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Living with Uncertain Work[1].

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Abstract

This article examines the different forms of uncertainty that workers in precarious jobs experience on a day-to-day basis. The article highlights the various ways in which uncertainty at work spills over into workers' lives away from the workplace and provides a representative and up-to-date comparison of the experiences of workers in permanent, fixed-term and casual forms of employment. The article achieves its objectives through a mixed-methods research design comprising an analysis of data from the Understanding Society survey and interviews with workers in the retail, higher education, logistics and social care sectors.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that the apparent recovery of the UK labour market since the Great Recession masks a number of underlying problems. Many of the new jobs that have been created since the start of the crisis are low-waged (Mayhew, 2012) and there has been a substantial rise in the number of employed workers who want more hours of paid work (Bell and Blanchflower, 2018). There has also been a growth in insecure types of employment. The TUC (2017: 12) has estimated that 3.2 million workers in the UK face insecurity in work. Insecure workers include people employed on zero hours contracts, people in insecure temporary work, including agency, casual and seasonal workers, and low-paid self-employed workers. These developments indicate a substantial increase in precarious

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employment, which the ILO (2010: 27) defines as work that is 'performed in the formal and informal economy and is characterized by variable levels and degrees of objective (legal status) and subjective (feeling) characteristics of uncertainty and insecurity' (ILO 2010: 27). Precarious employment is likely to involve relatively low wages and a high risk of in-work poverty, substantial employment insecurity or employment of a limited duration, weaker employment and social protection rights when compared to other workers and lower levels of worker control over how and when work is performed (Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989; Vosko, 2010; Standing, 2011).

Some of the problems associated with precarious employment were acknowledged in the recent 'Taylor Review of Modern Working Practises', conducted on behalf of the UK government. However, the report also applauded the 'flexibility' of the UK labour market, claiming that:

> "The UK is good at encouraging economic activity and creating jobs. 'The British way' works and we don't need to overhaul the system. The Review believes that maintaining the flexible and adaptable approach to labour market regulation has benefitted the UK so far, but focusing more closely on the quality of work as well as the number of people employed, will take us in the right direction." (Taylor et al., 2017: 31.)

This paper explores the concealed costs associated with the UK's 'flexible' labour market and employment practices. Drawing upon quantitative and qualitative data, the paper highlights in particular the corrosive effects of uncertainty in relation to work and employment. The terms risk and uncertainty are often employed in discussions of precarious employment (for example, Kalleberg, 2009) but are rarely defined and often used inter-changeably. By contrast, economists regard risk and uncertainty as separate concepts, following the distinction made by the economist Frank Knight (1921). According to Knight, risk is present in situations in which the odds of different possible outcomes occurring can be calculated in advance. In situations characterised by uncertainty, by contrast, the possible outcomes are unknowable and therefore the odds of specific outcomes occurring cannot be determined in advance. This implies that outcomes cannot be predicted and it is this aspect of precarious work that provides the

main focus for this paper. Using a multi-method approach, the paper examines the consequences of unpredictable working time and work-related incomes for workers' wellbeing and shows that unpredictability in employment creates unpredictability in workers' personal lives. The paper also compares the experiences of workers in casual, fixed-term and permanent employment, focusing particularly on the consequences of uncertainty in respect of working time and workers' perceptions of their employment security. The paper begins by describing the growth in precarious work in the UK. It then presents the findings of an analysis of the UK's Understanding Society Survey, which explores the implications of uncertainty for workers' ability to exert control over their working lives and the resulting consequences for their job satisfaction and wellbeing. This is followed by an analysis of qualitative data gathered from interviews with workers in the home care, retail, logistics and higher education sectors. These are sectors of the UK economy in which work-related uncertainty is relatively wide-spread. The interviews shed light on the lived experience of uncertainty, the hardships that it imposes on workers and how unpredictable work influences workplace power dynamics.

2. The growth of uncertain work

The economic crisis that commenced in 2008 had a substantial impact on the UK labour market, leading to a marked increase in unemployment, under-employment and labour market inactivity, particularly among young people (Goujard et al. 2011; Heyes et al. 2016). Although the rate of aggregate unemployment began to fall after 2011, the apparent recovery in the labour market coincided with increases in forms of employment often associated with precariousness (McKay et al. 2012). One notable development has been the growth in the number of zero-hours contracts, which encompass all cases 'where the employer unequivocally refuses to commit itself in advance to make any give quantum of work available' (Deakin and Morris (2012: 167). The number of workers on zero hours contracts increased from 70,000 in 2006 to 810,000 in 2016 (TUC 2017: 12). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), 2.8 per cent of all people in employment were employed on a zero-hours contract in their main job during October to December 2016. In addition to experiencing extreme uncertainty in relation to the number of hours they may be asked to work, workers with a zero hours contract have very limited employment rights and social protection. For example, a lack of guaranteed hours has

resulted in workers experiencing difficulties when attempting to claim tax-credits or income-based JobSeeker's Allowance (unemployment benefit) (Adams and Prassi, 2008).

