How job quality matters to workers' health outcomes

Not all jobs are created equal. Some forms of employment are insecure and unrewarding. They leave people vulnerable to stress, economic hardship and poorer health outcomes.

To improve society's health and wellbeing, the focus is often on creating more jobs. It should also be on **creating good jobs**.

What proportions of jobs in the Canadian labour market are considered good jobs or bad jobs?

To get a picture of job quality in the Canadian labour market, Institute for Work & Health researchers drew on survey data of **2.8 million working-aged Canadians** who completed the long-form census in 2006. They sorted this study population into five groups, based on three indicators. Because the study population is considered nationally representative, the sizes of the five groups within the study are thought to mirror the **actual proportions** of five types of job quality within the Canadian labour market.

The three indicators used

Hours worked
Number of hours in the previous week

Employment stability
Weeks employed in the previous year

Earnings
Income from wages, salaries, or tips

Based on these three measures, they grouped Canadians into five categories of job quality.

Five groups seen in the data

Standard employment
secure and stable work with full-time hours, favourable overall working conditions and high earnings

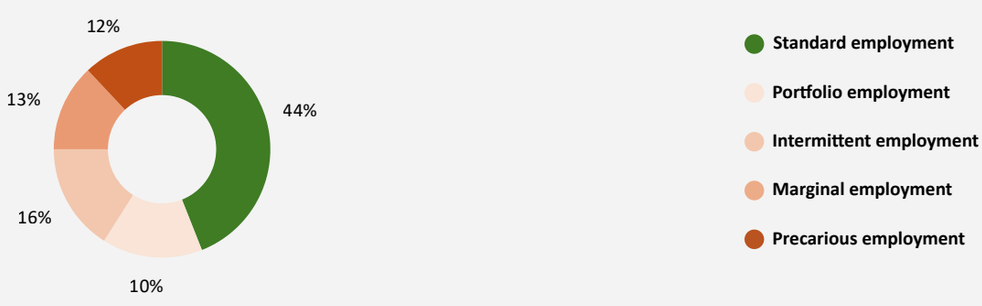
Portfolio employment
the highest earnings of all groups, with stable, year-round employment though long hours

Intermittent employment
a modest income in sporadic and unstable employment, likely seasonal and irregular jobs

Marginal employment
lower than average earnings in jobs with limited hours

Precarious employment
the lowest earnings of all groups, with part-time work in low paying jobs for parts of the year and periods of unemployment for other parts

Proportion of the Canadian labour market



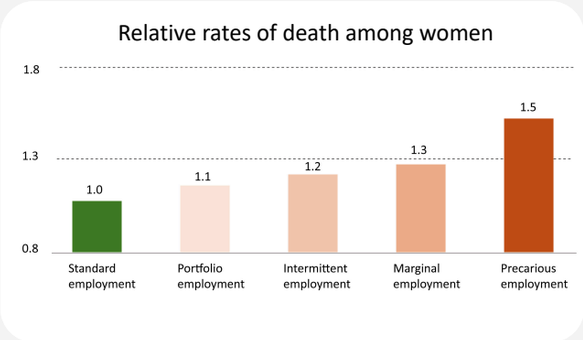
Who are the workers in each job quality type?

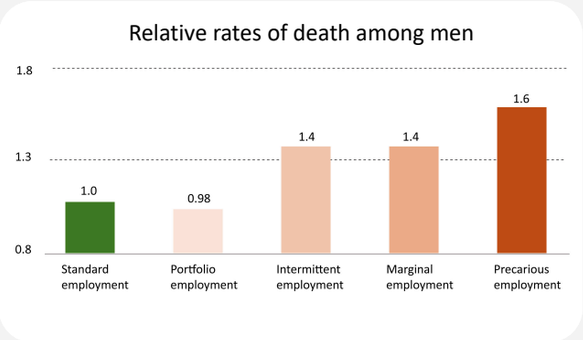
Of the 44% of Canadians in standard jobs:
- 46% are women
- 26% are young workers
- 15% are non-white workers

Of the 12% of Canadians who are in precarious jobs:
- 55% are women
- 60% are young workers
- 25% are non-white workers

Relative rates of death, overall

These graphs show how the rates of death in each group compare to the rates of death among those in standard employment.



