support structures available to workers within and outside the workplace.

Uncertain Work Patterns and Social Participation

For example, the intermittency and uncertainty of non-standard workers' work scheduling can hinder workers' ability to cultivate meaningful relationships with their co-workers. As Baumeister and Leary argue, for social interactions to facilitate a sense of belonging 'these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's

welfare’ (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). However, ‘[b]ecause temporary workers’ tenure in organisations is generally short, the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships is limited’ (Boyce, Ryan, & Imus, 2007, p. 8). This was something that a number of the independent contractors interviewed commented upon, many of whom often worked alone and therefore rarely had contact with colleagues on a regular basis.

A number of casuals similarly complained that the irregular and uncertain nature of their work made it more difficult for them to participate, socially, at work. Irregular and uncertain work patterns also affected workers’ social participation outside of work and difficulties making plans to socialise with family members and friends were frequent concerns amongst those interviewed.

Impact of Employment Status Differences

Non-standard workers not only face problems participating in social networks as a consequence of their intermittent and uncertain work patterns and shorter job tenure. As Tompa et al. point out that ‘the lower status of temporary workers makes this group susceptible to social exclusion by regular full- and part-time workers’ (Tompa et al., 2007, p. 218). For example, non-standard workers may be excluded from work-based social networks and from meetings and training activities at work because colleagues do not view them as genuine or equal members of the workplace community. The formal exclusion of non-standard workers from work-based social networks and from meetings and training activities *because of their lower employment status* can have devastating consequences for their experience of self-esteem. For example, in Pocock et al’s study of casual employment in South Australia, casual employees frequently referred to being treated as ‘only a casual’ and many commented that others considered them ‘less than proper workers, despite the commitment that they make to their work’ (Pocock, Prosser and Bridge, 2004: 14-15). Loss of self-esteem, especially among older men, and being treated with a lack of respect were key grievances for these workers.

The majority of casual workers in this study—but not other non-standard workers—were often excluded from work meetings *simply because they were casuals* and weren’t seen as full employees or equal staff members. There was a general sense among casual employees that they were seen as second class workers by management especially, but occasionally also by their permanent co-workers. Casuals would often describe themselves as being “just boots” or “shit kickers”.

Corrosive effects of Casualisation

Another way in which non-standard employment arrangements can affect the quality of social support available is via the corrosive effect that these employment arrangements can have on co-worker solidarity. One example of this is the effect that the growing incidence of casual employment is having on rates of union membership. Casual and temporary employees, for example, are less likely than their permanent co-workers to be members of a union. Critics of non-standard work arrangements argue that the proliferation of these employment arrangements and the impact that this proliferation has had on rates of union membership within the workforce has undermined workers’ collective bargaining position and shifted the balance of power to the employer (Standing, 2008, p. 26).

But work casualisation can also affect worker solidarity at a more personal and immediate level. For example, employment contracts that provide workers with no guaranteed minimum numbers of shifts and with no legal expectation of ongoing work can breed competitiveness among workers if,

for instance, workers feel that they must compete with each other for shifts or for future employment contracts. This can, in turn, affect the quality of workers' interactions with each other and even lead workers to withhold knowledge and resources from each other. Some fruit pickers, for example, reported that their co-workers had tried to sabotage their equipment so as to ensure that there was more fruit available for them to pick.

The casualisation of work not only has the potential to breed a corrosive competitiveness among non-standard workers themselves as they compete with each other for shifts and for future employment contracts. It can also affect the quality of social relations between permanent workers and their non-standard co-workers if, for example, permanent workers view non-standard workers as a threat to their own job security (Boyce et al., 2007: 11). Depending upon the extent to which they fear their own jobs are in danger of being replaced by temporary or casual workers, permanent workers may actively try to undermine the status of casual and temporary workers within the work organisation as a way of seeking to protect their own jobs. This may involve withholding vital information and resources from casual and temporary workers so as to undermine the ability of casual and temporary workers to succeed in their jobs and so as to prove to management that casual and temporary workers are incapable of doing the jobs that permanent workers currently do. In some cases, the fear that they might be replaced by casual and temporary workers might motivate permanent workers to actively harass and bully non-standard workers so as to force them from the workplace.

Conclusion

In summary, the *employment uncertainty experiences*—i.e. the intermittent and uncertain scheduling of work, limited and uncertain job tenure—and *employment status differences*—e.g. lack of paid leave; stigmatisation of non-standard workers as 'only casuals'; and exclusion of non-standard workers from meetings and training activities—associated with non-standard employment arrangements expose non-standard workers to a number of additional material and psychosocial health hazards, as illustrated below.

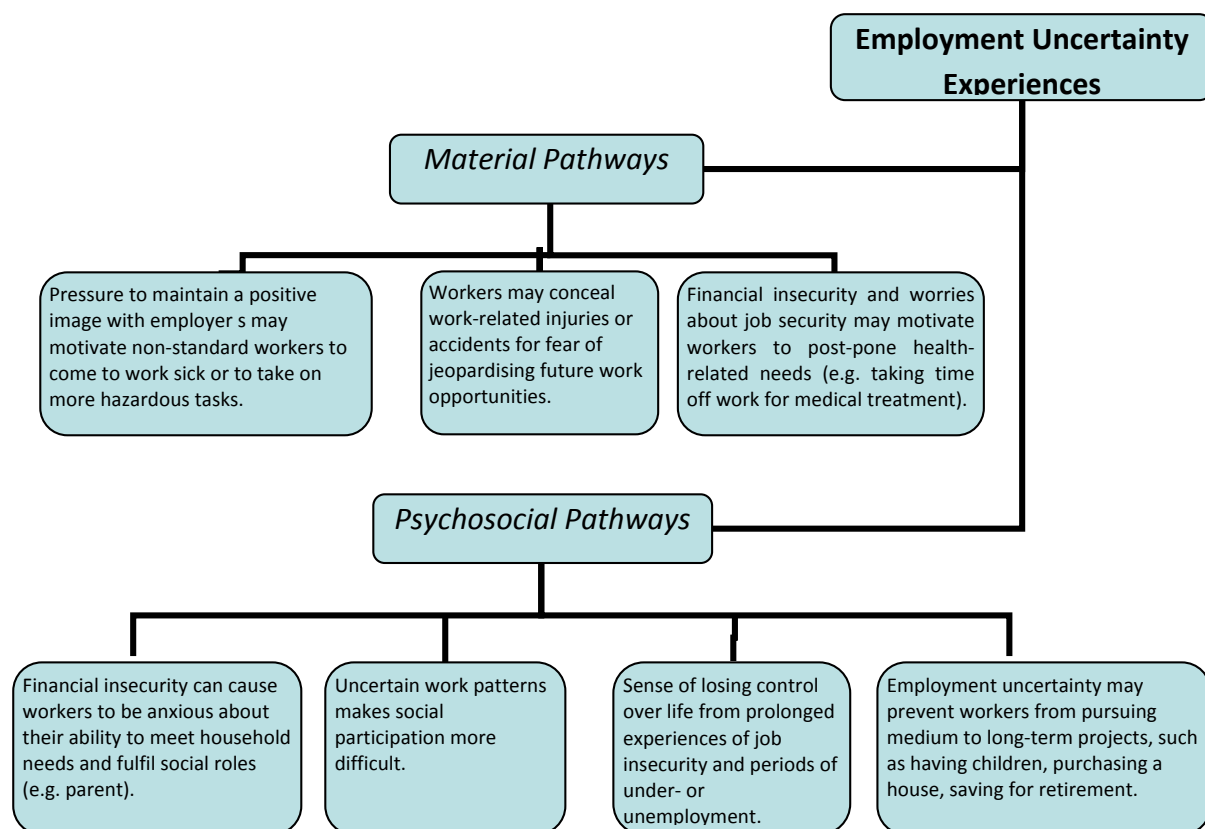


Figure 1: Employment Uncertain Experiences and Health Pathways

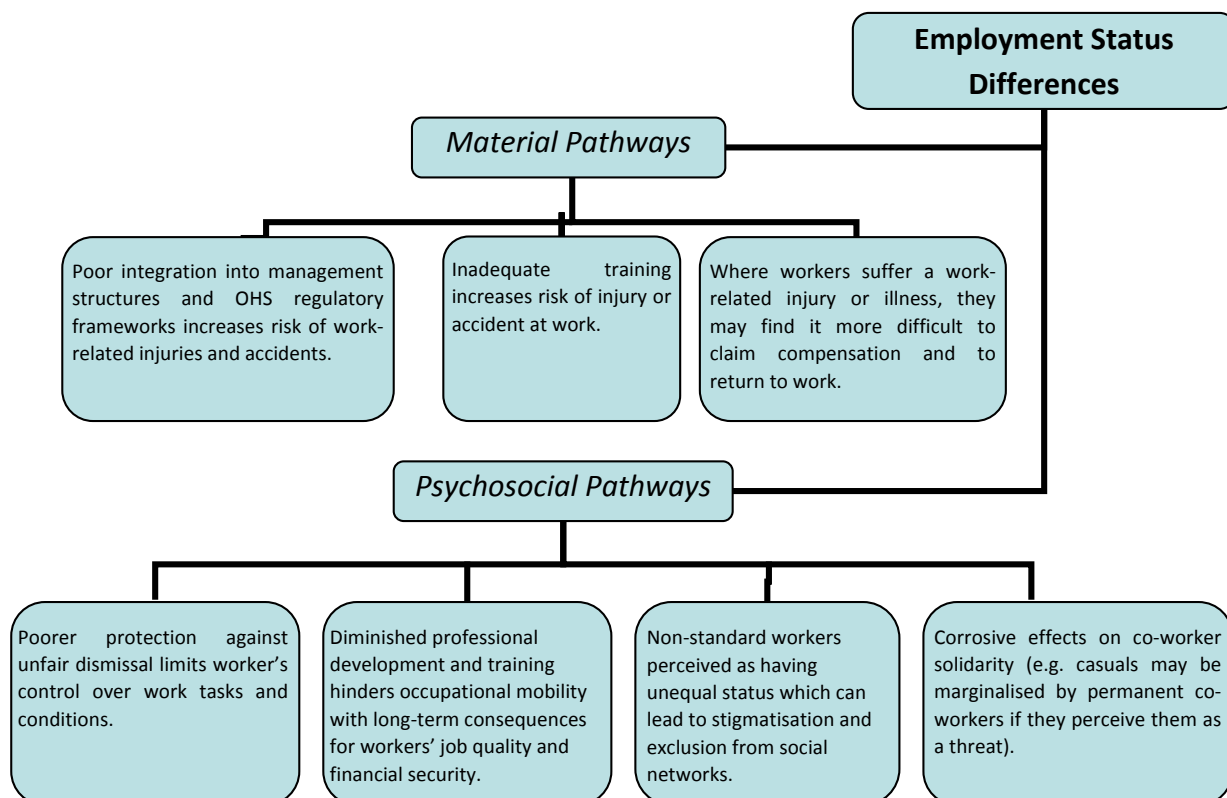


Figure 2: Employment Status Differences and Health Pathways

Beyond the immediate impacts on workers' psychosocial and physical health, this study has also highlighted a number of important structural disadvantages—forms of social and economic disadvantage that perpetuate inequality—related to non-standard work arrangements that are of broader concern to social justice and equality. One very significant source of concern, especially for women, is the obstacles that non-standard workers face with respect to the accumulation of superannuation. A second is the diminished professional development and training opportunities available to workers in insecure employment, which make non-standard workers vulnerable to being trapped in lower-skilled and more poorly paid jobs in the long run.

The health risks and structural disadvantages associated with non-standard work arrangements indicate that the policy concerns raised by recent shifts in the social organisation of work go beyond labour market productivity concerns. The costs and benefits of employment arrangements cannot be measured simply in economic terms. The implications for key public policy domains outside of labour market regulation also need to be taken into account, especially in the area of health equity. This is because the costs of recent shifts in the social organisation have fallen on some workers more than others. For example, non-standard work arrangements affect women and lower-skilled workers more than they affect men and those with more marketable job skills.

Moreover, as this study has stressed, it is not only women and those from less privileged backgrounds that are shouldering the lion's share of the social and health costs generated by non-standard work arrangements. Rural workers are also more likely to be affected by non-standard employment arrangements than workers in urban centres. The reasons are twofold. Firstly, there is a higher incidence of non-standard employment in rural and regional areas. But secondly, economic conditions in rural and regional areas also play a role in determining the quality of workers' experience of non-standard work.

One of the key insights from research on the social determinants of health over the past 30 years is that efforts to reduce social inequalities in health cannot concentrate on the provision of improved health care services alone. While health care services are important in recovering health, the quality of people's educational and employment opportunities and the conditions in which they live have an equal, if not more important, role to play in contributing to their health. 'Achieving health equity,' as the final report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health stresses, 'requires safe, secure, and fairly paid work, year-round work opportunities, and a healthy work-life balance for all' (WHO, 2008, p. 8). Consequently, to improve the health of people living in rural and regional areas, and reduce the gap in life-expectancy between better and worse off social groups, careful decisions will have to be made about the allocation of resources, and policy options will have to be evaluated for their health impacts. Trade-offs may need to be made between directing resources towards the provision of improved and expanded health care services and targeting resources towards the provision of wider work opportunities, more stable employment arrangements and better psychosocial work environments.

1. Introduction

Work is a core social activity and key source of personal identity, social recognition, and belonging (Evans & Gibb, 2009, p. 4) and when employment conditions are good, this ‘can provide financial security, social status, personal development, social relations, and self-esteem’, all of which contribute to health (WHO, 2008, p. 72). Labour regulation in OECD countries following WWII sought to secure the significance of work in people’s lives as a source of identity, self-esteem, and social recognition by offering workers greater protection from the vagaries of market forces and establishing a regime of employment-related benefits and entitlements. In recent decades, however, there has been a major transformation in the social organisation of work towards more flexible and less secure forms of employment, such as temporary and contract work. Nowhere has this been more apparent than in Australia, where the proportion of the workforce engaged in atypical or non-standard work³ is particularly high by OECD standards (Campbell & Burgess, 2001, p. 173) and where growth in non-standard work has been outpacing growth in permanent full-time work for almost 20 years (Rafferty & Yu, 2010, pp. 44–5). For example, over the past three years, casual employment and independent contracting have grown by 7.6 and 14.8 percent respectively compared to overall labour force growth of less than six percent (ABS 2008; ABS 2009a; ABS 2010). This study documents this shift in the social organisation of work as it has been experienced by workers in rural and regional Victoria and it explores its implications for workers’ autonomy and wellbeing in light of our knowledge of the importance of work as a key social determinant of health.

1.1 Recent Trends in the Social Organisation of Work

Workers in Australia are increasingly engaged under a variety of non-standard or flexible employment contracts which exclude them from many of the benefits enjoyed by fulltime, ongoing workers such as paid leave entitlements, regular work scheduling and protection against unfair dismissal. For example, around 20 percent of the labour force is employed on a casual basis while a further 10 percent work as independent contractors (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 3). Neither casual employees nor independent contractors receive paid leave entitlements or any legal expectation of ongoing employment, and they have very limited rights in the case of termination of employment. Casual employees and independent contracts are also twice as likely as other workers to work in a job where their hours and income vary from week to week (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009a, p. 22, 2009b) (ABS, 2009, p. 22). Casual employment and independent contracting are not the only forms of non-standard or atypical work in Australia, however, and some estimate that the share of the workforce working in insecure or non-standard work may be as high as 40 percent (Burgess & De Ruyter, 2000; Lewchuk, Clarke, & de Wolff, 2008, p. 387).⁴ For instance, many employees receiving paid leave entitlements—as many as 274,000 according to the most recent estimate (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 30)—are employed on a fixed-term rather than ongoing basis. These workers’ jobs may be far from secure if, for example, the length of their employment contract is very short. Moreover, a substantial proportion of permanent employees in

³ Non-standard or atypical work refers to employment arrangements that depart from the model of ‘full-time, permanent employment with regular hours and schedule...and providing a range of benefits’ (Tompa, Scott-Marshall, Dolinschi, Trevithick, & Bhattacharyya, 2007, p. 210)

⁴ This is substantially higher than in nearly all other OECD countries (with the exception of Spain) (Campbell & Burgess, 2001, p. 173).

Australia self-identify as casuals even though they are not formally classified as casuals by the Australian Bureau of Statistics because they are formally entitled to holiday and sick pay (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009a, p. 18). Nonetheless, even though they receive paid leave entitlements, permanent workers may still self-identify as casuals if they work on an irregular and intermittent basis or if their income and hours vary substantially from week to week. Notably, there were more than 180,000 “permanent” employees who self-identified as casuals in November 2007 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007a).

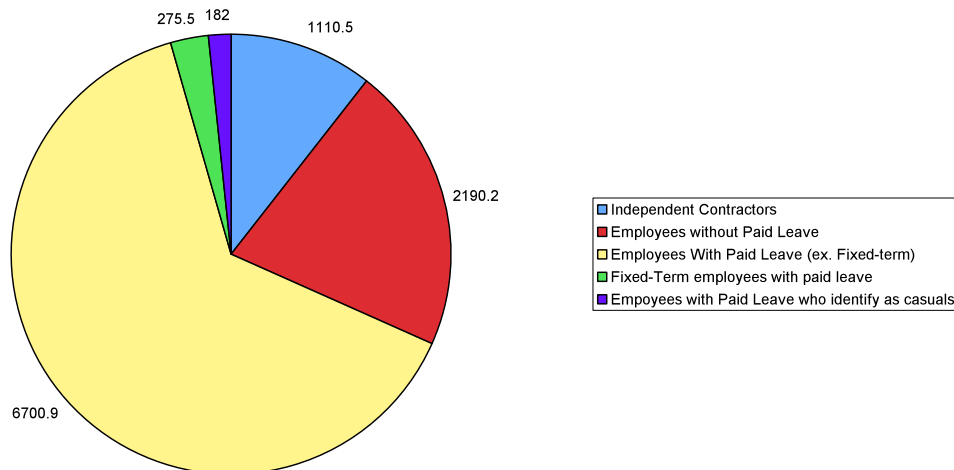


Figure 3: Share of Workforce in Different Forms of Employment (Figures in 000's)⁵

There are significant differences between independent contractors, fixed-term employees, and casual employees that suggest differing experiences of non-standard work. These differences are briefly discussed below

1.1.1. Independent Contractors

The Australian Bureau of Statistics defines independent contractors as workers ‘who operate their own business and who contract to perform services for others without having the legal status of an employee’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009c, p. 19). Independent contractors, that is, perform work under a commercial contract for services rather than a contract of employment. However, there is no fixed legal definition of an independent contractor. The fact that a client/employer hires a worker under a contract for services rather than an employment contract does not by itself establish that that worker is an independent contractor (Office of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner, 2010, p. 20). Rather, to determine whether a worker is an independent contractor or an employee, courts adopt a multi-factor test based on the following key criteria:

⁵ Source: ABS, Forms of Employment, November 2010 (estimates for employees with leave entitlements who identify as casuals taken from FOES 2007 survey).

<i>Control over work</i>	The worker chooses how, where, and when to perform tasks
<i>Number of clients</i>	The worker works on a number of different projects for different principals or genuinely has the right to do so
<i>Responsibility for the provision and maintenance of tools</i>	The worker provides and maintains their own equipment
<i>Tax and Insurance Obligations</i>	The worker is responsible for business expenses such as income tax and insurance
<i>Form of Payment</i>	The worker is paid by reference to the completion of tasks
<i>Risk of Incurring Financial Loss</i>	The worker carries a risk of loss or has the opportunity to profit from undertaking the work

Table 1: Key Factors for Testing Whether a Worker is an Independent Contractor (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation, 2005, p. 11; Office of the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner, 2010, p. 21)

Whether a worker is deemed an employee or an independent contractor has a number of significant implications for his or workplace entitlements and obligations. Because independent contractors work under a contract for service rather than a contract of employment they receive very little employment protection under Australian workplace relations legislation. This is especially so since the passing of the *Independent Contractors Act 2006*, one of the aims of which was to accentuate the commercial nature of independent contracting and to prevent states from applying the same protections that employees enjoy under workplace relations legislation to independent contractors.⁶ Accordingly, unlike employees, independent contractors are not covered by unfair dismissal protections or minimum wage protections, although they do receive some protection against hirers discriminating on the basis of race, sex, disability, and age under a number of anti-discrimination acts. Moreover, they are generally responsible for remitting GST to the Australian Tax Office and for making their own superannuation and income tax contributions. They may also be responsible for any public liability issues arising from their work, even when performed for a client, whereas employers typically bear this responsibility for their employees' work.

Almost three out of every four independent contractors are men and almost half of independent contractors work more than 40 hours per week, mainly as either Professionals (21.6%) or Technicians and Trades Workers (30%). Nonetheless, more than one in 10 independent contractors are labourers, indicating that even though independent contractors are typically higher-skilled workers, a significant proportion of lower-skilled workers are being hired as independent contractors (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 20). Independent contracts also tend to be older than other workers, with more than 50 percent of independent contractors aged between 35 and 59 years of age, and more than 20 percent over 60 years of age. A high proportion (73%) are also married or live with their partner (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 17). Another significant characteristic of independent contractors is that almost fifty percent of independent contractors work in a job where

⁶ The exceptions to this were the enactment of protections for outworkers in the clothing, textile, and footwear industries to ensure they are not paid less than the minimum that employees in those industries would be entitled to under industrial awards and the recognition of State legislation governing owner-drivers in Victoria and New South Wales. See Part 4 of the *Independent Contractors Act 2006*.

their hours vary from week to week and more than a third are required to be on call or standby (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 23).

1.1.2. Fixed-Term Employees

The term fixed-term employee, as used in this report, refers to employees who receive paid leave entitlements but who are employed only ‘for a specific period or for the duration of a specific task’ (Waite & Will, 2002, p. 1). Unlike independent contractors, fixed-term employees must perform their work under the direction of their employer and they are entitled to the same rights and protections as ongoing employees *for the duration of their employment*. However, the limited duration of their employment contract may disadvantage fixed-term employees in practice in terms of their ability to accumulate paid leave entitlements such as maternity leave and long-service leave, while they may also face added difficulties accessing employer-provided professional development and training and participating in collective decision making processes if, for example, they are viewed as *temporary* workers. From this perspective, it is notable that just over 40 percent of fixed-term employees have been in their jobs for less than a year, while 1 in 4 fixed term employees expect to change jobs within the next year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007a, p. 22). This observation corresponds with findings in a study by Louie et al. in which fixed-term employees were the workers most likely to report that their job was insecure and that they were distressed by this insecurity (Louie, 2006, pp. 478–9).

One very significant difference between fixed-term employees and other non-standard workers is the greater protection they receive under unfair dismissal legislation. Although fixed-term employees’ employment can be ended for any reason whatsoever once their employment contract has ended, employers cannot dismiss fixed-term employees prior to the completion of their employment contract without paying compensation. For this reason it has been suggested that fixed-term employment may, in certain incidences, give employees even greater job security than permanent employment (Waite & Will, 2002, p. 9). In practice, however, fixed-term employees are likely to experience greater employment uncertainty than ongoing employees, particularly if they are employed on short-term contracts. Another key difference between fixed-term employees and other non-standard workers is that fixed-term employees are more likely to receive a regular income due to their more certain work patterns and full-time hours. As a result, they may have greater financial security than other non-standard workers, although much will depend on the duration of their employment contract.

The majority of fixed-term employees (59%) are women and are concentrated in the Education and Training (37.7%), Health Care and Social Assistance (15.8%), and Public Administration and Safety (12.9%) sectors. Moreover, like independent-contractors, fixed-term employees tend to be higher-skilled workers. For example, more than half of fixed-term employees are professionals whereas less than 4 percent of fixed-term employees are labourers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 26). While recent data on the age profile and household characteristics of fixed-term employees is limited, Waite and Will (Waite & Will, 2002, p. 21) report that half of fixed-term employees are married while just over 30 percent of fixed-term employees are aged between 20 and 29 years of age, suggesting that fixed-term employment is more common among workers in the early stages of their careers.

1.2.3. Casual Employees

Casual employment is by far and away the most prevalent, and arguably the most precarious, form of non-standard work in Australia. It accounts for almost a fifth of all paid work in Australia and almost a quarter of all employment. The defining feature of casual employment is the exclusion of casual employees from paid leave entitlements, such as holiday pay, maternity leave, sick leave, and long-service leave. Moreover, casual employees can be dismissed at any time and without severance pay. Hence, as Campbell and Burgess argue, '[w]hereas permanent employees enjoy a range of rights and benefits, casual employees enjoy almost none' (Campbell & Burgess, 2001, p. 182). However, the definition of casual employment as employment without paid leave entitlements is controversial since this definition differs substantially from the way in which the term is used in common law, which focuses on the occasional and contingent nature of casual work to define casual employees as employees 'who are used "as and when required", with each engagement being seen as a separate engagement' (Campbell & Burgess, 2001, p. 176). Thus, an employee who receives no paid leave entitlements but who is employed on a year-round, full-time basis would not be considered a casual employee under the common law understanding even though he or she would be considered a casual employee according to the ABS definition. For the purposes of simplicity, we will adhere to the ABS definition of casual employment in this study.

Casual employees differ from independent contractors and fixed-term employees in a number of significant ways. Firstly, casual workers are heavily concentrated in less skilled and lower paid occupations. For example, 1 in 5 casual employees work as labourers, while a further 23 percent work as sales workers. In fact, not only are casual workers concentrated in the lower skilled occupations but employment in these occupations is more likely to be on a casual basis (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 29). For example, whereas the proportion of employees who work on a casual basis across all occupations is just under 24 percent, more than 45 percent of employees who work as labourers are casuals. For sales workers, the figure is close to 49 percent while a large proportion of employees in Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing are employed on a casual basis (46.7 percent) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 29). Casuals, as the table below illustrates, are predominantly younger workers (more than half are under 35 years of age) and female. Moreover, casuals are also the workers least likely to be married or living with their partner, while close to half have been in their job for less than a year indicating casuals' lack of job security.

	Casuals	Fix-Term	Ind. Con.	Labour Force
Industry				
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	2.88%	1.20%	3.10%	3%
Manufacturing	7.00%	3.10%	5.10%	9%
Construction	5.35%	3.80%	30.70%	9%
Retail	19.94%	1.00%	3.20%	11%
Accommodation and Food Services	19.36%	0.70%	1.60%	7%
Transport	4.68%	1.70%	7.50%	5%
Education	5.90%	37.70%	3.50%	8%
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	3.53%	5.50%	14.40%	8%
Health Care and Social Assistance	9.64%	15.80%	5.30%	11%
Occupation				
Managers	2.60%	8.60%	12.90%	13%
Professionals	9.20%	52.90%	21.60%	21%
Technicians and trades workers	8.90%	6.20%	30.00%	15%
Community and Personal Service Workers	17.40%	10.10%	4.40%	10%

Clerical and administrative workers	10.80%	15.10%	7.90%	15%
Sales workers	23.00%	1.70%	3.50%	10%
Machinery Operators and Drivers	7.59%	2.20%	6.60%	6%
Labourers	20.47%	3.20%	13.20%	10%
Personal Characteristics				
Male	44.00%	41.00%	74.20%	55%
Female	56.00%	59.00%	25.80%	45%
Married or living with partner	41.94%*	52.8%#	72.90%	63%
15 - 19 yrs	21.93%*	(15-19yrs) 9.5%#	1.30%	6%
20-24	17.53%*	(20-29yrs) 30.2%#	4.80%	11%
25-34	18.00%*	(30-39yrs) 26.5%#	16.80%	22%
35-44	16.73%*		24.50%	22%
45-54	13.97%*	(40-49yrs) 21.6%#	26.20%	22%
55-59	5.84%*	(50-59yrs) 10.9%#	11.70%	8%
60-64	3.56%*	(60+) 1.3%#	8.80%	6%
65 and over	2.47%*		5.80%	3%
Tenure in Job				
In current job <1 year	45.9%*	41%*	13.70%	20%
Expects to be in job in 12 months	79%*	75%*	92.80%	91%

Table 2: Characteristics of Non-Standard Workers by Employment Type⁷

1.2 Motivations behind growth in non-standard work

The rise of non-standard employment reflects the growing popularity of the 'flexible firm' model of business organization in which the workforce is divided into two broad categories of worker: a core group of competent full-time permanent employees who attend to the day to day operation of businesses and a flexible group of peripheral workers employed on an irregular basis to enable businesses to 'react quickly and efficiently to fluctuating market conditions' (Lenz, 1996, p.556; (Aronsson, Gustafsson, & Dallner, 2002, p. 152). This use of flexible workers is celebrated as enabling employers to adjust more quickly to changing market conditions while avoiding the risk of fixed labour costs and expensive employee benefits during periods of reduced demand (Tomba et al., 2007, p. 211). At the same time, it is also argued that the trend towards flexible and non-standard employment 'reflects workers' preference for flexibility' (Tsumori, 2004, p. 1). For instance, forms of non-standard work such as casual employment may help to remove impediments preventing workers who cannot commit to full-time work from entering the labour force (for example, carers and students). As Lenz argues, 'Part-time and temporary work traditionally has been a way for those with special employment requirements to find meaningful and profitable work and to tailor their work schedules to suit their personal or family needs' (Lenz, 1996, p. 557). Others celebrate non-standard work arrangements for the autonomy that they afford workers in the sense that forms of non-standard work, such as casual employment and independent contracting, supposedly provide

⁷ Source: ABS Forms of Employment Survey (FOES), November 2010 except * which is taken from ABS FOES, November 2007 Survey and # which is taken from Waite and Will, 2002, p.21.

workers with greater freedom to decide when and where they work. As a Federal Government report into independent contracting argued, 'For the worker, [independent contracting] can provide more freedom to choose working hours, to decide when they take their holidays, who they work for and what type of work they undertake. High demand for specialist contractors in particular industries contributes to higher wages and ease of worker mobility' (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment Workplace Relations and Workforce Participation, 2005, p. 8). The rise of non-standard work is thus celebrated as 'liberating workers...from the straitjacket of standardised employment' (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 329) and efforts to limit the use of atypical employment arrangements are resisted as coercive restrictions on workers' employment preferences (ICA 2003: Liberal and National Parties 2004). Against this, critics argue that the shift away from the standard model of full-time, ongoing employment has been almost entirely employer driven with the result that workers 'have come to bear the burden of organizational and economic performance as never before' (Scott, 2004, p. 145).

While acknowledging the benefits of flexible employment arrangements for a small number of workers, critics argue that the shift towards temporary and flexible employment has been driven by neo-liberal social and economic policies that have rendered employment conditions more precarious for the vast majority of workers (Evans & Gibb, 2009, p. 16). In Australia, for example, successive Coalition governments since the mid-1990s have sought to de-collectivise industrial relations by, among other things, weakening unions' ability to take industrial action and limiting the scope of collectively negotiated agreements (Workplace Relations Act 1996); by encouraging individually negotiated agreements in place of collectively negotiated minimum award conditions (Work Choices Legislation 2005); and by weakening state regulation of independent contracting (Independent Contracting Act 2006) (Quinlan & Johnstone, 2009, pp. 428–32). In so doing, industrial relations policy has increasingly sought to protect the competitiveness of business and industry in place of regulating minimum award conditions as the principal mechanism through which to secure employment. Indeed, within the context of the global economy, the robust regulation of minimum award conditions is now itself perceived as a threat to employment security (Campbell & Burgess, 2001, p. 174; Schmidt, 2006, pp. 2–4). The upshot has been a return to labour as commodity (Barbara Pocock, Prosser, & Bridge, 2005, p. 459; Schmidt, 2006; Standing, 2008) and the emergence of a situation of '*systematic insecurity*' (Standing, 2008, p. 19), as workers have been forced into forgoing entitlements and into taking on more temporary and uncertain jobs for the sake of increasing the competitiveness of business and industry. Moreover, critics of non-standard work arrangements argue that it is not only non-standard workers' employment conditions that have become more precarious. Permanent, fulltime workers' jobs are also under increasing scrutiny and pressure simply from the mere *presence* of non-standard workers. As Standing argues:

The primary indirect benefit for employers comes from the threat the presence of casual workers represents for regular workers. Not only are casual workers perceived as more amenable to real wage cuts, erosion of benefits, variations in working time and arbitrary penalties for errors, real or imagined. They are also likely to make other workers feel more resigned to such treatment themselves (Standing, 2008, p. 26).

1.3 Implications for Workers' Health

There is a concern amongst critics of non-standard work that the upshot of recent shifts in the social organisation of work has been 'the growth of poor-quality and health damaging forms of employment' (Quinlan et al., 2010, p. 301). For instance, workers in non-standard employment are

more likely than ongoing workers to experience more frequent periods of unemployment, which has long been known to have severe consequences for health. But research also indicates that the ongoing fear of losing one's job associated with prolonged experiences of job insecurity may be even more damaging to workers' health than the experience of job loss itself (Clougherty, Souza, and Cullen, 2010: 115). Prolonged exposure to job insecurity may undermine worker's confidence in their ability to achieve important life goals and to obtain financial and occupational security, with severe consequences for their experience of self-efficacy (which is linked to health). For those workers least able to compete profitably in the labour market, worries about job insecurity may lead them to avoid making long-term plans and commitments that they otherwise would like to make, such as forming relationships and having children (Artazcoz et al., 2005: 765). From this perspective, critics worry that the "flexibility" of non-standard employment relationships makes workers structurally more disposed to experiencing job insecurity and periods of unemployment on a more regular basis, while the discontinuity and uncertainty that are part and parcel of many flexible employment relationships can engender a sense of powerlessness that threatens workers' sense of mastery, efficacy and esteem (Facey and Eakin, 2010: 339-40). Irregular and unpredictable work patterns may also further undermine worker's control over their lives by inhibiting their ability to balance work and family life, and by hindering their social participation (J. Benach & Muntaner, 2007, p. 276; Clougherty, Souza, & Cullen, 2010, p. 115). For example, casual shift workers may have to live their life largely on-call because of uncertain/irregular work schedules and fears about the consequences of turning down work. Moreover, the ease with which they can be let go by their employer may also put pressure on non-standard workers to come to work sick, to refuse to report injuries and health concerns, and to accept more hazardous tasks that permanent workers refuse to do (Facey and Eakin, 2010: 335). Finally, there is a concern that non-standard employment provides workers with few opportunities for skill-acquisition and therefore risks eroding career paths—particularly for women and younger workers—with the result that non-standard workers end up trapped in more poorly paid and less skilled jobs over the course of their career (Standing, 2008, pp. 23, 26).

These concerns regarding the health impacts of non-standard work arrangements are explored more extensively in the next chapter, although it is important to recognise that the variety of non-standard employment arrangements in Australia differ in significant ways. Hence, it may be overly simplistic to conclude that recent shifts in the social organisation of work have, on the whole, been either beneficial or detrimental for workers' health and wellbeing. Before exploring the health implications of non-standard work in more detail, it is important to draw attention to the social patterning of non-standard work arrangements since this raises a number of important concerns regarding the social equity impacts of non-standard work arrangements.

1.4 Inequality and Insecure Work

One of the notable and potentially alarming features of the shift away from permanent, ongoing employment is the social patterning of non-standard work. Not all workers have been equally affected by the rise in non-standard work arrangements. Whereas some social groups have experienced a marked change in their employment conditions over the past 30 or so years, others have experienced little change at all. As we document below, to the extent that the rise in non-standard employment has contributed to a decline in working conditions and the growth in health damaging forms of employment, women, less-skilled workers, and workers outside the major cities have had to shoulder the lion's share of these social costs.

1.4.1 Class inequalities in the experience of non-standard work

In Australia, less-skilled workers are more likely than higher-skilled workers to be employed under a non-standard employment contract. We see this in the fact that the occupations with the greatest share of employees who are employed on a casual contract are the less skilled and more poorly paid occupations, such as labourers (45.5 percent of employees) and sales workers (48.7 percent). By contrast, less than one in ten managers and just over ten percent of professionals are employed on a casual basis (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 29).

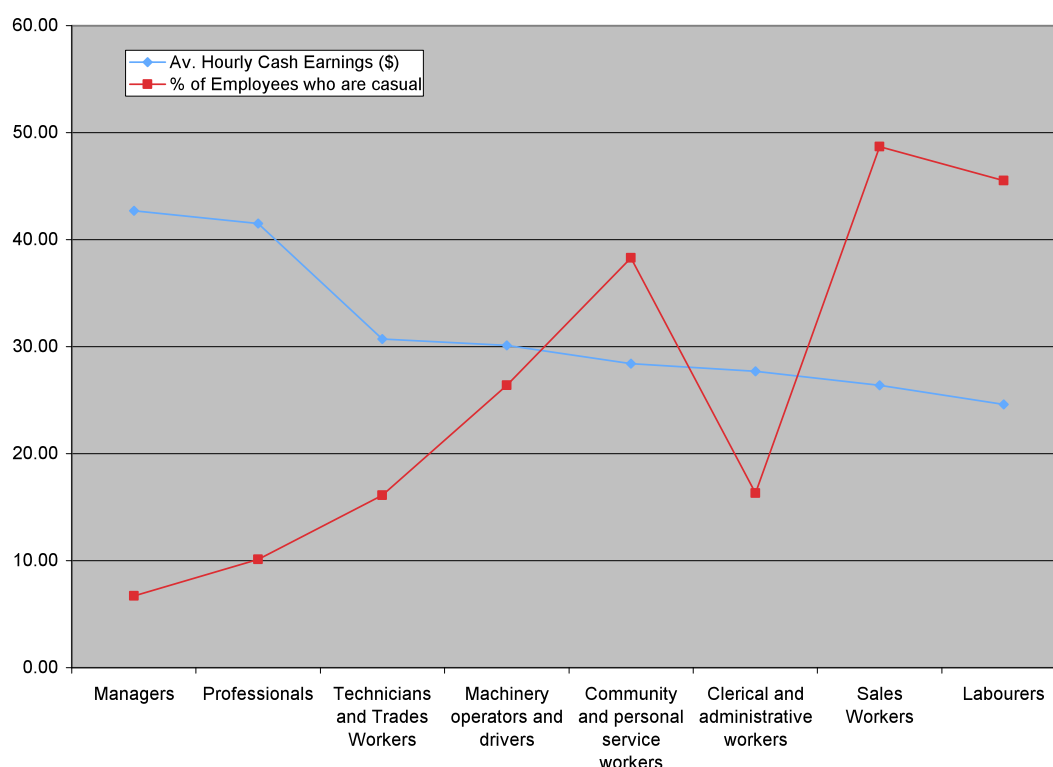


Figure 4: Proportion of employees employed as casuals by occupation ranked according to average hourly earnings, November 2010.⁸

That casual employment is concentrated in less skilled occupations is unsurprising since more highly-skilled roles may be more difficult to fill with temporary workers who may lack the skills and qualifications needed to perform in these roles. By contrast, roles that can be performed with little training or qualifications are more suitable to being casualised since there is less need for employers to retain skilled workers for these positions. Nonetheless, even when independent contracting and fixed-term employment forms of non-standard work that are more prevalent in higher-skilled occupations are also taken into consideration, there is still a higher concentration of non-standard employment arrangements in the less-skilled and poorer paid occupations. Figure 3 below shows the percentage of workers employed either as casuals, fixed-term employees, or independent contractors within each occupation and compares this to the average hourly earnings of workers within each occupation. The graph clearly shows an inverse association between average earnings

⁸ Data on proportion of employees without leave entitlements is taken from the Nov 2010 Forms of Employment Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 29). Data on the average hourly earnings of workers by occupation is taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010b, p. 21.

within an occupation and the proportion of workers within an occupation employed under non-standard employment contracts.