Self-employment has also increased and accounts for almost one-third of the additional employment created between April-June 2010 and January-March 2017. Much of the new self-employment is low paid (Blanchflower 2015) and 1.7 million self-employed workers are thought to receive less than the government's National Living Wage (TUC 2017: 12). Furthermore, the collapse of the courier firm City Link in 2015 drew attention to the vulnerable position of self-employed people working as contractors while the 2016 Employment Tribunal ruling that prevented Uber from classifying drivers as self-employed highlighted the problem of bogus self-employment in the 'gig economy'.

The proportion of workers in temporary jobs increased slightly during the 'Great Recession' but has more recently edged downward. In January-March 2017, 5.9 percent of all employees were in temporary jobs. Of these workers, 27 percent reported that they had taken a temporary job because they were unable to find a permanent position (ONS 2017). The critical question, for those for whom temporary employment is not freely chosen, is whether and how quickly workers can move into permanent jobs. Workers with temporary contracts receive less employer-funded training than permanent employees, which may negatively affect their chances of moving into more secure employment (Bryson 2007; Cutuli and Guetto, 2013). Evidence from a number of EU countries suggests that temporary jobs can serve as career traps rather than stepping stones (Korpi and Levin, 2001; Scherer, 2004). More generally, upward transitions within the labour market have become more problematic as the number of relatively low-paying, (mainly) service sector jobs has grown (Goos and Manning 2007; Nolan and Slater 2010). Young workers in particular are facing longer and more complex education-to-work transitions, involving increasingly differentiated trajectories and less security than in the past (Green, 2013; Lewis and Heyes 2017).

Although precarious forms of employment have increased since 2008, precariousness had been identified as a trend in the UK and elsewhere well before the economic crisis began. The drivers of precarious work have been much debated. Kalleberg (2009) has emphasised the impact of globalisation and technological change, coupled to national development such as the weakening of trade unions and

the erosion of social and employment protections. Prosser's (2016) study of precarious work in eight EU member countries points to the importance of national regulatory frameworks, including weak enforcement of labour laws and the liberalisation of laws relating to, among other things, probation periods and the use of fixed-term contracts. There are also sectoral drivers that have encouraged a growth in precarious work in particular parts of the UK economy. At their root, these drivers involve pressures to reduce costs. Analysis by the TUC (2017) has shown that hospitality (restaurants, bars etc.) accounts for one-fifth of the increase in insecure employment since 2011 while residential care and education each account for one-tenth of the increase. The growth of insecure work in residential care has been encouraged by cuts in local authorities' adult social care budgets, which have placed intense pressure on labour costs (ADASS, 2016). The ability of providers to deliver contracts based upon local authority set charge-rates increasingly depends upon offering zero hours contracts for homecare workers. These insecure contracts have become standard across the homecare sector and it has recently been calculated that 58 per cent of homecare workers are on zero hours contracts (Skills for Care, 2017). These workers may not receive pay for all the hours they work (Bessa et al., 2013). For example, the UKHCA (2012) has estimated that travel time comprises an average of 19 per cent of the hours worked by homecare workers, but it is typically time that is not paid for. UNISON's Ethical Care Charter, which has been adopted by 30 Councils, demands the payment of a Living Wage for homecare workers and a move away from the use of zero hours contracts, but recent research suggests that this has proved problematic (Hayes and Moore, 2017). While a number of councils have given homecare workers the option of a having a guaranteed hours contract (GHCs), some care workers have been reluctant to have them because they involve unscheduled working time, including early mornings, evenings and weekends. Although workers with zero hours contracts are ostensibly free to refuse to work unscheduled hours, this is not the case for workers with a guaranteed hours contract.

The proliferation of insecure contracts in higher education has been subject to growing media and union attention in recent years. Creeping marketization and an increasingly uncertain funding regime have encouraged higher education employers to manage risk by employing teaching staff on 'atypical' contracts. According to the Universities and Colleges Union (2016), drawing on data from the Higher

Education Statistics Agency (HESA), 53.2 per cent of all academic staff and 49 per cent of teaching staff at UK universities are employed on what can be regarded as 'insecure contracts'.

Common to all sectors are attempts by employers to create a closer match between hours demanded and hours supplied. The growth in zero hours contracts is one manifestation of this strategy. A further manifestation, which is particularly apparent in the retail sector, is the use of short-hours contracts. These contracts guarantee workers a minimum number of hours each week, with the possibility that they will be offered additional hours (CIPD, 2015:3). A survey of members of the trade union USDAW (USDAW, 2014) found that more than half of respondents regularly worked additional hours above their contracted hours and that three-quarters of these workers would have preferred that those additional hours be guaranteed.