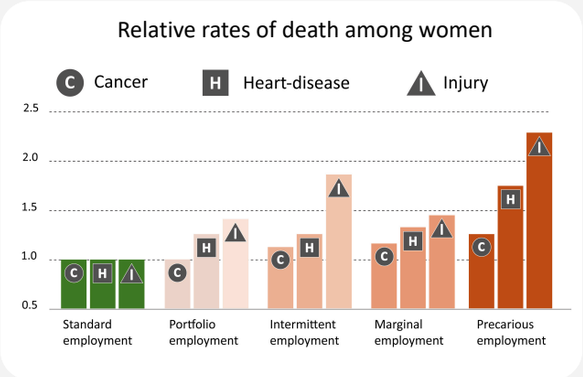


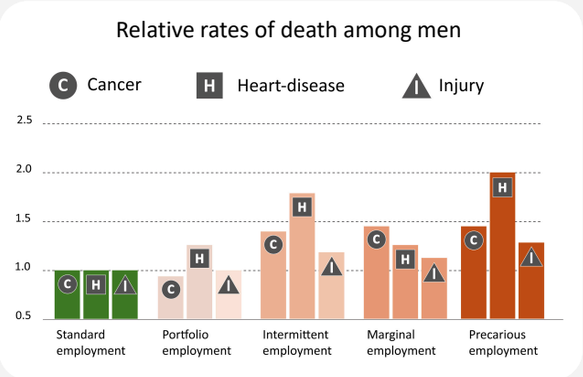
Workers in the precarious employment groups are **1.5 to 1.6 times as likely** to die over 13 years, compared to to the workers in the standard employment group.

In general, death rates increase as job quality decreases.

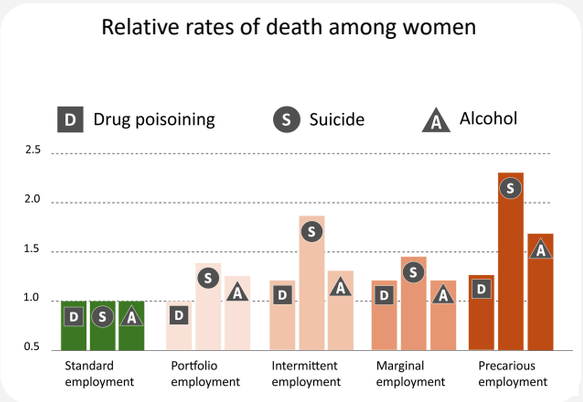
The only exception is for men in portfolio employment, whose risk of dying over 13 years is almost the same as that of men in standard employment.

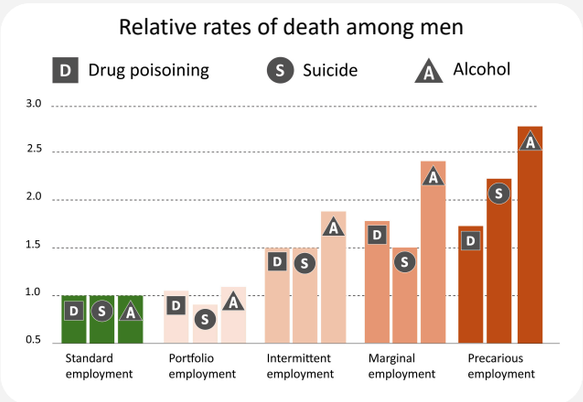
Relative rates of death from cancer, heart disease and unintended injury





Relative rates of death from drug poisoning, alcohol and suicide





All above results have been adjusted to account for differences in age, race/ethnicity, immigration status, marital status, household size, region of residence, rural/urban characteristics of residence, and education. To see more details about these findings, go to the project page.

The Institute for Work & Health is an independent, not for-profit research organization that conducts and mobilizes research to support policy-makers, employers and workers in creating healthy, safe and inclusive work environments.
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