

# Low-quality work influences what young people want out of a job

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Young people in precarious or unsecure work, including temporary or zero-hour contracts, value 'extrinsic' work values such as pay and security less than those who have a permanent job.

However, if they feel that they're overqualified for the job they're in, they will place greater importance on pay and conditions compared to those who have a good skills match.

Researchers at Newcastle University, UK, looked at the work values of

young people aged 18 – 35 in eleven countries across Europe. They found that the quality of the work young people were currently in, as well as previous experiences of unemployment, have varying effects on their motivations towards their job.

Generally, age has an important effect on how young people feel about their work. The researchers found that people in their 20s who have had a spell out of work, valued 'intrinsic' aspects of their work, such as learning new things and opportunities for self-development, more than those who had been continuously employed.

However, this changes at about age 30 when this difference is reversed and those aged over 30 who have been unemployed place less importance on intrinsic values than those who have not been unemployed. This reflects the changing life stage that many experience in their 30s and the different attitudes towards risk that often accompanies this, the research team say.

The research, which is published in the current issue of the *Annals of the American Academy*, is one of the first studies to look specifically at young workers and the impact of the quality of their work conditions. The research team say that the findings provide a better understanding of the factors that shape young people's attitudes to work and what they want out of a job.

Dr. Emily Rainsford, Research Associate, Newcastle University, explained: "Experiences of unemployment or low quality work early in their career can directly influence the work values of a person and have a long-term impact on motivation and their attitudes towards pay and other benefits. Where young people feel there is a mis-match between the job they're doing and their skills and experience, they are more motivated by aspects such as pay and job security."

## Implications for policy

By using data gathered by the EU CUPESSE project, which ran between February 2014 and January 2018 and explored the causes and consequences of unemployment among young people, the research team examined the impact that unemployment and low-quality work have on more than 11,000 young adults across Europe.

The research has important implications for policymakers, as well as for employers and recruiters, the researchers say.

Dr. Rainsford said: "Youth unemployment across much of Europe rose following the global financial crash in 2008 and policymakers have rightly sought to address this. However many of these policies are targeted at the under 25s. But this research shows that there are important [experiences](#) to take into consideration for those aged over 25 because values and priorities are still changing and being formed.

"In addition, short-term contracts are now common in a number of sectors and increasing numbers of graduates mean that the jobs market is more competitive than ever. This means we are seeing more young people working in precarious conditions or doing [jobs](#) that they're overqualified for.

"Policies need to start reflecting the reality of how [young people](#) experience the modern labour market as this has an impact not just on the individual in terms of their motivation, [work](#) values and job satisfaction, but also for society as a whole."

Provided by Newcastle University

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