Employers have also sought to reduce labour costs by contracting with workers who are ostensibly self-employed. This strategy is apparent in the logistics sector. Dominant firms within this sector have increased control over the logistics function and focused on driving down costs and guaranteeing service delivery. In so doing, employers have made increasing use of atypical employment and also contracted with a growing number of self-employed workers paid on a piece-rate basis (Moore and Newsome, 2018). These 'owner-drivers' typically work alongside directly employed drivers in large delivery companies and are paid according to how many deliveries they make.

Uncertain and precarious work tilts the power balance within the employment relationship even further in favour of the employer. According to Bourdieu (1998: 85), insecure work situations disempower workers, giving rise to 'flexploitation' or 'a mode of domination of a new kind, based on the creation of a generalised and permanent state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission, into the acceptance of exploitation'. Research evidence has highlighted growing work pressures and fear at work (Gallie et al 2013; Newsome et al., 2015). Although there is a risk of overlooking the extent to which the consequences of precarious work for workers are contingent on factors such as their attachment to work and the availability of alternatives (Campbell and Price, 2016), a substantial body of evidence has shown that job insecurity is a stressor that has negative consequences for the health and wellbeing of workers and that problems accumulate the longer job insecurity continues (De Witte et al., 2016). This

paper adds to this body of evidence by (1) providing a detailed investigation of different forms of uncertainty that workers in precarious jobs experience on a day-to-day basis; (2) highlighting the various ways in which uncertainty at work spills over into workers' lives away from the workplace; and (3) providing a representative and up-to-date comparison of the experiences of workers in permanent, fixed-term and casual forms of employment. Many studies of the consequences of precarious employment (e.g. De Cuyper and De Witte 2006) group together fixed-term and other time-limited forms of employment. However, fixed-term employment, in which an end date is known, is less uncertain that casual employment that may involve irregular spot contracts. For this reason, this paper treats casual employment as a distinct category.

3. Research methods

This paper draws on research undertaken for the TUC in 2017. The research explored experiences of insecure work in the UK and involved both quantitative and qualitative methods. The former comprised an analysis of the UK's Understanding Society Survey (USoC), which is a representative survey of households in the UK and the successor to the British Household Panel Survey, to compare workers in permanent jobs with those in casual and fixed-term employment. The findings are mainly derived from Wave 6 of USoC, which was undertaken in 2015. Data from Wave 5 of USoC, undertaken in 2014, were also drawn upon for part of the analysis. The qualitative component of the research methods involved interviews with workers on insecure contracts in four sectors across three geographical regions: London/South; North of England and East of England. The sectors were higher education, logistics, social care and retail. In the logistics sector, interviews were also conducted with self-employed drivers and/or 'so called life-style couriers'. This category of worker is not covered by the survey findings, but its inclusion within the qualitative findings enables further insights into the experiences of uncertain work. In most cases access to workers was secured through trade union contacts at workplace and/or local level. In each of the sectors, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with individual workers. These were supplemented with focus group(s) comprising three or four workers in each case and selected through purposive sampling. The number of workers who

participated was 18 in retail, 23 in higher education, 23 in logistics and 14 in social care. Workers were asked about their work histories, their experiences of uncertain employment and the consequences for their wellbeing, financial security and ability to plan for their future. The focus groups and interviews lasted between one and two hours and were recorded and transcribed with the consent of participants. The transcriptions were then subjected to thematic analysis.

4. Survey Findings

We begin the analysis of the survey findings by mapping the characteristics of workers in casual employment, drawing on Wave 6 of USoC. The survey covered 19,156 employees. Of these, 92.4 percent had a permanent job, 2.9 percent had a contract for a fixed period, 1.6 percent were in casual work and 1 per cent were agency workers. The remaining employees were seasonal workers or had some other form of non-permanent employment. For the purposes of our analysis, 'casual employment' is composed of casual workers, agency workers, seasonal workers and all other workers in non-permanent jobs, excluding those with a fixed-term contract. The latter are treated as a separate category. Self-employed workers are excluded from our analysis.

