

## Atypical labour markets in Sweden

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### Flexible employment forms in Sweden

In 2015, 26% of all in employment in Sweden were either part-time workers, on fixed-term contracts or solo self-employed. The share that was either part-time workers or temporarily employed has decreased from 23.3 percent in year 2000 to 21.8% in 2015. The share of workers with marginal part-time or fixed-term contracts, has increased slightly since 2000. By contrast, the share of people working long hours has decreased between 2008 and 2015. The total share of self-employed has almost been stable between 2008 and 2015. Temporary agency workers are not measured as a distinct category in the Swedish LFS but constitute approximately 1.5% of all employees.

### Variations in flexible employment across sectors

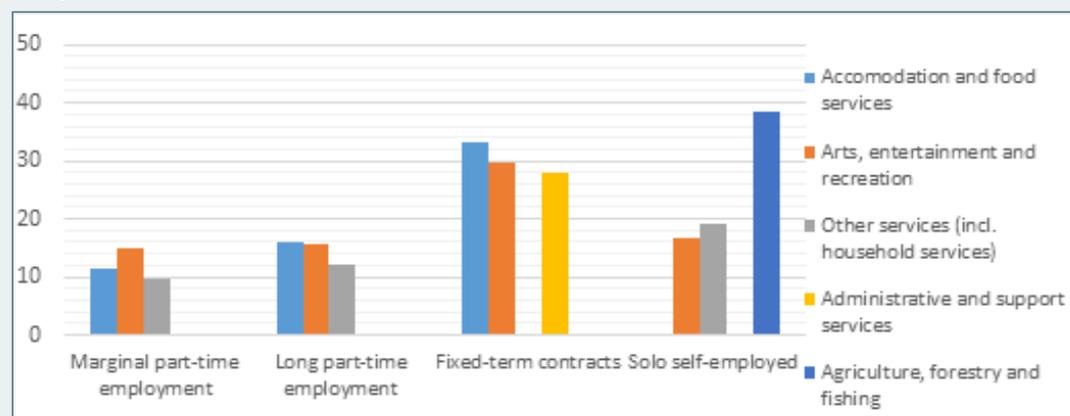
In 2015, non-standard contracts were most frequent within the sectors of *Accommodation and Food services*; *Arts, Entertainment and Recreation*; and *Other services* (including household services). Within *Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing* it is common to be solo self-employed, while fixed-term contracts are frequent within *Administrative and support services*.

Figure 1: Recent development in non-standard employment forms in Sweden (2000-2015) in percent of all employees (15-74 years)



Source: Authors own calculations based on LFS data.

Figure 2: The three sectors with the largest shares of non-standard employment forms in Sweden in 2015, percent of all in employment (15-74 years), weighted yearly data



Source: Authors own calculations based on LFS data.

## Characteristics of flexible workers

The relation between sector of employment and non-standard contracts has been further scrutinized by means of multinomial regression analyses. Working within the sector of Accommodation and food services constitutes a higher risk of being on a fixed-term or part time contract. This effect however decreases when controlling for gender, age, education and employment status. When adding country of birth to the analyses, we find that the odds for being on a fixed-term contract are higher for people in the category Other services than for people working with Accommodation and Food. In the analyses of solo self-employment, the control variables do not affect the odds for the various sectors in any noteworthy way.

Some groups are generally at higher risk of having non-standard contracts: students; people with more than one job; and people born outside the Nordic countries. These are all groups that are generally facing difficulties to gain a foothold on the labour market. Men and women show differently profiles regarding non-standard employment: Men are more likely to be self-employed, while women are more likely to work reduced hours.

Moreover, the shares *involuntarily* having long part-time work (not shown in Figure 1) and fixed term contracts have increased during the period.

## Recent debates and regulatory changes

A recent debate among politicians and union representatives concerns how to manage the problem of involuntary part-time work, not least how to regulate employers' practice to, instead of dismissing personnel, reducing working hours from full-time to part-time. In 2016, a legal adjustment were made to restrict the possibilities for employers to use so called "stacking" of different types of fixed contracts. Stacking has been applied to circumvent the rule that a temporary position automatically should be regarded as a permanent position after two years of employment. Regarding solo self-employment, the debates – and calls for regulatory changes – generally stem from its unclear legal status. Hence, many different assessments and disputes have unfolded in regard to whether a solo self-employed should be defined as an employer or an employee

## Future challenges

There is a risk that fixed-term contracts will increase the coming years, when the bulk of migrants arriving during the last years try to gain a foothold in the labour market. It is important to safeguard that temporary employment constitutes a stepping-stone to better quality jobs, rather than becoming a dead-end into unstable, low-paid employment with few possibilities to move into better positions. While digital platforms give new opportunities for flexibility, both from a worker, employer and a consumer perspective, it is important that these new forms of employment relationships are regulated in an appropriate way to prevent risks of workers abuse.



### The future of work: Opportunities and challenges for the Nordic models

In this collaborative project funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers, more than 30 researchers from the five Nordic countries study:

- What are the main drivers and consequences of the changing future of work in the Nordic countries?
- In what ways will digitalisation, new forms of employment, and platform work influence the Nordic models?
- What kind of renewal in the regulation of labour rights, health and safety, and collective bargaining is warranted to make the Nordic model fit for the future?

Through action and policy oriented studies and dialogue with stakeholders, the objective is to enhance research-based knowledge dissemination, experience exchange and mutual learning across the Nordic boundaries. The project runs from 2017 to 2020, and is organised by Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research, Oslo. [www.fafo.no](http://www.fafo.no)

This brief emerges from Pillar III Self-employed, independent and atypical work, coordinated by Anna Ilsøe, [ai@faos.dk](mailto:ai@faos.dk)

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