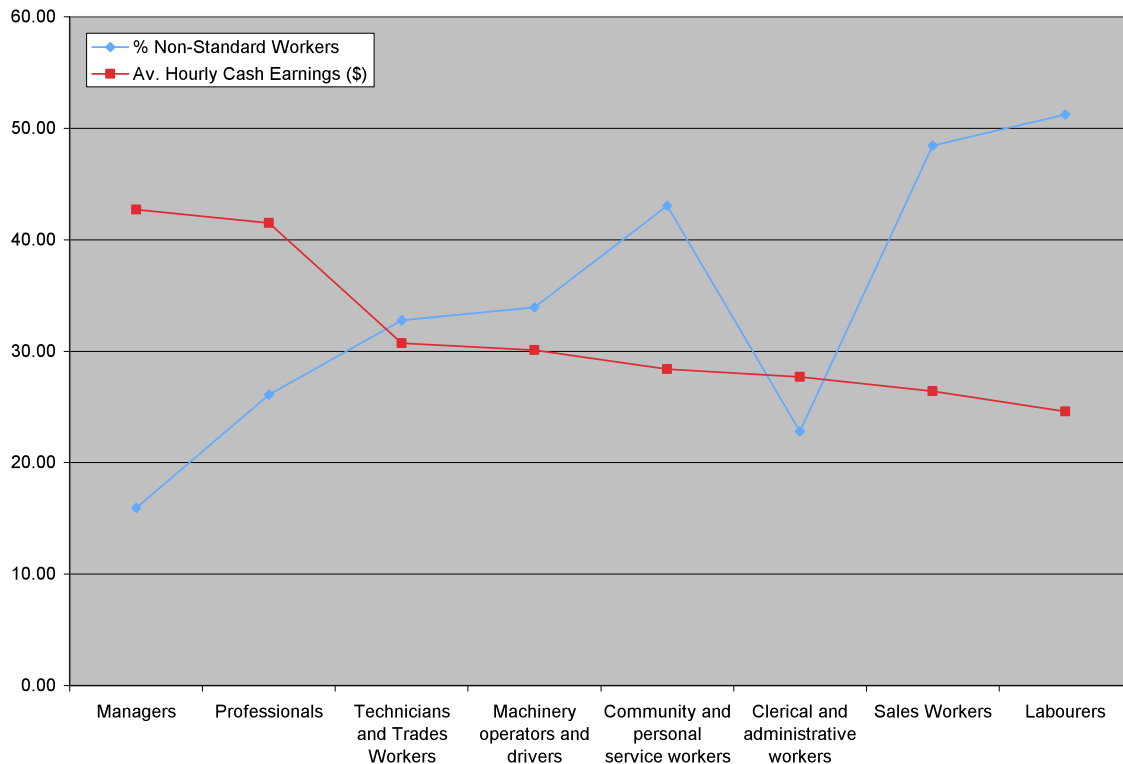


Figure 5: Proportion of workers in non-standard employment by occupation plotted against average hourly earnings.⁹

It is not only the higher incidence of non-standard work arrangements in less skilled occupations that renders poorer and less-skilled workers more vulnerable to the impacts of non-standard work, however. Poorer and less-skilled workers may also have very different experiences of working under non-standard employment arrangements than higher-skilled workers as a consequence of their more limited employment mobility and reduced wealth. For example, better off workers in more highly paid positions have greater economic resources to cope with periods of under- or unemployment than lower socio-economic status workers, who may struggle to afford basic necessities if they experience intermittent work scheduling. Similarly, non-standard workers' whose skills are in high demand and who are confident of being able to secure alternative employment may be less worried about the ease with which they can be let go by their employer than less skilled workers who find it more difficult to source alternative employment. Hence, as Artazcoz et al. rightly point out, '[l]ess qualified workers could be more vulnerable to flexible employment because of their lower employability and less power to negotiate their employment conditions' (Artazcoz et. al., 2005, p. 762).

⁹ Data on proportion of non-standard workers by occupation is taken from the Nov 2010 Forms of Employment Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a). Data on the average hourly earnings of workers by occupation is taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010b, p. 21.

1.4.2 Gender inequalities in the experience of non-standard work

The gendered patterning of non-standard work is even more pronounced, with around 1 in 4 women being employed on a casual basis in November 2010 compared to just 15.5 percent of men (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, p. 11). This is consistent with trends overseas. In the US, for example, close to a third of women who participate in the workforce are engaged in non-standard employment compared to just under 23 percent of men while, in Europe, more than one in ten women are employed on temporary contracts compared to just 1 in 20 men (Menéndez, Benach, Muntaner, Amable, & O'Campo, 2007, p. 777).

A number of factors explain the higher incidence of casual employment among women. Firstly, casual employment is more common in the so-called 'pink collar' occupations. For example, Community and Personal Service Workers and Sales Workers are two of the occupations with the highest proportion of employees who are employed on a casual basis (38.3 percent and 48.7 percent respectively). These occupations are also occupations that account for a large percentage of the female workforce, with Community and Personal Service work and Sales accounting for close to 30 percent of all female employment between them (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009b, pp. 19, 29). But it is not simply that occupations with a high percentage of female employees are also occupations with a high percentage of casual employees that explains the gendered dimension of non-standard work. Even when women work in occupations and industries with relatively low-rates of non-standard work, they are still more likely than their male colleagues to be employed on an irregular basis. For example, whereas less than 7 percent of employees working in management in Australia are casuals, close to 1 in 10 female employees in management are casuals. Similarly, the proportion of female technicians and trades workers who are employed as casuals (30.9 percent) is almost double the overall share of employed technicians and trades-workers who work as casuals (16.1 percent) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, pp. 27–9). Indeed, as Figure 4 below illustrates, *in every occupation* a larger percentage of female employees are casuals than male employees. One explanation for why women are more likely than men to work as casuals is that women prefer to work on a part-time basis so that they can better balance work and family commitments. However, while this undoubtedly explains some of the gendered difference in the incidence of casual employment, what is particularly striking is that, *even in full-time jobs, women are still more likely than men to be employed as casuals.*

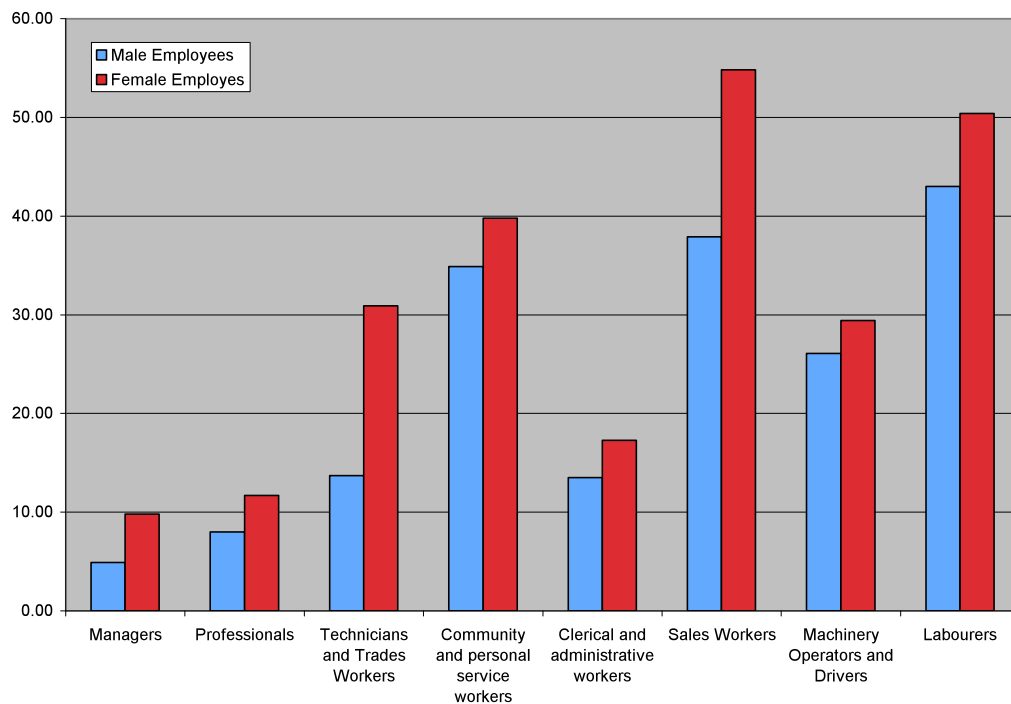


Figure 6: Percentage of employees without paid leave entitlements by gender and occupation (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, pp. 27–8).

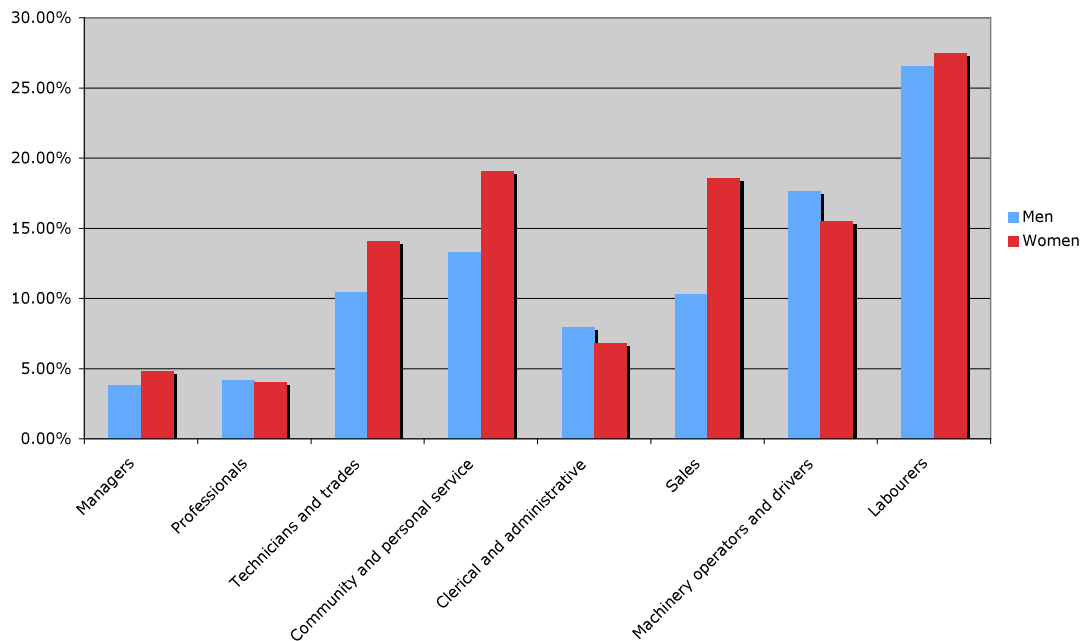


Figure 7: Percentage of full-time employees without paid leave by gender (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010a, pp. 27–8).

1.4.3. Rural vs. urban workers' experience of non-standard work

One significant feature of non-standard work in Australia is that non-standard employment arrangements are more common in rural and regional areas than in urban locations. That is, a greater share of the regional and rural workforce is employed in non-standard work than the urban

workforce (Louie, 2006, p. 478; Productivity Commission Research Paper, 2006, p. 49). Unfortunately, this over-representation of rural and regional workers in non-standard work has received very little attention in the existing literature. Earlier studies of flexible employment have tended to focus on urban centred skilled, technological work places such as the computer software industry (MacEachen, Pozer and Clarke, 2008), healthcare, education and managerial consulting (Leicht, Waltr, Sainsaulieu and Davies, 2009) and other skilled professions (Rubery, Ward, Grimshaw and Beynon 2004). Little qualitative research has been conducted on 'traditional' non-technological workplaces and particularly rural workplaces. This study attempts to address this gap in our understanding by focusing explicitly on the experiences of non-standard workers in rural and regional areas.

We concentrate on the experiences of these workers for a number of reasons. Firstly, workers in regional and rural areas are potentially more vulnerable to the effects of non-standard work not only because of the higher incidence of non-standard work arrangements in non-metropolitan areas but also because, as with socio-economic differences, living in a rural or regional location rather than a major urban centre is likely to affect people's experience of non-standard work. One issue here is the greater scarcity of employment opportunities in rural and regional areas, with unemployment in the Loddon-Mallee (Mildura; Swan Hill) and Goulburn-Ovens-Murray (Shepparton) regions running at 6 percent—20 percent higher than in the Melbourne metropolitan region, which has an unemployment rate of 5 percent (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). This greater scarcity of employment opportunities in rural and regional areas may exacerbate the job insecurity associated with certain forms of non-standard work. For where there are fewer job opportunities, the consequences of being dismissed from one's employment may be much more severe for workers. Hence, workers in rural and regional areas may feel under greater pressure to keep their existing jobs. At the same time, when there is an oversupply of labour, there is less need for employers to invest in retaining workers. Consequently, the ease with which they can be dismissed combined with the greater scarcity of jobs in rural and regional locations potentially makes rural and regional non-standard workers more vulnerable to coercion and exploitation by their employer.

A further reason for concentrating on the experiences of rural and regional workers' working in non-standard employment is the sensitivity of rural work to changing weather conditions. This is especially true of the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector, where changing weather conditions can frequently interfere with the scheduling and performance of work. With the exception of fixed-term employees, non-standard workers are acutely vulnerable to any delay or decline in the scheduling of work since the vast majority are only paid for the hours they work or the tasks they complete. Hence, the ability of non-standard workers' in rural areas to earn a living wage is not only sensitive to cycles in demand for goods and services but also to changing weather patterns, adding a further dimension of precariousness to their experience of non-standard work.

A final reason why we have decided to concentrate rural and regional workers' experiences of changing employment arrangements stems from the ongoing crisis in rural health. The 2007-08 National Health Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009d) shows that incidences of cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and poor mental health are higher in rural and regional areas than

in major cities.¹⁰ While the National Health Survey does not speculate on the reasons why this is the case, as we will see in the next chapter, these illnesses are all associated with working in a hazardous psychosocial work environment. Although the disparity in incidences of these diseases between metropolitan and rural/regional areas is unlikely to be explained solely by the higher incidence of non-standard work in non-metropolitan areas, understanding how the work environment shapes people's exposure to health risks can offer important insights into the role that shifts in the social organisation of work can play in mediating the incidence of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, and depression in regional and rural areas. The next chapter takes up this question of the importance of work as a social determinant of health before considering the particular health risks associated with non-standard forms of work.

¹⁰ In relation to the disparity in health outcomes between rural/regional and metropolitan Victoria, see <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ruralhealth/promotion/index.htm>

2. Health, Freedom, and Work

People's health is profoundly affected by the quality of employment and working conditions. Good employment and working conditions, for example, 'can provide financial security, social status, personal development, social relations, and self-esteem', all of which contribute to health (WHO, 2008, p. 72). By contrast, work environments that elicit stress or which expose workers to dangerous chemicals and toxins undermine health via material and psychosocial pathways. The material pathways through which working conditions affect health are the immediate physical, chemical, and biological hazards that workers are directly exposed to in their jobs, such as poisonous chemical products, toxins, smoke fumes, mineral dust, infectious diseases and viruses (e.g. doctors and laboratory technicians), and physically demanding work tasks (e.g. heavy lifting and muscle strain from repetitive tasks). If workers' exposure to these physical, chemical, and biological hazards is not carefully managed via adequate occupational health and safety training and practices and via the careful design of work tasks, these hazards can lead directly to injuries and illnesses. Notably, injuries and illnesses caused by such material hazards are estimated to account for just under 9 per cent of the global burden of mortality while, in the EU alone, an estimated 121,000 people die each year from work related injuries or illnesses (Joan Benach, Muntaner, & Santana, 2007, p. 78). But working conditions also affect people's health via less immediate psychosocial pathways. These include the quality of social support that is available within the work role, the opportunities that work affords people to exercise decision-making and to utilise and develop their skills, and the experience of job insecurity. The prolonged experience of work stress, for example, is associated with adverse physical health outcomes such as hypertension, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease, as well as with psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Joan Benach et al., 2007, pp. 81–82). Moreover, although participation in the workforce is generally better for people's psychological and mental wellbeing than unemployment, recent studies suggest working in a poor quality psychosocial environment may be even more damaging to health than long-term unemployment. For example, a recent Australian study reporting data on job quality, unemployment and mental health from the HILDA surveys found that working in a low quality job—measured in terms of job demands and complexity, job control, job insecurity, and perceived fairness of pay—was worse for a person's mental health than remaining unemployed (Butterworth et al., 2011). Indeed, people who moved from unemployment into a poor quality job experienced a significant worsening in their mental health compared to those who remained unemployed (Butterworth et al., 2011, p. 4).

2.1. Work, Health, and Self-Realisation

The quality of people's experience of the psychosocial work environment is important for health because of the effect that it has on people's positive experience of self and, in particular, on their experience of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Siegrist, 2005, p. 1034). Self-efficacy—'the belief a person has in his or her ability to accomplish tasks' (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1465)—for example, is important for health because it induces feelings of mastery (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1466) that help people to cope more effectively in response to environmental stressors (Marmot, Ferrie, Newman, & Stansfeld, 2001, p. 239). The work role can play an important part in promoting health because the opportunities that work affords people to learn new skills, to master difficult tasks, and to meet demands with a sense of responsibility and commitment can elicit experiences of self-efficacy (Johannes Siegrist, 2005, p. 1034). Work, that is, can promote self-efficacy and health insofar

as it provides ‘a sense of personal effectiveness, so that the worker feels responsible for shaping his or her life and feels an ability to affect the world’ (Levine & Rizvi, 2005, p. 104). But for work to act as a source of positive self-experience in this way, it must be meaningful in the sense that the worker must be able to see some element of his or herself in the task that is performed. If the worker sees no element of her subjectivity in the work that is performed—if she views the product of her work as something that could have been produced by *anybody*, even a machine—she will be unable to experience herself positively through her work since she will be unable to experience *herself* in the product of her work. Under such circumstances, work becomes a source of alienation with devastating consequences for workers’ experience of self and, through this, their health. This was something that Adam Smith had recognised as far back as the late 1700s when he reflected on the detailed division of labour in a pin manufacturing plant, where ‘[o]ne man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it’ (A. Smith, 1976, pp. 2:302–3).¹¹ ‘The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations,’ Smith worried, ‘has no occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion’ (A. Smith, 1976, pp. 2:302–3).¹² The German philosopher, G.W.F., would later echo Smith’s concerns and write that, work, under the detailed division of labour described by Smith, becomes ‘absolutely more and more dead...and the consciousness of the factory worker is degraded to the utmost level of dullness’ (Hegel, 1932, pp. 197–198 cited and translated in Avineri, 1971, p. 105).

Twentieth century studies on job satisfaction and job complexity largely support these criticisms of the detailed division of labour. In the literature on job satisfaction, it is ‘the element of *mental challenge*’ that is commonly cited as the aspect of work that workers’ most value (Locke, 1976, p. 1319).¹³ Mentally challenging jobs are a source of satisfaction and positive self-experience because they represent ‘an opportunity to exercise judgement’ which, in turn, enhances individuals’ feelings of ‘efficacy and ability to cope with the environment’ (Karasek, 1979, p. 303). Studies of the relationship between job complexity and workers’ cognitive capacities similarly suggest that the performance of routine, mindless work not only undermines job satisfaction but also workers’ cognitive development. For instance, Kohn and Schooler’s well known study of the effects of factory work on workers’ personalities found that, over a ten year period, ‘the cognitive capacities of men with complex jobs developed through work whereas the capacities of men with simple and repetitive jobs deteriorated’ (Kohn & Schooler, 1983, p. 304). Moreover, the effects of routine work on individuals’ agency spilled over into other spheres of their life. Workers whose jobs were intellectually challenging tended to pursue intellectually challenging leisure activities, while workers in mindless jobs tended to prefer mindless leisure (Kohn & Schooler, 1983, pp. 239–40; Murphy, 1993, p. 4). One reason why this is the case, suggest Kohn and Schooler, is that ‘doing substantially complex work tends to increase one’s respect for one’s own capacities, one’s valuation of self-direction’ (Kohn and Schooler, 1983, p. 304 cited in Murphy, 1993, p. 7). More recent epidemiological research suggests that routine, mindless work is not only deadening to worker’s cognitive capacities, it can also profoundly affect workers’ health. This was famously illustrated in the Whitehall studies, which uncovered a stepwise relationship between employment grade and health amongst British

¹¹ Cited in (Schwartz, 1982, p. 637)

¹² Cited in (Schwartz, 1982, p. 637)

¹³ Cited in (Elster, 1986, p. 113) See also (Murphy, 1993, p. 3)

civil servants that largely had to do with the different levels of control that workers in the different employment grades had over their work (Michael Marmot, Bosma, Hemingway, Brunner & Stansfeld, 1997, p. 235).¹⁴

2.1.1 Job Control and Health in the Whitehall Studies

The Whitehall studies are widely regarded as the most important work that has so far been carried out on the significance of psychosocial work stressors for health. The first Whitehall study was established in 1967 to investigate the causes of heart disease by examining the health of 18,000 male British civil servants working at various levels of the public service. At the time, it was believed that work-related risk of coronary heart disease was primarily of concern to men in senior management roles (because of the greater demands they were under). However, the first Whitehall study found that it was those working at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy who were most at risk of developing heart disease. Indeed, middle-aged men at the bottom of the British civil service were at four times the risk of mortality as middle-aged administrators at the top of the hierarchy, while each employment grade in the civil service had a higher mortality rate than the grade above it even when traditional risk factors such as smoking, diet, blood pressure, plasma cholesterol, short height and blood sugar were controlled for (Michael Marmot, 2004, p. 39). A second Whitehall study, which included female employees, was subsequently established to investigate the causes of this social gradient. The conclusion that Michael Marmot and his fellow researchers came to was that the health inequalities that persisted amongst Whitehall employees were largely due to differences in the level of control that workers in the different employment grades had over their work (Michael Marmot et al., 1997, p. 235). Employment grade was associated with health amongst the Whitehall workers because, within such a hierarchically structured workplace as Whitehall, a person's employment grade acts as a clear demarcation of the level of control that he or she has over his or her work and the scope he or she has for decision-making and the use of skill-discretion. While senior public servants may face higher demands in their job, they have a high degree of autonomy in their role and wide latitude to influence decisions. This is in contrast to junior clerks, who have little say over their work and little opportunity to influence decisions (Michael Marmot, 2004, p. 126).

When Marmot and his colleagues examined the influence of low-control over work on health they found that low-control was associated with increased risk of minor psychiatric disorders, such as anxiety and depression, as well as with risk of developing heart disease both within and between employment grades (Michael Marmot, 2004, pp. 124–7; Michael Marmot et al., 1997). Another notable and related finding was that the level of control people had in other areas of their life, such as their home life, was similarly—and independently—associated with their vulnerability to developing depression, especially amongst women (Michael Marmot, 2004, p. 129). In other words, low control over life in general is bad for health, although low control over work appears to be particularly bad for health (Michael Marmot et al., 1997, pp. 238–9). The relationship between low-control over work and poorer health has been repeated in numerous subsequent studies, which repeatedly show that low-control over work in the sense of having little opportunity to make decisions about how and when work is performed and little opportunity to utilise and develop skills is

¹⁴ Middle-aged men at the bottom of the British civil service were at four times the risk of mortality as middle-aged administrators at the top of the hierarchy, while each employment grade in the civil service had a higher mortality rate than the grade above it even when traditional risk factors such as smoking, diet, blood pressure, plasma cholesterol, short height and blood sugar were controlled for (Michael Marmot, 2006, p. 39).

linked to increased risk of cardiovascular illness, poorer self-related health, and depression (Joan Benach et al., 2007, p. 81). For example, in a study of more than 11,000 Dutch workers, workers experiencing high job strain—a combination of high demands and low control over work—had ‘elevated risks of emotional exhaustion, psychosomatic health complaints, physical health symptoms and job dissatisfaction’ (de Jonge, Bosma, Peter & Siegrist, 2000, p. 1324). A more recent study of the relationship between job-control and health outcomes amongst more than 1100 Australian workers similarly reported a strong association between job strain and elevated risk of depression, anxiety, and poorer self-related health (D’Souza, Strazdins, Lim, Broom & Rodgers, 2003, pp. 850–2). Moreover, as in the Whitehall II study, low-control over work accompanied by high demands appears to be consistently linked to lower occupational status (Karasek, 1979, p. 303).

The exercise of control over work is believed to be positively associated with health precisely because it ‘represents an opportunity to exercise judgement’ and so ‘enhances the individual’s feelings of efficacy and ability to cope with the environment’ (Karasek, 1979, p. 303). Karasek here points out that ‘more “active” jobs are associated with satisfaction and reduced depression, even though they are more demanding’ (Karasek, 1979, p. 303). Conversely, a work environment ‘that puts high demands on working persons while providing little control over one’s task performance limits the experience of self-efficacy’ (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1467). It is therefore argued that work stress should not be analysed simply in terms of the demands that workers are under but should instead be understood as ‘an imbalance between the psychological demands of work on the one hand and the degree of control on the other’ (Bell, 2004, p. 6). Indeed, more demanding jobs that allow workers greater control over their work are likely to have a positive impact on their health insofar as the successful exercise of skill and judgement in the face of high demands can elicit feelings of control and mastery (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1466).

2.2. Work, Recognition, and Self-esteem

Work can be a source of positive experience of self (and good health) if it is complex and challenging and provides workers’ with the opportunity to exercise judgement and to utilise their skills. But a second way in which the quality of the psychosocial work environment affects people’s positive experience of self is via the opportunities that the work environment provides for people to receive favourable feedback (or social recognition) and to experience a sense of belonging, each of which is important for self-esteem (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1466). For, as fundamentally social beings, our experience of self is mediated by how others see us—by whether they acknowledge and respect us as equals or look down upon us. ‘Our need to feel valued and capable human beings,’ as Wilkinson and Pickett here explain, ‘means we crave positive feedback and often react with anger to even implied criticism’ (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 43). In this respect, the constitution of our identity ‘is dependent on the experience of inter-subjective recognition’ and on our ‘receiving approval and respect from others’ (Honneth, 1992, p. 188). As a result, as Taylor explains, ‘a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves’ (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). But, in our work-oriented societies, how people are perceived and recognised by the society around them depends, to a large extent, on the type of work that they do. As James Cobb argues, ‘the source of social legitimacy in capitalist society comes primarily from what a person produces, and it is from this that inferences are drawn about who he essentially *is*’ (Sennett & Cobb, 1993, pp. 265, 268). This is why unemployment can be so devastating to people’s sense of self-worth for it ‘deprives the

[person] of the right to contribute (to the life of a work collective, to a company, to society) and therefore of the chance to benefit from the precious reward that recognition constitutes' (Dejours & Deranty, 2010, p. 172). Likewise, a work environment that 'excludes individuals from belonging, acting or contributing' and which 'prevents them from receiving favourable feedback' can be equally destructive of self-esteem and positive self experience (Siegrist & Marmot, 2004, p. 1465). For if others do not appreciate the value and quality of our work or if they do not acknowledge us as valued, contributing members of the workforce, this can corrode the confidence that we have in ourselves as contributing workers. As Elster argues, 'the individual needs the recognition and evaluation of competent others, both to know how well he is performing and to give substance to his self-esteem' (Elster, 1986, p. 115). Peer recognition is crucial to enabling the worker to experience his or herself positively as a valuable, contributing member of the workforce. When colleagues and supervisors acknowledge the value and importance of the work that we do, this helps us to see that what we do is meaningful; that we are valued as contributing members of the workplace community. This, in turn, buttresses our sense of self-respect and self-esteem and it 'gives the person benefiting from it a sense of belonging – to a group, a team, or a trade' (Dejours, 2010, p. 59). This is why the lack of recognition at work can be a major source of suffering for people (J. P. Deranty, 2008, p. 453). We see this in the robustness of the association between the experience of effort-reward imbalance and health.

2.2.1 The effort-reward imbalance model of job stress

The effort-reward imbalance model of job stress posits the employment relationship as a form of social contract based implicitly on the norm of reciprocity in which employees expect that their physical and psychological efforts at work will be rewarded in kind in the form of either money, esteem and recognition from peers, or promotion and job security (Kuper, Singh-Manoux, Siegrist & Marmot, 2002, p. 777; Siegrist, 2005, p. 1034). Thus effort is exerted at work to win respect and to confirm or enhance one's social status. When this effort is reciprocally rewarded, employees feel afforded status as good professionals who contribute and perform and who are members of a significant social group (work colleagues). As Siegrist explains, 'the work role can act as a source of recurrent positive experience of self-esteem. This is the case when achievements that meet or even exceed expectations are reciprocated by equitable rewards or when collaboration occurs in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust' (Siegrist, 2005, p. 1034). However, if workers perceive that reciprocity has broken down and that their efforts are not being rewarded in kind—i.e. if they experience effort-reward imbalance—core expectations about adequate exchange in a crucial area of social life are violated with severe consequences for their positive self-image (Kivimäki, Vahtera, Elovainio, Virtanen, & Siegrist, 2007, p. 659; Siegrist, 1996, pp. 27–8). 'Recurrent violation of the norm of reciprocity,' as Siegrist and Marmot explain, 'may elicit a sense of being treated unfairly and suffering injustice which afflicts the workers' self-esteem' (2004, p. 1467). This may in turn elicit 'feelings of threat, anger, and depression or demoralisation, which in turn evoke sustained autonomic arousal' (1996, p. 30). For example, in a recent study of effort-reward imbalance among Australian workers, feelings of anger were more prevalent among workers experiencing effort-reward imbalance even after controlling for compounding factors (L. Smith, Roman, Dollard, Winefield, & Siegrist, 2005, p. 118).

In repeated studies, the experience of effort-reward imbalance is linked to increased risk of heart disease, poorer mental health and physical health functioning. It is also associated with a higher

prevalence of other important health indicators such as diabetes, sickness absence and alcohol dependence (Joan Benach et al., 2007, p. 160). In the Whitehall studies, for example, the experience of effort-reward imbalance was associated with two to six times increased risk of developing coronary heart disease, while in studies of a large cohort of Dutch workers, workers in high-effort low-reward roles were three to four times more likely to develop psychosomatic and physical health complaints than workers in low-effort, high-reward positions and fifteen times more likely to report emotional exhaustion (Joan Benach et al., 2007, p. 160; de Jonge et al., 2000, pp. 1322–3; Michael Marmot, Siegrist, Theorel, & Feeney, 1999, p. 125). Notably, the source of psychosocial stress on the effort-reward imbalance model of job stress is not limited to failures of reciprocity within individual workplaces but include perceived failures of reciprocity with the broader social opportunity structure related to work (i.e. within the wider labour market). In other words, if workers perceive that broader labour market conditions provide few rewards and few opportunities for them to progress their careers or if they feel that industrial relations policies unfairly disadvantage workers this too can be a source of stress. For instance, a labour market characterised by fragmented job careers, job instability, and forced occupational mobility can elicit feelings of frustration among workers who perceive a more general failure of social reciprocity within the economy (Siegrist, 1996, p. 30).

2.2.2 Social Support and Health

The experience of effort-reward imbalance undermines workers' health by afflicting their self-esteem. However, a work environment that excludes workers' from belonging and which limits the opportunities available for workers' to receive favourable feedback may further undermine workers' health if perceived failures of reciprocity within the workplace have a corrosive effect on the quality of social relations within the workplace.

Social support, whether within the workplace or outside it, has long been known to be beneficial for health for a number of reasons. Firstly, being able to turn to friends or family for support helps people to cope during periods of acute stress (Bell, 2004, p. 18). For example, studies have shown that while adults are especially prone to developing serious illnesses in the year following the death of a close family member or friend, those who can turn to a network of friends or relatives for support have a reduced risk of morbidity or mortality during this period ((Parkes, Benjamin, & Liddle, 1969) Cited in (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, p. 165)). But having friends, being married and participating in social networks also appears to have a more general and long-term protective affect on health. For example, in the Alameda County Study, researchers constructed a social network index based on people's marital status, number of contacts with friends and relatives, and levels of church and group membership. What they found was that those who scored lowest on the social network index had the highest mortality rate and that low-scores were associated with a 1.9 to 3 times greater risk of mortality over a 9 year period ((Berkman & Syme, 1979) reported in (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, p. 161). Likewise in the second Whitehall II study, low social support from colleagues was linked to poorer mental health, while having a large circle of friends and seeing them regularly was found to be good for workers' overall health (Bell, 2004, p. 8). Whitehall workers who reported negative feelings about their close personal relationships were also found to have an increased risk of poor mental health, poor physical functioning, and sickness absence (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, pp. 161–3). Notably, there was a correlation between low employment grade and reduced participation in supportive social networks in the Whitehall studies, with this correlation being 'one of the main factors explaining the higher prevalence of depressive symptoms among participants in the lower employment grades'

(Bell, 2004, p. 8). Senior civil servants, for example, were more likely to be involved in social organizations, while men and women in the higher employment grades also reported the highest levels of confiding/emotional support from the person closest to them (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, pp. 170–1).¹⁵

One of the reasons why participation in social networks is good for health, argues the British epidemiologist, Richard Wilkinson, is because having friends and participating regularly in social groups gives people ‘a sense of confidence, of reassurance and of self-confirmation, whereas being rejected or not having friends fills one with self-doubt and causes confidence to evaporate’ (Wilkinson, 1999a, p. 54). In turn, if people’s experience of social participation is one of frequently feeling disrespected or belittled, they may be less inclined to seek participation in social networks and, indeed, may withdraw altogether from social life. As Wilkinson argues:

The strength of community life, local associations, and friendship patterns seems most likely to be statistically associated with health because they reflect, on the hand, people’s social ease and confidence or, on the other, the extent to which social contact provokes anxiety, negative social comparisons, feelings of inadequacy, and angst as people feel belittled and undermined by status hierarchies (Wilkinson, 1999b, p. 534).

From this perspective, the prolonged experience of effort-reward imbalance, insofar as it elicits feelings of being unfairly treated and of being disrespected, may have a corrosive affect on the quality of social relationships with the workplace, particularly as ‘relationships in which there is a mutual balance of give and take may be easier to sustain than those where there is an imbalance’ (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, p. 157). In this respect, the experience of effort reward imbalance at work may undermine health partly through the way in which it affects levels of social support at work. Indeed, in the Whitehall II study and other studies, the health effects of the experience of effort-reward imbalance have been less pronounced in cases where background levels of social support at work are higher (Kuper et al., 2002, pp. 777, 782). This may be because effort-reward imbalances have a less corrosive effect on social networks when levels of social support are already high. Alternatively, it may be because participation in supportive social networks buttresses workers’ positive experience of self, enabling them to better cope with threats to their self-esteem from effort-reward imbalance experiences. A potentially significant finding in this respect is that workers in lower employment grades appear to be more adversely affected by the experience of effort-reward imbalance than higher-status workers (Kuper et al., 2002, p. 782). That is, the experience of effort-reward imbalance is more damaging to workers’ health the lower their occupational status. We speculate that this is because workers in lower employment grades have a more precarious sense of self in the first instance due to their lower socio-economic status. Hence, the experience of effort-reward imbalance poses more of a threat to their esteem as they have fewer psychosocial resources to call upon to retain their positive experience of self. That the experience of effort-reward imbalance is more harmful to less-skilled workers’ health is an alarming finding once we consider the sort of socio-economic conditions that give rise to the experience of effort-reward imbalance. For instance, Siegrist argues that workers in lower employment grades are more vulnerable to experiencing effort-reward imbalance for prolonged periods because they do not have the same opportunities as more

¹⁵ Other studies have similarly found a correlation between low social status and poorer social support, with a Canadian study observing that higher socio-economic status was associated with higher levels of perceived social support (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, p. 170). See (Turner & Marino, 1994).

skilled workers to quit their employment in the face of threats to their self-esteem (Siegrist, 1996, p. 31, 2005b, p. 1034). Moreover, less skilled workers may also have to expend more energy keeping their jobs because of the competition for employment in less-skilled sectors of the economy. At the same time, there is also less pressure on employers to adequately reward less-skilled workers with pay increases, job promotions, or improved working conditions since disaffected workers can be more easily replaced. Conversely, the increased labour mobility of more skilled workers means that they are under less pressure to put up with failures of reciprocity in the workplace in the long run, while the difficulties that many employers face recruiting skilled workers means that they have a greater incentive to ensure that skilled employees are not disaffected by their work conditions.

2.3 Job Insecurity and Work Stress

Low-control over work, the experience of effort-reward imbalance, and poor social support at work are key sources of psychosocial stress that undermine workers' health by threatening the positive experience of self. Another key work-related psychosocial influence on health is the experience of job insecurity.

The experience of job loss has long been known to have particularly devastating consequences for workers' health. For instance, in a 2006 study of the health effects of job loss in the U.S. labour market, the experience of job loss 'more than doubled the risk of heart attack and stroke among older workers' ((Gallo et al., 2006) reported in (Luo, 2010)). Likewise, a 2009 study by Strully based on data from the U.S. Panel Study of Income Dynamics found that forced job loss 'increased the odds of fair or poor health by 54%, and among respondents with no pre-existing health conditions, it increased the odds of a new likely health condition by 83%' (Strully, 2009, p. 242). Commenting on the reasons why job loss is so hazardous to health, Strully argues that it can pose 'a major shock to one's social status' and it can also 'disrupt social connections and communities as the families of displaced workers frequently relocate to find less expensive housing or better job markets' (Strully, 2009, p. 222). Moreover, job loss usually also means a deterioration in material living standards while the sense 'of having lost control over one's life situation' is also thought to be a key factor behind the deterioration in health during periods of unemployment (Malenfant, LaRue, & Vézina, 2007, p. 816). But it is not simply the *experience* of job loss that is damaging to health. Indeed, epidemiological research increasingly indicates that the 'prolonged *fear* of losing a job may be more damaging than job loss itself' [emphasis added] (Clougherty et al., 2010, p. 115). In other words, the experience of employment uncertainty by itself is bad for health. This was illustrated by research carried out during the Whitehall studies into the effects of perceived job insecurity on workers' health.

Although the Whitehall studies did not originally set out to explore the relationship between job insecurity and health—employment in the civil service was very much considered a job for life at the time—the privatisation of the Property Services Agency (PSA) in early 1992 presented the researchers with an opportunity to study the health affects of job insecurity. What they found was that, in the lead up to privatisation, civil servants working in the PSA experienced poorer health and reported increased incidences of coronary disease risk factors compared to civil services in other departments not affected by the privatisation. During the termination phase, 'there were significant increases in ischaemia, cholesterol concentration and BMI [body mass index] compared with respondents in other departments,' while rates of divorce and separation were also higher (J Ferrie, 1999, p. 80). Moreover, when the Whitehall researchers carried out a follow up study with ex-PSA workers 18 months after privatisation, they again found that 'those who reported their new job to be

insecure experienced more physical and mental ill-health' and were also more likely to be utilising health services despite overall health behaviours (e.g. smoking) remaining much the same (Bell, 2004, p. 12). Notably, job insecurity here refers not merely to the threat of impending job loss but rather to 'the discrepancy between the level of security a person experiences and the level he or she might prefer' (J Ferrie, 1999, pp. 60–1). Here, feelings of insecurity can be induced by the threatened removal of valuable features of a person's job or by someone 'being assigned unwanted and additional tasks' (Michael Marmot, Ferrie, Newman, & Stansfeld, 2001, p. 2).

Other epidemiological studies of workers experiencing job insecurity have similarly found a strong association between job-insecurity and poor health (D'Souza et al., 2003; Kuhnert, 1989; McDonough, 2000; Roskies, Louis-Guerin, & Fournier, 1993). For example, a study of manufacturing workers in Michigan comparing the health of workers in plants threatened with closure with the health of workers in secure plants found that workers who were threatened with job loss had higher blood pressure, reported increased incidences of self-reported ill-health, and had higher drug use (S. Cobb & Kasl, 1977; Kasl, Gore, & Cobb, 1975) reported in (J Ferrie, 1999, p. 64)). A more recent study by D'Souza et al of more than 1100 professionals in Australia has also found that the odds-ratio of workers developing depression and having poorer self-reported health increases fourfold when workers suffer from high-job insecurity, even when the influence of job strain is accounted for and adjustments are made for gender, education, marital status, and employment status (D'Souza et al., 2003, p. 852). In a Finish study of the effects of organisational downsizing on sickness absence among local government workers, 'high job insecurity was found to increase the risk of long-term sick leave by 30% and short sick-leave (three days or less, self-certified) by 20% compared with low job insecurity' (Jane Ferrie, 2001, p. 74; Vahtera, Kivimaki, & Pentti, 1997). This finding is especially significant because the experience of job insecurity itself acts as a disincentive for workers to take time off work, even due to illness. In other studies, the experience of job insecurity has been associated with higher incidences of GP consultations and hospital referrals amongst workers' family members, indicating that job insecurity affects not just the individual but the family as well (Burchell, Ladipo, & Wilkinson, 1999; Jane Ferrie, 2001, pp. 74–5).

The link between job insecurity and health is believed to follow a similar pathway to that of the link between low-control over work and health in that workers who experience job insecurity 'lack control over their immediate employment situation' (Scott, 2004, p. 144). For the experience of job insecurity is marked by uncertainty and a sense of powerlessness (Bussing, 1999, p. 220). Michael Marmot, for example, suggests that job insecurity elicits a fear of losing control over one's life and of losing access to the economic resources that are needed to be able to lead the life the person most wants to lead (Michael Marmot, 2004, p. 134). However, the experience of job insecurity does not simply just cause people to be anxious about *future* loss of control over their life. The uncertainty associated with job insecurity may also have a more immediate effect on people's sense of self-efficacy and control over their lives if the prolonged experience of job insecurity undermines people's confidence in their ability to achieve important life goals and to obtain financial and occupational security. For example, for those workers least able to compete profitably in the labour market, worries about job insecurity may mean that they have to avoid making long-term plans and commitments that they otherwise would like to make, such as forming relationships and having children. For instance, in a study of a cohort of Spanish workers, increased job insecurity was negatively correlated with marriage, as well as with the likelihood of male fixed-term contract workers having children (Artazcoz et. al., 2005, p. 763).