Table 1 provides information about the sample, comparing workers in permanent, casual and fixed-term employment. More than two fifths of all workers in casual jobs were aged between 18 and 24 years and that almost one third worked in elementary occupations. Casual employment was comparatively rare in higher-level occupations, although substantial percentages of workers with fixed-term contracts were to be found among professional and associate professional and technical occupations. The percentage of workers who identified as 'non-white' in casual jobs was, at 16 percent, double the percentage identifying as non-white in permanent and fixed-term jobs. Women were disproportionately represented among workers with a fixed-term contract.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

4.1. Working time and job autonomy

In Table 2 workers' normal working times are compared. Three findings stand out: firstly, a relatively large percentage of workers in casual employment (12 percent) had no regular pattern of work; secondly, compared to workers in permanent and fixed-term posts, they were more likely to work only in the evenings; and thirdly, they were less likely to work during the day.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Workers also differed in relation to the amount of autonomy they had in their jobs. As can be seen from Table 3, the percentages of workers in casual jobs who indicated that they had little or no autonomy in relation to various aspects of their work were larger than those for workers in permanent and fixed-term employment. For example, 52 percent of casual workers said that they had no autonomy over their hours of work, compared to 36 percent of those in permanent jobs and 35 percent of those in fixed-term jobs. These findings echo Wilson and Ebert's (2013) examination of casual workers in Australia. Their analysis of the 2005 Australian Survey of Social Attitude demonstrated that most workers in casual jobs were not free to determine their hours of work and almost half were unable to decide how their work was organised (compared to one-fifth of workers in non-casual jobs).

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

4.2. Job satisfaction and wellbeing

An important objective of the study was to investigate the consequences of uncertainty for workers' job satisfaction and wellbeing. A logistic regression was conducted to assess whether the likelihood of

experiencing job satisfaction was related to different dimensions of uncertainty. In particular, the model evaluated the consequences of being employed on a casual or fixed-term contract and having no regular working time pattern. The model contained the following variables:

- Job satisfaction: job satisfaction has two possible values: 1 = having some positive level of job satisfaction; 0 = having a negative or neutral level of job satisfaction.
- Occupation: the model uses the ILO's International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)[2] and the four skill levels that are commonly used to group occupations together[3]. Level 4 includes legislators, senior officials and managers and professionals. This is the reference group for Table 4, against which the three other occupation groups are compared. Level 3 comprises technicians and associate professionals. Level 2 is composed of clerks, service workers, shop and market sales workers, skilled agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related workers and plant and machine operators and assemblers. Level 1 comprises elementary occupations.
- Age: four age groups are shown in the Table. The reference group, against which each one is compared, is '55 years and older'.
- Sector: those who work in the private sector are compared with a reference group comprising those who work in public organisations and NGOs.
- Working time: the 'job hours' variables measure the number of hours workers typically work in a week. The reference group is composed of those working 30-39 hours. 'Work weekends' measures whether workers sometimes or always work at the weekend while 'no normal working time' includes anyone who does not state that they usually work in the morning/afternoon or during the day.
- Ethnic group: people who self-identified as 'non-white' in the survey are compared with those who identified as 'white' (the reference group).

[2] http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_172572.pdf
[3] http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ier/research/classification/isco88/english/s2/

- Contractual status: workers in casual and fixed-term employment are compared to those in permanent jobs (the reference group).

Table 4 presents regression coefficients, standard errors and odds ratios. The findings show that workers in casual employment were less likely to experience job satisfaction than those in permanent jobs. By contrast, the difference between workers in permanent and fixed-term employment is not statistically significant. With respect to working time, the odds of experiencing job satisfaction were lower for those with no regular hours of work than for those with regular hours. It also appears that workers with very short hours (1-15 hours) were more likely to experience job satisfaction than those who work 30-39 hours (the reference category). In addition, workers in lower-level occupations (levels 1 and 2) were less likely to experience job satisfaction than those in the highest-level occupations (level 4) while women were more likely than men to experience job satisfaction.

A further regression was run to assess the consequences of insecure jobs for workers' wellbeing, relative to that of other workers. Wellbeing was measured in terms of job-related depression and job-related anxiety[4]. Research in occupational psychology (see Warr, 1990; 2013) has found that 'enthusiasm-depression' and 'contentment-anxiety' are the main dimensions in which workers' feelings about their jobs vary. The dimensions capture a wider range of emotional responses than measures of 'job satisfaction' in enabling job-related pleasure and stimulation to be distinguished from each other (e.g. the possibility that jobs might be pleasant and not induce anxiety, yet also be unstimulating) (Green, 2006: 153).

The model includes the independent variables used in the assessment of job satisfaction. The following additional variables were included:

[4] Using scales in USoC that are based on Warr (1990). Further information is available at: https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/dataset-documentation/wave/2/datafile/b_indresp/variable/b_jwbs1_dv and https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/documentation/mainstage/dataset-documentation/wave/2/datafile/b_indresp/variable/b_jwbs2_dv

- Satisfied with job: comprises workers who experience job satisfaction. The reference group is those who do not experience job satisfaction.
- Low job security: includes all workers who thought that they were likely or very likely to lose their job in the next 12 months. The reference group is those who thought job loss unlikely or very unlikely.
- Dependent 16 yr old children: comprises workers who were responsible for at least one child aged 16 years or younger. The reference group is all other workers (i.e. those with no child care responsibilities or older children).

