

Temp work strains employee mental health

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Workers hired for temporary, contract, casual or fixed-term positions are at risk for increased mental health problems, according to research to be presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.

"Temporary workers—those lacking long-term, stable employment—seem to be susceptible to declining mental health for as long as they continue to work in these so-called 'disposable' or 'second class' [jobs](#)," said Amélie Quesnel-Vallée, a medical sociologist at McGill University and the study's primary investigator. "This research shows that temporary work strains employee [mental health](#), as contingent workers report more symptoms of depression and psychological distress than similarly employed workers who are not in these fixed-term positions."

As of 2005, about 4.1 percent of the U.S. workforce—5.7 million American workers—held a position they believed to be temporary, according to the most recent data available from the Current Population Survey.

"These findings should be of particular interest for employers as they consider the long-term or global health impact of relying on a contingent workforce to meet current or future employment needs," said Quesnel-Vallée.

The research team analyzed a sample of longitudinal records collected biennially between 1992 and 2002 from the U.S. National Longitudinal

Survey of Youth 1979 (NLSY79). The NLSY79 is a survey of men and women born between 1957 and 1964 who were interviewed annually from 1979 to 1994, and biennially thereafter. The research team considered respondents' contingent (temporary) work status, depressive symptoms scores, poverty level and educational attainment. Results are considered representative of the general middle-aged U.S. working population.

Quesnel-Vallée co-authored the study with researchers Suzanne DeHaney and Antonio Ciampi, both of McGill University.

The paper, "Contingent Work and Depressive Symptoms: Contribution of Health Selection and Moderating Effects of Employment Status," was presented on Sunday, Aug. 9, at the American Sociological Association's 104th annual meeting.

Source: American Sociological Association ([news](#) : [web](#))

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