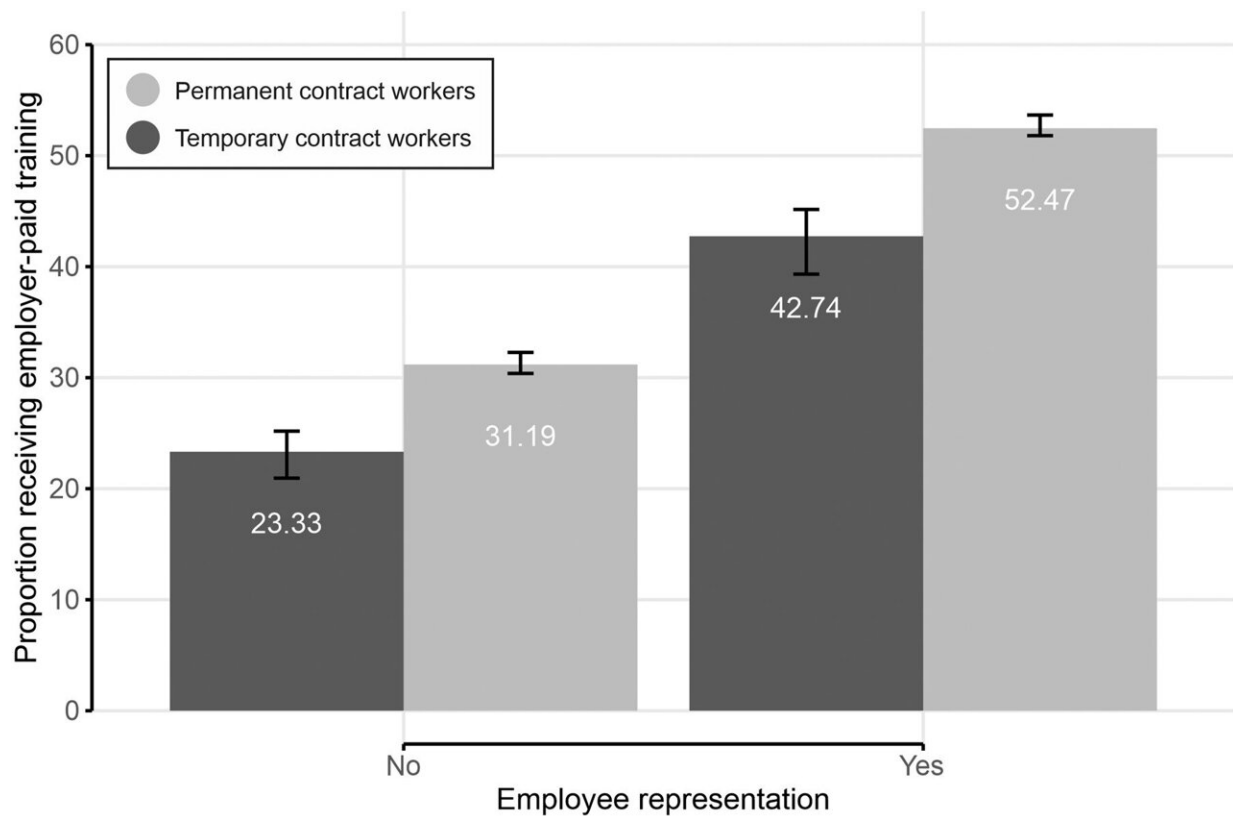


Temporary employment may consolidate labor market inequality

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The gap in employer-paid training according to employment contract and employee representation. Source: EWCS data. Credit: *European Sociological Review* (2022). DOI: 10.1093/esr/jcac021

A new study in *European Sociological Review* from Umeå University shows that temporary workers receive less employer-paid training than

permanent workers. However, having a union representative present at the workplace can be beneficial for all workers that want to develop their competences.

In their article, "Temporary Employment, Employee Representation, and Employer-Paid Training: A Comparative Analysis," Maja Adolfsson, Anna Baranowska-Rataj and Anneli Lundmark, sociologists from Umeå University, investigates the role employee representation play regarding the chance of receiving employer-paid training among temporary and permanent workers. Using data from the 2015 European Working Conditions Survey they analyze answers from 22,884 workers in 35 European countries.

"Our study shows that temporary workers receive less employer-paid training than permanent workers. This is a very important finding, as it illustrates one of the mechanisms of how temporary [employment](#) may strengthen labor market inequalities rather than working as a stepping-stone to more secure employment," says Maja Adolfsson.

Representatives strengthen communication between workers and employers

The researchers from Umeå University investigated what impact employee representation had on the chances on receiving employer-paid training. They can conclude that having a union representative present at the workplace, a representative that an employee can meet and talk to, for instance regarding training and competence development, is beneficial for both temporary and permanent workers.

"Having the possibility to knock on the office door of a coworker who is a union representative is helpful for everyone, regardless of the type of employment contract. We argue in the paper that by strengthening the

communication between workers and employers, employee representatives may argue in favor of developing the competences of all workers, regardless of their employment contract type," says Anna Baranowska-Rataj.

Unions at national level tend to support permanent workers

The researchers also looked at the role of [trade unions](#) at the national level. They found that union coverage, which measures the strength of unions at the country level, is more beneficial for permanent workers than for temporary workers when it comes to receiving employer-paid [training](#).

"Greater union coverage means more bargaining power in negotiations with the government and with other social partners when amending laws and regulations. Our results suggest that these actions tend to support permanent workers to a greater extent than [temporary workers](#). This implies that some of the policies and regulations supported by unions may not be equally beneficial for all workers. We believe that this result is of great relevance today, as the number of trade [union](#) members has decreased in several countries in recent decades, and therefore we must have a debate on how trade unions can change their structures and policies to meet the changing inequalities in the labor market," says Anneli Lundmark.

These new research results support the claim that [temporary employment](#) is an important dimension of social inequality.

"We worry that if we all do not start paying more attention to labor market inequalities, they will deepen. People who are already in a vulnerable position will become even more insecure. And employment

stability matters for many aspects of life, such as [mental health](#), well-being, and possibilities to establish a family," says Maja Adolfsson.

Master thesis led to scientific publication

The article was written based on the findings from a master thesis prepared by Anneli Lundmark and Maja Adolfsson. They decided to write their master thesis in connection to an ongoing research project which was led at the Department of Sociology by Anna Baranowska-Rataj. Their ambition was to make their master thesis innovative, filling a gap in the literature and available to a broader group of people. Going beyond what is normally required to pass the master program, they made the effort to transform the thesis into a research article in a top journal.

"The article is the cherry on top of the cake, and something I wish for other students to be a part of," says Anneli Lundmark.

More information: Maja Adolfsson et al, Temporary Employment, Employee Representation, and Employer-Paid Training: A Comparative Analysis, *European Sociological Review* (2022). [DOI: 10.1093/esr/jcac021](#)

Provided by Umea University

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