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Atypical labour markets in Denmark

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Flexible employment forms in Denmark

In 2015, 29% of all employment in Denmark was non-standard employment compared to 26% in 2000 (Figure 1). Thus, standard employment - understood as permanent employment with a weekly working time of 30 hours or more - is still the most dominant employment form in Denmark. Marginal part-time is the fastest growing non-standard employment form since 2000 and represents the largest sub-group of non-standard employment. Long part-time employment is the second largest subgroup, followed by fixed-term contracts and solo self-employment. The latter three have remained rather stable over time. Temporary agency work, which is a rather novel form of non-standard employment, is more marginal and accounted for less than 1% of total employment in 2015.

Variations in flexible employment across sectors

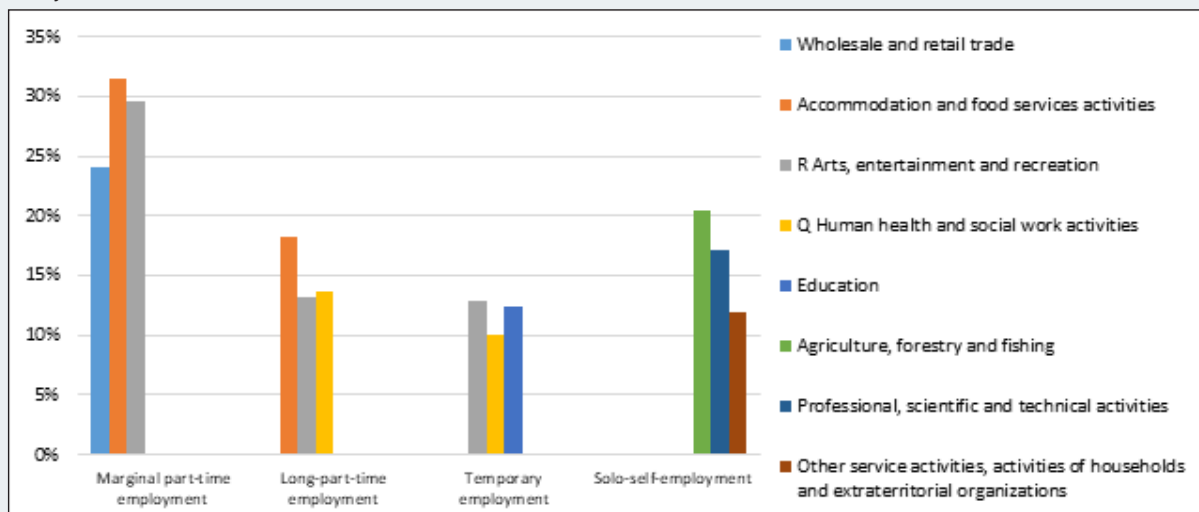
The prevalence of different forms of non-standard employment varies across sectors, but seems at a general level to be most widespread within parts of the service sector (Figure 2). For instance, marginal part-time is commonly used within *wholesale and retail, accommodation and food services* as well as *arts, entertainment and recreation* (24-31% of employment in the sectors). Long part-time is also more widespread within some of the same sectors as well as in *health and social services*. The same goes for temporary employment, which is also more common within the *educational sector*. Solo self-employment is frequently used within *agriculture, forestry and fishing*, which is due to a long tradition of many small farms in Denmark. Solo self-employment is also widespread within sectors like

Figure 1: Recent development in non-standard employment forms in Denmark (2000-2015), percent of all in employment, 15-74 year olds



Source: Authors own calculations based on Danish LFS data.

Figure 2: The three sectors with the largest shares of non-standard employment in Denmark, 2015, percent of all in employment, 15-74 year olds



Source: Authors own calculations based on LFS data.

professional, scientific and technical activities and other service activities.

Characteristics of flexible workers

Although non-standard employment varies across sectors in Denmark, the persons employed in non-standard jobs share many similar characteristics. Women, migrants, young people and low skilled are all more likely to work reduced hours (marginal or long part-time) and hold temporary positions. Men and older workers are more likely to be engaged in solo self-employment, but many also choose to work reduced hours in the last few years before retirement. Furthermore, marginal part-time jobs are primarily held by young people undergoing education, among whom this is typically a voluntarily choice for the majority (in 2015 only 5% were involuntary part-timers). Long part-time work is most often chosen out of family related reasons, but 19% of this group is involuntarily working long part-time. For temporary employees the involuntary share is even higher (approximately 43% in 2015). Since 2000, the share of involuntary part-time and temporary workers has marginally increased.



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

This brief emerges from Pillar III Self-employed, independent and atypical work, coordinated by Anna Ilsøe, ai@faos.dk

Recent debates and regulatory changes

Recent debates on non-standard employment are often linked to the idea of precarious employment. There have been a number of efforts to improve wages and working conditions for non-standard workers, often initiated by Danish unions. For instance, recently some unions have obtained a few collective agreements for digital platform workers and solo self-employed/freelancers, but there are also examples of employer led initiatives. At the political level, a recent reform of the Danish Unemployment Insurance system has eased access to unemployment insurance for self-employed/freelancers.

Future challenges

Marginal part-time is one of the fastest growing forms of non-standard employment and in some private services sectors nearly one third of the employees - often students - hold contracts of few hours. Marginal part-timers are, similarly to other non-standard workers, at risk of lower social protection, especially as the eligibility criteria for social benefits have been tightened in recent years and access to social benefits are increasingly linked to the individual's employment record (Mailand and Larsen, 2018).



Oppdragsgiver for prosjektet er Nordisk ministerråd.