3. Insecure Work and Health: Evidence from the Literature

The quality of employment and working conditions clearly have important ramifications for health not only because poor occupational health and safety practices risk directly exposing workers to severe physical, chemical, and biological hazards but also because workers' experience of the psychosocial work environment profoundly affects their health. The concern, from this perspective, regarding recent shifts in the social organisation of work is that the rise of atypical and non-standard forms of employment has contributed to poorer material and psychosocial work conditions. This is because non-standard work arrangements give rise to what we call *employment uncertainty experiences*—irregular and intermittent work scheduling, short and limited job tenure, financial insecurity—while workers who are employed under non-standard employment contracts are also subject to a number of *employment status differences* in the way they are treated at an institutional and personal level. For example, non-standard workers are often formally excluded from paid leave entitlements and regulatory protections that ongoing workers are entitled to, while temporary and contract workers may also be excluded from participating fully in work-related meetings, social events, and training because they are not permanent employees. As we discuss below, the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard work arrangements have the potential to undermine workers' positive self-experience while also putting pressure on workers to undertake more hazardous tasks and to adopt riskier health behaviours. For example, the exclusion of non-standard workers from meetings and training activities may undermine OH&S practices, potentially exposing non-standard workers to increased risk of incurring a work-related injury or illness. This is an example of how non-standard employment arrangements can affect workers' health in material ways. At the same time, the exclusion of non-standard workers from full-participation in the workplace community because of their employment status may also cause non-standard workers to feel that they are less than equal workers, which could threaten their experience of self-esteem and consequently affect their health via psychosocial pathways. The material and psychosocial pathways through which non-standard employment arrangements may influence workers' health are set out in further detail below. These pathways are then further explored in subsequent chapters within the context of the experiences of the rural and regional workers who took part in this study.

3.1 Material Pathways

Previous studies suggest that employment via a non-standard employment contract may undermine workers' health in very direct and immediate ways, such as by increasing their risk of incurring a work-related injury or illness but also by giving rise to fatigue from frequent changes in the scheduling of work and from work intensification pressures caused by the lack of job security. Notably, in cross-sectional surveys of more than 15,000 workers in the European Union carried out in 1995 and 2000, non-standard workers (including self-employed and temporary workers) 'tended to report higher levels of work-related fatigue, backache, and muscular pain' than ongoing workers (Cummins & Kreiss, 2008, p. 448) while, in their study of precarious employment arrangements in Canada, Lewchuk et al. found that workers who experienced scheduling uncertainty experienced more severe pain and more exhaustion after work than those who worked regular work patterns (Lewchuk et al., 2008, pp. 396–8; Lewchuk, Clarke, de Wolff & King, 2007, p. 22).

Another source of fatigue and exhaustion brought on by working under non-standard employment arrangements is the pressure that many non-standard workers feel to be seen to be performing because of the ease with which they can be dismissed compared to other workers. For example, in a previous qualitative study of casual employment in Australia, casual workers in some sectors reported that the feeling that they were expendable increased work intensification pressures. As they commented to researchers, 'it is important not to stand still, or you may be sent home' (Barbara Pocock et al., 2005, p. 465). Work intensification was also an issue amongst temporary workers in a Canadian study, many of whom 'constantly felt that they had to prove to their employers that they were the best, in order to make sure they were given priority for future contracts.' However, as the authors of this study note, in the long run 'this continual demand for high performance becomes difficult to maintain and eventually causes fatigue and a sense of weariness' (Malenfant et al., 2007, p. 830).

3.1.1 Presenteeism and Pressures to Conceal Work-Related Injuries

One of the most significant ways in which working in non-standard employment can materially impact on workers' health is that non-standard workers can feel under pressure to come to work even when they are sick or injured. As McNamara argues in a study of the hidden costs of casual employment in Australia, '[j]ob insecurity and especially the fear that absence from work or even refusal to do overtime might increase the likelihood of redundancy, means that some workers may avoid taking time off when ill' (McNamara, 2006, p. 26). The financial costs of missing a day's work through sickness or injury can also be a further source of motivation for presenteeism, especially for casuals and independent contractors who are formally excluded from sick leave entitlements. This is particularly likely to be an issue for workers who experience high scheduling uncertainty as these workers may not be in a position to afford to take time off, even when sick, if they do not work many shifts on a regular basis. As one casual worker commented in a previous study:

I do what a lot of casual workers do. You evaluate how sick, how injured, and how poor [you are]...I might not be very sick but I might be feeling rich, so I'll have the day off, and I might be feeling quite sick but extremely poor, and I work. And I have worked when I've been quite sick because I felt that I have no choice financially (B Pocock, Prosser, & Bridge, 2004, p. 20).

It is therefore unsurprising that repeated international studies have shown that rates of sickness absence are consistently lower amongst temporary workers than amongst permanent workers (Virtanen et. al, 2005, p. 618). One explanation for the lower incidence of sickness absence among temporary workers may be that temporary workers are generally healthier than permanent workers and so need to take fewer days off due to illness. However, this explanation is cast into doubt by a Finish study which showed that rates of sickness absence actually increase among workers once they move from temporary to permanent employment (Virtanen, Kivimaki, Elovainio, Vahtera & Ferrie, 2003, pp. 952–3).

In addition to motivating non-standard workers to come to work sick or injured, the fear of job loss may also motivate non-standard workers to conceal any work-related injuries or accidents they experience for fear that reporting any OH&S concerns or incidents may jeopardise future shifts or contracts (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 335). For example, a study of temporary workers in Sweden found that while workers suffered ill-effects from exposure to toxins, they refused to report their concerns because they feared that doing so would jeopardise future employment contracts (Aronsson, 1999 cited in (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 335).

3.1.2 Higher Incidence of Work Related Injuries

Repeated international studies show that temporary workers 'are exposed to more hazardous working conditions, work more often in painful and tiring positions, are more exposed to intense noise, [and] perform more often repetitive movements.' There is also evidence to suggest that they 'suffer from a higher risk of occupational injuries as compared with permanent employees' (Benach et al., 2007, p. 90). For example, a review by Quinlan, Mayhew, and Bohle of research into the OHS impacts of temporary employment found that, in more than 80 percent of studies, these work arrangements were associated with 'increased risk of injury, disease, and hazard exposure' as well as 'reduced knowledge of occupational health and safety issues and regulatory responsibilities' (Lewchuk, de Wolff, King & Polanyi, 2005, p. 8; Quinlan, Mayhew & Boyle, 2001; see also Quinlan & Mayhew, 2001, pp. 5–6). A 2006 Spanish study found that the incidence of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries was more than twice as high among non-standard workers than ongoing workers (Benavides, Benach, Muntaner, et al., 2006; Cummings & Kreiss, 2008, p. 448), while a US study of nurses caring for hospitalised patients with AIDS found that temporary nurses 'had a needle-stick injury rate 1.65 times higher than that of staff working in the same hospital' (Cummings & Kreiss, 2008, p. 448). In Australia, the Productivity Commission has similarly documented an association between the rapid growth in casual employment during the 1990s and poorer OHS outcomes (cited in McNamara, 2006, p. 13) while a 2002 study of workers' compensation claims in Victoria found that the frequency of OHS claims was much higher among workers in the labour hire industry than in other industries (Economic Development Committee, 2005, pp. 58–9; Underhill, 2002). These findings are particularly alarming given the pressures that exist for temporary workers *not* to report workplace injuries or accidents.

There are a number of explanations for why OHS outcomes are poorer amongst non-standard workers. Firstly, many non-standard workers face pressures from their employment uncertainty and job insecurity to work sick or injured, to refuse to report OHS concerns, and to take on more dangerous tasks in the workplace. But a second key factor behind the higher incidence of work-related injuries among temporary workers is their poorer integration into management and safety structures and their reduced training opportunities (which increases their risk of injury but also reduces their knowledge of complaints procedures). For instance, Aronsson found that non-standard workers in Sweden were more likely than their ongoing co-workers to report deficiencies in their knowledge and understanding of occupational health and safety issues (Aronsson, 1999) while a study of US petrochemical workers carried out in the late 1990s found that contract workers received fewer hours of safety training than permanent employees (Cummings & Kreiss, 2008, p. 449; Rousseau & Libuser, 1997). As these studies suggest, where workers are employed on only a short-term or temporary basis, there is less incentive for employers to provide any training other than a very basic workplace induction. At the same time, temporary workers who regularly change jobs face added challenges identifying work risks and retaining knowledge of OHS policies and practices since they must continually learn new health and safety procedures and practices (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2001, p. 25).

Labour hire employees face particular challenges integrating into workplace and management structures as the triangular nature of their employment relationship complicates lines of communication and responsibility, making OHS supervision and training more difficult and less likely (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2005, p. 10). This tripartite employment relationship also confuses workers and host-employers as to *who* exactly the employer is (and, therefore, who bears primary

responsibility for OHS). For instance, in a South Australian case study of the use of labour-hire workers in the power industry, the host employer believed that 90% of labour hire workers were employed by the labour hire agencies, whereas almost a third of workers believed that the host employer was their employer. The agencies, for their part, believed that more than half of the workers were self-employed independent contractors (cited in Economic Development Committee, 2005, p. 23). Since, in law, labour hire workers are actually the employees of the labour hire agency and not their host employer, it is the labour hire agency that, first-and-foremost, must ensure a safe working environment. But labour hire agencies often lack the necessary willpower and resources to conduct regular OHS inspections of clients' premises, especially in cases where their workers are geographically scattered and spread across multiple companies and industries. They are thus forced to trust that their clients will provide a suitably safe workplace. Many are also unaware of their legal responsibilities to their workers. For instance, a UK survey of labour hire agencies found that 80 percent believed responsibility for workers' OHS resided with the host employer (in the UK, as in Australia, OHS responsibility is shared between the labour hire agency and the host employer) (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2005, p. 13).

The use of independent contractors raises similar OHS and regulatory challenges, particularly as 'self-employed [workers] and contractors/subcontractors are often formally excluded from workers' compensation insurance cover' (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2001, p. 30). Indeed, independent contractors are often expected by their clients to take responsibility for the maintenance of tools and equipment and for insuring themselves against occupational health and safety risks. However, independent contractors in physically demanding/high risk jobs (e.g. construction) may not be in a position to adequately insure themselves against work-related injury or illness, especially if they are poorly paid or must compete for work in a highly competitive labour market. Moreover, as Quinlan and Mayhew point out, even when independent contractors do have adequate private insurance 'they may be reluctant to make claims because of economic pressures to keep working', especially as 'there may be a two-week (or even six-week) excess period before claims can be lodged' (Quinlan & Mayhew, 2001, p. 30). Indeed, non-standard workers more generally face a number of disadvantages with respect to prosecuting compensation claims when they incur a work-related injury or accident. As we have seen above, concerns regarding their ability to secure future shifts and future employment contracts can motivate non-standard workers to conceal work-related injuries for fear that making a claim will lead to loss of future work. But, as Johnstone and Quinlan also point out, the intermittent and short-term nature of much non-standard work may also make it more difficult for workers to successfully claim compensation in cases where they are willing to make a claim. This is because 'the complicated work histories of precarious labour make it even more difficult to identify causal links between exposure to hazardous substances and the development of an occupational illness' (Johnstone & Quinlan, 2005, p. 31).

3.2 Psychosocial pathways

Non-standard employment arrangements not only have the potential to expose workers to a range of additional material health risks, such as increased risk of incurring a work-related injury or motivating health damaging behaviours within the workplace (presenteeism/work intensification), the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard work arrangements can also give rise to a number of additional sources of psychosocial stress, as we discuss below.

3.2.1 How employment uncertainty experiences influence workers' autonomy/control

Job insecurity is one obvious source of psychosocial stress that non-standard workers are particularly vulnerable to, while the intermittency of temporary and contingent work 'also presumes periods of underemployment and unemployment' which are damaging to health (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 339). The experience of unemployment undermines health by, among other things, eliciting a 'sense of having lost control over one's life situation' while the experience of job insecurity similarly leads to 'a diminished feeling of control over one's environment' (Malenfant et al., 2007, p. 816; McDonough, 2000). Such feelings of loss of control hinder the experience of self-efficacy and, therefore, health.

The fear of job loss, however, is not the only source of non-standard workers' employment uncertainty experiences or the only threat to workers' sense of self-efficacy. The intermittent and uncertain scheduling of work and the consequent effects on workers' earnings are an additional source of employment uncertainty for non-standard workers that can have devastating consequences for their autonomy and experience of self-efficacy. For example, casual employees and independent contractors in Australia are twice as likely as other workers to work in a job where their hours vary from week to week (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009a, p. 22, 2009b, p. 23, 2010a, p. 23). Moreover, as illustrated in Table 2 (see chapter 1) casual and fixed-term employees are also more likely than other workers to be employed in their current position for less than a year and less likely to expect to be still employed in their current position in a year's time. In other words, their job tenure is shorter (and thus potentially more insecure). Scheduling uncertainty and limited job tenure can undermine workers' autonomy and control over their life in a number of ways. Firstly, as Facey and Eakin argue, 'constantly changing work schedules or last minute calls to work can disrupt personal and family routines and impede a worker's ability to plan even mundane activities such as doctor visits, extracurricular activities such as exercise, or participating in community life' (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 339). Temporary shift workers, for example, may have to live their life largely on-call because of uncertain/irregular work schedules and fears about the consequences of turning down work (even if only offered at the last minute). This was the case in a study of casual employment in South Australia, where losing shifts or working hours were frequently mentioned as a consequence of turning down work. As one worker put it, 'You're sort of in this position where you are forced to prioritise work all the time because it is how you survive. And it is so precarious that if you do say no to shifts they do stop calling you...And so you do learn to prioritise work over the rest of your life which isn't very healthy' (B Pocock et al., 2004, p. 10).

Uncertainty over work schedules and the intermittent scheduling of work can further undermine workers' control over life by exposing them to financial insecurity from frequent fluctuations in their earnings. This may in turn cause workers to be anxious about their ability to meet household needs and to avoid material deprivation (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 337; Tompa et al., 2007, pp. 216–7). Uncertainty over future earnings may also provoke workers into forgoing important needs or postponing activities important to their health and wellbeing that are costly to pursue. For example, workers may postpone healthcare or refuse to take a break from work because of financial insecurities and the ever present possibility of being out of work (Marlea Clarke, Lewchuk, de Wolff, & King, 2007, pp. 318, 320). Worries about job loss and the need to take work while it's available can also prevent workers from planning time off or spending money on holidays. In the long term, 'income uncertainty might affect quality of life in old age because it hinders early financial or retirement planning' (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 337). One particularly salient issue here in the Australian context is the disadvantages that non-standard workers face in accumulating

superannuation due to their exclusion from salary sacrifice schemes and due to the part-time and intermittent nature of their work patterns. For example, as O'Brien and Burgess point out, a succession of short-term jobs with different employers leads to the danger that contributions will be 'fragmented into many small accounts that are difficult to trace or track' while 'it is difficult to sustain an ongoing accumulation of contributions if periods of employment are interspersed with periods of unemployment or being outside of the labour force' (O'Brien & Burgess, 2004, p. 181). Hence, it is not only in the short-term that employment uncertainty experiences may create difficulties for non-standard workers in exercising control over their lives. There are also longer-term consequences for workers' ability to exercise control over their lives from working in jobs where work is scheduled on an intermittent and uncertain basis. One example here are the effects that job tenure uncertainty can have on partnership formation and on workers' decisions about whether or not to have children. For instance, workers—even those who work regular hours—may be reluctant to commit to starting a family while their work future is uncertain while men may face particular barriers to forming relationships if women perceive that their temporary employment status makes them unsuitable partners or spouses (Artazcoz et. al., 2005, p. 765). These effects were evident in a study of a cohort of Spanish workers, in which increased job insecurity was negatively correlated with marriage, as well as with the likelihood of male fixed-term contract workers having children (Artazcoz et. al., 2005, p. 763). Additionally, the short-term duration of their employment contracts and their lack of guarantee of ongoing work may make it more difficult for non-standard workers to borrow money from banks and other financial institutions in order to purchase a house or car. This has previously been identified as a key concern for casual workers in Australia (Macdonald & Holm, 2002, p. 32).

3.2.2 How employment status differences affect workers' autonomy/control

It is not only the employment uncertainty experiences associated with non-standard work arrangements that pose threats to non-standard workers' experience of self-efficacy and exercise of control over their lives. In various ways, the employment status differences associated with non-standard employment arrangements can also have debilitating effects on workers' autonomy. For example, the poorer integration of non-standard workers into management and organisation structures can increase the difficulties that non-standard workers face in successfully executing work tasks. For instance, non-standard workers may not be given the same resources as permanent employees to utilise in the completion of work tasks while permanent employees may be given priority over non-standard workers in the allocation of tools and equipment. Similarly, if non-standard workers are not fully included in workplace meetings and training activities, they may lack the procedural knowledge that is needed to quickly complete work tasks and to successfully comply with administrative requirements. Consequently, non-standard workers may struggle to achieve a sense of self-efficacy from their work insofar as this depends on being able to successfully complete work tasks. As Tompa et al. here argue, '[l]ack of control over access to organisation resources may lead to performance-based frustration that, in turn, can negatively impact worker well-being' (Tompa et al., 2007, p. 217).

If non-standard workers find themselves excluded from professional development and training activities and from full participation in the workplace community because of their employment status, this could, have detrimental consequences for their occupational mobility and career progression in the long term. As Aronsson, Gustafsson and Dallner argue:

Access to training, development and learning, and also to decision-making influence—at least in the long term—can reduce uncertainty and generate better job tasks, higher pay, and greater opportunities of choice for the individual. These issues are related to the wider and, from a policy perspective fundamental, question of whether time-restricted employment is a dead-end street or a path to more stable conditions of work and permanent employment (Aronsson et al., 2002, p. 156).

More limited opportunities for training and career development and a weaker ability to influence decision-making processes may ultimately jeopardise the ability of non-standard workers to control their employment future and occupational status, both within their employing organization as well as the wider labour market, causing them to be trapped in less-skilled and more poorly paid jobs. This could in turn affect their quality of life as they get older, particularly for workers who remain in non-standard employment throughout their career.

A 2002 OECD report lends credence to the above concerns, noting that temporary workers in Europe receive considerably less employer-provided training than their permanent counterparts (OECD 2002: 156 in Economic Development Committee, 2005, p. 116). An Australian study of employee training carried out in 2000 similarly found that while almost 70 percent of permanent employees had undergone some form of professional development over the past year, only 50 percent of casual employees had participated in professional development (Watson et al. 2003 cited in Economic Development Committee, 2005, p.123). A more recent study suggests that the gap in employer-provided training is widening, both in terms of the amount of training received as well as the quality of the content (Richardson & Liu, 2006, pp. 27–8). Tellingly, what predicted levels of employer-provided training in this latter study was not the average number of hours worked per week but the casual contract itself. Moreover, it is not just casual workers in Australia who face obstacles pursuing professional development and training. Independent contractors—who must pay for their own professional development—also report low rates of participation in professional development activities. A survey of independent contractors by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists, and Managers Australia carried out in 2004, for example, found that less than 50 percent of engineers surveyed had participated in more than 15 hours of professional development during the previous 12 months even though they are required by the Institute of Engineers, Australia to do a minimum of 50 hours professional development each year (APESMA, 2004).

3.2.3 How employment status differences affect workers' social recognition and integration

The role that work conditions play in enabling/hindering workers' control over their lives and experience of self-efficacy is only one aspect of the contribution that people's experience of work makes to their experience of self. The opportunities that the work role provides for people to experience a sense of social inclusion and recognition of their value as contributing members of society (i.e. self-esteem) are other important ways in which people's experience of work contributes to their experience of self. For some workers, however, their very employment under a non-standard employment contract and the status differences that are associated with this in terms of exclusion from full-participation in the workplace community and reduced benefits and entitlements may be experienced as a form of social misrecognition and threat to their self-esteem. For example, non-standard workers who would prefer to be employed on an ongoing basis may perceive their employment status as an *inferior* form of employment, while long-term casuals may view their ongoing exclusion from the benefits and protections that permanent workers are entitled to as poor reward for the efforts and contribution that they have made in their work role. This may, in turn, give

rise to feelings of anger and frustration as workers' feel undervalued and unappreciated by their employer. For example, in a Canadian study of intermittent work carried out in 2007, some workers reported that their employment situation 'led to a feeling of having been swindled and exploited that undermined them psychologically and physically' (Malenfant et al., 2007, p. 832). Similarly in Pocock et al's study of casual employment in South Australia, long-term casuals felt that their casual employment status was unfair and meant low earnings and limited opportunities to save for retirement' (B Pocock et al., 2004, p. 9).

The formal exclusion of non-standard workers from meetings and training activities can often reinforce the perception that non-standard workers are less than equal workers who are not full members of the workplace community. This perception can translate into how non-standard workers are treated by their co-workers and supervisors, with devastating consequences for their experience of self-esteem. For example, in Pocock et al's study of casual employment in South Australia, casual employees frequently referred to being treated as 'only a casual' and many commented that others considered them 'less than proper workers, despite the commitment that they make to their work' (Pocock, Prosser and Bridge, 2004: 14-15). Loss of self-esteem, especially among older men, and being treated with a lack of respect were key grievances for these workers. The perception that non-standard workers are not equal members of the workplace community may in turn affect the level of social support that is available to non-standard workers. For example, Tompa et al. point out that 'the lower status of temporary workers makes this group susceptible to social exclusion by regular full- and part-time workers' (Tompa et al., 2007, p. 218). That is, ongoing workers may exclude non-standard workers from work-related social networks because they do not view them as genuine members of the workplace community. In some instances, ongoing workers may even go so far as to try to undermine the status of non-standard workers within the workplace community if, for example, they view non-standard workers as a threat to their own job security. For instance, ongoing workers who fear that their jobs will be casualised if the use of temporary workers proves successful may withhold support from casual co-workers and seek to ostracise them as a way of trying to undermine temporary workers so as to safeguard their own jobs.

3.2.4 How employment uncertainty experiences affect social recognition and participation

Non-standard workers not only face obstacles to participating in work-based social networks as a consequence of how differences in their employment status are perceived by their ongoing co-workers. The intermittent and uncertain nature of their work scheduling and the short duration of their employment contracts can also add to the difficulties that non-standard workers face in participating in social networks, both within the workplace and outside it. As Facey and Eakin point out, '[p]ermanent workers, by virtue of their ongoing interactions with co-workers have the opportunity to develop shared values, orientations and activities' whereas temporary workers 'might not be able to access these social support resources because of their relatively short tenures in organisations' (Facey & Eakin, 2010, p. 339). For instance, colleagues may decide that it is not worth their while trying to form meaningful relationships with non-standard co-workers who they expect to be working with only temporarily. At the same time, non-standard workers themselves decide that it's not worth their while getting to know their co-workers when they have no guarantee that they will still be in the same job in a year or even six month's time (Malenfant et al., 2007, p. 829). Outside of work, the uncertainty of many non-standard workers' work patterns can undermine social participation in a number of ways, not least of which are the difficulties that uncertain work patterns

create for workers in terms of planning their lives. For example, on-call workers may have to frequently miss out on social events and family occasions because of the need to take whatever shifts are offered while they are available. Workers whose work patterns vary from week to week may also have to forgo joining social and sporting clubs or volunteering in community organisations that require regular commitment (B Pocock et al., 2004, p. 23).

	Employment Uncertainty Experiences	Employment Status Differences
<i>Material/Physical Health Hazards</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Pressure to maintain a positive image with their employer so as to secure future work may motivate non-standard workers to come to work sick or injured, or to take on more hazardous tasks. ➤ Workers may refuse to report OHS concerns and conceal work-related injuries or accidents for fear of jeopardising future work opportunities. ➤ Workers experiencing financial insecurity and worried about their job security may choose to forgo important health-related needs and activities, such as taking time off work and medical and dental treatment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poor integration of non-standard workers into management structures and OHS regulatory frameworks increases risk of work-related injuries and accidents. ➤ Inadequate training also increases risk of injury or accident at work. ➤ Where non-standard workers do suffer a work-related injury or illness, they may find it more difficult to claim compensation due to problems identifying which party is liable for paying compensation.
<i>Impacts on Psychosocial Health</i>		
<i>Autonomy/Control (self-efficacy)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sense of losing control over life from prolonged experiences of job insecurity and periods of under- or unemployment. ➤ Frequent income fluctuations can cause financial insecurity which can mean non-standard workers are anxious about their ability to meet household needs and fulfil social roles (e.g. parent). ➤ Doubts over their employment future may prevent non-standard workers from pursuing medium to long-term projects, such as forming long-term relationships, having children, purchasing a house, saving for retirement. ➤ In the short term, uncertain work patterns make it difficult for workers to balance work and family commitments and to make even immediate plans as workers have to live their life on-call. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Inadequate protection against unfair dismissal opens non-standard workers to workplace coercion and potentially limits their ability to defend their rights and interests. ➤ Reduced professional development and training opportunities and exclusion from decision-making processes inhibits non-standard workers' occupational mobility and career progression as well as limiting their input into the design of work tasks. It can also trap non-standard workers in lower-quality jobs in the long run.
<i>Social Recognition and Integration (self-esteem)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Intermittent and temporary employment can undermine the formation of work-based friendships and relationships. ➤ Unpredictable work patterns and the need to be on call also make social participation outside of work difficult, especially where it involves regular commitment (e.g. sporting and social clubs; volunteer organisations). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Long-term employment under non-standard work arrangements can strike some workers as a form of misrecognition of their identity. ➤ Non-standard workers may be perceived (and treated) as having unequal status within the workplace community which can lead to their exclusion from social networks at work and even their stigmatisation as <i>only casuals</i>. ➤ Non-standard workers may be marginalised by permanent co-workers if they perceive them as threats to their own job security.

Table 3: Pathways through which non-standard work influences health

The table above provides an overview of the material and psychosocial pathways through which the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-

standard work arrangements supposedly operate on workers' health. However, given the diversity of non-standard work arrangements in Australia—independent contracting, fixed-term employment, casual employment, among others—it may be overly simplistic to conclude that the shift towards non-standard employment is on the whole leading to a deterioration in material and psychosocial work conditions. Rather, as Lewchuk et al. suggest, the relationship between non-standard work and health is likely to be complex, 'where it is the *characteristics of the employment relationship* as much as having or not having permanent employment that are associated with different health outcomes' (W. Lewchuk et al., 2008, p. 388). There are significant differences, for example, between independent contractors, fixed-term employees, and casual employees that suggest differing experiences of non-standard work while it is not obvious that each of these forms of non-standard employment offers workers more precarious terms of employment than ongoing, full-time employment. Fixed-term employees, for example, are typically more highly educated and better paid than permanent, ongoing workers (Waite & Will, 2002, pp. 21–2). Compared to casual employees and independent contractors, they are also less likely to experience work scheduling uncertainty and are also entitled to paid holiday and sick leave. Hence, they may not be vulnerable to the same pressures that casual employees, for example, face to work when sick or injured. Attention therefore needs to be paid to differences in the ways that the various non-standard employment arrangements track hazardous material and psychosocial work conditions.

How workers are affected by employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences will depend not just on their type of non-standard employment contract but also on their personal circumstances, skills level, and work history. For example, people who chose to work part-time in non-standard employment because it suits other commitments they have (e.g. study/raising children/not wanting to be tied to a workplace) will have a very different experience of the relationship between non-standard employment and their ability to exercise control over their life than workers who would prefer permanent full-time employment (Marlea Clarke et al., 2007, pp. 315–6). Similarly, younger workers who see an initial period of insecure employment as a necessary step to obtaining permanent employment may have a very different sense of the risk that non-standard employment poses to their occupational status and inclusion within the workplace than older and less-skilled workers who feel trapped in non-standard work. Workers in different industries and occupations may also experience the employment status differences related to non-standard work in different ways. For example, in industries where non-standard employment is the norm—for example, Construction and the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector—workers may not experience employment under a non-standard employment contract as an inferior form of employment. Highly-skilled and less-skilled workers may also report very different employment uncertainty experiences. Workers whose skills are in greater demand, for example, may be less prone to employment uncertainty experiences insofar as there is a shortage of workers with their skills and qualifications. Hence, they can expect to work more regularly and for higher pay. By contrast, lower-skilled workers in areas where there is an excess supply of labour may struggle more to source and maintain employment, particularly if they are seen as being more costly to employ than younger workers who can perform similar tasks. For similar reasons, we suggest that workers in rural and regional locations are potentially more vulnerable to experiencing high job insecurity and scheduling uncertainty than urban workers because of the greater scarcity of employment opportunities in rural and regional areas.

The remainder of this report builds on the framework set out above concerning the material and psychosocial pathways through which non-standard work affects health by exploring rural and regional workers' lived-experience of the effects that working in non-standard employment has on their control over life, their social participation, their experience of self, and their exposure to physical health risks.

4. Study Methodology and Characteristics of Participants

4.1 Recruitment

A total of 72 people took part in this study at locations in and around East Gippsland, Mildura, Shepparton, Ballarat, Bendigo, Leongatha, and Hastings. Participants were recruited via a variety of channels. Assistance in recruiting research participants was initially sought from a number of unions and trade organisations—Maritime Workers’ Union of Australian, the National Tertiary Education Union, the Australian Education Union, Master Builders’ Association of Victoria, CEPU—in key industries with large concentrations of non-standard workers (identified using ABS data), while two regional trades hall and labour councils (Ballarat and Bendigo) also contacted their members about participating in the study. A series of advertisements were also placed in local newspapers in Mildura, East Gippsland, Shepparton, and Bendigo to ensure that the data sample was not limited to union affiliated workers—indeed, the vast majority of research participants were *not* union members—while a number of large employers in the Agricultural and Horticultural sector in Mildura, Bairnsdale, and Shepparton also agreed to pass on details about the study to their casual and contract employees. Finally, CentaBrace, a job network agency, also provided assistance in recruiting a small number of research participants in Mildura and Ballarat.

Prospective research participants were screened by gender, age, industry and occupation, and employment status so as to seek a cross sample of participants. We also focused on recruiting independent contractors and casual workers, as these are by far the most prevalent types of insecure employment in Australia. However, a small number of fixed-term employees were included in the sample in order to compare how the greater protections against unfair dismissal and greater certainty of work scheduling (at least in the short-term) enjoyed by fixed-term employees relative to other non-standard workers affected their experience.

4.2 Sample Profile

The interview sample included 46 (64%) casual employees, 12 (17%) independent contractors, 6 (8.3%) fixed-term contract employees, and 8 (11%) permanent “irregular” workers. This last group self-identified as casuals during the recruitment stage, although they do not fall strictly under the ABS measure of casual employment since they are formally entitled to holiday and sick pay, albeit on a pro rata basis. However, these workers had highly uncertain work schedules and their income and shifts varied substantially from week to week.

With the exception of fixed-term employees, the majority of research participants were men. The high proportion of men in casual employment in this study (54%) is in contrast to ABS data on casual employment, although this is explained by our focus on the experiences of workers in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery sector (a sector historically dominated by men). Moreover, even though more of the casual employees in this study were men, women who took part in the study were still more likely than men to be employed as casuals, with casual employment accounting for 68% of women’s employment status in this study compared to 61% for men.

	Casual (n= 46)	Perm. Irr. (n= 8)	Fix-Term (n = 6)	Ind. Con (n = 12)	Total (n = 72)
Gender					
Female	45.70%	37.50%	100.00%	8.30%	43.06%
Male	54.30%	62.50%	0.00%	91.70%	56.94%
Age					
Under 20	4.30%				2.78%
20-30	26.10%	25%	16.70%		20.83%
30-40	15.20%	12.50%	16.70%	33.30%	18.06%
40-50	28.30%	50.00%	16.70%	50.00%	33.33%
50-60	21.70%	12.50%	50.00%	8.30%	20.83%
Over 60	2.20%			8.30%	2.78%
Family Circumstance					
Couple with dependants	23.60%	50.00%	50.00%	75.00%	43.00%
Couple without dependants	19.60%		33.30%	8.30%	16.70%
Single Parent Household	6.50%	12.50%			5.60%
Lives alone	15.20%	37.50%	16.70%	37.50%	16.70%
Lives with family or friends	26.10%				18.10%
Weekly Household Income					
Less than \$500	23.80%		16.70%	-	16.70%
\$501-\$800	17.40%	50.00%	33.30%	8.30%	20.80%
\$801-\$1000	15.20%			16.70%	12.50%
\$1001-\$1600	34.80%	12.50%	33.40%	33.30%	22.20%
\$1601-\$2000	8.60%	12.50%		25.00%	11.20%
>\$2000	6.50%		16.70%	8.30%	8.30%
Missing or Don't Know	8.60%	12.50%		8.30%	8.40%
Education					
Missing	13.00%	37.50%			12.50%
Some primary	2.20%				1.40%
Finished primary	2.20%				1.40%
Some secondary	26.10%	37.50%		16.70%	23.60%
Finished secondary	10.90%				6.90%
Skilled vocational	21.70%	25.00%		75.00%	29.20%
Assoc diploma	8.70%			8.30%	6.90%
Undergrad diploma	2.20%		50.00%		5.60%
Bachelors degree	10.90%		33.30%		9.70%
Postgraduate	2.20%		16.70%		2.80%

Table 4: Characteristics of Study Participants

Casuals in the study were more likely to be younger and less educated than other workers, whereas independent contractors tended to be older than casual and permanent irregular workers. Casuals were also the workers least likely to live with a partner or to have dependents, perhaps an indication of their younger age. Casual and permanent irregular workers—who appear to share many of the same characteristics as casuals—also tended to be the lowest income earners, although 1 in 2 fixed-term employees also reported a weekly household income of less than \$1,000.

Consistent with previous studies, fixed-term employees were the workers most likely to have completed tertiary education. It is thus not surprising that all worked in either professional,

managerial or administrator positions in contrast to casual and permanent irregular workers, the vast majority of whom were either labourers or machinery operators.

As Table 2 below indicates, the proportion of participants who worked in the manufacturing, construction and education sectors is broadly consistent with the distribution of the workforce across these industries as reported in the ABS 2010 Forms of Employment Survey. However, there was a substantial over representation of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery workers. This is largely the result of the study's intended focus on the experiences of insecure workers in regional and rural Victoria, and agricultural workers in particular, given the neglect of these groups in previous studies.

	Casual (n= 46)	Perm. Irr. (n= 8)	Fix-Term (n = 6)	Ind. Con (n = 12)	Total (n = 72)
Industry					
Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing	47.80%			50.00%	38.90%
Manufacturing	10.90%	12.50%			8.30%
Construction	2.20%			33.30%	6.90%
Transport and storage	15.20%	62.50%			16.70%
Communications				8.30%	1.40%
Education	6.50%		83.30%		11.10%
Finance and Insurance			16.70%	8.30%	2.80%
Health and Community Services	6.50%	25.00%			6.90%
Hospitality	2.40%				2.80%
Retail	2.20%				1.40%
Property and business services	2.20%				1.40%
Cultural and Recreational Services	2.20%				1.40%
Occupation			-	-	
Labourer	50.00%	12.50%		12.50%	33.30%
Intermediate production/transport workers	17.40%	50.00%		50.00%	16.70%
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	6.50%				4.20%
Intermediate clerical, sales, service workers	6.50%				4.20%
Advanced clerical and service worker	2.20%	12.50%		12.50%	2.80%
Tradesperson & related worker					9.70%
Associate professionals	8.70%	25.00%		25.00%	12.50%
Professionals	8.70%		83.30%		12.50%
Managers & administrator			16.70%		4.20%
Proportion of Sample	63.89%	11.1%	8.3%	16.67%	100.00%

Table 5: Forms of Employment of Study Participants

4.3 Interview Design and Health Survey

Workers who participated in this study took part in a series of three interviews between September 2009 and September 2011. On each occasion they also completed a Duke Health Profile survey.

4.3.1 Duke Health Profile

The Duke Health Profile is a 17-item self-report instrument that measures health along the three major WHO health dimensions of physical, mental, and social wellbeing (Parkerson et al., 1990, p. 1067). It is derived from the larger 63-item Duke-UNC Health Profile, which has been used to measure health outcomes in primary health care and clinical settings (see Parkerson et al, 1990). The mean physical, mental, and general health (a combination of physical, mental, and social health)

scores from the first and final survey rounds are reported below according to interviewees' initial primary employment status. Higher scores indicate better health functioning in the Duke Health Profile, with patients with clinically diagnosed painful physical health problems reporting a mean physical health score of 58.1 in initial tests of the profile and patients with mental health problems reporting a mean mental health score of 49.2 (Parkerson et al., 1990, p.1056). Notably, casual workers in this study report a higher physical health score compared to other workers, which may reflect the fact that they were generally younger than the other workers. Independent contractors reported the highest mental and general health scores, although there was a decline in the mean mental and general health scores reported by independent contractors over the course of the study. There was similarly a decline in the mean physical and general health scores reported by casuals over the course of the study. Fixed-term employees and permanent irregular workers, by contrast, reported a higher mean physical health score in the final round of interviews than in the first round of interviews, although they generally reported much lower physical health scores than either casual employees or independent contractors.

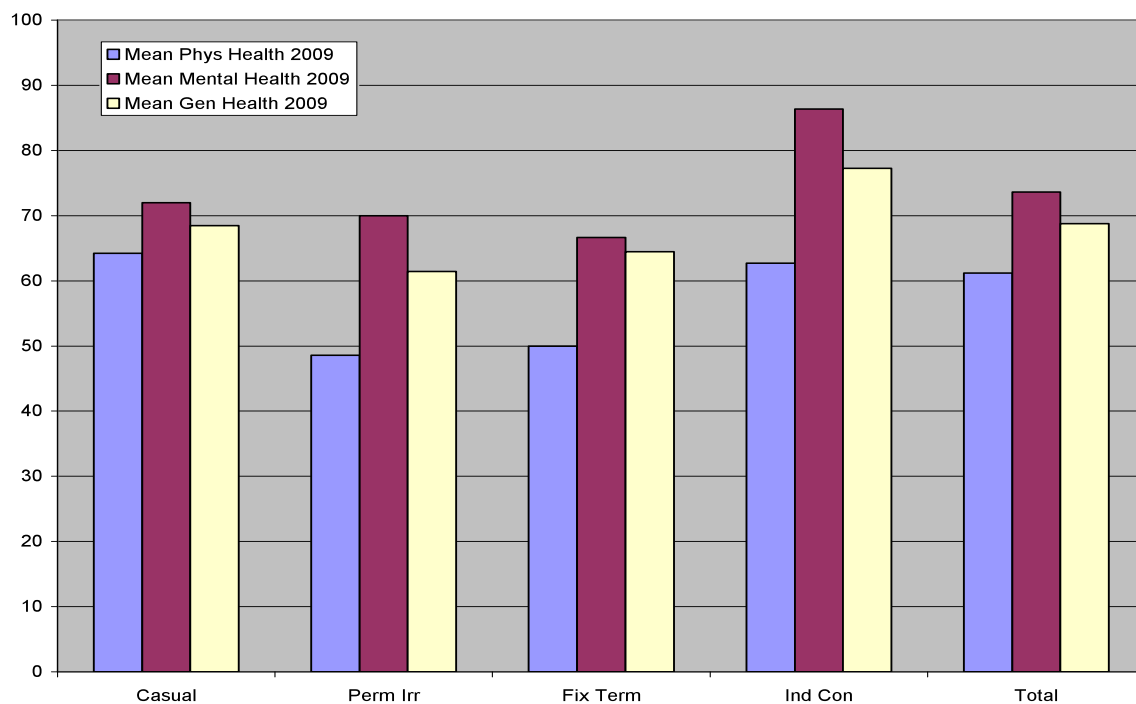


Figure 8: DUKE Scores by Employment Status, First Year of Study

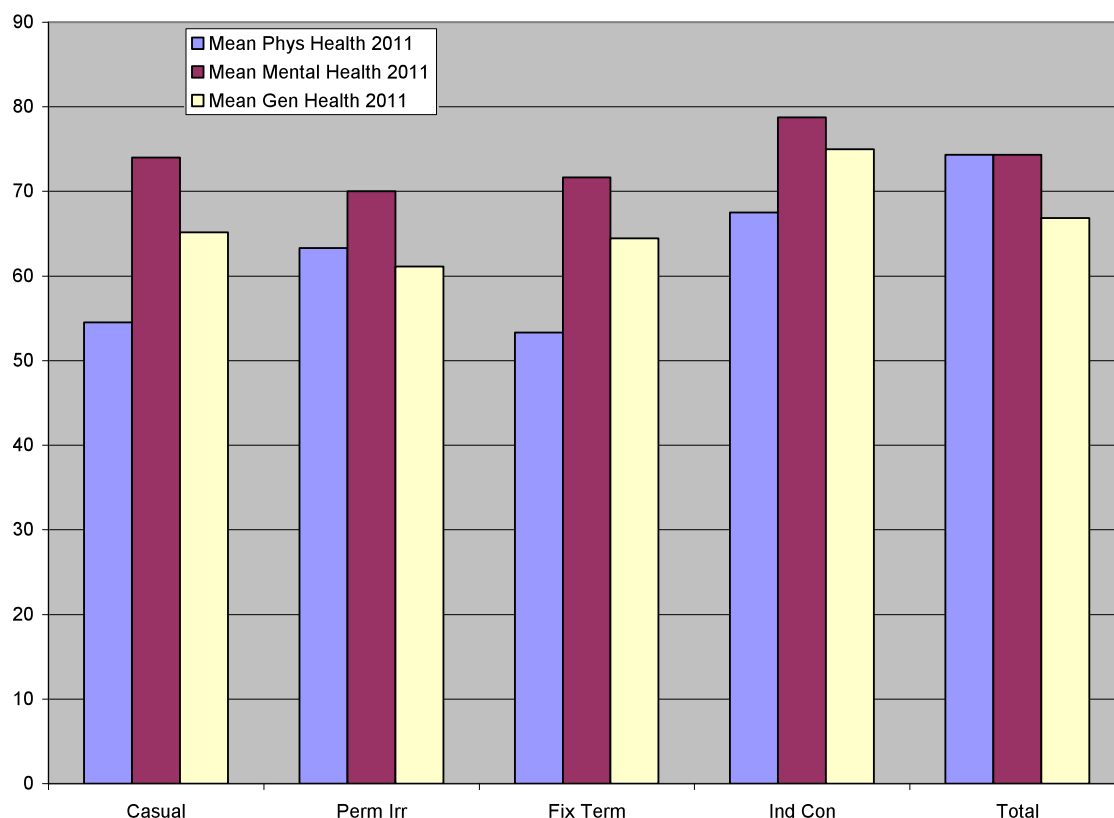


Figure 9: DUKE Scores by Employment Status, Final Year of Study

The Duke Health Survey scores have to be interpreted with a considerable degree of caution however, as the small sample size of the study makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the general physical or mental health of workers in the different types of non-standard employment based on quantitative survey instruments. Moreover, part of the difference in the mean health scores between the first and final year of the study may have to do with the smaller sample size in the final year of the study as a consequence of participant attrition rates. Given the relatively small sample size of this study, the qualitative data gathered during the interviews offer a stronger indication of the potential material and psychosocial health hazards related to non-standard employment arrangements.