The results are presented in Table 5. Scales were reverse coded. Positive coefficient values (B) indicate that feelings of depression or anxiety are lower for the groups shown in the Tables when compared with the reference groups. The results suggest that workers in casual employment do not differ from those in permanent jobs in terms of the levels of anxiety and depression they experience. However, perceived low employment security and working weekends are associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression, while anxiety (but not depression) is a worse problem for workers who have no normal working times. Among workers who do have normal working hours, those who work 1-15 or 16-29 hours experience less depression and anxiety than those who work longer hours. The findings also indicate that job satisfaction is associated with lower levels of anxiety and depression.

TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

4.3. Likelihood of job loss

Unsurprisingly, workers in casual and fixed-term employment were more likely than those in permanent jobs to expect to lose their job in the next 12 months. As shown in Table 6, 23 percent of those in casual employment and 35 percent of those in fixed-term employment thought it likely or very likely that they would lose their job. The corresponding figure for those in permanent jobs, by contrast, was six percent.

TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

To further explore the likelihood of job loss for workers in uncertain employment, a longitudinal logistic regression model was produced to predict the likelihood of different types of people dropping out of paid employment between Wave 5 and Wave 6 of the USoC survey (i.e. between 2014 and 2015). People moving from work to retirement are excluded. The findings, which are presented in Table 7, show that individuals who were in casual employment in Wave 5 were almost 4.6 times as likely to drop out of paid employment altogether as those in permanent jobs while workers with fixed-term contracts were 3.6 times as likely to drop out when compared with those in permanent jobs. Women were 1.5 times more likely than men to leave employment and (relatedly) workers with at least one dependent child aged less than 16 years were more likely to leave employment than those without dependent children. The likelihood of leaving employment was higher for individuals who self-identified as non-white compared to those who self-identified as white. Young workers were more likely to drop out than those aged 55 years and older (the reference group). People aged 18-24 years were 5.4 times more likely to drop out. In addition, those in elementary occupations (Level 1) were 2.8 times more likely than workers in the highest-level occupations (Level 4) to drop out.

TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

The survey findings indicate the extent to which uncertain work impacts on workers' wellbeing, working conditions and labour market prospects. The qualitative research findings, to which we now turn, explore these issues further and highlight the different ways in which workers' experienced uncertainty.

Dimensions of uncertainty

5.1 Uncertain working time

In all of the sectors covered by the research, workers had concerns related to uncertainty about their hours of work and working patterns. Zero hours contracts were in evidence in each of the sectors and were associated with financial insecurity for those workers who were employed on this basis. All of the home care interviewees were employed on a zero hours contract or had previously been so. While some workers had regular clients and relatively predictable hours, others faced continuous uncertainty about when they would work. Some care workers were informed of their rotas by mobile or email on a daily and even hourly basis. Workers in the higher education sector could also be allocated teaching and marking duties at short notice and changes would often occur during the academic year as workers were approached to fill gaps in the teaching programme.

Working time insecurity resulting from zero-hour contracts was also found in the retail sector. Many supermarket employees, however, were employed on flexi-contracts that guaranteed them a number of 'core' hours, with the possibility of additional hours. Employees on these contracts were obliged to work their agreed core hours and any hours that fell within their agreed availability window, providing appropriate notice had been given. The main characteristic of flexi-contracts was the unpredictability of working hours, which rarely coincided with contractual hours. Shifts were communicated through Whatsapp and workers reported that, although they were supposed to receive at least 24 hours' notice of a change, the notice period could be much shorter. This was because workers could give two hours' notice of absence, which then created immediate staff shortages.

There was widespread fear among workers in casual employment that refusing work when it was offered would result in fewer offers being made in the future or, potentially, dismissal. Workers in the retail, care and higher education sectors reported that they felt under pressure to accept overtime, work additional shifts or take on additional teaching or marking duties. Some of the retail workers claimed that staff could be asked to do back-to-back double shifts to cover for staff shortages:

‘You are more or less expected, or you’re just put in anyway. There’s no, like, “can you do this? Can you do X amount of hours? Can you do X amount of hours this day?” You’re more or less actually put in for, say, seven-and-a-half or eight hours a day, boom, boom... Without being asked, or any consent, you’d have to basically ask not to do that. And they’d more or less go, well, “why can’t you? Give me an excuse why”’ (Retail worker)

‘‘Everything is up in the air; the rotas are up in the air. I’m thinking, you know what? I can do without all this stress. I need something that’s more permanent, that’s safer. I never know when I’m going to get the hours and then I don't know if I’m going to get enough hours or too many hours. I’m on ZHC, I feel like I’m all over the place, you know? When I first started there they said to me, you can have as many hours or as little as you want. I thought, “well that’s great”, so I told them what I needed and what I was looking for and they said, “that’s fine”. And now I’ve got hours coming out of my head because we’re short staffed’. (Care Worker)

‘You feel that whatever is being offered to you, you don’t really want to reject it, because, that might be the person that needs to give you hours in the future. I took literally everything I could. […]. I can never say no, because if I said no, they’ll just find somebody else, and that’ll be the end of me. So, I feel like I’ve got to do everything perfect, and on time. They can’t sack a fulltime member of staff all that easily, but they can easily cut me out. So, that’s the insecure employment’ (Graduate teaching assistant, HE sector).

5.2. Uncertain personal lives

The pressure workers felt placed under to accept work at short notice, and their concerns about the consequence of refusing to accept the work, gave rise to anxiety, stress and a sense of being under-valued. The unpredictability of their working lives also had detrimental consequences for workers’ ability to manage their lives outside of work. Many workers argued, they could not easily make plans outside work.

> ‘At the end of the day if you’ve got the rota on a Friday, to start on the Monday, where can you make any physical plans? (Care worker)

> ‘You don’t much have a lifestyle. With all of this you’re just literally working to survive’ (Retail worker).

Medical appointments and social events often had to be cancelled at short notice. One retail worker stated that he was reluctant to plan his social life in advance, for example booking concert tickets, because there would be no guarantee of the time off. Others spoke of the difficulty of planning child care and the negative effects of unpredictable hours on their relationships with family members.

> ‘I won't see my kids before they go to school and won't see them during the day and I won't see them when I get home. Sometimes I won't see them for 48 hours depending on how my hours work. I'm a big family guy and it hurts: it hurts not seeing my kids. And I'm sure there are plenty of other people out there as well that are in the same predicament as what we are. And so yes it hits emotionally’ (Retail worker).

The higher education workers felt under pressure to be geographically mobile, to be available to move to the next job anywhere across the country, which also presented personal challenges. Many referred to the social isolation and sheer loneliness of moving from city to city chasing the next short-term contract, often leaving social networks and established relationships behind. Staff with fixed-term contracts referred to the constant pressure of looking for the next contract whilst simultaneously attempting to perform well in their current role (in case there was a possibility of a contract extension and/or a permanent role). They also claimed that relatively few career development opportunities were made available to them.

5.3. Uncertain income

Financial uncertainty was a further widespread difficulty for workers in uncertain employment. An inability to predict the amount of work that would be offered caused workers substantial difficulties in financial planning, which in turn caused them anxiety.

> 'From one week to the next [you don't know] what you're going to get. Some weeks we were getting 40 hours, but then the week after that it would be an hour and a half, then nine hours. There's no security and it leaves you vulnerable. It's worrying for the likes of me who is on my own that can I feed my child. Can I keep a roof over my head? Can I keep my car on the road so I can go to work? For the last few months I've never been so stressed in my life having to try and fight to get hours' (Care worker)

In the higher education sector, the financial uncertainty associated with zero hours contracts and flexible casual work agreements was compounded by the fact that the earning potential of workers (including PhD students) was typically restricted to term times. Financial uncertainty was a dominant feature of their lives. Some interviewees said that claiming Job Seekers Allowance was the only way to sustain an income during the summer periods. Others had secured payday loans to enable them to pay their rent. All interviewees mentioned that they had relied on family, friends or partners for financial support.

Although retail workers with flexi-contracts had a certain minimum income, the financial insecurity they experienced was only slightly less than that experienced by workers with zero hours contracts. Retail workers spoke of the difficulties they experienced in building up a credit history and being able to apply successfully for a mortgage or other loan. A number of workers said that they struggled to pay bills or had to 'go without'.

The parcel couriers were classed as self-employed and contracted by a parcel delivery company. They were paid according to how many parcels they delivered and collected in a day. On days when a large number of parcels were received, workers would be able to reach a pay rate for the day that was at least equivalent to the minimum wage. However, on days when a relatively small number of parcels needed

to be delivered, couriers claimed that once they had covered their costs it would be likely that they would earn £5 or less per hour.

> ‘You’re talking insecure work, you don’t how many (parcels) are coming. We could all get up tomorrow, and we could have a hundred. That’s a good day’s work, we’ll all be above minimum wage. We could also get up and have ten. You live day to day. The wage I am on, we’ll live, but it won’t pay the bills’ (Parcel delivery worker)

5.4. Uncertain unpaid working time

The financial uncertainty experienced by workers in uncertain employment was compounded by their work being organised in ways that encouraged unpaid working time. This took a variety of forms. Homecare workers reported that their pay was calculated on the basis of contact time with clients, which meant that they were not paid if their client cancelled an appointment in order to, for example, keep a hospital appointment. Homecare workers also discussed the non-payment of travel time between visits In London and the south-east, reliance on public transport to travel between clients added an additional stress for care workers. As one care worker commented, ‘they’re [the clients’ homes] far apart so therefore I’m just on edge all the time. I’m “ooh no, I’m late, I’m late!”’ Alternatively, care workers could experience substantial gaps between visits, during which time they would have to find ways of filling their time. These gaps in the working day were unpaid.