4.3.2 Interview Process and Design

72 workers participated in the first round of interviews, 44 (61%) in the second, and 42 (58%) in the third. The attrition rate over the course of the study is within expectations, particularly given the highly insecure living and working circumstances of many of those initially interviewed. For example, when arranging the second round of interviews, it was not uncommon to find that study participants' addresses had changed and that their phone numbers had also been disconnected. This was particularly true of those who had been working as casuals in the Agricultural sector during the first round of interviews. By contrast, all fixed-term employees and the vast majority of independent contractors managed to participate for the entire duration of the study.

With the exception of one or two instances where interviewees' explicitly asked to be interviewed in their place of work, interviews were held in a venue away from the interviewee's workplace, either in

a room provided by the local trades hall, the interviewees' home, or a suitable café. However, a very small number of second (3) and third round (8) interviews had to be conducted by phone due to the interviewee either moving inter-state or being unable to meet in person to do the interview. All interviews were semi-structured and lasted for 40 minutes on average.

The focus of the interview questions in each round was on exploring how research participants experienced the relationship between their employment contract and their ability to exercise autonomy in the workplace and control over their life, on the one hand, and their social participation and status within the workplace, on the other. In particular, we asked interviewees about the extent to which their employment situation elicited feelings of job insecurity and whether this had any impact on their workplace behaviours. We also questioned interviewees about whether the uncertain or limited tenure of their employment contract affected their ability to make medium and longer-term plans. Another aspect of interviewees' experience that we paid particular attention to was their experience of work scheduling and how this affected their social participation and ability to plan their life. For example, did interviewees value flexible working hours? Were they in control of their work scheduling? We were also asked interviewees if they had any experience of being treated unequally to permanent workers, either by co-workers or by managers, and whether this had any impact on their sense of self, their participation in work-based social networks, or their voice within the workplace. Finally, in the last round of interviews we asked participants about structural issues, such as whether they felt that living in rural or regional Victoria affected their chances of finding ongoing employment and whether they felt that employers in rural and regional areas took advantage of the greater job scarcity in their area to offer workers poorer pay and conditions. We also asked interviewees about the long-term consequences of remaining in insecure employment and whether they saw the proliferation of non-standard work arrangements as contributing to greater social inequality.

With the consent of interviewees, a digital recording device was used to record the interviews, which were then later transcribed. The data from the transcripts was cross-coded for reliability and Nvivo software was used to code and categorise the data around central themes identified in previous studies and on the basis of new issues that emerged from the data. The data was then analysed by the researchers for common patterns emerging from the research participants' different experiences, bearing in mind the need to be sensitive to structural differences between those employed under different types of insecure employment contract. Attention was also paid to analysing the data in terms of the different experiences of people who were dependent on insecure employment for their income, on the one hand, and people who did not need to rely on insecure work for their livelihood, on the other, as this was identified during the interviews as a key distinguishing factor of people's experience of insecure work. Key findings from the interviews are reported below and in successive chapters. Pseudonyms have been used to protect interviewees' identities and other identifying characteristics (place of work; company name) have also been removed. In some instances we have also withheld interviewees' location due to the small number of employers in the interviewees' industry in that particular location.

4.4 Why people enter non-standard work

One of the arguments occasionally made in favour of non-standard forms of employment is that these forms of employment provide less-skilled workers with a pathway into permanent, ongoing employment. Tsumori, for example, argues that '[c]asual employment can...serve as a stepping stone

to other job prospects for less educated workers (Tsumori, 2004, p. 7). Certainly, a small number of workers did manage to move from insecure to permanent employment over the course of the study. These included:

- Louisa, a fruit-picker with a young family in her 30s who retrained as an aged care attendant and was subsequently offered full-time, ongoing employment;
- Sharon, a PhD student in her 40s (and with a young family) who had worked as a sessional teacher throughout her studies before being offered an ongoing position at her university;
- Jenny, an accountant in her 40s who had worked on revolving short-term contracts for four years before eventually finding permanent, ongoing work;
- Lauren, an officer administrator in her 40s who was offered a fulltime ongoing position by the temping agency where she was working part-time on a casual basis;
- Simon, a stevedore who had worked as a casual for more than ten years before gaining permanency with his employer;
- Miranda, a floor manager at a packing shed who had been employed as a full-time casual for more than fifteen years before eventually being offered a permanent position by an alternative employer; and
- Yvonne, a personal care attendant in her 40s who moved from a highly insecure permanent “irregular” position to a permanent part-time position after moving inter-state.

What is significant about these cases, however, is that in many cases people had to change employer to gain permanency even though, in some instances, they had been with their employer for many, many years. Those who did manage to move from a casual employment contract to a permanent employment contract with the same employer were either highly skilled workers (Sharon) or had been with their employer for a very long time (Simon). Even those workers who did manage to gain permanency over the course of the study were careful to point out that they did not see insecure employment per se as a pathway to permanent, ongoing employment. Sharon, for example, felt that her experience was very unique and that her pathway from casual to permanent employment was the exception rather than the rule:

So in the end, it's all worked out for me. But, having said that, of everyone else that I'm doing my PhD with, no one else is in that situation. There's, you know, a couple of people...and they're just scrambling around for casual work. They're, you know, they were going to work at this [third level institute in Melbourne] and that fell through two days before...So I think my situation is not the norm at all. A very big exception...So I think it shouldn't be this great success story that if you do your PhD here, your going to get a job here. That's very, very unusual. The other people, who did great PhDs...are just doing casual work—looking for bar work, and hoping that by doing more casual work, they're going to get jobs (2011 Interview).

Hardly any of those participating in this study viewed non-standard employment as a pathway to more secure employment. While many—indeed most—workers who participated in the study actively desired permanent, ongoing work, they did not see insecure work as providing any sort of pathway:

I think being casual—it's really the way the hospitality industry has gone in the last 15 years I reckon. When I started in the hospitality industry 30 years ago, I was casual for a while and then permanent. Permanency was pretty common for years to come. Taking holidays was common practice, you'd take holidays. And now, people don't want permanents...The employers actually don't want to have permanent people (Jeremy, hospitality worker in his 40s, 2010 Interview)

when I first started working casual, I only went for a month. If you worked casual for a month and they liked you, you went full-time and then about a year or two later it was a three month trial. Now you'll go at least 12 months so I was sitting there and I'm like, "Well if I do my job right," I'd say at the smoko table, "If I do my job right I should go full-time in a few months," and they all sort of looked at me and laughed. They said, "Mate I'm casual," and I was like, "Oh I thought you've been here over a year," and he said, "Yeah I have been here over a year and I'm still casual." He goes, "Mate we're all in the same shit, we're all casual you know, all we have to do is get a phone call one day, "Don't come in," and you don't come in." He said, "That simple, that's how it is." So basically it's the same as work for the dole...it's like we're all grunts here, we're all shit-kickers. That's all we are (Matt, factory labourer, 2009 Interview).

Many were simply resigned to the fact that was little chance of getting permanent, ongoing work:

I don't know what I see it as a pathway too. I don't know what the pathway [to permanent employment] is; just a bit of luck I think sometimes...I think it's particularly hard up here at the moment. The grapes have been doing really badly, and last year was even more dismissal. We had all that rain on the 4th of February when people were just about to start picking. And then we had a very wet winter, so a lot of the grapes had...a lot of the vineyards developed disease early on, so some people didn't get any crops at all. And then the rain in February topped it all off...So the jobs that are there, it's just really competitive. I know lots of people who are looking for work and just not able to get anything bar little bits of casual stuff (Julia, TAFE teacher, 2011 Interview).

Indeed, some saw non-standard work as actively harming their chances of gaining permanent work. In the third year of the study, Julia, for example, felt the need to remind her bosses at the TAFE that she wanted full-time, ongoing rather than casual work. She was worried that, because she had been working on a casual and temporary basis at the TAFE for the past five years, people might think she was only looking for casual work. As she said to her boss, 'I just think that if you keep working casually everybody might be under the false impression that you want casual work' (2011 Interview). Susan, a single mother in Shepparton, felt that the casual work she was doing at a nearby factory was preventing her from getting assistance from Centrelink to find permanent, ongoing work since her case officers took the view that she already had a job, even though her work schedule was very intermittent and highly uncertain and she would regularly go through periods of underemployment:

And I actually think that having worked casual has stopped me from getting permanent work...It's stopped me from getting permanent work because when you go to the job agency - which is a requirement from Centrelink - they know that you're doing work. So they're not going to tell you about jobs; they already think that you're working. So you go along to these appointments. You talk nice to each other...but they never tell you about a job. And I understand that they probably get paid to find people who are totally unemployed jobs. And I actually wonder whether me working casual has stopped me from getting permanent work. I really think that that's probably the case (2011 Interview).

She saw no hope of being made permanent in the factory where she was working for the past five years and had given up trying after successive casuals had failed to gain permanency:

I haven't applied for a full-time job because I've watched everybody else, all the other casuals, apply for the job. They all discuss who's going to get the job; none of them get the job. They

bring in a new person and of course they're all very disgruntled and I've seen it happen time and time again, so much so now that the casuals say, "Well, we've applied for five jobs, we haven't got it, we're not doing it anymore," so they give up (2009 Interview).

Those who took part in this study could broadly be classified into three different categories in terms of the reasons why they were working in non-standard employment: *content casuals* who valued the flexibility of that non-standard work afforded them terms of work/life balance, *reluctant casuals* who resigned themselves to the fact that no permanent positions were available in their industry or location, and *indifferent casuals* who accepted non-standard work as simply the way people in their industry and occupation had always been employed.¹⁶

4.4.1 Contented Casuals

Workers in the contented casual group actively favoured working in insecure employment because it suited their circumstances. Notably, only independent contracts and a few casual employees fell into this category. Virtually all of the fixed-term employees and permanent "irregular" workers, by contrast, were *reluctant casuals* (4.4.2). The contented casuals were not looking for permanent, ongoing work and preferred to work on a casual basis or as an independent contractor for lifestyle reasons or to supplement their household income. This included one full-time agricultural contractor who valued the freedom that independent contracting gave him to choose his working hours and a very small number of casual employees who preferred to work on a casual contract because of the higher rate of pay and because they didn't want to be tied down to their job. For example, even though Graeme, a casual stevedore in his 50s from a double-income household, could see a number of downsides with working casually—particularly, lack of job security—he preferred to work on a casual basis because of the freedom it gave him to do other things with his time:

Yeah, well I'm building a house at the moment, it's good that I can just turn down work...I like the freedom of not having to work nine to five everyday...And, if I want to have a day off with my friends or something, on a Friday or something, I can just not work on the Friday (2010, Interview)

Pete, who was in his 50s and who worked two days a week as a casual in a restaurant, explained that he preferred to be employed as a casual 'because I'm making more this way than a set wage' (2010 Interview). Pete only needed to work part-time because he was also receiving a disability support pension. Like Pete, most of the workers in the contented casual group—which included university students, a parent who was not the primary income earner in her household, and businessowners who did some independent contracting for additional income—were not reliant on the income from their employment and only wanted part-time work. As a consequence, they were able to work only when it suited and generally valued the freedom that working in non-standard employment gave them to better balance their work and family commitments or to earn additional income to help support them during their studies. As Karen, a university student who worked casually in inventory analysis during her summer break explained, 'We couldn't do full time because we are uni students. Like casual suits us whenever we can work' (2009 Interview). Similarly for Lauren, a temping agency worker with young children in Bendigo:

¹⁶ Within the context of labelling groups of workers according to their motivations for entering and remaining in insecure work we use term 'casual' liberally to apply to all insecure workers. However, outside of this context, we adhere to the more restricted understanding of this term; namely, as referring to employees who receive no paid leave entitlements.

'one of the reasons temping's great [is] when you've got young kids. It's so hard to find work where your employer can allow you to juggle and so like, if you've got school sports on, you just say, "Oh, I don't want to work that day" then so you don't have to take a job on that day' (2009 Interview).

Some of the workers in this group were business owners who did part-time casual work to supplement their business income. David, for example, worked one or two days a week as a casual stevedore but his main job was running his own veterinary supply business. For him, the casual stevedoring work was 'just a bonus.' 'Its good money for a shift here and there,' as he explained, 'and it breaks the monotony of what I do, something a bit different, good bunch of blokes' (2009 Interview). A number of agricultural contractors (hay and silage) were also dairy farmers. They did contracting work principally as a way of boosting the cash flow of their business and of covering the costs of the machinery that they needed to save their own hay and silage:

I've never really chased work and most of the people that I still work for, in fact most of the people that I've ever worked for, probably 90% of them, have always been friends anyway. Along with that at around about 15 years ago we, for our own use, we needed to make large quantities of silage because of the number of cows we were milking and we fiddled around with flail choppers and I had a contractor come in one day with a self-loading wagon and he did what would have taken us a week to do, he did it in a day, and that impressed me so much that I bought one of my own the next year. And the main reason that I've been contracting is to help offset the costs of the machinery and make it cheaper on the farm (Bill, 2009 Interview).

For most of the workers in this group, their job was not a particularly important source of personal identity in the sense that they did not place great weight on achieving in their work role. Rather, they saw their casual and independent contracting work as secondary to other, more important commitments that they had, such as their studies, their children, or managing their own business. In this respect, they weren't actively seeking a sense of identity or belonging from their insecure work and indeed they valued the fact that, as a casual employee, they did not have to be as involved in their workplace or as committed as full-time, permanent workers. As Graeme explained,

[T]hat's the best part of it to go, in my position, is when I go there I just do the work and then I go home and don't think about it again. You know, I don't have to worry about anything. As soon as that bell goes, that's it; forget about it, I don't care. So I don't want to be promoted or – I don't want anything. I just want a few days a week work (casual stevedore, double income household, 2010 interview).

Workers in the contented casual group weren't particularly worried about their job security since they did not rely heavily on the income from their employment and could make do without the work in many cases. As Trevor, a dairy farmer in Leongatha explained, 'It's something that I took on as a bit of an add-on to the dairy farm and, at the end of the day, if it wasn't there tomorrow, I would go back dairying full time. So it doesn't worry me' (2009 Interview). They acknowledged, however, that for people reliant on insecure work, things would be very different. Jack, for example, was a retiree who travelled around doing casual farm work because it gave him a way of seeing the world. But he would not recommend casual farm work to anyone who had a family to support and who needed a reliable income:

I've never been dependent, like I've said; I've never been dependent on it for my income. So I mainly do it just for life experience and that and part of the attraction is I want to go to Queensland, the United States, Western Australia or the Mallee or where, you know. So that's where I am but like, if I was say a 35 year old and had all the kids again and they were all like

five, seven, nine and 11, well no, I wouldn't even be thinking about it...You know, I actually like it but it's not something I would have done if I was married with kids, school age kids I'm talking about, no. Yeah, it's mainly for, mainly for people with no kids, dependent (2009 Interview).

Similarly, even though Lauren highly valued the flexibility that temping work gave her to balance her work and family life, she recognised that the fact she did not need to rely on the work because her husband had a permanent, secure job significantly coloured her experience: 'I think if you're going to temp you need to make sure you've got a permanent income coming in from somewhere else. What sort, I don't know but there needs to be, otherwise you would get really stressed' (2009 Interview).

4.2.2. *Reluctant Casuals*

The majority of study participants could be described as *reluctant casuals* in the sense that they saw non-standard work as an inferior form of employment but resigned themselves to working on an insecure basis because of the lack of ongoing employment opportunities in their particular industry or location. A number of the independent contractors interviewed, for example, became independent contractors simply because they had to do so in order to get work in their industry. As Tom, a carpenter who sub-contracted for one of the state's largest residential builders explained, 'you're basically a business, not that you want to be; you just want to get up, go to work everyday and come home like everybody else. But because of you are, you're forced into being a small business' (2009, Interview). Hugh, a telecommunications sub-contractor with two young children, similarly explained that engaging people as independent contractors was simply the way that employers in his industry preferred to hire people: 'they don't employ people, this mob. So they just get you contracting and that standard has definitely deteriorated every year since I've started...They just give you whatever they want. You have no control' (2009 Interview). When we last spoke to Hugh in July 2011, he had had enough of working as an independent contractor and was looking to get a permanent position working for Telstra, though he did not hold out much hope:

I actually approached the local team leader the other day, I said, "any chance of you putting me on the Telstra books..."I get on pretty well with him, and he's said to me before "I wouldn't mind having you onboard." But, you know, it's out of his hands. That was a few months ago. And I approached him the other day, and I said, "can you talk to the right people to see if you can get me on board with Telstra; get me working directly for Telstra." I said, "I know it won't happen, but at least if you get it in the guy's ears it might get him thinking about it." But I haven't heard back from him yet. [Interviewer: And why are you looking to do that?] Oh, more job security, you know. They work 9 day fortnights, they get four or five weeks annual leave per year, they get sick leave...much better quality of life and they earn more than me...as well as training opportunities. It's chalk and cheese (Hugh, 2011 Interview).

With the exception of the diary farmers who did agricultural contracting work to supplement their farm's income, the independent contractors interviewed expressed a clear preference to be employed under an ongoing employment contract, though they saw little chance of obtaining a permanent job. The principal reason independent contractors gave for wanting permanent employment were the greater entitlements that ongoing workers enjoyed and the greater ability that permanent workers had to take time off:

Financially, I've contemplated this recently actually; financially, I think it would be a lot more beneficial to be an employee. Especially, I personally would probably go for a government organisation...the benefits that are actually associated with those organisations are actually quite high. Even medical, hospitals and stuff. You've got, because it's such a large organisation and you get – well, you get annual leave for a start, you get sick leave. So you can actually take a

day off and still get paid for it, which I don't, I can't...And being able to plan four weeks leave, that's a luxury that I sort of think "Ah." (Karen, insurance claims investigator, 2011 Interview).

See, a union site would be good but there are none around; none that would last for very long anyway unless you've got big high-rise buildings. So, if I was still living in Melbourne and I could get onto a union site I would [Interviewer: Rather than contract?] Yeah, for sure. Because it just, it takes the worry out of it. And they do get paid very well...Holiday pay, sick pay...yeah all that sort of stuff. Although, even, they still have divided their workers - I don't know how they work it, but they can still lay off a lot of people if work slows up without any real sort of grief. They can just say, "well work's slowed up, get rid of a few blokes." So, I mean, two weeks notice and you're out of work. Generally, I think, most big companies will let people know well and truly in advance that, yeah, "it's not looking good guys." ...So it is, if I could get on a union site and I was living in Melbourne I would. But up here, like I said, there just isn't the opportunities for it. (Mark, carpenter).

Most of the casuals and all of the fixed-term employees that were interviewed similarly showed a clear preference to be employed on an ongoing basis for much the same reasons. As Jeremy, a hospitality worker in Mildura explained, 'if it was permanent, it would be a lot better...then once every six months you could take a couple of weeks off and recharge the batteries (Jeremy, hospitality worker/double income household, 2010 Interview).

It's terrible [working as a casual]. You have got, it is a lack of security. You have no holiday pay so you cannot plan. You are keen to take as many hours as you can in fear to try and...make up that gap when you, for the holiday times that they are closed (Claire, casual labourer/single income household, 2009 Interview).

I think it would [better to be permanent] because the security's ongoing. And then there's all sorts of other advantages like long-service leave and these sorts of other things that accrue. Yeah, I think I would be better off but they just don't do that anymore (Trish, sessional teacher-both fixed-term and casual/single income household, 2011 Interview).

Workers who were reluctant casuals were generally reliant on the income from their employment and craved greater job security, particularly with regard to being given some assurances about minimum working hours. Notably, there was a particularly high concentration of single mothers—all of the single parents who were interviewed fell into the reluctant casual group—and factory labourers in the reluctant casual group, illustrating the higher incidence of more precarious forms of temporary employment among women and less-skilled workers. For the sole parents in this group, the uncertainty and intermittency of their work patterns created tremendous difficulties for them in terms of receiving parenting support payments from Centrelink as a consequence of the work participation requirements introduced under the Howard government.

To continue receiving parenting payments, sole parents may have to work 30 hours a fortnight and participate in Job Services Australia programmes when they are out of work. These participation requirements can be difficult to meet for those who work in casual employment, where their hours can fluctuate dramatically from week to week and where there can be regular periods of under-employment. As Susan, a sole parent who had worked as a casual factory labourer for 5 years explained:

As long as I work 30 hours a fortnight they don't give me a hard time, so when I worked three months full-time I've worked a lot more hours than is required of me but the moment it stops, "Wow, you're not doing a good enough job." Like, "Go out and find another job," and you know they don't take into consideration that you've actually worked for the last three months full-time and now the work has slowed down, and they seem to think it's your fault, and we don't

have any control over how much work we get. I never turn down work or anything, I take all the work that's offered to me and yet the moment the work stops I'm in trouble with Centrelink [laughs]. You know, and they tell me, "You go in there and you demand that they give you work." It doesn't work like that. And they do, they cause you a lot of stress....they don't seem to realise that okay, you mightn't work this fortnight but you might work 38 hours next fortnight, or no, well 70 odd hours, you know, and they seem to think it's our fault. Then they tell you to go and find another job but we just assume that we'll get more work in the future where we are but they just tell you, and if you work under 30 hours you have to apply for four jobs a fortnight which is ridiculous because there isn't four jobs to apply for. Yeah, and I've got co-workers who have gone without money for weeks because they don't want the stress of Centrelink. So they don't, they've got out of the Centrelink system and then when the work dies off they've got no money for weeks and weeks on end because they just don't want the stress of Centrelink (2009 Interview).

Each summer Crystal, a single mother who worked part-time as a casual swimming instructor, would run into problems with Centrelink because work in her swimming pool would stop altogether during the school holidays as there were no school children to give lessons to. During this period, Crystal would be forced into apply for additional jobs even though there were few jobs available and she knew that work would pick up again at the end of the school holidays:

I keep weighing up, is it worth it? Will I just tell them I cannot meet these requirements, they're just ridiculous. I might be able to get some cash jobs and do things like that around but I cannot meet what they want or do I just keep playing the game and saying, "Well, this is my circumstances, you've very aware of the circumstances" and just muddle our way through...I've got an interview on Wednesday and this situation will be brought up. So since last year they've brought out – they've tweaked it a little bit and they've got some wording in their brochures about, we understand if jobs take a hiatus over summer. So I'm wondering how legally binding that is, if they're going to acknowledge six weeks as our six weeks from school term to school term is too long, it doesn't qualify. We only meet if your work closes down over a week over Christmas, so I'd have to get a bit more information over that and I think they do that on purpose just to make sure they cover their back more or less...[Last summer] it was regular pressure [to apply for jobs] and they equally would roll their eyes at the scenario as much as I would. I teach their children. They know exactly how it works but they had to do their – be seen to be doing their job and I would be responding accordingly and all with a bit of a wink, and yes we know it's ridiculous. And that's how it's been and I imagine this will probably be a scenario the same (2010 Interview).

Some reluctant casuals accepted their insecure employment status as not ideal but inevitable given their choice of occupation. This was particularly true of those working in the third-level sector, who viewed permanent employment as a thing of the past while, at the same time, bemoaning the casualisation of the third-level sector. They accepted that they would have to work under non-standard employment contracts if they wanted to remain in their occupation. And while they would prefer to be employed on a permanent basis, they didn't feel that they were being particularly unfairly or unjustly treated. But others, especially those who worked on very short-term contracts (9 months or less) or whose working hours varied substantially from week to week, had a much more negative reaction to being employed on an insecure basis and deeply resented having to work on a casual or contract basis. 'It's exploitation, pure and simple', explained Trish in her first interview, as she was facing into another summer without work due to classes finishing for the year: 'It's as though they don't consider what happens to those casual people over a three month holiday period. I don't think it even enters their minds.' She couldn't understand why the TAFE that she worked in continued to employ her as a casual, especially as she'd 'had regular classes for 2 years':

They've dropped me again and, "Oh, we'll happily have you back next year on a casual basis. Sorry we can't afford to put you on a contract," which doesn't make any sense to me at all because I'm sure, it would be actually cheaper for them to put me on a contract. I don't understand and being a casual person you can't really complain or ask too many questions because they just simply won't hire you anymore. So just tremendous pressure to keep your mouth shut (2009, Interview).

Her lack of job security and the fact that she would have to survive without work each summer were a major source of stress:

I'm not suicidal but I feel like it sometimes though, I do...I've actually got bald patches all over my head from just yeah, anxiety. I did go and see a Doctor about it and he said it's a deep-rooted anxiety and I thought, "Mmm, I wonder why that is." [Laugh] probably from relief teaching and raising kids on my own, I'd say. I'm finding now I'm approaching summer and doing it again...It's a subconscious thing, but it's stress... "How can I make ends meet, will we get below this summer, how can I buy presents for my children?" Well, they're older now and I've just said, "No presents this year kids, I'll make you a card each." When they were younger it was, "But everybody else, all my friends got a this and a that." I just felt terrible that I couldn't provide. They're older now and I think, I don't know if they forgive me but the older one understands and he's not begrudging me or my mothering but it's an awful, awful position to be in (2009 Interview)

It was not uncommon for workers in this group to describe casual employment as 'basically a legalised slavery, where you do get some money but the rewards simply aren't there' (Jeremy, hospitality worker/double income household, 2010 Interview). Some saw it as a way for companies to divide the workforce and to strip workers of their entitlements for the sake of saving on costs:

Casual employment keeps unity from the workplace and it benefits only the employer, that's the only person – and the bloke who's fucking handing us out the pay cheque. We're used as fodder, you know. They're just fucking dragging the dough in. It's created a massive industry that's probably not regulated by anybody, and they're making a fucking fortune off us. They're the only ones that are doing okay out of this casual employment. The bloke that takes you on as an employee is doing all right... well, he might be spending a few more dollars but if you're no good he's got the right to fuck you off. And the bloke who is grabbing that hourly rate, you're just the mug in between. It's not a good way to be living (Patrick, casual construction labourer, 40s with four children, 2009 Interview).

Well this area, traditionally, it's got a fairly high unemployment rate – and they [employers] know there's plenty in the pool for casual work. They've just got to put it out there, put it out there saying 'we're looking for casuals.' And really, there's plenty of people around and a pretty broad range of people too because this is a retirement area as well. There's plenty of older people around just looking for a bit of casual work – they only want a half dozen hours a week or whatever, just to supplement the pension or whatever...And they know it. Employers know it. I know the co-op, they use it too because the place over there relies on casuals. And they know they're better off because the casual rate is no higher than the normal full-time rate, and they know that. And they know they don't have to pay holiday pay, they don't have to pay sick pay and all the rest of it. So yeah; they play on that, there's no doubt about it (Daniel, casual fisheries worker, 50s, 2011 Interview).

Independent contractors in the reluctant casual group felt that companies used independent contractors as a way of avoiding having to pay work cover and having to provide other benefits that direct employees were entitled to:

Employers make a lot more money out of casuals and independent contractors than what they do out of full-time staff...Definitely employer driven: less responsibility to your employees, with contractors and casuals, less responsibility to them. You don't have to supply the tools, you just

pay them a lump sum every month or two weeks or whatever, and that's your only problems...And, if they don't perform, you just get rid of them. There's no unfair dismissal or anything like that (Hugh, telecommunications sub-contractor, 30s, 2011 interview).

They don't have to deal with work cover; they don't have to deal with nothing – all the responsibility is on me. Yeah, that's what it is (Anthony, plasterer, 40s, 2011 Interview).

Workers in the reluctant casual group felt deeply under-valued by their employers, occasionally with devastating consequences for their self-esteem.

I feel as though I'm being exploited and I am being exploited. It's just, "Ring Trish, she'll come and fill in because she's desperate" and they're right, I am and I fill in and I do everything that's required and still no permanent job. I don't know what to do. I'm looking to get out of teaching altogether because I'm not being looked after and I'm not surprised there's a shortage of teachers because if this is the way they treat people it's not surprising, is it? Anyway, so that's my situation. Now, I'm looking for a waitressing job or anything just to try and get through the summer (Trish, TAFE teacher, 2009 Interview).

As Alice, a permanent irregular aged care attendant explained of how she felt after she and her colleagues had voiced concerns about the rostering of shifts only to be told that they could go elsewhere if they weren't happy with the hours:

Here we are, backs against the wall, and we're not getting anything. And we don't get any respect, because why would you say to somebody, "If you don't like what you've got you can leave. Go and work somewhere else." That doesn't show me any respect... And I put my name on my feedback, so they know where it comes from. And I think that a lot of the girls would have, because we want to see changes. We don't want to be treated this way. And yet, I mean, people leave, they go, they just can't handle it anymore. I'm just frustrated, really frustrated. (2010 Interview).

[W]e're just seen as an endless commodity of, you know, I can be replaced at the drop of a hat. There'll be somebody who, you know, if I don't want the job I can go and somebody will step into my shoes. They can easily get somebody. So what use am I? (2011 Interview).

More often than not, workers in the reluctant casual group felt that they had to be seen as reliable, highly committed workers if they were to keep their jobs. Flexible employment, in their view, afforded *them* very little control or flexibility. Rather, the work flexibility all worked to the advantage of the employer. As Matt, a factory labourer who needed full-time work because he had a wife and two young children to support explained, 'With casual, it's always just, do what you're told. If you don't, there's the door! (2011 Interview). Helen, a personal care attendant in her 20s, similarly felt at the beck and call of her employer:

I've been screwed over so many times at the place that I'm in now and at previous positions. Like when the shifts were coming in fast and thick, they will call me and say, "Oh we need you, we need you" and I'm always there to say yes. I never turn down a shift because I know how desperate it gets when there aren't any shifts and I'm ringing up asking them for a favour, "Nope, we've got nothing, sorry." ...If they want me I'm there, if I want them they're not there. (2009 Interview).

4.4.3. Indifferent Casuals

The final group of workers in the study were *indifferent casuals* in the sense that they did not actively desire to be employed on a permanent, ongoing contract (as in the case of reluctant casuals) nor, at the same time, did they consciously choose temporary work over ongoing work for lifestyle reasons (as in the case of contented casuals). Whereas contented casuals sought to work in insecure

employment so as to balance their work with other commitments, the indifferent casuals in the study largely fell into non-standard work as a consequence of that being the way people were typically employed in their industry. But unlike reluctant casuals, they did not seem to mind being employed under a non-standard employment contract or express a clear preference for permanency. For example, Terry, an independent contractor who had worked for the same small builder for more than 20 years, felt reasonably secure in his job and didn't think that being employed under an ongoing contract would make much difference to his quality of life:

I don't think there's much difference between if I was working for someone on wages to subcontracting; it's virtually the same I reckon. Like, off and on, and virtually probably should go on wages or whatever, but we don't want to do it that way (Terry, sub-contractor, 2009 interview)

However, Terry's experience of building sub-contracting was unique among the construction workers interviewed. He was fortunate that he worked for a small private builder building architecturally designed homes who could charge high rates. The other building sub-contractors who participated in the study—carpenters and plasterers—and who sub-contracted for large construction firms building residential housing at the lower end of the market had an altogether different experience of independent contracting. These companies paid poorly and the work was boring and repetitive. Nonetheless, the independent contractors had to accept the poorly paid work because there was little alternative. Moreover, with no government regulation of minimum award rates for independent contractors, these independent contractors were finding that the large building companies were able to use the scarcity of jobs in the area to put pressure on wages. As Mark, a carpenter explained:

Obviously it's illegal to price fix. They're not meant to be but they do. I can't prove that but as a subbie I know full well they do. So you can't even – there's no point in you jumping ship with one company and going to another company because they all do. And if someone puts their price up by a little bit, the other ones just do the same. So then it's all even. Probably would be good to see it regulated a bit more because, I mean, you do four years of an apprenticeship and all that sort of stuff and then these companies will only pay \$35 an hour if there's extra work to do. That was, 10 or 15 years ago I was making \$35 an hour. Everything else has gone up but our pay hasn't (2011 Interview).

Most of those in the indifferent casual group—with the exception of Terry—worked in industries where work patterns were *necessarily* irregular and uncertain because work was highly dependent on weather conditions (for example, fishing and fruit-picking). These workers never expected to work in a regular, full-time job and accepted their non-standard employment contract as simply a function of the irregular nature of their work. For these workers, who were mostly either fishermen or fruit-pickers, intermittent and uncertain work patterns were simply part and parcel of their work rather than something that was imposed on them by employers. They were not looking for a secure job and indeed enjoyed not having to work routine hours. As Alex, an experienced skipper on a scallop boat explained:

That's pretty much the thing, fishing is a lifestyle. Something that gets into your blood...It is not a 9 to 5 job. You may leave here at six in the morning and you might leave here at six at night and you cross the bar at night. It is like an adventure pretty much. Like going on a hunting expedition or something similar, you know. But it is purely the lifestyle really (2009 Interview).

This is not to say that these indifferent casuals were not subject to some of the same adverse consequences of intermittent and uncertain work scheduling as reluctant casuals. Indeed, quite a number of fishermen reported that they faced huge obstacles to social participation from the irregular nature of their work patterns and that the uncertainty of their work patterns was also a major source of stress for their partners, in some cases leading to marriage break-ups. But because the intermittent and uncertain nature of their work was environmentally rather than economically driven, they were not as affected psychologically by it. As Steven, a skipper on another scallop boat explained when asked whether the uncertainty of his work patterns bothered him, 'Oh no, you just work. It's just your job you know, you've sort to just got to try and fit everything in with it, work around it. It's all you can do' (2009 Interview). Moreover, unlike reluctant casuals, the workers in the indifferent casual group did not view their insecure employment status as an inferior form of employment. This was because nobody in their line of work was, or ever had been, employed on a permanent, ongoing basis. So there was less of a sense that being engaged under a non-standard employment contrast was discriminatory or unfair.

There were two broad patterns of experience among the indifferent casual workers that reflected differences in the degree to which people had to work at maintaining their existing employment or at securing future work. The fishermen in the group, for example, generally felt secure in their jobs. They typically crewed or skippered on the same boat throughout the year, and while they would experience times when there was no work because of poor weather conditions, they always remained confident that there would be work available once the weather picked up. They were also paid a percentage of the boat's catch and so could quickly earn a reasonable income if conditions were good. Hence, provided that they budgeted carefully, they could manage financially during periods of underemployment. As Darren, a deckhand in his 20s on a prawning boat, explained when asked whether he tried to pick up extra work to cope during lean periods:

I haven't had to...Like I've had, like after last prawn season, [the] money lasted quite a few months after we've finished prawning and so that's sort of kept me ahead basically all year. Even though we've had stretches of weather, where we weren't working much and then we've managed to get out and we've caught a few fish and that's sort of kept us going. I've always, I've got a bit of a buffer in the bank and I've got a separate account which I don't touch unless I really have to (2009 Interview).

Moreover, the fishing industry in Australia is regulated by a quota system, which prevents over-fishing. This affords fishermen some security of income since it reduces the possibility of fish markets being over-supplied. At the same time, it also protects fishing crews from being over-worked by boat owners since boats cannot fish year round without violating their quota. In short, while the fishermen in the group experienced irregular and intermittent work patterns, and while they were vulnerable to regular fluctuations in their earnings, they did not have to invest heavily in finding work or worry much about their job security during periods of under-employment. Their employment was also stable in the sense that they worked continuously for the same employer even if their work patterns were interrupted by changing weather conditions. This relationship afforded them some security.

The sense of security that fishermen seemed to enjoy was in stark contrast to the fruit-pickers in the group, for whom finding and keeping work was a constant struggle. Fruit-pickers would change employer many times in a year and it was not only the weather that affected the availability of work

in their industry. What emerged from the experiences of fruit-pickers over the course of the study was an industry highly sensitive to fluctuations in global food prices and where domestic growers were increasingly employing backpackers and immigrants via labour hire agencies in place of directly employing experienced pickers. In some cases, growers and labour hire agencies (contractors) were employing people illegally, as Jeremy, who did pruning work part-time work on a boutique vineyard to supplement the income from his casual hospitality work, explained:

[T]here's a few not so reputable operators around as well, whether they're contractors or whatever, you know. There's a few contractors that use Asians, illegal immigrants and that sort of thing. They're getting underpaid, so it sort of screws everyone...You know, they've come from a country a country where they're probably earning, you know, \$3 or \$4 a day or a week or whatever and, you know, if they earn \$50 a day, they're probably laughing, or they think they're great. And, you know, somebody else is making \$50 out of their sweat...And the fact that, you know, if I go out and want to work in competition, it makes my rate look really expensive to somebody who wants me to work (2009 Interview).

Minimum award rates were almost never adhered to, with growers preferring to pay workers by the bin instead of by the hour. The abundance of available labourers in need of picking work was also contributing to lower wages and lengthier periods of under- or unemployment. Louisa, who had moved to Mildura with her husband to work on the blocks because they felt it would give them more time to spend with their children, explained that there had been a sharp decline in the amount of harvest work available in recent years: 'Before, a couple of years ago, the season was going through from January, it covered the whole year from January to December generally, but now it's only about five or six months that we're working and the rest of the year there's no jobs' (2009 Interview). Prior to the first interview, Louisa had decided to retrain as an aged care attendant because there was not enough picking work available in the area. Indeed, a number of the casuals and permanent irregular workers in Mildura who were working in other industries had previously worked as harvest labourers before retraining because the work was so unreliable. As Alice, an aged care attendant who had worked for many years on vineyards in the area explained:

I think by the time I finished I was probably getting six months, and they were finding things for me to do that perhaps didn't need doing, but they knew that I needed to survive, so they were very, very good to me and I thought, "Well, I've got to re-train and do something else." No work and you've got to go and front up at the job agency and they don't give you any assistance to get any courses or anything until you've been unemployed for ... it's the egg and the chicken. Until you've been unemployed for three to six months, you don't really get any assistance...And I was living on black and gold food so I could pay, I think it was about just over \$800 so I could do my Certificate III, otherwise I wouldn't have been able to do it. And then I wouldn't have had the job that I've got if I hadn't been able to do that (2009 Interview).

The labour market pressures were a source of continued frustration for pickers who, each year, felt less and less confident about being able to survive financially.

Michael: The money's not there, nah. There is a lot to do with the weather now like there's been a lot of rain. I've heard through other pickers 'cause we're in contact with a lot of other fruit pickers doing the circuit, Bowen has been a flop for the last couple of years because they're getting rains at the wrong time. Tomatoes are all marked and it's the same down here, the heat comes at the wrong time [laughs].

Toni: Yeah but it's not just that...

Bill: It's the backpackers..... backpackers come and cut us out.

Toni: you move to another district to get work and you can't get in there because they'd rather hire all those backpackers that they can just ring straight away.....and even though we're experienced and done it for years we can't get in unless we're actually on the [labour hire company] (2009 Interview).

These fruit-pickers experience of working in non-standard employment was in many ways similar to the experience of independent contractors who sub-contracted for large residential building firms. With growers more than happy to outsource their picking work to labour hire companies, who were taking over an increasing share of the work that was available, fruit-pickers were having to accept lower rates of pay simply to get work. They were also under pressure to work longer hours since labour hire companies would only employ pickers who would commit to working long hours. As Michael, a picker in his 40s who had worked as a fruit-picker for two years, explained during the third interview:

It's gone even more so with contractors [this year]. And I feel like, with the contractors now, the picker will never get a pay rise. The bin price hasn't gone up for 10 years as it is already. But now, any pay rise that's given, the contractor takes it. And I think that's the way it will be forever...In fact it's been all pay drops this year hasn't it?