> ‘You only get paid for what you do. You could be out on the road ten hours, but you could only be working six hours, so you're only getting six hours pay, and the majority of calls are normally half hour calls, aren’t they’? (Amy, care worker)

Parcel delivery workers similarly performed tasks that they were not paid for. In particular, they were not paid for the scanning, sorting and loading of parcels ready for transportation. This routine of checking, scanning and loading could take up to two hours every morning. Workers claimed that parcels were often missing from the manifest, or sometimes parcels were included for which there was no

record. Payment was only made following a successful delivery. Workers were not paid for unsuccessful attempts at delivering a parcel (e.g. where a customer was out when the courier called). In warehousing, workers sometimes arrived at their workplace only to find that they were not required and would therefore not be paid. Unpaid work was also reported by HE workers and was associated with workers having to respond to student emails, unpaid teaching preparation and marking duties, as well as providing student feedback and attending meetings. All interviewees emphasised that they were not paid for being available for students and responding to their queries, yet were required to do these things:

> 'When you finish a seminar, you've got a queue that want to talk with you. You walk and they follow you and you continue giving to them. I mean, you're working, basically. On top of that, I don't have an office. I need to work in the library. Working in the library or being at the café means that you're exposed to students that literally stand next to you and start waiting if you're busy with someone else. You cannot just say "leave me alone, I'm not paid for this"' (HE worker)

Many of the home care and higher education workers felt a sense of responsibility towards their clients and students, which further encouraged them to work beyond their contracted hours. For example, some of the care workers had provided their clients with their personal telephone number, so that they could keep in contact with them. Care workers also spoke of visiting clients during their breaks in order to provide additional care. As other studies (e.g. Stacey 2005) have shown, care workers' commitment to those they care for often leads them to work 'beyond contract'. The higher education workers similarly referred to their commitment to academia, passion for their subject and dedication to notions of scholarship and knowledge and to creating a positive learning experience for students. However, they also felt that their employers took advantage of their commitment to scholarly values:

> 'I think that that's what they exploit. The fact that most do not perceive themselves as workers but as doing a mission. I mean, that's their basis for exploitation, I would say. Because they rely on the good will of a lot of people who put in that extra effort' (HE worker)

6. Conclusion

This paper has shed fresh light on the negative consequences of uncertainty in relation to work. The survey results revealed clear differences in the experiences of permanent employees and the casual workforce. When compared to permanent employees, workers in casual employment are more likely to be young, non-white and employed in an elementary occupation Workers in casual employment and those who have unpredictable working patterns lack the ability to exert control over crucial aspects of their lives in and outside the workplace, with adverse consequences for their wellbeing, job satisfaction and longer-term prospects. The survey findings demonstrated that perceived low employment security and working weekends are associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression and that anxiety levels tend to be higher among workers who have no normal working times. The interviews shed further light on this issue, demonstrating that unpredictable working hours created a pressure to be available for the 'possibility' of work at all times. This pressure in turn created difficulties in workers' lives outside of work, including problems associated with organising care, holidays and regular family time. Problems were compounded by low pay and workers' inability to predict their pay, which meant that many struggled financially on a day-to-day basis and were unable to build a credit history that would allow them to secure a mortgage or other type of loan. Many workers stated that recent changes in state benefits made their feelings of financial insecurity and vulnerability even more acute. Taken as a whole, then, our findings reveal a set of destructive pressures that affect both work and home life. These pressures reflects the one-sided benefits of uncertain work to employers and the associated asymmetry of power in the workplace. Workers across all sectors reported growing pressures at work and expressed feelings of worthlessness, vulnerability and fear in the face of employer power. Uncertain work and its corrosive effects will clearly need to be tackled if 'good work' is to become more prevalent in the UK.

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Table 1. Contract type by age, occupation, ethnic group and gender (%)

		Permanent	Casual	Fixed-term	X^2
Age	18-24	11	44	25	911.688***
	25-34	20	15	19	
	35-44	22	11	18	
	45-54	28	14	21	
	55+	19	16	17	
Occupation	Managers/senior officials	16	2	8	556.894***
	Professionals	13	9	30	
	Associate professional and technical	17	12	18	
	Admin/secretarial	12	9	14	
	Skilled trades	7	4	4	
	Personal service	10	14	13	
	Sales/customer service	8	13	4	
	Process, plant machine ops.	7	8	2	
	Elementary	11	29	8	
Ethnic group	White	91	84	92	50.376***
	Non-white	9	16	8	
Gender	Men	49	48	40	17.252***
	Women	51	52	60	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 2. Times of the day at which people work (%)

	Permanent	Casual	Fixed-term
Mornings only	4.2	4.4	2.8
Afternoons only	1.3	3.1	1.1
During the day only	67.4	49.6	72.5
Evening only	1.9	7.1	2.4
At night	2.2	3.4	0.9
Both lunchtimes and evenings	0.6	2.4	1.1
Other times of the day	0.3	0.0	0.2
Rotating shifts	8.6	6.5	5.0
Varies/no usual pattern	5.2	12.0	6.1
Daytime and evenings	8.0	10.8	7.8
Other	0.2	0.6	0.0

Table 3. Autonomy (%)

		Permanent	Casual	Fixed-term	X^2
Over job tasks	A lot	42	22	33	236.615***
	Some	33	33	34	
	A little	14	20	18	
	None	12	25	14	
Over work pace	A lot	46	31	41	121.118***
	Some	29	29	33	
	A little	13	19	14	
	None	12	22	12	
Over work manner	A lot	56	36	50	196.113***
	Some	28	33	34	
	A little	10	17	11	
	None	6	14	5	
Over task order	A lot	55	31	52	244.030***
	Some	28	34	31	
	A little	10	18	10	
	None	8	17	7	
Over work hours	A lot	24	13	25	115.175***
	Some	22	16	23	
	A little	18	20	17	
	None	36	52	35	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 4. Job satisfaction – logistic regression

	B (SE)	Odds Ratio
Level 3	-.042 (0.05)	.96
Level 2	-.22 (0.05)***	.80
Level 1	-.32 (0.07)***	.72
Age18-24	-.07 (0.07)	.93
Age 25-34	-.04 (0.06)	.96
Age 35-44	-.10 (0.06)	.91
Age 45-54	-.11 (0.06)	.90
Female	.22 (0.04)***	1.24
Non-white	-.02 (0.07)	.98
Private sector	-.01 (0.04)	.99
Casual	-.22 (0.10)*	.80
Fixed term	.10 (0.18)	1.11
Job Hours 1-15	.31 (0.08)***	1.36
Job Hours 16-29	-.05 (0.05)	.95
Job Hours 40+	.02 (0.05)	1.02
Job Hours NA	.01 (0.11)	1.00
No normal working time	-.22 (0.05)***	0.8
Work weekends	.07 (0.04)	1.07

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 5. Job-related anxiety and depression

	Anxiety B (SE)	Depression B (SE)
Level 3	.35 (0.05)***	-.01 (0.05)
Level 2	.63 (0.05)***	-.11 (0.05)*
Level 1	.81 (0.07)***	-.10 (0.07)
Age18-24	-.17 (0.07)*	-.20 (0.07)**
Age 25-34	-.34 (0.06)***	-.26 (0.06)***
Age 35-44	-.22 (0.07)**	-.20 (0.06)**
Age 45-54	-.15 (0.06)*	-.15 (0.05)**
Female	-.69 (0.05)***	-.33 (0.04)***
Non-white	-.33 (0.07)***	-.15 (0.07)*
Private sector	.39 (0.04)***	.04 (0.04)
Casual	.05 (0.10)	.11 (0.09)
Fixed term	.26 (0.17)*	.34 (0.11)**
Job Hours 1-15	1.03 (0.08)***	.66 (0.07)***
Job Hours 16-29	.42 (0.06)***	.22 (0.05)***
Job Hours 40+	-.07 (0.05)	-.05 (0.05)
Job Hours NA	.64 (0.11)***	.14 (0.10)
No normal working time	-.16 (0.05)**	-.06 (0.04)
Work weekends	-.35 (0.04)***	-.19 (0.04)***
Dependent 16 yr old children	.03 (0.03)	.06 (0.03)*
Satisfied with job	1.66 (0.05)***	2.09 (0.05)***
Low security	-1.84 (0.10)***	-2.77 (0.9)***

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001. $R^2 = 0.16$

Table 6. Perceived likelihood of job loss in the next 12 months

	Permanent	Casual	Fixed-term	X^2
Very likely	2	10	16	1060.724***
Likely	4	13	19	
Unlikely	34	34	36	
Very unlikely	61	42	29	

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Table 7. Likelihood of dropping out of work

	B (SE)	Odds Ratio
Level 3	-.01 (0.15)	.99
Level 2	.59 (0.13)***	1.81
Level 1	1.03 (0.14)***	2.81
Age18-24	1.69 (0.15)***	5.41
Age 25-34	.55 (0.17)**	1.73
Age 35-44	.17 (0.18)	1.18
Age 45-54	.28 (0.17)	1.33
Female	.43 (0.09)***	1.54
Dependent children <16 years	.18 (0.06)**	1.20
Non-white	.387 (0.12)**	1.47
Private sector	.44 (0.10)***	1.55
Casual	1.52 (0.12)***	4.56
Fixed term	1.28 (0.17)***	3.6

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001