In many ways the frustration and difficulties that fruit-pickers experienced in relation to earning a living was similar to that of the reluctant casuals. But what set these fruit-pickers apart from the reluctant casuals was that they didn't particularly desire to be employed on a permanent basis. They would be quite happy to continue work on a casual basis *provided that they were adequately paid for it*. Their frustration came from feeling under-paid, which they saw as stemming from the willingness of backpackers and immigrants to work for very little pay. As Alice, who had gotten out of the industry and gone into working in aged care, explained:

Well, they've just announced, within the last six months, they've just announced that anyone who's working on weekend will be on some sort of penalty rate...I will guarantee you that there will be no one getting that rate. If you're driving a tractor and you're working for a winery and the winery has got money to spend, you may. But for the average Joe Bloggs who's going out for the weekend, they are not going to be paid that. It's just not going to happen. There is a never ending supply of backpackers who come to this town. Now, you come into town, you've got your little backpack, you part it in some dodgy accommodation, and you come work for me. Now, you work all day and I'll say here, at the end of the day, here's your \$12. Now you might not find that out until the end of the week. Okay. What are you going to do at the end of the week? You're not going to be very happy, but you've gone down the road, now you'll complain to a few people, but replacing you—right behind you—will be another steady flow of backpackers (2009 Interview).

5. Material Hazards of Insecure Work

As we saw in chapter 3, one of the ways in which non-standard employment arrangements supposedly affect workers' health is by exposing workers to physically more hazardous work conditions, as well as by motivating workers to adopt riskier health behaviours. For example, fear of job loss and the need to maintain a positive pressure with their employer so as to secure future shifts and employment contracts may motivate workers to come to work sick or injured (presenteeism), or to take on more hazardous job tasks. In some cases, fear of job loss may also motivate workers to conceal OH&S incidents and concerns that reporting any OH&S incidents or concerns might jeopardise future work. Work intensification pressures from a lack of job security and the consequent need to continuously prove themselves to their employer may also lead to fatigue and muscle pain, while the poorer integration of non-standard workers into management and training structures also increases the risk of workers incurring a work-related injury or illness.

A number of those interviewed reported physical health complaints as a result of their work, although it is difficult to know to what extent these physical health complaints can be attributed to workers' non-standard employment status rather than other aspects of their work. For example, almost all of the fruit pickers reported examples of farmers spraying pesticides near where they were picking, although it is difficult to know whether fruit pickers' would be any less vulnerable to getting sprayed on if they were employed on an ongoing rather than casual basis.

Case Study: Fruit-Picking and Exposure to Physical Health Risks

Fruit-pickers reported multiple incidences of being sprayed on by chemicals. Toni and Michael, for example, were a couple who had worked as pickers for 20 years and who reported numerous examples of being sprayed on by farmers.

Michael: Toni can tell what sort of a spray it is by the smell 'cause she'd know, whereas I wouldn't even smell it and it won't affect me and she'll be up spewing all night, hot flushes, diarrhoea, the whole bloody works 'cause she's been poisoned and I don't even notice it...

Toni: And like one time we were out there and they were spraying it near us and I said to Michael, "They're spraying come on we'll just go," he [the farmer] came out and he's like "It's not close enough to you," but he left all the backpackers out there you know?

Michael: First of all he tried to tell me on the phone "Oh no he's 12 rows away from you." I said "Well I'm standing on top of my ladder and I'm counting and he's six rows away," he said "Oh no he's not I'll come out and have a look." And he walked down the road and the first thing he did was "Oh shit he's close isn't he?" So he rushed back down the road and he goes "Oh you can knock off now if you like," and he left everyone else out in the paddock, all the English backpackers, they stayed out there (2009 Interview).

In one instance, Toni had to miss work for two days because she fell violently ill after a farmer sprayed crops near where she was picking. She had not been provided with any protective gear, such as a face mask. Her husband, Michael, was concerned that they would be unable to successfully claim compensation if they were ever to develop a long-term illness from the pesticides because they worked for so many different growers each year that it would be almost impossible to hold any individual grower responsible:

I always worry at the end of the day if you got a cancer or something that was caused through a spray how would you prove who done it? I've worked on 50/100 farms and say five of them have just been ruthless they'll spray up beside you and you just run for it, just jump in your car and fuck off home and you come back the next day and it's like nothing happened (2009 Interview).

Bill, a fruit-picker who had worked in the industry for more than 40 years, had accumulated a number of health problems from both the physical nature of the work as well from being exposed to pesticides:

I get a – I get a bit dizzy and that in the head. I don't know whether it's from the sprays or what over the years, I go a bit dizzy in the head sometimes. It's just my knees and back's bit worn out and those sort of things are worn out from running up and down ladders for years. I run up and down ladders for 30 odd years before I bought a machine, 'cause I started when I was 15 and I'm 60 now, so that's 45 years. My wrists, my wrists were turning, I had to go to the doctor, I was going all numb and blue in my fingers, I wasn't getting any – wasn't getting any circulation. I only went when I was over at []. Took all these tests and that (2010 Interview).

In the second year of the study, Bill needed an operation on his knee. However, he had been out of work for three months during the second year of the study and was putting off having the operation because of he couldn't afford to spend between \$1,000 to \$3,000 on a knee operation given his lack of work:

I need the money at the moment, yeah. 'Cause I've got a – got a knee here playing up and I'm – I'm – I'm in – in Medibank Private, so I can probably get it done any time, but you've always got to pay the gap. So I don't know whether it will be \$1000 or \$2000/\$3000 gap, so you've got to have money there for that, emergency things (2010 Interview).

Construction workers, like fruit-pickers, also frequently reported physical health complaints from the nature of their work, although again it is impossible to say whether the non-standard nature of their employment status had anything to do with the pain and aching that they felt.

Fatigue was by far and away the most common health complaint that workers reported, with shift workers in particular complaining of fatigue.

Case Study: Shift Work and Fatigue

Fatigue was common among stevedores who took part in the study. These stevedores worked on either a casual or permanent irregular basis, and lived their lives almost permanently on call. This was because, although they were rostered into panels, they would not find out until the evening before whether they were working the next day or not. As Brian, a permanent irregular stevedore in his 20s explained:

I never know what I am doing the next day. It is just hard to organise anything, you can't make plans...every day I am chasing work, like as soon as I find out I'm not working there I have to find other work. So I never know what I'm doing. And I can't commit to anything (Brian, permanent irregular stevedore, 20s, 2009 Interview)

Under the terms of their employment, permanent irregular stevedores could be asked to work in other ports more than 100km away when their own port wasn't busy and, by the end of the study, many were being asked to travel inter-state for work since their own port had little work available. Shifts in some of these other ports went for twelve hours, and the stevedores were being pressured into accepting 12 hours as the standard shift length in their home port. The uncertainty of their work scheduling coupled with having to work twelve hour shifts and having to travel long-distances for work was exhausting many of the stevedores. Added to this was the fact that many juggled multiple jobs because they were not getting enough shifts stevedoring to meet their household needs. For example, Frank, a permanent irregular stevedore in his 50s who also worked a second job in a nearby warehouse, was on the point of exhaustion at the time of the second interview, which took place shortly after Frank had returned from an 8-hour shift working in Melbourne having previously worked five twelve-hour shifts in a row at another port:

the last few hours of a 12-hour shift are very hard to get through especially when you're operating machinery. And then they drive home. Some boys live right down [] and places like that. A couple of guys I've heard say that they've almost run off the freeway on their way home. You know you can just feel it there. I'm speaking to you now I'm still tired. Last night, yesterday was an eight-hour shift but we still had to drive to the city and drive back so that turns it into an 11, an hour and half each way travel, so it's an 11-hour shift, you know...I think they're adamant to keep 12-hour shifts and they're adamant that we do them on the conventional shifts as well as this shift. And I've worked the conventional shifts in [] and I know that it's not a good thing. Certainly not, it's not good for your body and you know it's, it's telling on you, you know. Here's me I've done two weeks down there, five days, five days of 12 hours and then straight into the city work and as I'm talking to you, I'm nearly asleep you know. So people they're all getting ready for Christmas today and I don't even feel like it because you just feel zapped. You know what I mean? I've just turned 50 and I generally look after my health and am pretty fit and everything but it does catch up with you I think. It's not nice. And I think whoever thought of 12 hours shifts needs [to be] shot (2010 Interview)

John, a permanent irregular stevedore who had worked as a casual up until the first interview, explained that the 12 hour shifts were particularly difficult for the casuals. Whereas permanent irregular workers would get a day's notice before a shift, casuals could be called into work at the last minute:

And the supplementaries [casuals] mate they don't even know what's going on until they get a job...you know, 5 o'clock the night before and that could be you know a 12-hour shift, an eight-hour shift or a transfer to Melbourne. Not only that they could get a phone call 10 minutes or even at seven, you know at seven o'clock saying, "Can you come into work now for a 12-hour shift?" Which, it sucks, it really sucks 'cause you've got no time to prepare. I know 12-hour nightshifts are you know they're really hard to try and stay awake...It's tedious work, where you know a lot of the guys fall asleep and stuff like that and that's where it becomes a dangerous thing but we're trying to – like I'm a HSR down there. So I'm trying to monitor that and, you know, if the guys really need an extra five minutes or something to get off the

machine, go and have a cup of coffee or something like that, well so be it. You know, that's it, it has to happen, there's no point you know, burying the guy 'cause he's trying to earn a living you know what I mean? (2010 Interview)

Simon, who had worked as a casual stevedore for more than ten years before being made permanent, felt that working irregular and uncertain work patterns for the past 10 years had taken its toll on his health:

Some of them might sit here and say it doesn't affect them, its rubbish. You can't be doing 8 hours here and then going and doing 8 hours over there, getting home maybe getting 6 hours sleep and then going [to work again]...I don't doubt for a fact that [long pause] I'm a lot more tired now than what I should be for a 43 year old. Now I haven't been to a doctor who's told me that this is wrong with me, or I've got this, or I should be taking that, or whatever. But I just feel a lot more tired than I should for a person my age. [Interviewer: Was sleeping and rest ever a big issue for you?] Huge issue. Huge issue. It is to this day [Interviewer: 'Cause you've still got the change in work patterns?] I do, and [long pause] you might get one night shift for the week. You might get three night shifts all in a row. I might not work a night shift for two months and it's nothing for me just about every night to go, "Ping," at two in the morning. Wide-awake. I get up and watch telly. I'm just wide-awake, and I put that down to just years of doing night shifts and irregular sleep patterns and all that (2009 Interview)

The physical health complaints reported above—fatigue, pain and aching, exposure to chemicals—are complaints that permanent, ongoing employees working in the same industries and occupations are potentially equally vulnerable to. However, those interviewed did report a number of examples of how working under a non-standard employment contract explicitly affected their health in material ways, not least of which were that workers felt under pressure to come to work sick or injured.

5.1 Presenteeism

With the exception of fixed-term employees and permanent irregular workers—who were entitled to paid sick leave, albeit on a pro rata basis—presenteeism was common amongst interviewees, especially among reluctant casuals who either could not afford to take time off when sick or who were afraid to do so for fear that they would lose shifts. ‘Well in the past as a casual’, explained Adam, a stevedore with a young family to support, ‘you basically have to be shitting in your pants not to go into work really. Because this work, the money, you wouldn’t give a shit if you were sick, you’d still go in...You can’t afford not to [go to work]...At the end of the day, when you’re a casual, you’ve got to do the job. If you don’t, you don’t get paid. Simple as that.’ ‘I’d have to have a leg off or something to stop me going,’ explained Trish, a TAFE teacher, who would frequently be out of work during the summer months. ‘I need the money – because I need the money to pay back the debts I’ve accumulated all over summer really’ (2010 Interview).

[I]f you’re casual and you’re sick, you’ve got to work. You don’t have the sick time and you don’t want to be seen as a slacker. So I can see how physically, people could run themselves into the ground. I mean, I did that as a casual. Unless I couldn’t get out of bed, I went to work because (a) I needed the money and (b) I didn’t want them to call someone else next time (Sharon, sessional tutor, 2011).

We’ve all come into work ill...see our manager...when she’s not well she doesn’t come in but she’s permanent...We’ve had, well, cold and flu’s and some of the teachers have a gastro but they still come in and spread it all around because you wouldn’t tell them that’s what it is and

you would certainly lose pay [Interviewer: And in your case, you've done that before with contagious viruses?] Yeah. You just do, you come in and you think, well, if I'm sick, you're all going to be sick. That's the way this thing works. We're not going to get paid if we stay away (Crystal, lone parent and casual aquatics instructor, 2010 Interview).

It wasn't just casuals who would work sick. Many independent contractors would also work sick, principally because they needed the money. For example, Tom, a carpenter explained that he had worked "crook" for three days the week before the first interview because, 'well, you have bills – you have to pay your bills, so you have to go to work' (2009 Interview). Presenteeism was similarly common amongst fruit-pickers, who felt that they would be penalised by the farmer if they went home sick or injured or if they take the day off work because they were sick. As Toni, a picker in her late 30s explained, 'say if you have an injury at work, you can either go to work or you can say to your boss, "Well, I've hurt myself," and they might say, "Well, you're out." What do you do?' 'You go to work,' as her husband, Michael, explained (2009 Interview). Fishermen too reported incidences of presenteeism as, somewhat surprisingly, did contented casuals. In the case of contented casuals, the fact that they wouldn't earn a wage if they didn't go to work acted as an *incentive* for presenteeism. As Chris, an agricultural contractor explained, 'I've got to get the job done so I get paid and so that I get the next job. But, if I'm honestly, really, really crook, I'll stay at home. But, yeah, probably if I was working for a company and I had sick days owing to me, there's a lot of days that I probably would've stayed home.' For fishermen, it was more a case of not wanting to let their fellow crew members down, since they knew that it would be difficult to find a replacement crew member at short notice. But for casuals and fruit-pickers reliant on their job and who were struggling to get enough shifts, they simply couldn't *afford* to be sick while there was work available:

You need money, it doesn't matter how sick you are...that's the time I get really sick and I push myself to the edge and there's a time that I fainted. I remember one time I fainted at a block because the heat was too much, the heat was too much but I pushed it, because I need more boxes, because the price is not the much you know. I'm lucky to get \$500, \$400 [per week] you know, and if I don't push myself what can you do with \$100 a week? (Nicola, Fruit-picker, 2009 Interview).

Case Study: Employment Uncertainty, Stress, and Sickness

Intermittent and irregular work scheduling motivates presenteeism while compounding illness. Workers who have little security regarding the scheduling of future work feel they cannot afford to take time off due to illness while work is available. Hence, they come to work sick, which only exacerbates their illness. And when worker's health is so bad that they simply cannot push themselves to go to work, anxieties about getting future work and being able to make ends meet creep in, similarly undermining their recovery. For example, Helen, a personal care attendant in her mid 20s, works at an aged care facility in East Gippsland. Even though she works in health and community services and is well aware of the risks to her patients and co-workers, Helen still comes to work sick if she can. Because her shifts are so irregular and uncertain—the fortnight before the first interview, Helen only worked a shift and a half, leaving her with only \$230—she simply can't afford *not* to work when she is ill:

If I'm not feeling well and I know I'm not getting any shifts, I'll rock up anyway. I had the flu a couple of months ago and I was coughing all over the place and I turned up for a shift. I didn't do it very well but I was there (2009 Interview).

Notably, Helen also suffers from bipolar and the month before the first interview her health was so bad that she had to miss work for an entire week, leaving her with very little money for the month. Helen and her husband are heavily in debt from not having enough work to pay their bills.

We're in debt, I can't get permanent shifts, I don't have the skills to go anywhere else to get permanent shifts...which is why we're in debt [laugh] because some fortnights we can afford to pay the bills and others we can't....I had to take a week off about a month ago because I couldn't get out of bed and I had to take that week off and I didn't get paid. So I ended up with I think three shifts I got paid for. So I got about \$350, which again wasn't even enough to pay the rent. Our debts are behind the eight ball at the moment and I'm on payment plans all over the joint to get all this stuff paid off, electricity, telephone, everything, car (Helen, casual personal care attendant, mid 20s, 2009 Interview).

Consequently, when Helen has to take time off work because of ill health, she worries about being able to make their next month's bill payments, which only makes her health worse:

It just makes things difficult when you don't know when you're going to be working next or when you know you don't have many shifts and you're crook as a dog. It makes the sickness last longer because you're ill for longer, it lingers and you've just got to go because I panic when I can't go to work. I get into an absolute panic thinking, "Oh shit, I'm going to lose out on money, I can't pay for this bill, I can't pay that bill." And that makes my mental health go through the roof as well and then you know, if I can't go, I can't go and other times I feel like I can't go to work but I go anyway and then there are other times when I want to go to work and there aren't any shifts. So it's just very exhausting being casual. Permanent work you've got days and hours that you're going to work, just take annual leave or take sick leave. This job, you can't do that (2009 Interview).

5.2 Putting health on hold

Income uncertainty from the irregular and intermittent scheduling of work not only motivated those interviewed to come to work sick or injured, many of those interviewed explained that they would also regularly put-off looking after their health because they had more urgent needs and couldn't

afford the costs of managing their health. This was particularly true of permanent irregular workers and casual employees in the reluctant casual group, who were the workers with the most intermittent and uncertain work scheduling. These workers reported regularly forgoing health and dental care either because they couldn't afford the costs involved of going to the doctor, having surgery, or going to the dentist, or, if they could afford the costs, they were worried that work might dry up in the near future and they would need to rely on their savings to get them through a period of under- or unemployment. For example, when we first interviewed Yvonne, an aged care attendant from a single-income household, she explained that she had needed a sinus operation for quite some time. As a casual employee, she couldn't afford to have the operation, especially as it would mean taking 'about four weeks off' from work. 'I had to wait until I went permanent part time,' she explained, which she had recently been promoted to. A year later, Yvonne still hadn't had the operation because the amount of work she had been getting was so limited. However, she had recently taken up a permanent, ongoing job, inter-state and was hoping to have the operation the following year:

I know say sometime next year, I'm going to have to, like, take some sick time off because I have to have like a nasal operation on my sinuses...And I can do that now because I can get sick days and get some sort of time off. Whereas before I had to keep putting it off because I just couldn't afford to take the time off...I just haven't financially been able to do it. So I was kind of waiting and hoping that I would get a good job, and I did, and now that I have I can maybe look at doing that next year (2010 Interview).

Dental care was one of the first things that workers in insecure employment would forgo. As Angela, a single mother who worked in various permanent "irregular" jobs from catering in nursing homes to packing sheds, explained:

I have not been to a dentist in years. I haven't been feeling well, I went to see the doctor the other day, I asked him to bulk bill, now I've got the cheque here, it came back from Medicare but I still have to find another \$20 odd to fund him, which I don't have. This is pathetic, it really is, you can't budget, you really can't budget, everyone you speak to says, "Right you have to sit down and plan, you spend this much on this and this much on that." How can you plan when you don't know how much you're getting? So it does, it makes it very hard...because the next fortnight you might have nothing, the next two, the next month, you have no idea at all where you stand and I can't at the moment - being in this position, I'm just, I really can't handle it...it's making me very sick and I can't afford to get sick (2010).

Matt, who cycled in and out of casual labouring work, would avoid the dentist altogether. Instead, if a severe tooth ache developed, he would go to the nearby hospital to have his tooth pulled out as this was cheaper:

With the dentist, my mouth is full of really bad teeth. I don't bother going to pay myself for the dentist. I just wait til I'm absolutely in terrible pain. I pay me \$25, go to the hospital, and just have a tooth ripped out, rather than just have it all fixed up and all that. So, when it comes to that, it's only cross that bridge when it gets to it, because otherwise, you know, you've got more important things to spend the money on (2010 Interview).

5.3 Difficulties returning to work after injury and the costs of being sick

The fact that people in non-standard work are putting off managing their health and working sick reveals an important structural issue. Workers in stable employment who earn a regular income have the material resources necessary to invest in managing their health so as to protect themselves from falling sick or from developing an illness. Moreover, should they fall sick, workers in stable, ongoing

employment, can take time off work to rest and recuperate without having to stress about getting future work or having to worry about how they are going to afford to pay future bills. However, workers in insecure employment who experience employment uncertainty and who are dependent on the income from their employment do not have the same means to invest in managing and protecting their health, while the economic costs should they fall ill can be severe, especially given their exclusion from paid leave entitlements.

Bill's story (see case study below) highlights the precarious situation that workers in non-standard employment can find themselves in if they fall ill and are unable to work. One notable issue, from this perspective, is that very few of those who took part in the study had income protection insurance to cover themselves financially should they be unable to work through sickness or injury. Some independent contractors did have income protection insurance as they needed this to insure themselves against a work-related injury or illness since, because they were not employees, they

Case Study: What happens when insecure workers get seriously ill

Bill was a fruit-picker in his early 60s who worked for the past 40 years as a harvest labourer. Bill's family lived in QLD while Bill himself spent most of his time living in his trailer, which a grower whom he had known and worked for for many years allowed him to park on his orchard in Northern Victoria. Bill had accumulated a number of health problems—including pain in his knees, wrist, and back—from the physical nature of the work and, in the final year of the study, Bill developed throat cancer. He was living on a farm near Shepparton at the time and had to travel to Melbourne to receive treatment (chemotherapy). While the treatment itself was paid for by his health insurance, the costs of travelling to and from Melbourne to attend the treatment were not. Neither were the costs that his treatment had on his ability to work, as the chemotherapy took such a toll on Bill physically that he was unable to work. Bill was running out of money since he had had to live off his savings for most of the year.

I've had throat cancer and everything and I've only worked a few months last year and I'm just trying to get onto a pension or sickness benefit now. Yeah, I'm running out of money and just living off me funds, my bank account. It's just about dried up running from here to Melbourne, getting Peter McCallum's – the cancer joint there...it's cost me a lot on medication, staying down there, park your car, car park, all that sort of thing, it costs \$10 a night...I haven't been able to work (2011 Interview).

With Bill no longer able to work for the orchard owner where he parked his trailer, the orchard owner was far less willing to accommodate Bill. The orchard owner had cut off the supply of water to Bill's trailer. Bill was very worried about what the future held in store for him, as he had no close friends or relatives nearby and his health meant that he could no longer work as a fruit-picker. Bill was hoping to return to Queensland so that he could move in with one of his brothers, but he wasn't sure how he would be able to afford the cost of moving back:

I'd like to go home to []. I'm sort of down here by myself. I've got no friends or nothing here. I don't know anybody here so I'm just stuck out in the orchard, you know, and I don't go into town much so I'm sort of all alone out here. Yeah, it's pretty lonesome....It's not real good....I'm stuck here with this caravan and two utes and the trailer and a cherry picker. I'm stuck, I don't know what to do. It's a worry to me...I won't be able to afford to work...I don't know what I'm going to do....Look's like I've got to get out of here and, I don't know, go home, get one of my brother's to look after me or something. I don't know (2011 Interview).

were not formally covered under Work Cover. Moreover, the major clients of independent contractors often insisted that independent contractors have income protection insurance before they would hire them. However, other non-standard workers rarely could afford income protection coverage and some reported that they couldn't take out income protection insurance as they had no secure income to protect. As Susan, a factory labourer and single mother explained, 'we'd actually discussed that not so long ago: how as a casual can you get income protection. And I don't think that I can...I think it's more that I suppose when you're not working you're on Centrelink benefits; so that's your income protection... I don't have death cover, or life insurance. I did inquire about that once and I think it was like \$25 a week. But I just thought, "I need that \$25 now' (2011 Interview). Likewise, Toni and Michael (fruit-pickers) explained:

Michael: No, we can't get it because it's not, next week we might have no work...I mean, I've looked into it before and they didn't like me.

Toni:...Yeah, I often think about that, if we hurt ourselves, or if Michael did, you know, how am I going to go to work? And we've asked, we've rung up the welfare a few times, and they are just so...we've had times where we haven't bought food for a long [time] (2011 Interview).

Jenny, an accountant who had worked various short-term contracts before finally securing an ongoing position in the third year of the study, felt that there was no point taking out income protection insurance while she was only working 6 month contracts. Now that she had gained permanency, however, it was something that she had decided to take out:

I didn't look into it for a short term sort of thing – but...at the [where she now works], you can have it taken out of your superannuation if you want – and they gave me all the booklets on that – and it's not very much money at all, actually, and so I decided that I would have it, particularly as now we've bought this other house; it's good to have that income protection, we've got a loan to pay off...[Interviewer: And did you ever consider taking that out as a fixed-term worker?] Well, they never really made that clear whether you could. I possibly should've looked into that. Em, but then it would only cover me to the period, to the end of the contract...If there was a six month contract, that would cover you during that six months. But it doesn't help much when you haven't got a contract anymore (2011 Interview).

Others simply couldn't afford to take out income protection insurance. As Julia, who at the time of the final interview was working on a 9 month full-time contract at a TAFE in northern Victoria explained:

I've only just probably now got into a position where I could afford to put aside \$2 for income protection probably. So, you know, like, I know they're all very well and good. But if you don't have the money to do it, you don't have the money to do it!...I admire any casuals or any people working on those sorts of hours and those sorts of rates of pay that can afford to have many insurances (2011 Interview).

The fact that they don't have income protection insurance exposes non-standard workers to severe financial risks should they suffer a long-term illness or disability that cannot be causally attributed to their work. Moreover, when non-standard workers who have been out of work through illness or injury—whether work related or not—are ready to return to work, they can find that their history of

Case Study: Returning to Work after an Injury

Matt had incurred a number of work injuries over the course of his work as a casual labourer in various factories and farms. In the second year of the study, while working on a potato farm, he tore a ligament and fractured his tibia when he slipped and fell off the back of a truck while packing sacks of potatoes in wet weather. He was a casual at the time. The farmer initially put pressure on him not to go through Work Cover, telling him that there could be "certain ramifications" if he did:

he didn't want Work Safety getting involved because there's a lot of things on his farm that are just not safe at all. Even with the chemicals...and he had some white substance he was spraying with them to keep them preserved for long periods of time. And yeah, you'd be working you know, on a belt, inside one of his sheds sometimes just picking through them. And you'd have it spraying and you could taste it, or breathing it in, get it covered all over your pants, all over your shoes and, yeah, I don't know what it was but we weren't offered glasses or any facial, breathing protection or anything. We were just given gloves, that's it (2010 Interview).

The farmer initially offered to pay Matt's medical bills out of his own pocket, but Matt eventually put the claim through Work Cover claim once the medical bills began to mount. When Matt was interviewed again in the third year of the study, his injuries were 95% healed and he was looking to return to work. However, he was finding it next to impossible to get casual work, which he put down to his history with suffering injuries at work:

I've been trying to get back into work. And the only problem is; there's just not that much work out there. And what there is, a lot of people won't put on anyone who's been injured because [you're] too much of a liability...It's getting me into a bit of strife because I've had to go through Work Cover and all that. So the moment anyone asks you, "Have you ever made a Work Cover claim," usually your resume just gets tossed out straightaway. So it's becoming a major problem (2011 Interview).

He felt that it would have been much easier for him to return to work if he had been an ongoing employee when he got injured as his employer would then have tried to find alternative jobs for him to do. However, as a casual, his employer was under no obligation to offer him any further work while other prospective employers weren't interested in hiring somebody who had previously incurred a work injury:

Well, if I was working full-time - with all the annual leave, sick pay and all of that - and I injured myself...when I busted my thumb at [] a few years ago [where he was employed on an ongoing basis], straightaway, I was off for the day after because I was having me thumb put in cast and all that; but the day after that, I was back at work...I mean, it got boring because all I had to do was stand there every half an hour just pull one lever to open a furnace door, then close it. That's all me job was for a few hours. It was boring as all hell but they said that it's important that you're at least back in the workplace....If you injure yourself in an actual fulltime position, then the opportunity is there to come back...Where, as a casual, they can say, "Oh, you injured yourself, see you later!" They get away with it because you're a casual. They can just say, "oh, we're not putting you in because you're a casual, and we can get rid of you just for any reason."....I should've been in a fulltime position because I would've been a lot better off. I probably would've gone back to work soon after, after a couple of months...But because it was casual, the boss just said, "see you later" and I haven't heard from him since (2011 Interview).

suffering an illness or injury makes it more difficult for them to regain employment. This was something that Matt, a casual labourer in his mid 20s with two young children, was all too familiar with (see text box above).

5.4 Concealing injuries/Pressures to take on more dangerous work

Matt's experience highlights the difficulties that non-standard workers can face in returning to work after suffering an injury. But the pressure that Matt came under from his employer not to make a Work Cover claim also highlights the pressures that non-standard workers can face to conceal any work injuries or OH&S concerns for fear that speaking out or making a Work Cover claim might jeopardise future employment prospects. For example, Claire, a casual worker in her 50s who had worked in retail and as a factory labourer, explained that many of her co-workers at a food company where she had previously worked, had worked injured for fear that they would lose future shifts if they reported OH&S incidents:

'You would pick up safety things that were a problem and they would just be ignored. The level of speed that they have to work at...it was terrible for the muscles. Your muscles would be screaming, and I was quite fit back then. Your muscles would be screaming out because they had been involved for too long at a particular pace, but you did not dare and a lot of them were injured, working injured, but they would not speak up because they were scared they would lose their place. Health things, there was a cockroach that came through in a fruitcake one night and nothing was done about that. Everyone knew about it, it was an old building, it happens' (2009 Interview).

Frank, a permanent irregular stevedore, had a teenage son who worked as a labour hire employee in a nearby factory. Just before the second round interview, Frank's son had crushed his fingers in a rolling machine. He was sent home without pay and didn't put through a Work Cover claim. Frank tried to persuade his son to make a Work Cover claim but his son was reluctant to "upset the apple cart":

No, oh no he's still bandaged up, his hands, his fingers...had his fingers taken off and he can't go back, he's got to rest up for at least a week before he goes back... Lucky the thing stopped, he could have had his arm taken off. I questioned the OH&S and that. I think it might come back and bite them because I think they maybe, they think they won't get him back. And that's the way casual workers, that's the way they work...[I]n the end he didn't [make a claim] because he said, "Look I think my hand will be right in a few days Dad and I don't want to upset the apple cart." I said, "Well look you know, I believe you should do it 'cause at the end of the day, people don't do it we're no better than a third world country." Do you know what I mean? People are scared to take them on and do the right – they advertise on TV, the girl in the meat slicer on TV – they're advertising for people to do the right thing with WorkCover, WorkSafe and everything else but people are scared to do it (2010 Interview).

Interviewees reported examples of being threatened with job loss for raising OHS concerns with management. For example, in the second year of the study, Ewen left his job as a fisherman to work as an engineer on board a maintenance tugboat off the North Western coast of Australia. Just before the second interview, the tugboat's air-conditioning unit had broken. When the crew members, who were all casuals, asked management to fix the air-conditioning before they went on their next voyage, the management threatened to hire a substitute crew rather than fix the air-conditioning unit:

This trip actually, we had a problem. Our air-conditioner broke down for about 12 days. And where I'm working, I'm working in North West Australia, up in the tropics. And, em, it had

gotten to about day 12 or something like that and we got to a point where a couple of the guys were like, 'if the air-cons not fixed, you know, we're not willing to go to sea sort of thing, you know.' The company called up and said, you know, like, 'is that the case, give me a yes or no answer, otherwise we'll get someone else to replace you, you know, we'll get crew who will do it sort of thing.'...That was a bit rude after what we'd put up with. It's stinking hot up here. It's 35 degree days pretty much every day, you know. On a steel boat, it gets pretty hot. So a few of the guys were pretty offended by that (2010 Interview).

There were multiple examples, not all of which were necessarily OH&S related, where workers—and casual employees in particular—had been threatened with (or feared) job loss for speaking out or rocking the boat. In some cases, casual employees and permanent irregular workers that were desperate for work were taking on tasks that permanent employees would refuse to do because they felt they had no choice. Susan, a lone parent who worked on the production line in a soap factory, explained that 'the permanents sometimes manipulate the situation so that you get the poorer job.' She gave the example of sitting on a chair monitoring the production line machinery so that it doesn't jam up. As she went to explain, 'you're each supposed to have a turn for half an hour...because you can get motion sickness if you don't know how to look at it. And the permanents will very conveniently manipulate it so that they don't have to have a go at it. Or the casuals might swap between themselves but the permanents don't take their turn' (casual labourer, sole parent, 40s, 2011 Interview). Angela, another sole parent who had worked for four years as a seasonal labourer in a cannery, had a similar experience of being asked to do jobs that permanents would refuse to do:

Anything that the permanents don't want to do, they refuse, they don't do it and they say, "That's the reason why we've got the casuals here, that's their job, we don't have to do shit jobs like that," they have said. And we have to do it...If you say, "No", you're out of there. And everyone who's a casual, who's a seasonal temp, you know that. If you refuse work, you're out the door...So it's not a fair place at all to work, it really isn't. And they know that we're desperate for work and like you're there, your day to day, you don't know which day they're going hook up to say, "Right, you're out of here." So yeah, you behave (2009 Interview).

'Behaving,' for Angela, included not bringing any problems to management's attention. As she explained, 'if you have a problem you don't go to management, you try and handle it yourself...cause if you go to management, they put you off anyhow' (2009). For this reason, she had concealed an injury she had suffered at work:

I now have a doctor's report where I have a bulging disk as well. But see the thing too is, you don't report when you get hurt, alright, because if you report to them you've gotten yourself hurt, you're out of there, so, and because I didn't report it at the time when I got hurt, I don't have the leg to stand on now to do anything about it (2009 Interview)

Incidences of workplace bullying were another common example of things that casual workers in particular would keep quiet about for fear that making a fuss would lead to job loss. As Trish, a single mother who had worked for many years in temporary teaching roles on both a casual and fixed-term basis, explained:

I've definitely bitten my tongue on many occasions, thinking, "I just can't go there. I can't mention this or it will jeopardise any future work, so I'll just keep quiet and say nothing," which has been pretty hard to bear at times and I'm trying to think of a specific example of that. Well, at [] High School it was dreadful. There was staff there, you know that sort of personality that bully people and they bullied me because they could get away with it. Like humiliating me in front of a class full of students. There was one teacher, a PE teacher in particular, who seemed

to take great delight in humiliating me in front of students. That was an example where I wanted to go and complain but I thought if I go to the principal and say anything, I probably won't get employed. I'll be a troublemaker or thought of as a troublemaker and I couldn't afford to shut that door, so it was very tricky. That was just that one school. Awful, awful, dreadful time there. I don't think I will ever recover from the emotional trauma of that school, it was just dreadful but being a single parent I just had to grin and bear it. I'm away from there now, thank goodness (2009 Interview).

It wasn't just casuals who felt under pressure to tow the line and not make a fuss at work. Surprisingly, some fixed-term employees reported similar experiences as they came towards the end of a contract. As Katherine, who was working on a fixed-term basis in university administration, explained:

I've only got 3 months left on my contract so do I try and play nice for the next 3 months to keep a contract or do I continue to do my job? We've had many discussions based on [Jonathan] saying "Just shut up and play nice, go to work, get paid and come home again 'cause you're only on a contract." But having to actually rectify that within yourself and turn around and say "Am I comfortable going to work just to collect a pay check but not doing what I see as being...productive," yeah. You know, productive is that I have to rub some people up the wrong way but that's part of the job so that's a real catch 22 for me and I don't like to think that I'm going to play that game.

As the examples above clearly illustrate, the ease with which non-standard workers (especially casuals) can be dismissed accompanied by their need to maintain a positive impression with their employer so as to safeguard future shifts and employment contracts can motivate workers to conceal work-place injuries and OH&S concerns, as well as broader concerns (e.g. incidences of bullying and harassment) within the workplace. Similarly, many non-standard workers refuse to take time off work when they fall ill or suffer an injury; firstly because, in the case of workers whose shifts are intermittent and uncertain, they cannot afford to go without pay, while, secondly, some also worry that they will lose out on future shifts or employment opportunities if they take time off due to illness or injury and are seen as unreliable. Those that do fall ill for an extended period or suffer an injury that keeps them out of work can find returning to work difficult, while the economic costs of being out of work for extended periods can be severe, particularly as many non-standard workers don't have income protection insurance to cope with these costs.

6. Impacts of Insecure Work on Workers' Autonomy

The previous chapter examined a number of the material pathways through which the employment status differences and especially the employment uncertainty experiences associated with non-standard employment arrangements can influence workers' physical health. But, as we saw in chapters two and three, work and employment conditions influence workers' health as much via psychosocial pathways as they do via material pathways. The role that work and employment conditions play in mediating workers' positive experience of self is just as important a factor in explaining the relationship between working conditions and health as the role that work and employment conditions play in exposing workers to physical, chemical, and biological health hazards. Of particular importance is the role that work and employment conditions play in enabling workers' to experience a sense of self-efficacy and control and in enabling workers to cultivate a sense of themselves as autonomous agents capable of acting on and shaping the environment around them. This is evident in the well established links between low control over work, job insecurity, and poorer health, briefly discussed in chapter two.

As highlighted in chapter three, critics of non-standard working arrangements worry that the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard working arrangements hinder the experience of self-efficacy and control by undermining workers' exercise of autonomy, not just within the workplace but within life more generally. In particular, critics worry that these employment arrangements may undermine the quality of workers' self-experience as a result of:

- Prolonged experiences of job insecurity and periods of under- or unemployment giving rise to a sense of losing control over life;
- Income fluctuations from irregular work patterns causing financial insecurity which in turn causes workers to be anxious about their ability to meet household needs and fulfil social roles (e.g. parent);
- Uncertain work patterns and the need to be on call making it more difficult for workers to balance work and family commitments;
- Doubts over their employment future preventing non-standard workers from pursuing medium to long-term projects, such as forming long-term relationships, having children, purchasing a house, saving for retirement;
- Inadequate protection against unfair dismissal opening non-standard workers to workplace coercion and restricting their ability to defend their rights and interests; and
- Reduced professional development and training opportunities and exclusion from decision-making processes inhibiting workers' occupational mobility and career progression, with long-term consequences for workers' control over their lives.

On the basis of the interviews conducted for this study, these threats to workers' positive self-experience and psychosocial health are *all too real*.

6.1. Uncertain and Intermittent Work Scheduling

A minority of those interviewed actively valued the ‘flexibility’ of their employment contracts. For the most part, these were workers from double-income households seeking greater work/life balance, students who only want to work for a few hours each week and during semester breaks, or business owners who work occasionally in casual or contract work to supplement their income (i.e. contented casuals). For these people, working in insecure employment helped them to get what they wanted out of life. Some indifferent casuals working as fishermen similarly experienced their employment situation as contributing to their autonomy in the sense that they prized the way of life that went with their work and wouldn’t trade it for a routine, 9 to 5 job. Moreover, fishermen appeared to cope well with the irregular and intermittent nature of their work scheduling because they saw it as part of their chosen way of life and as something driven by environmental rather than economic necessities. They accepted irregular work patterns as ‘the life of a fisherman’, as Trevor, a skipper on a prawn boat explained: ‘sometimes it makes it a bit hard. You know, if you’ve got parties or something to go to, you can’t say, “I’m going to be there,” you know. Well, that’s the life of a fisherman, I suppose. *But you just get used to it*’ (2009 Interview, emphasis added). However, for the vast majority of those interviewed—reluctant casuals and fruit-pickers—the insecurity of their employment arrangement was a major source of frustration. As Alice, a permanent irregular working in aged care commented, ‘we really need to have something that says we are more than just the next five minutes of our life. And that’s not too much to ask, really, I don’t think...to know that you’re not just, the noose is there and somebody’s going to pull the trap door. And I don’t really think that anyone should have to live like that’ (2009 Interview).

Workers in the reluctant casual group frequently reported feeling stressed or anxious about their employment future. ‘You worry a lot,’ explained Tom, a building sub-contractor in East Gippsland. ‘Yeah it can make you quite miserable if there is not enough work around and you are trying to make ends meet’ (2009 Interview).

Stress is a huge factor. Like, at this meeting down at the [] Town Hall, I was talking to a guy and he was just saying that his road rage at the moment is phenomenal cause there’s that much stress with work. And it’s really coming back...things like road rage; so that’s get to be of medically detriment to the person, doesn’t it, you know. Road rage can lead to other things as well. So it’s a lot of stress working as a contractor because most people that do it aren’t business people. A lot of people, their heads don’t work like that. They’re just happy to go and do their 40 hour week, 38 hour week, and go home and get paid for it....Yeah, my stress levels are always high. You know, just thinking, “OK, I’m going to be taking a week off at the end of September”, I’m already planning now [July], structuring the finances to be able to afford that type of thing (Hugh, telecommunications sub-contractor, 30s, 2011 Interview).

Trish, a lone parent who had worked for many years in temporary teaching positions, was heading into another summer without any work at the time of the first interview (an experience that would be repeated in each year of the study):

I cry a lot yeah, I cry. Especially that now that it’s getting near summer, now I’m getting really teary at the slightest thing. Sort of having a little weep on an off all day today so knowing what I’m heading into again. Get the local papers and there’s nothing oh, there is, a chef at [] Hotel, a second chef I’m going to apply for. A chef [job], but anyway I’m going to go and see them on my way home to see if I can get that. It’s just scary, it’s really scary (2009 Interview).

A key issue for these workers was their lack of control over work scheduling. As Susan, a factory labourer and sole parent explained, ‘Sometimes I work one day a week, sometimes four days a week,

sometimes it's nearly full-time for about 3 months...You cannot predict it...It's hard to organise your days; you don't know what you're doing from one day to the next. You don't know whether you're going to work next week, kind of thing, you can't make appointments' (2011). Workers in the study who were reliant on the income from their job weren't in a position to turn down any shifts that were offered to them, firstly because they couldn't financially afford to do so; but, secondly, because they were worried about recriminations if they said no to any shifts that were offered to them.

That's something I learned very early on in the piece; you don't rock the boat. And this is why, even though the doctor's appointments were pretty important to me, I still cancelled them; I had the wife cancel them. And I've seen plenty of people come and go. You generally try not to rock the boat...I've always said, "If they want you to work, you go to work." You might have had something really important on today but...we'll use you today, I think this is fairly important to discuss this sort of thing. If they'd rung this morning, I'd have gone. I would've had to get [his wife] to say we'll postpone it or do it another day, whatever, whatever. So yeah, and holidays, yes. You really, you wouldn't want to jump up right then and say, "Oh look, we're going to Brisbane," right now at Christmas time, when you know it's one of their busier times and say, "I'm not available at the moment." (Connor, casual machinery operator, 50s, 2009 Interview).

That's your biggest fear, is how long you're going to be there, and that's why you do your best and you never refuse...You'd never, never ever would you refuse to do anything; well I never did anyhow' (Angela, lone parent, seasonal labourer in packing sheds, 2009 Interview).

By the time of the second interview, Angela was no longer coping with having to work on an irregular and uncertain basis:

the next fortnight you might have nothing, the next two, the next month, you have no idea at all where you stand and I can't at the moment - being in this position, I'm just, I really can't handle it...it's making me very sick and I can't afford to get sick (2010 Interview).

After the first interview, Angela got a job as a caterer in a retirement village. She started off as a casual but was quickly "promoted" to permanent part-time (permanent "irregular"), which she was delighted about at the time because she felt it would give her greater job security. However, after she raised concerns with her manager about some of her co-workers not following health and safety guidelines when preparing food for residents, her shifts began to be cut back to just three 6 hour shifts per fortnight. She eventually quit because she was not getting enough shifts and found that she was unable to pick up extra work anywhere else while she was still tied into working the three shifts a fortnight. 'At the moment I am again unemployed, working permanent part time, just 'cause you hear the word permanent it doesn't make you - it's now, it made me feel secure then but it's not' (2010 Interview). Most of those who were reliant on their job had to live their lives on call.

Case Study: Living on Call

Daniel, a casual worker in his 50s, worked in a fish processing factory. For 30 years, he was employed on a permanent basis before being made redundant and then being re-employed on a casual basis two years before the study. Notably, Daniel never received a severance payment when he was made redundant, despite his 30 years of service with the company.

when I finished full-time, they didn't – because they offered me work casually – they didn't give me a pay out, a redundancy pay. When I was looking for redundancy, they didn't give me a redundancy pay, which I questioned at the time. But because I didn't have any options for employment I didn't pursue it because they were still offering me casual work. And because they said they were still offering me casual work I wasn't entitled to redundancy pay, which I knew I was (2011 Interview).

Even though Daniel felt he was entitled to a redundancy payment, he didn't pursue it because he was reliant on still getting work from the factory. As he explained, 'you've got to think at the back of your mind, you don't sort of, you don't want to rub things up too much - bite the hand that feeds you sort of thing – you don't want to make waves.'

Daniels' work patterns at the fish processing factory involved being on-call, seven days a week, which made planning things in advance extremely difficult:

You're on call 7 days a week from anything from 7 in the morning to 7 or 8 at night. You can't plan a week ahead and say, "Oh yeah, next weekend we'll...or I'll do something," because you don't know if you're going to miss out on work or not. You know, you can plan to do it, but come time, come the weekend or whatever it is, well, you've got to decide, "Do I go or do I stay and work? (2009 Interview).

Daniels' uncertain work patterns meant that he had had to forgo a number of recreational and community activities because he couldn't commit to anything. For example, when he first started working in the industry he had to give up playing footy because he couldn't commit to training or matches, while more recently he had to turn down his neighbour's invitation to join the CFA because he had to be available to take whatever shifts were offered to him:

When actually when I first started at the co-op because it was part of the fishing industry – I used to play a bit of footy in my younger days – I had to give it up back then because you knew, well you didn't know what weekends you were going to be [free]...so I had to give away the footy....You can't commit to anything [Interviewer: it interferes with your social participation?] It does for sure, it does. Another example, oh a couple of years [ago] the neighbour behind my place, he's on the local CFA out there, asked, "Well, do you want to join the CFA?" And I said, "ah" - initially I thought, yeah, it'd be alright but they have regular meetings every Wednesday. I said, "listen, there's no guarantee that I'll show up because," I said, "I could be working. You know, I can work up until 7, 8 o'clock in the night, you know. I said, "I can't commit to something like that because of work because I don't know when I'll be working, simple as that, because I just don't have regular hours." Well, you become a member of CFA or something like that, comes the summer time and fires and all that sort of stuff, you go and do the right thing, help out, but you're missing out on work. See, whether you're full-time employee, your employer gives you the time off to do that sort of thing. Being a casual, you don't show up for work you don't get paid, simple as that. So it affects your social life a lot for sure. You just can't plan things, you just take things day by day (Daniel, casual fisheries worker, 50s, 2010 Interview).

Daniels' work patterns not only varied from day to day. His daily shifts were also often scattered throughout the day. For example, Daniel might work for a few hours in the morning processing

boats' catches, then knock off for a few hours before returning to work again in the evening when the next group of boats arrived. He might only work 4 or 5 hours in a day but this could be spread over 10, or even 12 hours. Indeed, when a new seafood industry award came in July 2010 stipulating minimum shift requirements this created huge problems for Daniel as it meant that he became more costly to employ. He had to sign a waiver exempting his employer from paying him the minimum shift requirements to ensure that he could continue to receive work:

[T]he middle of last year, a new seafood award came out...There was a fair bit of change with the casual labour set up...they introduced – there was going to be a minimum, so if you got called in for casual work you'd have to be paid a minimum of three hours. Now, in our industry you could be called in two or three times a day. You might only work for an hour or two hours and then knock off for three or four hours and then get called in again. And it really didn't suit the industry. So what was going to happen, there was going to be a lot of extra strain put on the permanent staff. They were told that "Oh, no, you can't call in casuals because we've got to pay them a minimum of three hours etc. etc." But I read the award. I downloaded a copy of the award myself at home and I read through it, and there was a clause there which said that if it was agreeable between the employer and the employees that particular clause did not have to apply. Along as you signed an agreement that said you were agreeable to only coming in for an hour's work or whatever, that's all you had to do (2011 Interview).

Like Daniel, Alice, a single woman in her 40s who worked on a permanent irregular basis as an aged care attendant, would also have her shifts spread throughout the whole day. 'It can take me 8 to 10 hours some days to get three hours of pay,' she explained, 'because they're spread and while I understand that the nature of the business is, you know, that clients do want things at times, you can work it a bit better than that – a bit more time management and thought to how better to use my time' (2011 Interview). Alice's shifts would also be in different locations depending on where her clients lived. She was expected to travel to clients' homes using her own car, which created additional financial and time costs. It was not simply that her shifts were highly uncertain and spread over the whole day that frustrated Alice. She was struggling to get enough shifts to survive financially.

I'm classed as a permanent casual, okay, but I still have, I have no control over the amount of hours. We have a contract and that will state that we have a maximum amount of hours that we can do, but we have no control over the minimum hours that they give us. And although we are given a roster each Friday with our weekly hours on it, what tends to happen is that if we're given four hours notice, those hours can be gone for whatever reason...And those hours aren't picked up again; we can't get them from anywhere else. So I may start out this Friday with 25 hours on my roster for next week, but I may end up with 10, 15. I may end up with 30, but more often that not, we lose hours, we don't tend to pick them up (Alice, 2009 Interview).

For example, the morning of the third interview (a Tuesday) Alice received a call saying that she was no longer needed for a job that she had been rostered on for that day. She had already lost 5 hours from her roster that week. When she and her co-workers approached her employer in the second year of the study about the insufficient and intermittent scheduling of their shifts, they were told that if they were not happy with the hours they were getting they could leave:

we're just seen as an endless commodity of, you know, I can be replaced at the drop of a hat. There'll be somebody who, you know, if I don't want the job I can go and somebody will step into my shoes. They can easily get somebody. So what use am I? (2011 Interview).

Eventually, Alice had to take on a second job because she was getting fewer and fewer shifts. Indeed, she estimated that her annual income had fallen by as much as \$6,000 over the three years of the study. It had gotten to the stage where she was at risk of losing her house if she didn't take on a second job even though, under the conditions of her contract, she was obliged to be available to work 35 hrs a week for her first employer. Fortunately, she managed to source additional work with a private client that she could do on her rostered days off and which didn't interfere with her main job. However, other permanent irregular workers who were similarly obliged to be available for work for their main employer found it more difficult to find a second job that they could easily fit around their main job. For example, in the second year of the study, Frank, a permanent irregular stevedore in his 40s, lost his second job because a new manager took over who demanded greater reliability:

I lost the pharmaceutical job I was in because they changed to a new manager and he asked me, "What days I could do?" and I said, "Ah, I don't know until 3 o'clock on any day what my allocation is." So what I had been doing with the other manager was ringing him up when I get my day off and say, "Can you use me?" whatever and he'd say, "Yeah, just come up." He says, "Well I can't work like that." So I lost that job. (2010 Interview).

John, a recently divorced stevedore in his 30s, explained that he had gotten rid of his second casual job because the stress of juggling the two jobs was 'just killing' him:

I got rid of it purely for the fact that trying to juggle this work in with other work meant, you know, trying to leave early from the other job, it was, the other job finished at 4.30...It started off part-time, but then they only wanted me every day and umm. But then you, 'cause work was dead here and I was only a supplementary [casual], so then you'd find yourself knocking off there around 3, coming straight from, I was working in [sic.], so you're driving from [sic.] to get to [sic.] to start work straight away. So I'm trying to get changed into fluoros and all that sort of stuff as you're driving, you know waiting at the set of lights, your top's off, your pants are off. And after a while mate, that was just killing me, so I quit that and just relied on this work...[I]t was a gamble I had to take, because it was either a case of I was going to lose both jobs because you know, both sides were getting peeved (2009 Interview).

The uncertainty of John's work scheduling made life very difficult for him after his divorce. He had custody of his two children every second weekend but couldn't guarantee his ex-wife that he would be able to look after their children on his designated weekends:

Mate it's umm, very frustrating for all relationships...Because it's so irregular and we work weekends, the kids, I've got a family court order where I've, I had to fight to try and get the kids every second weekend and sometimes there's no work for the whole week, and then there's work on the weekends where I've got the kids, so then I've got to try and shuffle that around as well to try and keep everyone happy, because if I turn around and ask my ex-partner, things are pretty amicable at the moment, but in the past they haven't been where she's just, "bad luck, don't work," so you know, "well I don't work, I can't pay you child support" (2009 Interview).

The dominant experience among those who were dependent on their work was a sense of powerlessness; of having absolutely no control over their work patterns and of being given fewer shifts than they wanted or needed to manage financially. 'You go into a casual job and say, "No, I don't want to work that day,"' explained Matt, a factory labourer in his mid 20s, 'and that's it, you're gone. Because there's plenty of other people who will work the same rate, the same hours, all of that...With casual, it's always just, do what you're told. If you don't, there's the door!' (2011 Interview). Those who raised questions about pay or work scheduling were simply told that if they weren't happy with their hours or pay they could go. Indeed, in some cases, people were laid off after voicing discontent.

The Costs of Speaking Out

In the final year of the study, Daniel, who was working as a casual at a fish processing factory, experienced a significant downturn in his work after the company hired two additional permanent employees and reduced the amount of shifts being given to casuals. Notably, Daniel wasn't given the opportunity to apply for the permanent positions when they were advertised, despite his more than 30 years experience with the company. Daniel was unhappy with the level of work he was getting, as he had previously been the first casual who they would offer shifts to. Management heard of Daniel's dissatisfaction with the level of work he was getting and, instead of increasing his shifts, they summarily dismissed him one afternoon:

[T]owards the end of last year they decided they wanted to put on two full-time employees, which meant cutting my hours back a bit. Anyway I said, oh I wasn't too happy about it, but I suppose, you know, I accepted it. There wasn't that much I could do about it; I wasn't offered a full-time position or whatever...And then one day, one of the directors at the [] which I've known for a long time – I've known most of the directors ever since I've been there, a fair few of them, 30 years or whatever – he approached me one day, this boat was unloading and he came up to me and said, "Oh, you're not too happy." "No", I said, "I'm not too happy with what's going on, my hours have been cut back you know etc. etc." "No, I'm not too happy about it but I suppose I've got to accept it." Anyway, apparently a few days after that he must have said something to the manager about it and the manager took offence and next thing I know, the manager of the area where I worked come out to me and said, "Oh the general manager...the manager, said he's not to offer me any more casual work." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Oh, I don't, he's just got the shifts or whatever, there's no more work for you." So I went up, immediately I went up there to front him to ask why; knocked on the door, walked in, he wouldn't answer my questions or whatever. He just said, "That's my decision."...He wouldn't elaborate anymore and I just walked out...I was working that day he told me and that was it after today there was no more work, full-stop...No notice, nothing (2011 Interview).

Daniel pursued an unfair dismissal case against the company since he had worked as a casual for more than a year and was therefore entitled to some protection against unfair dismissal even though the company initially thought that he had no claim for compensation. Indeed, the company tried to claim that they hadn't dismissed him; that they had simply stopped giving him shifts. Daniel took his case to Fair Work Australia and eventually reached an out of court settlement with the company for far less than he felt he was entitled to. However, he was worried that if his case reached court and the judge ruled against him, he would be liable for the company's legal costs, which he couldn't afford to pay:

They put an offer in of [] for unfair dismissal. And then, as I was talking to the lady lawyer [from Fair Work Australia]...She said to me, "If you're not happy with it you can go further, which will take us to the next step, where you front up in front of a magistrate."...And she said, "you can go through that process if you think you're entitled to more but," she said, "there's no guarantees that you'll get any extra." "Plus," she said, "if you strike the wrong magistrate, he could go against you. If he goes with them, you've got to pay all their costs." And of course, he's engaging a Collins St solicitor and all this because it's not his money, it's the [] money...and that's a lot of money if I don't win it. I knew I would've been entitled to more but then I mentioned about these other things that weren't part of the redundancy when I finished full-time. I said, "I've still got that to put in for. And I know I've been under-paid." He's been underpaying not only me but the rest of the casuals...And I said, "I've still got that to put in for." "Oh, no, no, no." She said, "If you go for, whatever figure you come up with, that's got to include all that...because you have to sign a release – you're not allowed to apply for any other compensation." Anyway, that swung me a bit...

She gave me a couple of hours to think about it...She said she was going to ring me back about 4 o'clock and she did. In the meantime, I went through all me figures...So I worked out what I thought they owed me regarding the three years prior, with the lack of redundancy payment, and the underpayment of casual rates...anyway, I worked it out to be about – just what they owed me – I worked out to be about [twice the initial offer from the company]...So, when she rang me back I said,

"Listen, this is what I reckon they owe because of this, because of this."...Anyway, the final figure was about [2/3 of what Daniel felt he was owed]. She said, "They're going to offer you that. That's it, no more. Otherwise we're going to have to go to the next step."...So I accepted that (2011 Interview).

Like Daniel, Michael, a fruit-picker who switched to driving trucks for a grower in the second year of the study, suddenly found himself out of work after he went to his employer to seek a higher rate of pay once he found out from other truck drivers that he was being grossly underpaid. Michael was only being paid \$20 per hour to drive trucks—occasionally interstate—and in some cases he would even be paid by the load rather than the hour.

Michael: the farm I was working for last year, they offered me a job as the - they indicated that they were looking for a truck driver. And I had a semi-truck license, and they said they'd pay for me to get a B double license, and yeah, so I went and did that. I've been driving the B double for them for the last year. I did the grapes - did the grapes first, and then went on and I've been driving for these oranges all this year, and then, yeah, came around and found out I was being underpaid severely, talking to other truck drivers, and finding out what conditions other people were getting, and went to the union about it. I've been underpaid something like \$60,000 in one year...I was - I did some - - nights 30 hours - 30 hours in a row, then I'd come home and have five hours off, and then I'd go to another 20... So if I didn't have a ten-hour break, apparently it's all double time.

Toni [Michael's wife]: But it was really, really dangerous. And, what do you do? You couldn't say, no, because - I'd have no job, because it was the same place. I'd have no job - I was allowed to pick by myself only because Michael was the truck driver (2010 Interview)

Michael: ...sometimes I only wanted to do a couple of hours of overtime, but I'll do 20, you know? What's "as much as you want"? I didn't want to do it.

Toni: If Michael said, no - - -

Michael: I would have had no job.

Toni: They would have sacked him, and then I would have been gone, too (2010 Interview).

Michael consulted with his union and worked out that over the course of ten months he had been underpaid about \$56,000 because he was being asked to work such long hours. As soon as his union contacted his employer about the issue, the truck was taken away from him and he was out of work. Moreover, his wife Toni, who picked fruit for the same grower, also found herself without a job:

We're on the bones of our arse at the moment. I tried to borrow some money from the bank the other day to get us through Christmas, and because I've got no job, they just said, "Oh, we can't help you." So I've been cut off badly, really (2010 Interview).

The experience of powerlessness was not limited to casual employees. Even a number of the independent contractors felt that they had little control over their work. For example, Hugh worked as a telecommunications sub-contractor for a company that looked after Telstra's line maintenance. Each evening he would be sent his jobs for the next day, and the level of work available each day could vary dramatically. The company he contracted for took little interest in whether or not Hugh was getting enough work each day:

They just give you whatever they want. You have no control. You can't ring up and say, "Look I'm done for the day, can you push more through to me." That's not how it works. You get

emailed the work, your work for the day the night before. You go through, sort out what you're got to do, where you're got to go. That's what I do anyway and go and do it the next day. At the moment they're pushing through about 20 to 21 jobs, 21 jobs maximum a day to me at the moment. Normally I could probably do about 30 to 40 in a day....Some days I might get one job and that's not even worth bloody going out to do and then other days I'll get 21 and drop down to 14. The next day might be five and then up to 21 again and so you can't really plan anything' (2009 Interview).

Some independent contractors in the reluctant casual group were in a position where they could turn down work or ask for time off. However, they had only reached this position because their skills were in high demand and they had already well established working relationships with their clients. As Karen, an insurance claims investigator explained:

I feel uncomfortable doing it [turning down work] but I've got to the reality where I have to do it because I haven't got enough time to do it, nup. [Interviewer: But you wouldn't be worried about what the implications of turning down work might be? Would they still offer you more work if you turned down a project?] Yes. And I think all my companies have. I think the first time where you do turn down work it is, and if you've never turned down work from that particular company, yeah, it's always a bit of a test but they always come back, because as I said before, there's not that many investigators in the particular area that I do or in this region (2009 Interview).

However, independent contractors who were dependent on a single client for most of their work and who worked in an area where there was no shortage of similarly skilled workers were in a far weaker position to say no. As Tom, a carpenter in his 30s who sub-contracted for a multinational construction firm explained when asked whether, as an independent contractor, he could dictate his working hours:

At the end of the day, you are your own boss; if you want to go home, you are going home, but there is no guarantee he is going to tell you to come back the next day sort of thing' (2009 Interview).

Somewhat surprisingly, fixed-term employees were not immune from the effects of employment uncertainty experiences even though their work patterns were generally more regular and less uncertain than those of insecure workers. The issue for fixed-term employees, however, was the uncertainty surrounding what would happen at the end of their employment contract rather than constantly changing or uncertain work schedules. As Maria, a young researcher who was employed on a fixed-term basis on various research grants explained,

The end of last year was the end of a contract, I think, and I had, there was no research project at the end of last year. So I had no idea what I was doing, and I actually did apply for a scholarship [to do a PhD] then 'cause I didn't know if I'd have work. And I did get the scholarship but I ended up turning it down because we did, we got some research projects that gave me this 12 months, 2009 employment. And I remember before that came in, yeah it was really stressful. You're spending all this time trying to put a scholarship application together and worrying about where you're going to live next year and what you're going to do for work. Should I be, you know, looking for jobs as well and...Yeah, just I guess, like there've been periods throughout the work when it sort of comes down to the end of a contract and you feel quite nervous and anxious and you, you can't see, like beyond the next six months of okay I've got this to do and you just kind of, you sort of don't know where to go or what to do and you kind of feel in limbo (2009 Interview).

In some cases, the uncertainty of whether their contract would be renewed affected the way fixed-term employees worked. For example, Tracey, a secondary school teacher in East Gippsland, found

the experience of working only on short-term contracts fraught with anxiety because of the need to maintain a positive impression with staff and management at the school in order to secure a future contract: 'you suddenly think well, you start looking at yourself and wondering should you have said that to so-and-so, and anxieties flow to the surface and you're suddenly watching every move you make and things like that.' The anxieties would even spill over into the classroom. As she went on to explain,

I suppose you know where I probably would do it differently would be in the classroom when the kids...you think you might not push the kids so hard to get them to work because if they go and make complaints to [their] mum that they're getting picked on or something, that's probably where I would've stopped doing things; I would've, if I was ongoing, you wouldn't worry about it (2009 Interview).

6.2 Taking Time Off

One of the dominant themes that emerged during the interviews was the difficulty that non-standard workers faced in taking time off from work. Those who had other sources of income or who had a partner with an ongoing, fulltime job were regularly able to take time off, as were fishermen, who could take time off between voyages particularly as they were confident of being able to return to work again. Moreover, some reluctant casuals who had a supportive boss were similarly able to plan time off, particularly if they had been in their role for a number of years. For example, Patrick, a casual construction labourer who had been in his job for two years, explained that he now felt confident enough to ask for time off: 'I just ring them and say, "Listen, I've got such and such to do tomorrow," and because I'm 2 years into it, they'll just say, "Yeah, no worries"' (2009 Interview). By contrast, Ewen, who had just taken up a casual job working onboard a maintenance tugboat before the second interview, felt that he would have to be prepared to lose his job if he were to ask for time off:

Ah, at this stage it'd have to be something worth being prepared to lose my job over, yeah. You know. That's the way I'd have to look at it...You know, they could get someone to replace me. And I haven't been with the company long enough to sort of say too much (2010 Interview).

Similarly, when Patrick first started out in his job as a casual construction worker he wouldn't dream of asking for time off either. 'I just needed to show that I was there to work,' as he explained: 'We've had to have the grandparents come in and look after the kids because I wouldn't have a day off for a fucking funeral' (2009 Interview).

Unless they worked regular hours and had been in their job for a number of years, workers who were reliant on their job were rarely in a position to take any length of time off. Some were afraid to take time off in case it jeopardised getting future work or, if there was a possibility of shifts becoming available during a planned holiday, they felt they couldn't afford to knock back the work. Julia, for example, missed out on going on a family holiday over Christmas during the second year of the study because she was told that there might be casual work available in one of the halls of residence at the TAFE where she worked, and she didn't feel in a financially secure enough position to turn down any work that might be offered:

'I would've liked to have gone for a holiday...Well, usually we only go camping anyway, so it's not that it's anything more expensive than staying at home. So it's not the price. It's just that I wasn't able to go because I couldn't afford to knock back work if it was coming. So that's been

my main stress all year is not being able to take holidays and not being able to knock things back' (2010 Interview).

Others simply couldn't afford to take any time off because they were not getting enough shifts in the first place to go without work while it was available. For example, in the final interview, Hugh commented that he was planning to have a vasectomy. His urologist urged him to take a week off work to recover from the operation, but Hugh wanted to have the operation on a Friday so that he could recover over the weekend and come back to work the following Monday:

I've just been to the urologist today. I'm going to go and get the vasectomy done. And I said, "ah, can you do it on a Friday." He goes, "OK." So then I can just recover over the weekend and start back work on the Monday. And he said, "well, I'd like you to take a week off." And I said, "nah, I can't do it. Won't be able to take a week off." So I said, "can you do it on a Friday." And what I'll do is I'll go out and do Friday's work on Thursday night beforehand – go to hospital on Friday and have the weekend to recover. [Interviewer: So what would happen if you took that week off?] Ah, it'd make a huge dent in the income...I can't afford it financially to take off a week (Telecommunications subcontractor, 2011 Interview).

Hugh hadn't been able to take an extended break for years:

I'm going to be taking a week off at the end of September, going to go to Canberra. And we're going to take the three days off in between Christmas and New Year. That'll be the holidays for this year...Last year it was the same, I only took 8 days whereas four or five years before that I think I took two weeks off total (2011 Interview).

Karen, an insurance claims investigator who sub-contracted for large investigations firms, similarly couldn't afford to take much time off because it would mean going without pay:

No [I don't take many holidays]. One it's just too, well I haven't been financially able to do it...The year before I took two holidays, two weeks, so it was two weeks, yeah. And I wouldn't say that when that drop happened in earlier this year, I wouldn't have called that a holiday 'cause I was actually anxious...I was at home and looking for work because I'd rung up all of the hire companies that I knew. Suppose I like to keep busy anyway, so it wasn't a holiday....[Interviewer: You couldn't go on a two-week holiday?] Nah. I don't know how I'd do that, 'cause then that's two weeks without working, see I just can't contemplate it. Even if actually went somewhere and it actually didn't cost me anything, I'm actually still not then earning the income...for the accounts. So I'd have to work my guts out for a month or something, working 80 hours a week or something like that, something ridiculous to actually do that (2009 Interview).

Even a number of permanent irregular employees—who receive holiday pay on a pro rata basis—were unable to take any significant break from their work because the amount of shifts they were getting was so minimal. Alice, for example, hadn't seen her mum for seven years because she couldn't financially afford to make the trip to Tasmania. She explained during the first interview that she had been planning to visit her mum for some time. However, by the time of the final interview, she still hadn't been able to do so. Instead, she was planning to use the little holiday leave she had working a second job so that she could meet her mortgage repayments:

I'm going to take my holidays in November/December and I won't have enough money to be able to fund my four weeks of holidays and pay my mortgage and the other bills that I've got. So what it means is that I'll have to take my holidays from [] but still work at []. Ill have to work at [] during my holidays.... [Interviewer: And you still haven't had a chance to go to Tasmania to go and visit your mum?] No, no. I tried to get her to come over her because at least, I thought, well if she comes over here I can work while she's here and make enough money to pay the bills and

everything else. And that'll be the best pay to do it. But she's, you know, she's 78; she can't come, she's unwell. And I haven't seen her for seven years (Alice, single income household/aged care worker, 2011 Interview).

Fixed-term employees were in a better position than most other non-standard workers in that their work patterns were more regular and they also were entitled to paid holiday leave. Nonetheless, those who worked on short-term contracts still reported difficulties taking time off which stemmed from the short term nature of their employment contracts. As Sarah, a librarian who worked a series of 3 to 6 month contracts over the course of the study explained, 'Not really sort of knowing where you are makes it hard to plan anything.' Sarah was the primary income earner in her household, since her husband could no longer work as a result of a work injury he suffered. Before the second round interview, her husband had been pushing her to book a holiday to New Zealand but Sarah was reluctant to do so as her existing contract was about to expire and, although she had been promised an extension, she had not received any formal offer of extension. 'I couldn't book,' she explained, 'because I don't know what I'm doing' (2010 Interview). Jenny, an accountant who worked full-time for a third level institute had similarly wanted to take a holiday to New Zealand but decided against it after only receiving a 4-month contract extension:

[T]he last couple of months have been rather stressful and uncertain because it's, you know, you can't plan anything...we were thinking of going to New Zealand for a couple of weeks next year, but I'm definitely not planning that now...One, it's only a short-term contract but April I don't know where I'll be so I can't plan that. Financially, I wouldn't want to plan that either because I don't know what the money is going to, you know, when I'll be working, for how long and that sort of thing. So that's probably a minor thing I guess because we have just had a good holiday in the UK and I can put that one off, but there's more long term things, not knowing what you're doing rather than holidays (2009 Interview)

6.3 Financial Impacts of Insecure Work

Employment uncertainty and the irregular scheduling of work can further hinder workers' control over their lives by affecting their financial security. For example, as Facey and Eakin argue, 'unpredictable earnings might mean constant anxiety about meeting financial obligations' and 'undermine a worker's ability to fulfil social roles (for example, as provider), which may have negative personal and social effects' (2010: 337). While workers in the contented casual group and fishermen in the study were all reasonably well-off financially, other workers in the study—especially single income householders in the reluctant casual group—were struggling to get by and many were building up mounting debts from periods of under- or unemployment. For example, those in seasonal work, such as fruit-pickers and casual or sessional teachers, would build up debt during the months when they were out of work only to spend the remainder of the year taking whatever work they could get to pay back their debts:

when the holidays come, it's just panic because you can't pay the bills...I end up getting incredibly broke, very depressed, borrow money left right and centre to pay the mortgage, to pay the power, buy food and then spend first term paying it all back. [Interview: So taking out a line of credit in the summer to get you by?] Exactly, that's what you do and that's what I've been doing for 25 years, so what can you do, I suppose (Trish, lone parent, TAFE teacher, 50s, 2009 Interview).

Michael: Well we've got no work now for 2 weeks. So we're 2 weeks with no money at Christmas and we haven't made a lot of money in the last month, 2 months we've been picking these Valencia's? [Toni: For the last 2 years we've been living over Christmas..... on credit] So

that's credit to the max now...We're right on the border now, right on the border (Fruit pickers, 40s, 2009 Interview).

Mounting credit card debts from having to find money to pay bills during periods of under-employment was something that many of those reliant on the income from their insecure work experienced. For example, Louisa (who spent many years picking fruit with her husband before retraining as an aged care attendant) explained that 'when you work at the farm, you never know how much money you're going to have in a week,' which makes budgeting and keeping on top of bills extremely difficult:

We can't plan anything. We leave everything like where it is.. Because at the beginning I used to plan and I can't do it. So I put myself in trouble because I can't do it. I can't keep the plan to pay because the next week, this week maybe we get \$600 this week and yes okay we can pay but next week is rain two days or three days. Well yeah, \$200, and then we need to pay rent and some food for the kids, nothing else we can pay (2009 Interview).

The financial insecurity they were experiencing was causing many in the study to postpone spending money on items such as servicing the car or, as we have already seen, dental and medical treatment:

I'd never get a new car but sometimes when the car seems to be going all right we'll make sure we keep it going until the car starts not sounding too good, do you know what I mean? Why - if it ain't broke don't fix it, kind of thing you know what I mean? But yeah, that's just the way we operate mate, just because the money's not that good, do you know what I mean? You've got to stretch it out and we stretch the cars out to what they're telling us what they can cope with so (Adam, permanent irregular stevedore, 2010 Interview).

It's hard, it's the same as any, any sort of work where you're living week to week you don't know how much – a bit different if you get the same amount every week you can make a budget but it's very hard to budget when you don't know if you're not going to get work next week then how do you budget for that. You've got to [put things off] – yeah...servicing the car is a big one...Yeah until I get a really good week. Yeah, I don't know really, yeah sort of things like that. All the bigger things you sort of, you got to pay like rego and stuff like that, it all goes on credit and you hope you have a real big week in the next four weeks so you can pay it off (Brian, permanent irregular stevedore, 2010 Interview).

Even fixed-term employees in the reluctant casual group were postponing plans and ambitions they had while their employment future was uncertain. For example, Jenny, an accountant who worked on a fixed-term basis for the first two years of the study, had been hoping to be able to buy a property closer to Ballarat. She and her husband lived in a rural location and wanted to move closer to the town so that they could access services and amenities more easily when they got older. For the first two years of the study, Jenny wasn't confident enough about her future employment prospects to take out a mortgage to purchase the property, something that she managed to do in the final year of the study having finally secured ongoing employment:

now I've been able to make that commitment and buy the house for the future plan and get ours ready to sell and get a bank loan and all that. There's no way you can do that on a contract position...banks don't really like –especially large amounts for housing loans – to lend money when you're on contract position' (2011 Interview).

6.3.1 Borrowing money to purchase a home

Jenny's experience illustrates the consequences that working in insecure employment can have for workers' long-term control over life. While Jenny was fortunate enough to secure an ongoing position which then enabled her and her husband to purchase a property closer to town, workers'

who remain in insecure employment in the long-term may struggle to afford their own home because of problems securing a bank loan. Notably, a 2008 US study of the effect of temporary employment on asset accumulation found that 'temporary employment reduces both the probability of homeownership and the value of the home for those who are owners' (McGrath & Keister, 2008, p. 216). The authors put this down to a number of factors. Firstly, '[m]ortgage lenders tend to be unwilling to lend to people with sporadic employment histories, who have little savings for a down payment' (McGrath & Keister, 2008, p. 202). But, as they also point out, workers in temporary forms of employment do not have well-defined career paths. The jobs that non-standard and temporary workers are employed in are often jobs where the opportunities for workers to improve their skills and to undertake professional development and career training are more limited (we discuss the implications of non-standard employment for workers' career progression in sec 6.4 below). Hence, in the long-term, workers in temporary employment are disadvantaged in terms of their occupational mobility, which in turn hinders their home ownership and asset accumulation more generally quite apart from the difficulties that they already face in acquiring a home as a result of their more limited job tenure.

The concerns McGrath and Keister highlight with respect to the effects of temporary employment on home ownership and asset accumulation in the US are supported to an extent by the experiences of workers who took part in this study. Many casuals and permanent irregular workers who were the primary income earner in their household were reluctant to borrow money or to take out a mortgage because they didn't feel that banks would lend them money. 'When you're hired as a seasonal what have you it's, there's no security, you can't do anything, you can't go in for a loan, you're a nobody,' explained Angela, a lone parent. 'I haven't bothered to go and get loans,' she went on to explain. 'If you stuck your head out the door and had a look at the car that I'm driving, you'd have a laugh. I don't even think about going to get loans and things like that, 'cause you won't, unless you've got a permanent job, you know, so' (2009 Interview). Yvonne, a permanent irregular aged care worker, likewise saw little point in going for a loan while she was a casual employee and put off buying a house until she went permanent part-time. 'I would have liked to have gone permanent part time earlier,' as she explained, 'because it would have been nice to be able to go for a loan. It's so hard going for a loan for anything, let alone a house, when you're casual. They won't look at you' (2009 Interview).

That said, some non-standard workers did manage to secure a mortgage. However, these workers typically had been in jobs that provided a reasonably steady income for at least two to three years prior to going for a loan. Hence they were able to present lenders with a history of earnings and demonstrate their ability to service a loan. For example, Darren, a deckhand in his 20s who was recently engaged, had had no problems taking out a mortgage because he had steady jobs for the previous five years. Had he spent those five years moving between different temporary jobs, he suspected that he would not have been able to borrow money so easily:

It was easy at the time because I'd been on another boat, I'd been there for 3 years or 2 and a half years...I had two fairly solid group statements from the previous years, and because that boat had a set routine were you do two trips on, one trip off, I basically had a set wage...But if I had of been, like there's a lot of deckhands that skip around to different boats, they'll only be there for a few months here and there you know. Whether they get bored or there's just, whatever happens? They're the one's that'll have trouble 'cause...[Interviewer: they've got no record?] That's right, yeah. If you go for a loan even with a land job, you've got to be there for 6

to 8 months or something like that...So when I went for the house I was lucky because I had been on the other boat for more than 2 years and I had the two group certificates, which were fairly identical. It might have been a bit different if those group certificates were very different. You know, we might have had a good year one year and then a bad year the next year and they might say well your income's declining, you know, you can't afford the house, so I was quite lucky with the timing in that I suppose (2009 Interview).

6.3.2. Superannuation

Another key area of concern for non-standard workers' long term autonomy and control over their lives is superannuation. While the issue of superannuation has not received as much attention in the literature as other aspects of non-standard working arrangements, it is critical to understanding the long-term consequences of growth in non-standard and temporary forms of work in Australia for workers' control over their lives, particularly in old age. This is because Australia has shifted the burden of welfare provision in old age onto workers via the introduction of mandatory superannuation contributions. The problem, within the context of recent shifts in the social organisation of work, is that the superannuation scheme is largely modelled on the standard employment relationship. Workers' ability to accumulate sufficient superannuation to provide for their retirement depends on remaining in regular, full-time employment. 'Generating an adequate retirement income,' as O'Brien and Burgess point out, 'is premised on having sufficient earnings in order to make sufficient contribution to a super fund and having continuity of earnings'. These conditions, as O'Brien and Burgess, rightly point out, simply 'do not apply to large components of the Australian workforce' (O'Brien & Burgess, 2004, pp. 179–80).

Workers in non-standard or insecure employment—the majority of whom are women—are particularly disadvantaged when it comes to accumulating superannuation and planning for their retirement. Firstly, the intermittent nature of much insecure work makes it difficult for insecure workers to accumulate superannuation. As O'Brien and Burgess rightly argue, 'it is difficult to sustain an ongoing accumulation of contributions if periods of employment are interspersed with periods of unemployment or being outside of the labour force' (O'Brien & Burgess, 2004, p. 181). Related to this is the fact that many insecure workers have variably weekly earnings, while those working part-time hours may not receive enough shifts in a given pay period to trigger mandatory employer contributions. Notably, in an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of employment arrangements and superannuation contributions carried out between April and July 2007, more than 8 percent of casual employees were not receiving or making any superannuation contributions compared to only 1.8 percent of employees receiving paid leave entitlements (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007b, p. 67). A further issue for casual employees is that they are often prevented from utilising tax-efficient mechanisms, such as salary sacrificing, for making additional superannuation contributions (this is less of an issue for permanent irregular workers and fixed-term employees who can avail of salary sacrificing). For example, Sharon, a sessional tutor in a third level institution had wanted to use some of her pre-tax salary to make additional superannuation contributions, particularly as she had had little previous opportunity to accumulate super as a consequence of only working part-time. However, *because she was a casual*, the institution where she worked would not let her salary-sacrifice her additional superannuation contributions:

I get paid superannuation every once in awhile if I go over a certain threshold but not every time. And I wanted to salary sacrifice - because my super, I've got hardly any super being a woman who's been in casual work...and part time work for the past eight years, nearly nine years. So, I actually, did try to ask if I could salary sacrifice super but they said, "No, you can't

because you're casual, we can't put any extra contribution and you can't put in any extra contribution because you're only casual because your pay is so variable." (Sharon, casual tutor, 2010 Interview).

The obstacles they faced in accumulating superannuation was something that frustrated many of those who took part in the study:

[T]his really annoys me, really annoys me about casual work, that that superannuation, 9%, was a trade-off for productivity gains in the 90s. It wasn't something that was ever given out of the goodness of anybody's heart. It was a – pay rises were forfeited to get that superannuation pay out; and if you earn less than \$400 dollars a month, you don't get that. And it's like saying – it's a slap in the face to people; "Ah, because you're not important enough, we're going to give you a 10% pay cut effectively," because you don't get your 9% superannuation. And I think that's an absolute – that's theft, it's like institutionalised theft. And that makes me very angry. But that being said, when I do earn more than – when I have earned more than \$400 dollars a month, I end up with a piddly little amount, in this nominated super fund, or that was a nominated to super fund. And then I've got to run around and get all the paper work, mull it all over, and you lose administration costs. And you've got to really keep your eye out for the automatic insurance deductions, and all this sort of stuff, and get onto it really (Sandra, self-employed kiniseologists and ex-casual, 2010 Interview).

As Sandra's comment highlights, insecure workers' superannuation contributions can often be spread across multiple funds as a consequence of frequent job changes. As a consequence, what little super they have is consumed in administration fees while, for many, it is a struggle just to keep track of where their super is. As Matt, a casual factory labourer who had cycled in and out of jobs for the past five years explained:

most of my super accounts – I've got so many of them and, yeah, I can't figure out; I don't even know who they all are. You know, they've gone to old addresses and that. So I'm not that phased about it. There probably wasn't much in there anyway because, you know, you work for three to six months here and there at all these different jobs – doesn't put much super in. You might have a hundred dollars in each account' (2011 Interview)

Some casuals consciously tried to manage their superannuation by rolling over their different accounts into a single fund and by indicating to their employer where they would like their super to be paid. However, in a number of cases, employers appeared to take little heed of workers' superannuation preferences.

You give them your super number and they go "Oh no we deal with this crowd," "But I thought you're supposed to use..." and they say "Nah." They'll put it in their one so then you might only do a week's work there and they've put it in this super company that you haven't had before, by the time you get 'round to trying to roll it over it's all gone [laughs]....I've got six different super, I've rolled a few of them over and then we tried rolling some over but the companies themselves send you this great big list of stuff. They want police certified bloody copies of this and they want that and it's so much paperwork you've gotta go into town and find somebody, a pharmacist or somebody that knows you or a policeman or whatever to get these certified copies to send off to change my money into my other account. Isn't your ID enough? I should be able to ring up and say "Oh yeah I've got this one here and I'm transferring it over to there." (Michael, fruit-picker, 40s, 2009 Interview).

Notably, the workers least likely to be receiving or making any superannuation contributions were independent contractors. Independent contractors differ from casual employees, fixed-term employees, and permanent irregular employees in that, as self-employed workers, they are responsible for making their own superannuation contributions. Their superannuation contributions

are supposed to be factored into the prices they charge their clients. However, in reality, only two out of the twelve independent contractors that were interviewed made regular superannuation contributions. Some independent contractors in the contented casual group—mainly agricultural contractors who had an additional farming business of their own—preferred to invest in land or property instead of making superannuation contributions. Other contractors who were reliant on the income from their contracting work simply couldn't afford to put aside money for their retirement:

I don't pay myself any super [Interview: And is that because you can't afford to?] Yeah basically. Like, you say to them, "look, we've got all these bills coming in and we can't even afford to pay ourselves super and." And they said, "ah, it's allocated in your thing." He said, "9 percent of what you're paid should be going in the super." And I said, "well, you tell me where all these percentages should be. They just don't add up."...They want you to take 9 percent out of what they give you, and you do the sums, you just can't afford it. It doesn't work that way. (Hugh, telecommunications sub-contractor, 30s, 2011 Interview).

I'm in the long service leave but I don't contribute, because I can't physically afford it. Same as my superannuation. I cannot afford it [Interviewer: So you're not paying yourself super at the moment?] No. Physically, I can't afford it. The government doesn't allow owner businesses, the way tax is and everything else, it's very hard to run your own business. So I just get an income and hopefully, when I buy land and that, that's my future (Anthony, plasterer, 40s, 2010 Interview).

The obstacles that non-standard workers face with regard to the accumulation of superannuation have the potential to expose these workers to considerable financial hardship when they are beyond working age, especially as most insecure workers are employed in relatively low-paid jobs. The disadvantages that they faced in this regard compared to workers in permanent, ongoing employment, was something that those interviewed were acutely aware of. For example, Trish, who had taught on a casual or fixed-term basis for most of her working life, was well aware that she had been penalised compared to her peers who had secured stable, ongoing employment:

Well I look at friends that I went through teacher's college with, they're going to retire on half a million dollars. I think I've got \$40,000. Which is still great, it's nothing to scoff at - \$40,000 is still good. But, you know, when I think, "gees, if I'd been stuck in the one job and worked permanently all those years, like my friends have, you'd be [nicely set up] (2011 Interview).

There is thus a very real danger that the proliferation of non-standard work arrangements may exacerbate existing socio-economic inequalities as income gaps widen in retirement as a consequence of non-standard workers' reduced savings opportunities. Women stand to be particularly adversely affected by these changes, not only because they are over represented in non-standard forms of work but also because they are more likely to work in part-time employment and to leave the labour force to care for children or relatives (O'Brien & Burgess, 2004, p. 183). The gendered dimension of superannuation was something that a number of women in casual and temporary work drew attention to:

I think the fact that there's no super is interesting 'cause I've been interested in that from a woman's perspective, how caring work isn't valued by capitalist society and so we don't get any super for looking after the kids. And so I'm entirely dependent on that my husband continues to be a nice guy,...I mean, I guess I would have legal rights to super. But I'm entirely aware that for the past seven years I've got hardly any super and that is something that, you know [Interviewer: Is that a big worry for you?] Oh not really...but I guess I'm aware of it just teaching about feminism to students who think that there's no women's inequality. So I was lecturing around super and really realised, wow, you know people are quite reliant on the gender

imbalance and on good will. But I mean, I'm not lying awake worrying about, I'm just aware of it and thinking that it could, you know. It's an issue for people in general in casual positions. (Sharon, sessional tutor, 40s, 2009 Interview).

I mean, I could support myself for about a month when I retire...I just accept the fact that I'm going to be working until I die. Honestly, you're supposed to have hundreds of thousands; I've got in the ones of thousands. Honestly, I couldn't support myself for a year...Don't get me started on super. In my opinion, superannuation was always going to be very, very unfair. I've never been for it. I'm a labour voter, but I've never been for it because, for a start, absolutely there was going to be men with a certain amount of money, and women with a certain amount of money. And the women were going to have virtually no money unless they were cut in because the men were earning so much that they wanted to divide their super...They [women] were definitely always more casuals; they were definitely always going to take more time off, and, that super was probably not going to - only in some cases was that super going to keep on going (Julia, sessional TAFE teacher/integration age, 50s, 2011 Interview).

6.4. Career Progression and Occupational Mobility

The consequences of intermittent and irregular work scheduling for non-standard workers' ability to purchase property and accumulate superannuation savings is just one example of how non-standard employment can affect workers' autonomy and control over their life in the long-run. But another aspect of non-standard employment with long-term consequences for workers' autonomy is the exclusion of non-standard workers from employer-provided skills training and professional development. As Aronsson, Gustafsson and Dallner point out, access to skills training and professional development are important in enabling workers to take control over their careers as these resources 'increases the employability of the individual' and determine 'whether the individual is heading towards greater control over his/her work-life situation and less uncertainty within the employing organisation and on the labour market' (Aronsson et al., 2002, p. 172). However, studies indicate that non-standard workers in general and casual employees in particular have fewer opportunities to participate in skills training and professional development than permanent, ongoing employees. For example, according to an Australian study on casual employment and skills training carried out in 2000, while almost 70 percent of permanent employees had undergone some form of professional development in the previous twelve months to the study, only 50 percent of casual employees had participated in professional development during this period (Watson et al. 2003 cited in Economic Development Committee, 2005, p.123). A more recent study suggests that the gap in employer-provided training is widening, both in terms of the amount of training received as well as the quality of content (Richardson & Liu, 2006, pp. 27–8).

One explanation for the low incidence of participation in professional development among casual workers is the reluctance of employers to invest in training workers that may not be there in the long run. As Adam, a stevedore in his 20s explained, 'they'll train all the permanents and PGEs [permanent part-time workers] first and then, if there's room or so, they'll train the casuals. But most of the time it's just the PGEs, permanents.' Adam recognised that missing out on training opportunities - particularly the chance to acquire licences - could ultimately limit his work prospects: 'when they need a, just say like crane drivers or something like that, and you don't have a ticket, then you can't work' (2009 Interview). Jenny, an accountant in her 40s, found her opportunities to undertake professional development much improved after securing a permanent role in the final year of the study:

They tend to - well they definitely do - value you a lot more, include you in decision making and, you know, I really like the job a lot whereas the hospital didn't give you any of those indications at all...I think a lot of it was because it was a contract job and they thought, "oh well, she's only here for a little while, we won't invest that time and that sort of thing in her." ...I didn't realise at first, but they did have one good training thing down in - oh, it was off site - for all the accountants. It was sort of a conference thing I suppose. And I wasn't invited to go to that. Neither was [sic], one other lady at the business...But their excuse was "Oh, we've got to have three accountants in, you know, on site, in case the managers want them or anything like that." But I think that that was just an excuse because there'd been, well there was another conference at another time and there wasn't three of us on site. And the other one that was there, she didn't want to go to this thing anyway. She was quite happy to stay back. So really, I definitely think it was an excuse. [Interviewer: So you think now that, as an ongoing employee, you'd have better opportunities to build up your skills and training?] Yes, they've already sent me on a couple of things (2011 Interview).

Like Jenny, many of those interviewed felt that they would have far greater opportunities to undertake professional development were they permanent employees rather than non-standard workers:

I'm pretty sure that, I'm a hundred percent sure that as a casual nurse I couldn't claim professional development leave, I don't have that. Permanent staff do, so they could get paid for that 8 hours - for attending a seminar in Melbourne, plus claim on their income tax: the trip down, the payment for the course and they could even, if they were really nice to their manager maybe, ask the manager to approve payment for the course itself because the employer would think, "Oh well, I'm going to keep you for two more years, you can be an in-house trainer for this if I pay for this kind of thing." So there's that, there's that sort of relationship and understanding and also, under contractual agreements, if I pay for this training you better stick around to let me use it, whereas, as a casual, I know I don't get that. So if I was to do any up-skilling it would be self-initiated, at my own expense, yeah unpaid. [Interviewer: Which then sort of stops people from doing it?] It does. It would, look it would certainly reduce the amount of training I would go for (Seine, ex-casual nurse, 20s, 2011 Interview).

That was the other thing I was going to say about professional development: each year I register with VIT - institute of teaching - you have to do that...I think it's a hundred hours in five years, and I think I've got about 20 in four years. I've got to do another 80 hours in order to maintain my teaching registration. So the pressure's on; so, I don't know, over the next twelve months I've got to really hook in and do lots of professional development. [Interviewer: And do you think that teaching casually is part of the reason why?] Oh definitely. Definitely, because I would get hired to fill in for regular staff who were doing their professional development days. It wasn't for me to do. It was for me to fill in for them so they can do it (Trish, casual/fixed-term teacher, 2011 Interview).

Inadequate access to professional development and skills training was something that concerned not just casuals but also independent contractors, who, like casuals, had to pay for their own professional development and undertake training in their own time. This perhaps explains why, in a survey of independent contractors carried by the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists, and Managers Australia, less than 50 percent of engineering independent contractors had participated in more than 15 hours of professional development during the previous 12 months even though they are required to do a minimum of 50 hours professional development each year (APESMA, 2004). Similarly, those independent contractors interviewed for this study rarely undertook professional development or skills-training. Many could neither afford the time nor the money to attend professional development, particularly as this would mean missing out on paid work. This was also an issue for casual employees who were concerned that if they committed to doing a course they might miss out on shifts at work. For example, Susan, a lone parent and casual

factory labourer was being put under pressure by Centrelink to undertake additional training so that she could enhance her employability and better meet participation requirements for the parenting payment she was receiving. But Susan was reluctant to commit to any course because it could mean having to turn down shifts at work:

But even when I see a course I think, "Well, do I do this course and just tell work, well I can't work on those days." And I don't do the course because I think that if they call me in to work, I want to go to work. And Centrelink puts pressure on you to do courses. But you don't want to turn down work either to do a course...Like it might only be a short course, but you don't know whether it's going to help you get a job (2011 Interview).

The uncertainty of their work scheduling created difficulties for independent contractors in undertaking professional development in some cases. For example, Karen, an insurance claims investigator, would often have jobs come through at the last minute that had to be completed within a matter of days. Some of these jobs could involve having to travel hundreds of kilometres to interview claimants. Her work would therefore regularly upset plans that she had pre-arranged, including attending seminars and conferences. 'I don't get a lot of opportunities,' as she explained during the first interview. 'Well basically, you have to pay for them yourself, and then it's the time. And nine times out of ten, as I said, you try and organise something and then it all goes pear shaped' (2009 Interview). Katherine felt that she would have better opportunities to build up skills and progress her career if she was a direct employee of a company instead:

My business would have to pay for it, so I would have to pay for it and take the time out. Whereas, if you're an employee, you get paid to, you know, [a] three day conference, your employer will probably pay you accommodation, your meals, while you're doing that training course. It's a four hour training course, well you're getting paid while you're there so whereas myself, I can't earn money while I'm at a training session...So then, from a sub-contractor's perspective, how can you increase your – what I'm thinking here is that, OK, you've got this contract now, and then you sort of want to grow and get bigger, so you try and get a larger contract. But how can you demonstrate that, you know, you've got all these technical skills or information, because you haven't had time to do it. Yeah, so it's a bit of a balance there (2011 Interview).

Even independent contractors who were de facto employees in the sense that they always worked for the same client found that they received little support from their employer. As Hugh, who sub-contracted for a telecommunications company that carried out Telstra's line maintenance work, explained:

I wish they would do that, like train you up and give you different trained multi skilling and all that type of stuff but that's not on offer...A while ago I was thinking of this optical fibre stuff coming out, might be worth trying to do an optical fibre course. I rang up the TAFE down in Melbourne and it's a...I think they said 3 month or something like that course. I thought I could take that amount of time off work to go and do that, pay for it all myself and all that type of stuff; just can't do it, no. Like you'd ask [] and they'd probably just encourage you to do it but they wouldn't help you out at all...So it's not encouraged to further your development that's for sure. You just get put in your hole and that's what you do. like I can see in a few year's time what I do's going be no longer required, that's for sure and when all this optical fibre stuff comes out but that's, see that's a communication thing, what's going on. That's the biggest mystery at the moment. (2009 Interview).

By the end of the study, Hugh still hadn't managed to pursue any training in fibre optics despite enquiring about it a number of times. He could see that this could create a problem for him down the

track if fibre optics became the dominant source of work as many in the industry feared was going to happen following the rollout of the national broadband network:

I'm still going alright here at the moment with the work that's available. So there's still enough work, like I'm still getting enough work through because of the active chasing of work that I'm doing. But as soon as that dries up, yeah, I'll have to get trained up into fibre I guess and go hunting for a job in the fibre world (2011 Interview).

The diminished professional development and training opportunities available to non-standard workers increases the risk that workers in insecure employment will end up trapped in poorer quality jobs with limited opportunities to exercise control over work tasks (i.e. health damaging jobs). Moreover, diminished professional development and training opportunities undermines non-standard workers' occupational mobility with long-term consequences for their financial security, particularly in later life. Indeed, one of the factors that McGrath and Keister identified as contributing to a lower rate of home ownership and asset accumulation among temporary workers in their US study was precisely temporary workers' poorer training opportunities and diminished career paths, since these had the effect of trapping temporary workers in more poorly paid jobs (McGrath & Keister, 2008, p. 201).

The poorer professional development and training opportunities available to non-standard workers illustrates that non-standard employment can be a form of structural inequality in the sense that not only are there immediate disadvantages associated with working in a temporary rather than ongoing job; non-standard employment arrangements also perpetuate inequality and disadvantage by hindering occupational mobility.

6.4.1 Exclusion from Salary Scales

Related to the disadvantages that non-standard workers face with respect to accessing professional development and skills-training is their lack of incorporation into well-defined salary structures that ensure workers regularly receive incremental pay rises. Permanent employees in ongoing roles are tied into salary structures that award them incremental pay increases, often on an annual basis, if they meet pre-agreed objectives and performance criteria. However, the non-standard workers in this study rarely if ever received such incremental pay increases. Any increase in their pay was as a result of mandatory pay rises set out in industry awards *that applied to all employees regardless of the duration of their employment tenure* (i.e. pay increases that would be awarded equally to workers who had only just started out in their jobs and to workers who had been in their jobs for more than a decade). Workers in some cases could move onto a higher rate of pay by acquiring additional certificates and skills, but they would have to pay for this training themselves and newly recruited workers with the same skill set would equally be entitled to this higher rate of pay. The exception to this was fixed-term employees, who were tied into formal salary progression structures *for the duration of their employment contract*. But even then, if fixed-term employees changed jobs—as many in the study did—this could upset their salary progression. Indeed, some fixed-term employees actually took pay cuts when they changed employer. For example, Jenny, an accountant who had worked for a third level institution for the first 18 months of the study, took a pay cut midway through the second year of the study when she took an eight-month contract working for the finance department of a nearby hospital. She was upset about having to take a pay-cut but did so because she was led to believe that there was a good chance she could go permanent at the end of

the eight months. That did not materialise and Jenny had to eventually find alternative employment the following year.

There was generally no recognition of workers' contribution or length of service in workers' pay rates. As Jeremy, who had been working in the same pub for four years explained, 'there's no incentive for good work...If you are a mediocre worker you still get paid the same as a good worker, you know. So at the end of the day, there's no real incentive to excel' (2010 Interview). Daniel, a casual food processing worker in his 50s, was similarly paid the same wage as other, much younger casuals performing very simple tasks, even though Daniel had been working for his employer for more than 30 years and could do a range of different jobs:

I don't get paid any more than the guy that might only do one job, a simple, menial task, because he gets paid at the same rate that I do. So that's probably unfair on that one. But, you know, I can do maybe eight, 10 different jobs (2011 Interview).

Quite a number of those interviewed, especially fruit pickers, were still receiving the same rate of pay as five or even 10 years ago even though the cost of living had increased sharply in the mean time. This was making it more difficult to survive on the income from their employment.

The farmers are still paying.... the same rate they were 5 years ago, whereas if I worked in a factory I would have had 10 pay rises over that 5 years you know and I'd be on better money...So the bin rates are still where they were 5 years ago which is crazy. Nothing else is. Nothing we buy, none of our living costs, power, petrol you know? [Interviewer: So it's become harder and harder to live off the wage?] Definitely whereas like I say 5 years ago we were in a good career making really good money. Now, we're struggling (Michael, fruit picker, 40s, 2009 Interview).

Here they're pretty honest. Over Mildura you don't see nothing, they just – you're getting \$24, that's it, and that's been that sort of thing for the last 15 years or whatever, it's never been any different. Twenty-four bucks in 15 years, that's – hasn't gone up, hasn't gone down, it's just sat on the same length. But there's been a lot of – lot of wage rises in the last 15 years, but the bin rate's never gone up (Bill, fruit picker, 60s, 2010 Interview).

Well I couldn't believe it, the other day I seen on one of these shows, that working in a café, they've got to get paid like \$900 a week or something...We work so hard and, honestly, at the end of it, we're probably going to be crippled and the government's going to give us no help and we'll have no other, you know, what other job do we do because we've been doing this for so long. But now we're getting less and less money; it's ridiculous (Toni, fruit picker, 40s, 2011 Interview).

Independent contractors similarly reported that their pay had barely increased over the years. Indeed, those who worked as sub-contractors felt under pressure to accept lower pay rates because of the scarcity of work in their area.

Independent Contracting and Minimum Award Wages

Under the *Independent Contractors Act* (2006), enterprise bargaining agreements and industry awards governing minimum pay and conditions do not apply to independent contractors unless independent contractors negotiate these into their individual agreement with their client/employer. One of the arguments against including provisions governing independent contracting in enterprise bargaining agreements and industry awards is that individually negotiated agreements enable independent contractors to negotiate higher rates of pay and more favourable working conditions with their client/employer. However, despite claims by organisations such as Independent Contractors Australia that the deregulation of independent contracting gives workers more freedom to negotiate higher rates of pay, few—if any—of the independent contractors in this study felt that they were in a genuine position to negotiate a higher rate of pay with their employer:

No, there's no negotiation. You're told, "this is it, if you want it, please sign here. And if you don't like it, well, we'll find someone else." (Hugh, telecommunications subcontractor, 30s, 2011 Interview).

You either take the job and do it or you don't. You can't sort of whinge about nothing...[Interviewer: I suppose if you all get together, it might help you with pay rates on your jobs?] Around here it'd be hard though because we've got [] and [], you're a sub-contractor, they just give you a price. Take it or leave it, pretty much. They're not forcing you to do the work (Mark, carpenter, 30s, 2011 Interview).

There was unanimous agreement amongst contractors, *including those in the contented casual group*, that regulation of minimum pay rates for independent contractors was vital. As Hugh, who worked as a telecommunications sub-contractor, explained:

Minimum standards, minimum conditions for the workforce is greatly needed for contract workers. There's no doubt about that. Like we get, Christmas day the new contract started, I got a pay decrease and a reduction in conditions. Christmas day they done it; it was really nice! That's how badly it's needed (2011 Interview).

If you agreed to be paid a \$1 an hour, then you could be paid that much. I've heard a lot of new people, investigators that have just done their training, and they'll go to – obviously dependent on their background or if they're an expert or if they're an ex policeman or have got something to push on and get a higher rate – I've heard that they were being paid like at \$12 an hour or something ridiculous and at like 40 cents a kilometre, just so that they can get into the industry and get that experience...I don't know how they would survive and that's why a lot of new ones aren't coming in because investigation companies are offering such low rates because of their lack of experience ...How they justified it when was talking to someone about it is because that person is so inexperienced, when their reports are coming in, they basically almost have to be redone. They'll eventually learn, but a lot more monitoring of that person has to happen so that's taking the time of someone else [Interviewer: Would you like to see more regulation of the rates that independent contractors are actually paid?] Mm, yes, in my industry I'm not sure how that would actually work because it is work cover, it is governed by that large organisation...There should be some sort of regulation but I don't know how it would actually fit in (Karen, insurance claims investigator, 50s, 2011 Interview).

Building sub-contractors reported a similar experience and felt that the large construction firms in Victoria were colluding with each other to keep wages down. The scarcity of building work in rural Victoria and the willingness of some independent contractors to work for little pay was putting pressure on pay rates, which had barely increased in 10 years.

Obviously it's illegal to price fix. They're not meant to be but they do. I can't prove that but as a subbie I know full well they do. So you can't even – there's no point in you jumping ship with one company and going to another company because they all do [the same]. And if someone puts their price up by a little bit, the other ones just do the same. So then it's all even. Probably would be good to see it regulated a bit more because, I mean, you do four years of an apprenticeship and all that sort of stuff and then these companies will only pay \$35 an hour if there's extra work to do. That was, 10 or 15 years ago I was making \$35 an hour. Everything else has gone up but our pay hasn't....They won't raise their rates unless they're forced to and they take their time. I know they couldn't get plasters for ages and they finally caved in and raised it, but they didn't raise it much – just enough to get the plasters back doing work. So probably in another five years, they're going to have the same issue all over again. So with those companies, yeah, I think it'd be – it would be a big help (Mark, carpenter, 30s, 2011 Interview).

I think there should be a minimum standard, a minimum award that [you] shouldn't get below. That has to be done otherwise it's just going to cripple everyone. You know, you get the Chinese and they're doing it too – the plastering – and they're coming around and actually living on the site with their families and they're cooking. And, really, it's illegal to do it and they do it...They'll work under lights and they'll work all night and, really, they quality of work is nowhere near the same as, you know, what the Australian standards should be [Interviewer: So it sounds like what you're saying there is that there needs to be more regulation of minimum wages for independent contractors?] Definitely...They've got to realise, "OK, well in the building industry, these employers have got to pay so much." There's got to be a minimum wage for employees and realise that, well, they've [the independent contractors] got to make money too (Anthony, plasterer, 40s, 2011 Interview).

Workers in insecure employment, in short, stand to be disadvantaged in the long term as a consequence of diminished professional development and skills-training opportunities and poorer integration into salary structures with well-defined pay progression paths. In the long run, insecure workers may therefore end up in less-skilled and poorer paid jobs than they would otherwise achieve had they been employed under an ongoing employment contract with consequences for their long-term financial security and autonomy in later life.

7. Impacts on Self-Esteem and Social Participation

The employment uncertain experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard working arrangements can have debilitating consequences for workers' exercise of autonomy and control over their lives in both the short and longer term, as illustrated in the previous chapter. But, as this chapter reports, intermittent and irregular work scheduling can also undermine non-standard workers' social participation—both within the workplace and outside it—while the employment status differences associated with non-standard employment arrangements can be similarly destructive of workers' social inclusion and opportunity to experience self-esteem in and through their work. The effects that non-standard employment arrangements can have on workers' social participation and experience of self-esteem represent a further psychosocial pathway through which non-standard employment arrangements affect workers' health.

7.1. The Importance of Social Participation and Self-Esteem for Health

Social integration and participation has long been known to be beneficial for health, as is evidenced by the lower risk of mortality associated with having friends, with having close family relationships, and with regular participation in community organisations (S. A. Stansfeld, 1999, p. 161). Supportive social networks are good for health partly because 'having other people available for support and assistance can enhance coping and provide a buffer against stress.' But more than that, there is also evidence to suggest that 'simply being part of a supportive social network reduces stress, even if other people do not provide explicit emotional or practical assistance' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 508). One reason why this is so, argues Richard Wilkinson, is because having friends and participating regularly in social groups gives people 'a sense of confidence, of reassurance and of self-confirmation, whereas being rejected or not having friends fills one with self-doubt and causes confidence to evaporate' (R. Wilkinson, 1999a, p. 54). Moreover, participation in supportive social networks also enables people to develop a sense of belonging, itself an important bulwark against anxiety and depression (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 506).

In industrial societies such as Australia, the work role acts as a key social institution capable of providing people with a sense of connectedness to others and a sense of self-confirmation (Annis, 1996, p. 5). This is because good working and employment conditions in which individual workers' personal contributions are recognised and rewarded provide workers with the opportunity to feel part of a significant community and to derive a sense of self-esteem from the social value that is attributed to their personal endeavours and contributions. One of the criticisms of non-standard employment arrangements, however, is that the employment uncertainty and status inequalities that are often associated with these arrangements work to undermine the social support structures available to workers within and outside the workplace. For example, the intermittency and uncertainty of non-standard workers' work scheduling can hinder such workers' ability to cultivate meaningful relationships with their co-workers. As Baumeister and Leary argue, for social interactions to facilitate a sense of belonging 'these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare' (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). However, as Boyce et al. argue, '[b]ecause temporary workers' tenure in organisations is generally short, the opportunity to develop meaningful relationships is limited' (Boyce, Ryan, & Imus, 2007, p. 8). A related concern is that the employment status differences associated with certain types of non-standard employment may lead to non-standard workers being

actively excluded and marginalised by their co-workers. For example, Tompa et al. point out that ‘the lower status of temporary workers makes this group susceptible to social exclusion by regular full- and part-time workers’ which, in turn, is associated with elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Tompa et al., 2007, p. 218). Chapter 3 highlighted a number of key aspects of non-standard employment that are a source of concern as far as workers’ social participation and ability to derive a sense of self-esteem from their work are concerned:

- Intermittent and temporary employments can hinder participation in work-based social networks;
- Unpredictable work patterns and the need to be on call make social participation outside of work more difficult, especially where it involves regular commitment;
- Long-term employment under non-standard work arrangements can strike some workers as an affront to their dignity and self-worth (e.g. misrecognition of their value as contributing members of the community); and
- Non-standard workers may be perceived (and treated) as having unequal status within the workplace community which can lead to their stigmatisation and exclusion from social networks by permanent co-workers.

The experiences of workers interviewed in this study largely support these observations, although the issues for independent contractors, permanent irregulars, and fixed-term employees are different in some respects from those facing casual employees in that the employment status differences associated with non-standard employment arrangements appear to only afflict casuals workers’ social inclusion and experience of self-esteem. By contrast, the difficulties that independent contractors, permanent irregular workers, and fixed-term employees face with represent to participating in social networks stem principally from the short term duration of their employment contracts and the intermittent and uncertain scheduling of work rather than from any status inequalities associated with being a permanent irregular or fixed-term employee or even an independent contractor.

7.2 Impact of Intermittent and Uncertain Work Schedules

The intermittent and uncertain nature of much non-standard employment makes it more difficult for non-standard workers to develop meaningful work-based relationships and a number of those interviewed felt isolated from the work group. This was something that a number of the independent contractors interviewed commented upon, many of whom often worked alone and therefore rarely had contact with colleagues on a regular basis. ‘It’s very isolated,’ as Karen, an insurance claims investigator explained. ‘There’s companies that I’ve never actually been to...We talk on the phone constantly but never met them face to face, or interacted, or socialised with them.’ ‘I suppose where I actually feel it is at Christmas,’ as she went on to explain, ‘because I’m hooning around all these places, they’re organising all their Christmas do’s’ (2009 Interview). Hugh, a telecommunications sub-contractor, likewise wished that his job afforded him better opportunities to develop a rapport with his co-workers. But his workplace never arranged work functions for the independent contractors:

It is very isolated [Interviewer: You don’t have a lot of co-workers that you, sort of, work that close to or support?] No, it doesn’t exist. It doesn’t exist. Definitely co-workers there, but I

wouldn't trust them, or don't get along with them. I do get along with them as, "Hi, how are you? What's been happening?" and stuff, but I wouldn't go back for a beer with them or anything like that...there are no Christmas parties, no functions, nothing like that [Interviewer: Is that something that you would like a bit more of?] God, yeah. I think it's good for morale. You know, get together and have a talk about things, thrash things out, and have a few beers and stuff like that. With having origins in the hospitality industry, that's what it's all about it, even of a night time, just to wind down with everybody that's been working, and having a beer with them and stuff like that. I think it encourages friendships and gets morale up, I reckon (2011 Interview)

A number of casuals similarly complained that the irregular and uncertain nature of their work made it more difficult for them to participate, socially, at work. As Susan, a casual factory worker in Shepparton explained, 'like if they have a morning tea, you have to sort of pre-order what you want. Well, the casuals can't do it because they don't know if they're going to be there on that day...the casuals can't participate because we don't know if we're going to be there on the day. So that excludes us' (2009 Interview). For Seine, a casual bank nurse in her 20s, it was the simple fact of not working alongside the same people everyday that made it more difficult to establish work-based friendships: 'I guess being casual you wouldn't build the same sort of rapport you would if you were working the same places five days a week, all the time for 2 years or 1 year even (Seine, casual nurse, 2009 Interview).

Sandra, who had worked as a casual in Queensland before returning to Victoria and establishing her own kinesiology business, explained that one of the difficulties casuals face is that co-workers don't see it as worth their while forming a relationship with colleagues who are unlikely to be there in the long run:

I mean, you're so on the periphery if you're a casual worker in the workplace...People don't invest in you because you're not going to be there for long. The same as when we went to Cairns, people didn't actually talk to you for a year because they said you were going to go. Well of course you don't get integrated within a year, you just bugger off...And I guess when you're there for casual work, you're only there to do a particular job and it's usually – it would be the kind of work that's low skilled or broken down easily or you can bring someone in for a very specific work. They're not seen to be there as a ongoing, contributing, valued member of staff, you know what I mean (2011 Interview)

Trish, who had worked in temporary teaching roles for more than 20 years, likewise felt that the short-term nature of the roles she had worked had prevented her from cultivating strong friendships with co-workers since, working short contracts across different campuses, she didn't get a chance to get to know people. This, in turn, meant that she would miss out on social functions that her colleagues would organise after work, something that she had recently experienced before the second interview:

I popped into the Indian to get take away one night, and here's all the TAFE people were sitting there...I felt instantly hurt and I kept my back to them like I hadn't seen them [Interviewer: that you weren't invited?] that I wasn't included, yeah. But then, why would they I suppose. They don't even know me; why would they ask me? They've all been working together for 15 years, or whatever, and all good friends. So, who am I, do you know what I mean?...I don't get an opportunity to get to know anyone, nor then – nor do they get to know me. I don't – I no longer hope or live in expectation or hope that I will be included, or make some sort of social life for myself through my work situation. It's just never going to happen - just won't happen (2010 Interview)

Irregular and uncertain work patterns also interfered with workers' social participation outside of work. For example, casuals, permanent irregulars, and independent contractors who worked uncertain hours explained that they could not participate in regular, organised social and sporting activities. Ewen, for example, had had to give up playing football when he took a job onboard a fishing boat because he couldn't commit to training or matches.

My first job out of school was fishing and em I played football up until then. And, as soon as I went fishing, em, yeah I stopped playing football back then – well, I've never took it back up so, yeah, I'm not involved in any organised sports anymore. [Interviewer: And was that the irregular hours that put an end to it?] Yeah, pretty much. Like you can't, work has to [come] first. Like, if we have to work over the Grand Final then, that's too bad. So it's not very fair on the club. And you start missing training and that, you're not playing your best. And with work, I was too worried to get injured for work as well (Ewen, ex fisherman, 20s, 2010 Interview).

Indeed, in the second year of the study, Ewen quit his job as a fisherman and went back to working as an engineer on board maintenance tugboats because the uncertain hours were taking too much of a toll on his work/life balance.

I decided to come back to working on the tugboats because, what I was finding hard with the fishing was I never knew when I was home or when I was going to work...But then I couldn't plan anything. 'Cause, I'd go away and then, like, I wouldn't know exactly when I was coming or going sort of thing. So I thought I'd go back on the tugboats and do a set roster. It's five weeks on and five weeks off, so at least I can plan in advance when I'm going to be home and I can sort of have a bit of a life (Ewen, ex fisherman, 20s, 2010 Interview).

Julia, who worked in a variety of casual and fixed-term positions at a TAFE in Northern Victoria throughout the course of the study, explained that she just has to put the rest of her life on hold while her employment future is uncertain as she is not in a position to turn down any work that might be offered to her.

I just find myself in a position where I've got to take on so much work that I just have to say no to everything else. I take on the work, and then if I have any time left over, I might sit down for a while. I don't really do social things...Well, I do some community things. I just fit them in when I can. I quite often say no to things that I've committed to because work comes up; that still happens for me because I'm taking on this casual work on top of what I was doing. If I had fixed-term all the time and I just took on that, I would know what I could commit to. So that's true...you could participate more, definitely. It is pretty bad to say, "Yeah, I'm going to be on this committee," and then find out I've got work and then say, "Sorry, I've got work, I can't." That still happens to me with the casual part (2011 Interview).

Difficulties making plans to socialise with family members and friends were frequent concerns amongst those interviewed, while those who lived their life on call often reported having to miss out on birthdays and other important family occasions because of being called to work at short notice. Tim, a permanent irregular stevedore in his mid 20s, explained that his friends had stopped inviting him to things because they were fed up with him cancelling on them after being called into work at short notice. 'My mates don't ask me to do as much anymore because they are sick of me cancelling and all that sort of stuff.' He went on to explain that he couldn't afford to turn down work, even if it meant letting his friends down: 'if your only days of work are Friday, Saturday and Sunday night, you are not going to knock it back are you?' (2009 Interview).

Case Study: Trying to commit to things on an irregular work schedule

Frank, who had migrated to Australia from Ireland, was in his late 40s and had two school aged children. Frank's main job was working as a permanent irregular stevedore, although he also worked a second job, warehousing for a pharmaceutical company, on days when there was no stevedoring work and the warehouse needed additional workers (although Frank lost this job in the second year of the study after a change of manager at the warehouse – the new manager was unwilling to work around Frank's unpredictable shift patterns). Frank explained that he was unable to commit to anything and that making plans to catch up with family or friends was almost impossible given the unpredictability of his work:

People will ring you to say, "Do you want to come to the football this Saturday night? Do you want to come to a barbecue at the weekend?" You can't commit yourself at all until the day before, until you get your message at three o'clock on your phone whether you're allocated or not. Look, I can't tell you tomorrow, if you said to me tomorrow, "Do you want to meet me at Young and Jacksons for a few beers?" I'd have to say, "I can't," because I don't know until after three o'clock today what my movements are tomorrow (2009 Interview).

For example, the evening before the first interview, Frank had had to miss a very close family friend's birthday because he was called into work at short notice.

We had our friends, our closest friends here who are [sic.] as well, they emigrated here with us. The dad of that family...his birthday was yesterday, and we never miss it. We always go up there at night and have a few drinks and celebrate. Because both families don't have relatives here they're our closest friends, they're more like family than anything. My youngest son asked me today why I wasn't there last night and he's only nine. I had to explain to him that I had to work and had the afternoon shift, you know. So it does affect you. It does affect your life; it does affect your lifestyle (2009 Interview).

What most upset Frank about the unpredictability of his work was that he could no longer be as involved with his sons' lives as he would like. For example, back in Ireland, Frank used to be a scout leader, something that he could no longer do because of his work patterns. And while he still managed to help out coaching his youngest son's footy team, he was worried that he was letting other parents and children down because he couldn't guarantee that he would be always able to make training and matches:

You can't commit to people. I help out with the kids' footy team locally. My son plays Aussie Rules. I've done that for the last three years. Training nights and things like that, when you're on an afternoon shift you can't go. It's hard because they're relying on you. Other people are relying on you to be there to help train the kids, and also when the game came up every Sunday, there were Sundays I had to say I couldn't be there....I used to be a Scout Leader back in Ireland years ago and I tried it here. It only lasted a few weeks because I just found myself I couldn't commit, and because I'd put my young boy in the Scouts and I just couldn't commit to it because I was missing weeks. It just felt like, this isn't much good because people need you. If you stick your hand up and say you're going to do something, you need to be there to do it. It is very hard (2009 Interview).

In the second year of the study, Frank had to give up helping out with his son's footy team when the team moved to training three nights a week instead of two:

I did give it up and my son gave up playing last year because I wasn't there...Yeah, he'll take it up again next year. I had to give it up. They started training three nights a week, sometimes three nights a week because they wanted the kids were, the standard of play wasn't up to scratch with the rest of the football clubs, so they started increasing the training and trying to get them up to scratch a bit better and I couldn't commit to that when you're working shift work (2010 Interview).

7.2. Impact of Employment Status Differences

For some non-standard workers, most notably casuals, it is not just the uncertain and intermittent scheduling of their work that prevents them participating fully in social networks at work. They also face obstacles as a direct consequence of their employment status—obstacles that have little to do with the scheduling of their work. As Daniel, who worked as casual in a fish processing factory, explained:

At the moment I feel I just don't belong anywhere. That's just my feeling. You don't belong anywhere as a casual employee. Yeah, you just sort of feel like you're on a lower rung of the ladder...because you're not involved in things that happen with full-time employees, whether it's decisions in the workplace or meetings or things like social gatherings after work or whatever, and you're not part of it. So you don't feel part of any organisation...you want to feel part of something, you want to be worth something; you want to be part of an organisation and contribute to it. But you just don't feel like it when you're a casual labour[er] I don't think. You're just sort of there making up the numbers, and that's it; to do a job and to make up the numbers and that's about it (2011 Interview).

The majority of casual workers—but not other non-standard workers—were often excluded from work meetings *simply because they were casuals* and weren't seen as full employees or equal staff members. Julia, for example, spoke of the difference between how the casuals and *the real* workers were treated:

They definitely make a distinction between the things that they will invite all the sessionals to and the casuals to, and the things that they will invite the real workers to (Julia, sessional teacher/integration aide, 50s, 2009 Interview).

Patrick, a casual construction work, gave the example of a recent enterprise bargaining agreement which, as a casual, he was told that he couldn't participate in:

It's just created a, fucking, monster. Like, today, I've put my hand up – we're having a vote on the EBA very shortly. So I've put my hand up, and I said to this bloke, "Listen, mate, I'm a casual, someone's told me that I'm allowed to vote on this EBA." And there's a panel of four blokes, one bloke says, "Yes, you are," the other bloke says, "No, you're not." I said, "Well, who do I believe?" And they have a bit of a whisper. "No, you're not." I said, "Well, why would I want to join the union?" That's when you get – you're put back in your place. 'Cause you're not – you're in this – you're part of all the, bloody, to-ing and fro-ing, and you're at the meeting, but at the end of the day...You're not allowed to participate and have your say (Patrick, casual construction worker, 50s, 2009 Interview).

In some cases, casuals would even be excluded from Christmas parties and other work social functions that permanent workers would be invited to.

There has been times, not so much of late, but there have been times when there's been a barbecue happening at lunch time and the casuals haven't been allowed to go to it, only the permanents. But the last couple of times the casuals have been included, if you happened to be there on the day you can go kind of thing...You wouldn't come if you weren't at work but I know a couple of years ago it caused a lot of ill-feeling. They had Christmas parties and the casuals aren't allowed to go to the Christmas party [laughs] (Susan, factory labourer, 40s, 2009 Interview).

I remember at the TAFE, that's when I decided to get a permanent job in the social work field, I was sort of sitting at my desk trying to plan the lesson for the next day or whatever and I saw all the other TAFE, the permanent TAFE staff go off to a meeting and they're all laughing and having coffee but, you know. And I thought, this is terrible, I'm doing the same job as them and

I'm excluded. And part of it was probably because they thought, well you know, we don't want to make her feel compelled to come to meetings because she's not getting paid for it, but you're definitely excluded from that (Sharon, sessional tutor, 40s, 2009 Interview).

Their exclusion from social functions, meetings, and workplace events not only limits the opportunities available to casual workers to build up and participate in supportive social relationships at work, insofar as they are excluded *because they are perceived as second class or "not real" workers*, it can also have devastating consequences for their experience of self-esteem. For example, Trish felt like a "nobody" after being asked to fill in for permanent teachers while they were attending a school meeting:

If they have a meeting they'll hire me to fill in for the teacher so they can all go off to a meeting but I'm left out... They had a meeting today, I wasn't invited. I'm just a nobody basically, and it does terrible things to your self-esteem...I do painting on the side, that's my therapy. If I didn't do that I think I would have been locked up a long time ago because it just squashes your self-esteem (Trish, casual/fixed-term teacher, 50s, 2009 Interview).

Susan, a casual factory labourer who had complained to her boss about the behaviour of some of her co-workers similarly felt treated as if she was worthless after she was told to put up with it because they were permanent and she was casual:

Well, if there's ever any slight little situation, as a casual you just get told, "Oh well, they're permanent." And it just makes you feel like you have absolutely no rights whatsoever. Like, to be told that they're permanent, to me, doesn't given them a right to do something bad or treat you bad. Like, they should treat you with respect. But on the odd time where I've mentioned something to me boss, they've just said, "Oh, well they're permanent."...When I went to the boss - well it was probably more than a year ago now - that was the attitude: "they're permanent, you're casual." And it just makes you feel really lousy (Susan, casual factory labourer, 40s, 2011 Interview).

There was a general sense among casual employees that they were seen as second class workers by management especially, but occasionally also by their permanent co-workers. As Simon, a stevedore who had worked as a casual for more than 10 years explained, 'You did almost feel a bit second-class at times. "You're just a casual," you know what I mean?' (2009 Interview). John, a permanent irregular stevedore, explained that management look upon casuals as "the bottom feeders" (2009 interviews), while casuals often described themselves as being "just boots" or "shit kickers".

you walk into a factory, you're a casual like at [], you've got the big foremen and that, they're walking around in their nice ironed shirts. They're the pen pushers, they run the joint. Then you've got the full-timers, "Oh, I love my job, I'm happy." Well of course they're happy. They're getting paid well, they've got on ongoing job, they've got stability. Then you've got the casuals who just shut their mouths, they don't say anything. But when you're out at smoko, or you know having your lunch, they'll be talking about, bitching [about] this, bitching [about] that, because they're all unhappy about someone or something that's going on, and there's nothing they can do about it. And that's where you do get stressed out. *You do look down at yourself and say, "OK, we're a bunch of shit kickers"* [emphasis added]....you do casual work and you just think, well no point getting your hopes up. You always keep your ears open, your nose up, just to see if there's any chances of getting fulltime work, but usually it's just hope for the best and just be prepared for the worst. And the worst is usually that, *you're just a shit kicker and there's nothing you can do about it* [emphasis added], and you just do what you're told (Matt, casual labourer, 20s, 2011 Interview)

Noticeably, casual workers who managed to secure a permanent, ongoing jobs—for example, Sharon, a sessional tutor who was offered an ongoing lecturing position just before the final interview—spoke of the getting a *real* job:

When I was pregnant in the past I've been in casual, these TAFE jobs, and it's just, you know, the stress was enormous thinking "what am I going to do, I better work while I have a little baby because I want to keep my job." And now that I have an actual *real job* [emphasis added] what do you call it, a permanent job, it's really...you just don't have to worry about any of that (Sharon, ex sessional tutor, 2011 Interview).

Sandra, who had worked as a casual in a number of retail and administration roles before setting up her own business likewise felt that, as a casual, 'you're not a *real* person' (2011 Interview; emphasis added). Some even went so far as to say that they felt treated like slaves. As Nicola, a fruit picker in her 40s, explained:

they [farmers] look at you, you know, you're just a worker, you know, and sometimes I feel sometimes that I'm not just an employee, I'm sort of—they look at me like a slave or something, you know, you're more like a, you're just like nothing, you have no value (Nicola, fruit-picker, 2009 Interview).

'Members of the public look down on us,' explained Michael, 'cause we're fruit pickers. I try not to tell too many people I'm a fruit picker' (2009 Interview). However, care must be taken when interpreting the significance of these statements by fruit pickers since the low status in which they are held may have more to do with the fact that the type of work that fruit pickers do isn't valued within the community rather than that, as *casuals*, they are seen as second class workers. Similarly with comments by a number of personal care attendants that they are 'right at the bottom of the pecking order' (Alice, permanent irregular aged care worker, 40s, 2010 Interview) and that they are 'looked on as something on the bottom of your shoe' (Yvonne, permanent irregular aged care worker, 40s, 2009 Interview). Again, it's unclear whether the low-esteem in which these aged care workers stems from the nature of their employment contract rather or from the fact that personal care attendant work is poorly valued within the broader community. Nonetheless, it certainly appears to be true from the broader experiences of workers in this study that working as a *casual* as such is damaging for workers' social recognition and experience of self-esteem, although fixed-term employees, independent contractors, and, to a lesser extent, permanent irregular workers do not appear to suffer any social misrecognition simply because of their employment status. Moreover, for the most part, the contexts in which casual employees feel that they are viewed as nobodies or second-class workers are limited to workplaces in which casuals work alongside permanent co-workers. No fishermen, for example, felt that they were treated as nobodies or second-class workers because of their employment status. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the fishermen in the study never worked alongside colleagues who were employed on a permanent, ongoing basis. Hence, there was no sense that they were *inferior* workers to other workers in their industry or workplace.

7.3. Corrosive effects of Casualisation

The status inequalities associated with casual employment make it more difficult for casual workers to experience a sense of belonging and self-confidence from their work role, while the intermittency and uncertainty of many non-standard workers' work patterns—including permanent irregular workers and independent contractors—makes it more difficult for them to participate in supportive

social networks, whether at work or outside of work. However, another way in which non-standard employment arrangements can affect the quality of social support available to individuals is via the corrosive effect that non-standard employment can have on co-worker solidarity. One example of this is the effect that the growing incidence of casual employment is having on rates of union membership. Casual and temporary employees, for example, are far less likely than their permanent co-workers to be members of a union. The vast majority of workers interviewed for this study, for instance, were not union members even though a number of union organisations assisted in the recruitment of research participants. Workers gave a range of reasons for why they were not union members. In many cases, workers' intermittent and uncertain work schedules meant that they could not afford to join the union, particularly as some unions continued to charge membership fees when members were out of work or worked only minimal shifts. As Susan, a casual factory labourer with three children to support explained:

When we joined the union, we were told that it – like, you pay a union fee each week. We were told it would be done on a pro-rata basis. So we understood that if we work one day a week, we only paid for one day, rather than for the full week. But when we – if we only work four days – four hours or we'd work one full day, we had to pay the full union fee. Which meant – was nearly \$10 out of our pay. There was one day where I only worked – one week, I only worked four hours for the week, and I paid nearly \$10 in the union fee. So I only stayed in the union for a few weeks, and then I pulled out, because I couldn't afford to lose \$10 for four hours work (2010 Interview).

Trish, a lone parent who did casual and fixed-term teaching, had previously been in a union but had to give up her membership when she moved to Victoria because her union would not offer any discounted rate to casual and fixed-term teachers during periods of no work:

Union fees, there's no discount on that. And I'm a real union person – my father's a communist, you know...I got really upset with the AEU. In New South Wales, what the Teacher's Federation Union there do is...they garnish your pay. So when you earn money they take their bit, and that's great. And when you're not working, they don't take it. And when I came to Victoria, of course, join up with the union as you do, and even when I wasn't teaching they were still taking their \$36 a month. I rang them up and said, "Look, I'm a casual, can you do [a discounted rate]" and they said, "Oh no, that's not economically viable for us." And I said, "Well, I didn't realise you were a profit run organisation." I got really cross with them. I thought, forget it. I'm not going to join. So I'm not in the union. And now I'm thinking, ummm – it goes against my grain for not being in the union (2011 Interview).

Other workers either didn't see the point of joining a union or weren't aware that there was any union in their industry. Independent contractors in particular didn't feel that joining a union was worthwhile since companies could simply not hire them if they campaigned for improved conditions or better remuneration:

As a subbie with the unions, there's not really much point...you either take the job and do it or you don't. You can't sort of whinge about nothing....[Interviewer: I suppose if you all get together, it might help you with pay rates on your jobs?] Around here it'd be hard though because we've got [] and []; you're a sub-contractor, they just give you a price. Take it or leave it, pretty much. They're not forcing you to do the work (Mark, carpenter, 2011 interview).

Critics of non-standard work arrangements argue that the proliferation of these employment arrangements and the impact that this proliferation has had on rates of union membership within the workforce has undermined workers' collective bargaining position and shifted the balance of power to the employer. Moreover, this is something that not only weakens the position of workers

employed under non-standard employment arrangements but workers more generally. As Standing argues:

The primary indirect benefit for employers comes from the threat the presence of casual workers represents for regular workers. Not only are casual workers perceived as more amenable to real wage cuts, erosion of benefits, variations in working time and arbitrary penalties for errors, real or imagined. They are also likely to make other workers feel more resigned to such treatment themselves (Standing, 2008, p. 26).

Non-standard employment contracts, in other words, impose costs more generally on the workforce in terms of workers' collective capacity to stand up for the rights and to advocate for greater entitlements. This was something that a number of those interviewed commented upon:

Telstra has got probably three types of workforces. They have got their direct employees. They've got their contracting staff, plus they've got direct employees that are on AWAs, which got signed with Work Choices. They're just like a contractor, but a direct employee... They've created three levels of employees. Three types of workforce divided and conquered, I guess, you could say...Create competition within the workforce, and weaken the unions, mate. Yeah, I don't know, and create competitiveness amongst the workforce. So who's the winner out of that? (Hugh, telecommunications sub-contractor, 30s, 2010 Interview).

In the stevedoring industry, the company tries to categorise [pause] permanents, part time permanents, complete casuals...I see it, as the company's was to try and pit their own workforce against each other. As a case of a united workforce is harder to deal with than one that's full of factions [Interviewer: So it's their way of managing unions, you think?] Definitely, that's my opinion. I'm not saying I'm right but that's just my views. If you've got [pause] 40 blokes [pause] that are saying, "No this is the way it has to be done," as opposed to 10 saying one way, 10 saying the other way, 10 saying the other way and 10 saying another way, well the company's gonna grab one 10 and say, "Well we can do it this way." Just along them sort of lines if you understand what I mean. It's a divide and conquer thing...I don't doubt for a minute it's not just in this industry, it's... [Long pause] I think that's been the mentality of a lot of companies for a long time (Simon, ex-casual stevedore, 40s, 2009 Interview).

But work casualisation can also affect worker solidarity at a more personal and immediate level. For example, employment contracts that provide workers with no guaranteed minimum numbers of shifts and with no legal expectation of ongoing work can breed competitiveness among workers if, for instance, workers feel that they must compete with each other for shifts or for future employment contracts. This can, in turn, affect the quality of workers' interactions with each other and even lead workers to withhold knowledge and resources from each other. Many casuals and permanent irregular workers recognised this danger and bemoaned that the casualisation of work had forced workers into becoming so territorial and defensive:

[Interviewer: So did the insecurity and poor pay spill over into relationships; you were all competing for work?] Definitely...Yes definitely, definitely. Even though people personally liked each other, it couldn't override the fact that, you know, "I need this job, I'm sorry," you know. [Interviewer: And you're competing for shifts?] Yeah, yeah. And why did she get it and I didn't get it. Why is he still here and I came in before him or at the same time? Yeah, definitely. But that is still here (Julia, sessional teacher/integration aide, 50s, 2009 Interview).

Yeah, yeah. It's very competitive...Because you want to look good, so you're not going to give that person [the] opportunity to – it becomes rather anti-educational. It's a bit like the scheme that Julia Gillard's got about, what are they called, super teachers? Giving higher income to higher performing teachers. So you can see what's going to happen there. Instead of sharing resources and information, they're all going to, "Oh [No]." It's just anti-education. It's the most

ridiculous idea I've ever heard of and that's exactly what happens among casual people. I mean, fellow art teachers in the [name of school] went, "Oh, thank God, [name of teacher] left town." One of them actually said it to me in jest, but quite really—and we're, [name of teacher] and I are quite good friends, you speak to each other on the phone—but he said, "Oh, I'm glad you left, I've got [work] for another 12 months next year." So, it was competitive, it's just not good. I mean, not good. I mean that's life I suppose isn't it? Not very – I've never been terribly competitive; more a cooperative person than a competing person. And I find it all a bit distasteful personally, and I'd rather be out of the whole system than have to continue doing that, but they pay so well I keep getting sucked into it, you know what I mean? (Trish, casual/fixed-term TAFE teacher, lone parent, 50s, 2010 Interview).

Some fruit pickers reported that their co-workers had tried to sabotage their equipment so as to ensure that there was more fruit available for them to pick.

You leave your machine out over there at night-time and they'd let the air out of your tyres, or do something to your machine. You'd get there and it wouldn't start and you'd have to muck around with it for a while. Just things to slow you down....Like – like – like – like the slow ones are jealous of the fast ones. If you're – if you're a good picker and – and you – you show – show him up – show them up, they get a bit jealous with you. Yeah, yeah (Bill, fruit picker, 60s, 2010 Interview).

sometimes it is you think you've got a good relationship with [other pickers] but then sort of like, you know, you have to be the favourite of the contractors, you know? [Interviewer: Is there competition amongst the workers?] Yeah, its like competition but you rarely find your friend is, you know, sometimes you get a friend, but then you couldn't at the end of the day really, you know, you might think they're a friend but they'll backstab you just to get the favourite from the contractors. And...like I said before, I don't really blame like other people for it, you know, because everyone are trying to survive; their family, they're trying to provide for their families and I'm not going to say, you know...you know, if my friend did that to me I will say, oh well, it's sad that she or he picked that side, but you know, I know she's trying to survive. (Nicola, fruit picker, 40s, 2009 Interview).

Yvonne, who, in the second year of the study, moved to a job where employees were on permanent part-time contracts with guaranteed shifts, recognised that there was a huge improvement in the atmosphere at work as a result of workers being more secure in their employment:

I suppose when you get a permanent part time position you're secure; you get holiday pay, you get your annual leave, you get your sick pay whereas being on casual and not knowing if you're ever going to get a permanent part time position, it just makes you feel a bit insecure...Like the last place that I worked at there was always - people were always whingeing and carrying on, "Why did she get that shift? I wanted that shift" and, "why is she getting more shifts than me?" and that kind of thing. And they were constantly scanning the rosters and looking who was on and why there were on and why weren't they given - how come this person got say eight shifts in the fortnight and I only got six, and oh yeah. It was like that all the time [Interviewer: So I suppose when you're getting a set salary that doesn't really matter as much?] No, no. There's none of that. No. Because everybody's, as I said, basically permanent part time. They've got their set shifts (Yvonne, ex-permanent irregular and casual aged care worker, 40s, 2010 Interview).

Alice, a permanent irregular aged care worker who was struggling to get enough shifts, felt that the casualisation of work and the need to compete for shifts could lead people to do 'things they otherwise wouldn't do':

[A]t one stage we were told, "We won't be hiring any more people," because it was causing stress amongst the existing workers there. And then the next week you see two new other people who've been employed [Interviewer: And so you're all sort of seeing that as now

everybody's going to get less work?]) Of course, that's the only way we can see it. [Interviewer: You could see how hiring on more casuals could breed a sort of corrosiveness among the workforce?]) It does...and that's the same where you've got any sort of part-time or casual work. I know when I worked out on the block that was the same too because you'd be busting your guts out on the block to try and get things done out there and the boss would come along with, you know, ten or fifteen backpackers. While that's good for the backpackers, it takes work off you if you're working out there which means that cuts your pay short; that cuts your time short, which means that you've got to go and try and find a job somewhere else...You know, we're taking about people's livelihood – survival. What you get out there means food on your plate; it means a roof over your head. So I grasped that concept but it's wrong to treat people that way. It makes people do things they otherwise wouldn't do (2011 Interview).

The casualisation of work not only has the potential to breed a corrosive competitiveness among non-standard workers themselves as they compete with each other for shifts and for future employment contracts, it can also affect the quality of social relations between permanent workers and their non-standard co-workers if, for example, permanent workers view non-standard workers as a threat to their own job security (Boyce et al., 2007: 11). Depending upon the extent to which they fear their own jobs are in danger of being replaced by temporary or casual workers, permanent workers may actively try to undermine the status of casual and temporary workers within the work organisation as a way of seeking to protect their own jobs. This may involve withholding vital information and resources from casual and temporary workers so as to undermine the ability of these workers to succeed in their jobs and prove to management that casual and temporary workers are incapable of doing the jobs that permanent workers currently do. In some cases, the fear that they might be replaced by casual and temporary workers might motivate permanent workers to actively harass and bully non-standard workers so as to force them from the workplace. This was something that a number of casuals in less-skilled jobs experienced. As Ruby, who worked in packing sheds near Shepparton, explained:

The full time workers give the casuals a hard time...Just say things and be nasty and give them looks. Make you feel uncomfortable if they can, have a bit of a whinge, bitch. If they really don't like you, they won't keep you going, they'll put you off [Interviewer: So if the full time workers don't like you the manager will put you off if you're casual?]) [Laughs] Yep. I know, it's stupid, 'cause they been there for years, the old women and they just have a say, I don't know why. (Ruby, casual labourer, 40s, 2009 Interview).

Susan, a lone parent who worked as casual factory labourer, had a similar experience of being bullied and intimidated by the permanent workers in the factory. According to Susan, it was a common experience for casuals in her factory and a major source of work stress:

it's the way you're treated by the permanents. It's the stress that they cause, it's so much stress [laughs]. The casuals get on the phone to each other after work to discuss the terrible things that happened during the day [laughs]. I'm deadly serious. It's like you're debriefing [laughs] and it's how we got treated and who did what and what happened and, we talk about it, and I guess it's a stress relief because we're discussing how bad this was or [laughs], yeah...It's an everyday occurrence (2009 Interview).

Susan felt that part of the reason why she and her casual co-workers were so badly treated by their permanent co-workers had to do with the fact that they were seen as a threat to their co-workers' jobs. 'I actually believe they're threatened by us, that they think we're going to take their jobs,' as she explained. She gave the example of operating the line machines, which the permanent workers refused to let casuals know how to operate:

They never want you to know anything about the machines, they won't let you do any of it because they don't want you to know, which I guess comes from them being threatened by us. I don't know. We're not allowed to know how the machines work in case we know too much. (2009 Interview).

Workers in other industries similarly felt that permanent workers saw casuals and other non-standard workers as a threat to their own job security and that this contributed to a more hostile work environment. As Julia, an integration aide and sessional teacher who worked multiple casual and fixed-term jobs over the course of the study, explained:

I think in the workplace now there's a definitely, a much more competitive feeling and a much more stressful feeling than there used to be though, so that the permanents might feel my job can go casual. [Interviewer: So they feel a bit threatened by the casuals?] Yes. So I have, I have definitely felt that coming from people, that, "Oh God, they're putting on a casual. What do they think that my work can be done in, only a certain amount of time and that you don't have to have any real knowledge or why are we writing out working instructions. Is that so that they can just yell out, oh, we need someone today," to the line at the door [laughs] and invite the first person in and say, "There's the things, do it." (2009 Interview).

Hugh, a telecommunications sub-contractor in his 30s, explained that although he had a reasonably good relationship with Telstra's permanent employees in his area, contractors in general were treated with no respect by Telstra's direct employees who objected to the casualisation of the telecommunications sector:

Contractors have no respect at all in the Telstra workforce; that's for sure. You know, you're just a scum contractor, that's the way it works...You know, "you're taking another man's job." "No, we're not. Telstra wants it this way and that's Telstra that's created this." [Interviewer: but they see you as a threat to their job security?] Not necessarily a threat, but you're just a contractor. You're not as good as us. You're there as a peak load workforce. So when the load's at peak, that's when you're there for. [Interviewer: And would that then make it more difficult to integrate into the workplace community in terms of developing relationships?] Yeah, definitely. Like, I've worked hard. I do a good job and stuff, so I've got a fair bit of respect with Telstra workers whereas a lot of the other contractors around here haven't. They got no respect at all with the Telstra workers...But you still get the odd rogue Telstra worker who just want to stir it up and hang shit on you; have a bit of fun. It still affects your self-esteem, that's for sure (2011 Interview).

These examples illustrate that the growing incidence of non-standard work arrangements not only affects the social participation and self-esteem of the individual workers who are employed via those work arrangements. The employment arrangements also have a wider impact on job security within the broader labour market and on the quality of workers' experience of the psychosocial work environment.

8. Conclusion

Workers in Australia are increasingly being engaged under a variety of non-standard employment relationships, with Australia now having the highest incidence of non-standard work arrangements in the OECD. Employer groups, such as the Australian Industry Group, would like to see even more Australian workers employed via non-standard and ‘flexible’ employment contracts, with the AiG recently citing restrictions on the use of labour hire workers and independent contractors as threats to productivity (Hannan, 2011). But while the shift towards non-standard work arrangements may be benefiting businesses in enabling them to better respond to peaks and troughs in the global demand cycle, the evidence from this study suggests that workers are paying a high price for this shift in the social organisation of work.

8.1. Health Pathways

Some workers undoubtedly have a positive experience of non-standard work arrangements. For workers whose skills are in high demand and for those only seeking part-time work so as to supplement their household income, non-standard work arrangements can be of great benefit in enabling them to manage workloads and better balance work with study or family commitments. These *contented casuals* do not experience their employment arrangement as stressful or view it as an impediment to their freedom. In fact, for these workers, non-standard work helps them to achieve important life goals. However, for the majority of workers who are reliant on non-standard work and for those non-standard workers who are employed in industries or occupations where competition for employment is high, the flexibility of their employment contract is experienced as a major source of stress and a major impediment to their freedom and social participation. The threat of job loss looms large for these *reluctant casuals*, who feel under constant pressure to perform and who struggle to exert any control over their work scheduling.

I think it's definitely bad for your health. You just stress all the time and that means stress for the family, if you've got families, or stress for your partners; yeah, it's definitely a lot of stress and they lead to a whole lot of - high blood pressure, headaches, a lot of - I'm not very good on the whole health thing but I know that if you're stressed, you're more likely to get a whole range of things (Julia, sessional teacher/integration aide, 50s, 2011 Interview).

I've got a lot of friends who do different casual jobs, and it really drives them bonkers. You know, like mentally as well, but also some of them might be doing, like cleaning, and then they could have to do some night shift work, and then some day shift work, and it changes their hours all over the joint. So they're getting fatigued, and they also can't remember which job they've got..... If it's a roster and it's all over the place, you're just, "Ah Christ! Which hours am I working, I've got to work out this and I can't go off and do this that I had planned because now I've been put on a day shift rather than an afternoon shift." Yeah, it's very stressful (Matt, casual labourer, 20s, 2011 Interview).

As has been documented in this report, the *employment uncertainty experiences*—i.e. the intermittent and uncertain scheduling of work, limited and uncertain job tenure—and the *employment status differences*—e.g. lack of paid leave; stigmatisation of non-standard workers as ‘only casuals’; and exclusion of non-standard workers from meetings and training activities—associated with non-standard employment arrangements expose these workers to a number of additional material and psychosocial health hazards.

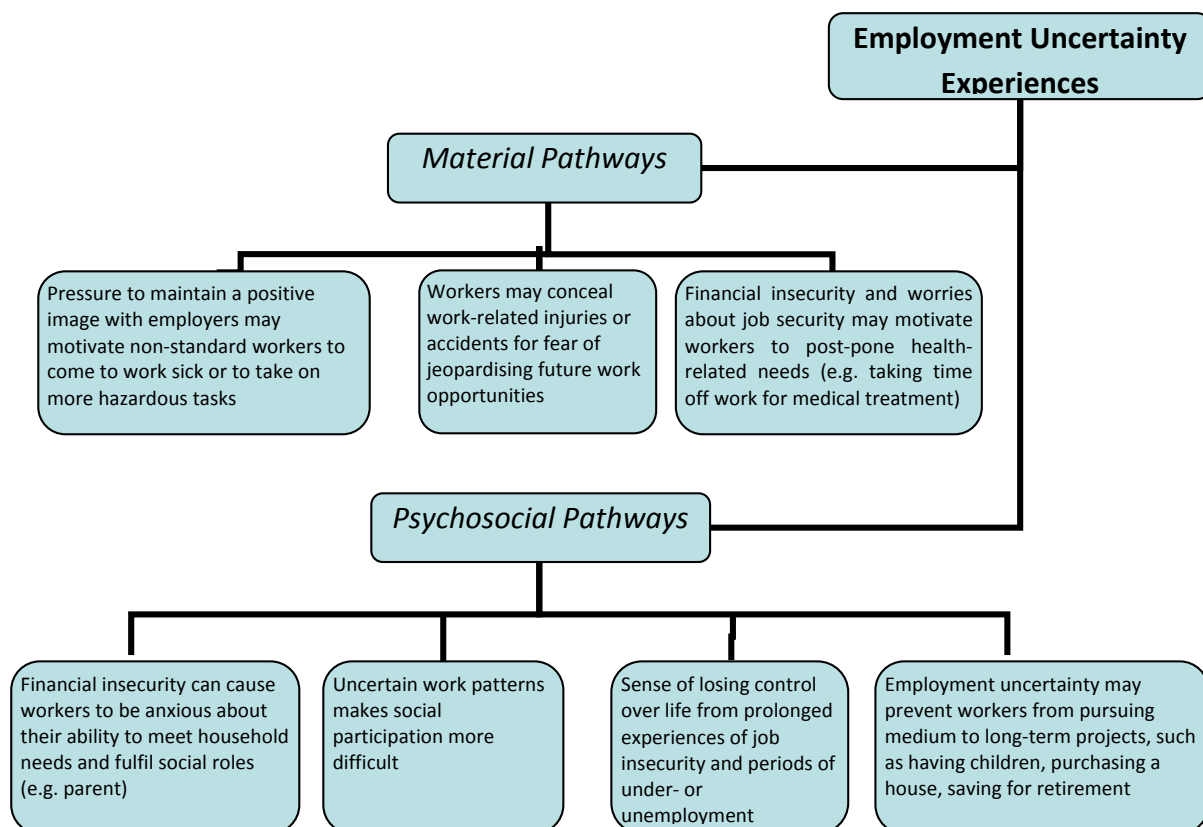


Figure 10: Employment Uncertain Experiences and Health Pathways

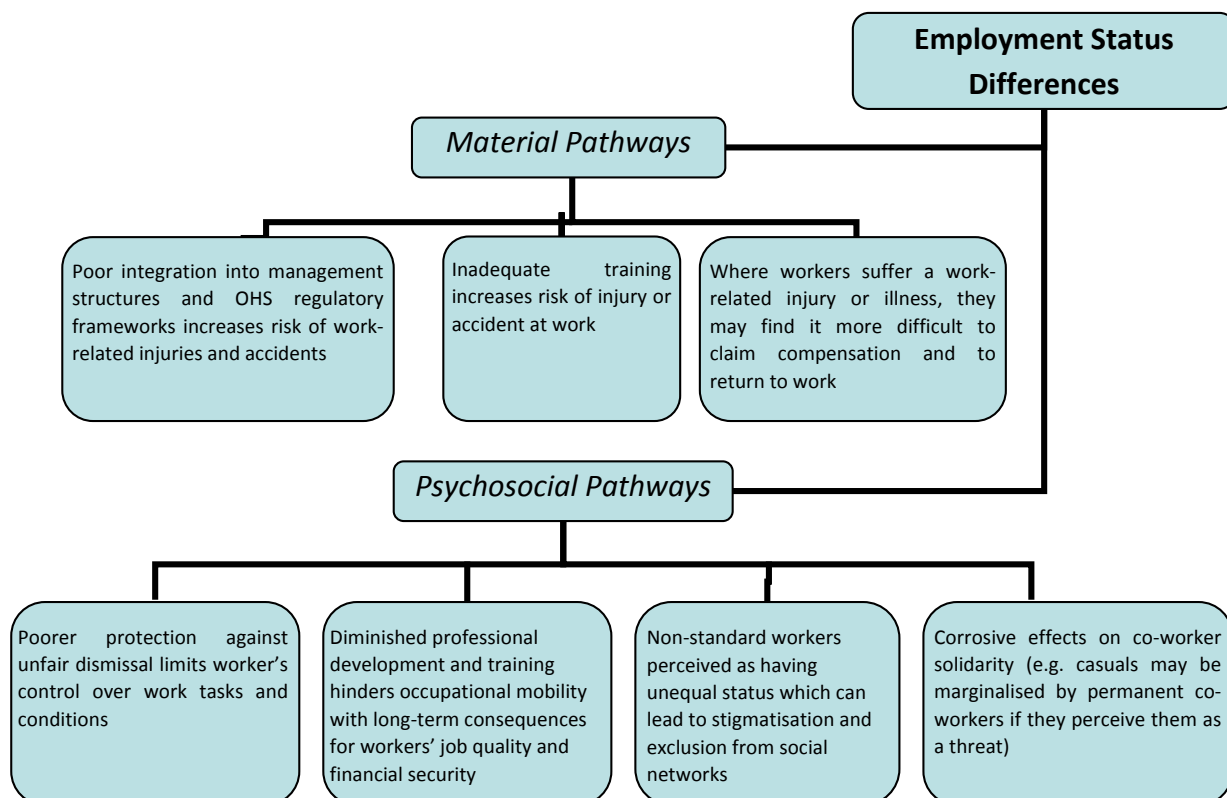


Figure 11: Employment Status Differences and Health Pathways

8.2. Insecure Work and Structural Disadvantage

Beyond the immediate impacts that the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard work have on workers' psychosocial and physical health, this study has also highlighted a number of important structural disadvantages related to non-standard work arrangements that are of broader concern to social justice and equality. By structural disadvantages, we mean forms of social and economic disadvantage that perpetuate inequality in the long run. One very significant source of concern here, especially for women, are the obstacles that non-standard workers face with respect to the accumulation of superannuation.

The superannuation system is predicated on workers remaining in stable, full-time employment as continuity of earnings is essential to generating an adequate retirement income (O'Brien & Burgess, 2004, pp. 170–80). The intermittent, part-time, and temporary nature of much non-standard work thus acts as a barrier to the accumulation of superannuation. Consequently, workers who remain in non-standard employment for extended periods of time are at severe risk of incurring financial insecurity and hardship in old age, particularly if the state seeks to withdraw from providing social security to retirees as superannuation becomes a more permanent feature of the Australian economy. Women stand to be particularly adversely affected by these developments inasmuch as they are not only more likely to participate in the labour force via non-standard employment arrangements but also more likely to work intermittently and on a part-time basis.

A second source of structural disadvantage arising from non-standard work arrangements is the diminished professional development and training opportunities available to workers in insecure employment. It is well documented both in Australia and overseas that workers who are employed via non-standard employment contracts receive not only fewer employer-provided training opportunities but also poorer quality training. The experiences of workers in this study confirm that non-standard employment arrangements disadvantage workers in terms of their occupational mobility, making it more difficult for them to progress their careers and to increase their earnings. Related to this is the poor incorporation of non-standard workers into well-defined pay structures with clear salary progression points. The upshot of both these disadvantages is that workers who enter the labour force via non-standard employment arrangements—especially as casual employees or independent contractors—risk being trapped in lower-skilled and more poorly paid jobs in the long run, with consequent impacts for their economic wellbeing later in life. Hence, not only do non-standard employment arrangements expose workers to additional material and psychosocial health hazards. The side effects of these employment arrangements on workers' occupational mobility also increase the risk of exposure over the long-term.

A final source of structural disadvantage are the barriers insecure workers face in terms of accessing work cover compensation and income protection coverage, although this issue has not been comprehensively dealt with in this study. For example, some non-standard workers—namely, independent contractors who work for multiple employers—are excluded from Work Cover schemes altogether while others with a fragmented work history, such as casuals who frequently change employer, may find themselves excluded in practice when it comes to long-term work related illnesses inasmuch as they may be unable to prove that their illness was caused by any particular job or employment. Moreover, anecdotal evidence from the interviews suggests that few non-standard workers have adequate income protection insurance should they develop a non-work related sickness or injury which prevents them from working. The potential difficulties that non-standard

workers face with respect to making work cover compensation claims and accessing and affording income protection coverage are a structural disadvantage for the reason that non-standard workers may be at greater risk of developing an illness or suffering an injury than permanent workers, when all else is equal. They are therefore at increased risk of being unable to work through injury or illness. At the same time, they may have fewer resources to cope with the financial impacts of being unable to work through injury or illness because of the obstacles they face prosecuting work cover claims and accessing and affording income protection coverage. They are thus doubly vulnerable.

Unfortunately, we have only been able to scratch at the surface of this issue in this report and much more work is needed to fully understand the extent to which non-standard workers are disadvantaged with respect to making work cover claims and accessing income protection coverage, as well as the implications on workers' long-term wellbeing.

8.3 Health Equity Concerns

The health risks and structural disadvantages associated with non-standard work arrangements indicate that the policy concerns raised by recent shifts in the social organisation of work go beyond labour market productivity concerns. The costs and benefits of employment arrangements cannot be measured simply in economic terms. The implications for key public policy domains outside of labour market regulation also need to be taken into account, especially in the area of health equity given the higher incidence of non-standard work arrangements among disadvantaged groups (e.g. low-income and rural workers).

While overall population health has improved markedly over the past 30 to 40 years, wide social inequalities in health persist. For example, in Victoria, the burden of mortality is higher in rural areas than in metropolitan areas, while rural men and women suffer a higher burden of disease from cardiovascular disease, cancer, neurological and sense disorders, and musculoskeletal diseases than those living in the major cities (Melbourne and Geelong). Similarly, living in a rural location is also linked with increased risk of suicide (Rural and Regional Health branch, 2009). The burden of disease and mortality in Australia is also distributed unequally between better and worse off groups, something that is true of almost all societies.

There is no biological reason why those who are wealthier *should* have better health than those who are poorer but, unfortunately, the gap in health between those who are better and worse off appears to be only getting worse. For example, between 1972 and 1996, the gap in average life-expectancy between members of the highest and lowest social classes in England and Wales widened from 5.5 years to 9.5 years, and much the same has occurred in other advanced economies (Michael Marmot, 2004, p. 26). To many, the existence of such widespread social inequalities in health is evidence that existing social structures are grossly unjust and unfair. As the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health has argued, 'Where systematic differences in health are judged to be avoidable by reasonable action they are, quite simply, unfair...Putting right these inequities...is a matter of social justice' (WHO, 2008, p. 2). Indeed, many believe that we have a particularly strong moral obligation to reduce *health* inequalities because health is so crucial to people's wellbeing and freedom (Anand, 2004, p. 17). Health, as Shlomi Segall explains, is morally important 'in ways that justify distributing medical resources more equally than we typically distribute other social goods, and wealth in particular' (Segall, 2007, pp. 342–3). What relevance has recent shifts in the social organisation of work to health equity in Australia?

As noted earlier in this report, the costs of recent shifts in the social organisation have fallen on some workers more than others. For example, non-standard work arrangements affect women and lower-skilled workers more than they do men and those with more marketable job skills. Firstly, this is because the more precarious forms of non-standard work (e.g. casual employment) are concentrated in the lower skilled and less well-paid occupations (e.g. machinery operators and manual labourers) whereas higher-skilled workers in better paid jobs are more likely to be employed on a permanent, ongoing basis. Similarly for women, traditionally female dominated (or pink collar) sectors of the economy, such as health and community services and teaching, have very high rates of casual employment while women in almost all occupations are more likely than their male colleagues to be employed on a non-standard basis *even when they work full-time hours*. But it is not just the fact that women and less skilled workers are more likely to be engaged under non-standard employment contracts that makes these workers particularly vulnerable to the effects of non-standard work arrangements. In the case of lower-skilled workers at least, the social disadvantages they *already* experience before entering the workforce in terms of lower income and poorer skills also affect the quality of their experience of non-standard work. This is because the precariousness of non-standard employment is mediated by workers' financial security and labour market mobility. For instance, workers who can change employers with relative ease are less vulnerable to the coercive effects of non-standard work arrangements. Because they are more confident of finding employment elsewhere should they quit their existing job, these workers have less need to conceal workplace injuries and OHS concerns, to come to work sick or injured, or to take on more hazardous work tasks in order to maintain a positive impression with their employer so as to secure future work. Similarly, workers who are financially secure are less vulnerable to the effects of intermittent work scheduling because they have more resources to cope with fluctuations in their earnings and periods of under- or unemployment.

As this study has sought to stress, it is not only women and those from less privileged backgrounds that are shouldering the lion's share of the social and health costs generating by the rise in non-standard work in Australia. Rural workers are also more likely to be affected by non-standard employment arrangements than workers in urban centres. Again, the reasons are twofold. Firstly, there is a higher incidence of non-standard employment in rural and regional areas. But secondly, as in the case of less skilled workers from under-privileged backgrounds, economic conditions in rural and regional areas also play a role in determining the quality of workers' experience of non-standard work. One example of this is the depressed labour market in some rural and regional locations.

Where job opportunities are limited, there is more pressure on workers to keep their existing jobs. At the same time, greater competition for jobs reduces the need for employers to provide incentives—for example, high remuneration and favourable working conditions—in order to attract and retain workers. This was something that a number of those interviewed commented upon:

If I was living in Melbourne, I'd get a job within one week; I'd be picking which job I want. And that's true. Because every time I've gone to Melbourne, like I hand out a few resumes out...and, yeah, within a few days, I've already got about three offers. And I'm like, which one do I take? [Interviewer: So it sounds like people are more desperate for work in regional areas?] Yeah, they're more desperate...There's not enough jobs to go around so everyone's waiting in line. I mean, even I've done it. I've sat there. You see a certain company like [] jewellers, they're always advertising positions; apparently it's because everyone who goes there, they don't really like working there. But, you know, you find a lot of places like that. And I've done it where there's a place that some people don't like. But I don't care; I'm desperate for the work. I'll be

just sitting there waiting and it's like, OK, any week now there'll be another add in the paper for that position, like [] or something. It's like, "there it is, go for it." [Interviewer: Do employers ever take advantage of that...to then offer people poorer jobs?] Yeah, security is like that. A lot of them are saying, "I'll work for half the wage for the whole night if you give me this shift."...So you can't compete because every else is competing. You've got to put down what you're willing to do. When it comes to casual work, yeah, as I said, everyone's waiting in line. If you don't want the job, you go out that door and I'll bring this bloke in and he can start working in your job straight away. And if he doesn't work out, then there's, you know, 50 people behind him...Also, because people are so desperate [for work], they just go through 'em. It's like batches of people. The same with [], they'll just bring in some people, then piss 'em off. Then bring in some more people, and piss them off. But what can you do about it? (Matt, casual labourer, 20s, 2011 Interview)

Alternatives to here, there's very few alternatives, that's it [Interviewer: so there's a greater sort of potential that employers could exploit the workers?] Yeah for sure, yeah for sure. They know – and well this area, traditionally, it's got a fairly high unemployment rate – and they know there's plenty in the pool for casual work. They've just got to put it out there, put it out there saying 'we're looking for casuals.' And really, there's plenty of people around and a pretty broad range of people too because this is a retirement area as well. There's plenty of older people around just looking for a bit of casual work – they only want a half dozen hours a week or whatever, just to supplement the pension or whatever...And they know it. Employers know it. I know the co-op, they use it too because the place over there relies on casuals. And they know they're better off because the casual rate is no higher than the normal full-time rate, and they know that. And they know they don't have to pay holiday pay, they don't have to pay sick pay and all the rest of it. So yeah; they play on that, there's no doubt about it (Daniel, casual fisheries work, 50s, 2011 Interview)

Now I think, well a lot of the farm industry's sort of closed up so there's more people looking for those jobs that come up. Instead of a couple of people applying, there might be ten because there's more people with no work now I think. I think it has become a bit more like that in the last few years with the horticultural side...more people looking for the same jobs. [Interviewer: And does that mean less pressure on employers to provide people with decent jobs?] Yeah, that's probably the way to look at it. They haven't got the pressure on them to do something because less people are going to complain because you need the job (Michael, fruit-picker, 40s, 2011 Interview)

All this suggests that, insofar as the employment uncertainty experiences and employment status differences associated with non-standard employment arrangements give rise to material and psychosocial health hazards, recent shifts in the social organisation of work may contribute to a widening of social inequalities in health. The need to tackle existing social inequalities in health as a matter of social justice has already been identified as a key public policy concern, particularly in regards to improving rural health outcomes. However, if the shift towards non-standard work is not tempered, efforts to achieve greater health equity in Australia may prove less than successful.

One of the key insights from research on the social determinants of health over the past 30 years is that efforts to reduce social inequalities in health cannot concentrate on the provision of improved health care services alone. While health care services are important in protecting and recovering health, the quality of people's educational and employment opportunities and the conditions in which they live have an equally, if not more important, role to play in contributing to their health.¹⁷

¹⁷ Most social epidemiologists now accept that inequalities in the distribution of the social determinants of health account for a far greater proportion of the unequal distribution of disease and mortality than either natural biological variation or people's unequal level of access to healthcare services. See (R. Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 26).

‘Achieving health equity,’ as the final report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health stresses, ‘requires safe, secure, and fairly paid work, year-round work opportunities, and a healthy work-life balance for all’ (WHO, 2008, p. 8). Consequently, to improve the health of people living in rural and regional areas and reduce the gap in life-expectancy between better and worse off social groups, careful decisions will have to be made about the allocation of resources, and policy options evaluated for their health impacts. Trade-offs may need to be made between directing resources towards the provision of improved and expanded health care services—the preferred strategy of the National Health and Hospital Reform Commission¹⁸—and targeting resources towards the provision of wider work opportunities, more stable employment arrangements and better psychosocial work environments. In policy areas historically outside the purview of health, such as labour market regulation and industrial relations policy, trade-offs may also need to be made between increased productivity and community wellbeing.

¹⁸ See Chapter 3, *A Healthier Future for All Australians*, Final report of the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (June, 2009). Available at www.health.gov.au/internet/nhhrc/publishing.nsf/Content/nhhrc-report.

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