

Only one in four workers worldwide has a stable job

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Only one quarter of the world's working population holds a permanent and stable job, according to a new report published by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Tuesday.

Even as the number of unemployed people worldwide remains significantly higher than before the 2008 crisis, the few jobs that have been created in recent years have been disproportionately part-time, contingent and low-wage.

The ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook—Trends 2015 report found that three-quarters of workers are “employed on temporary or short-term contracts, in informal jobs often without any contract, under own-account arrangements or in unpaid family jobs.”

The report notes that worldwide more than 60 percent of workers do not have any sort of employment contract, with most of them working on family farms and businesses in developing countries. But even among those who earn wages or salaries, less than half—only 42 percent—are employed on a permanent basis.

In what are categorized as high-income countries, the share of workers employed on a permanent basis has declined in recent years, from 74 percent in 2004 to 73.2 percent in 2012. For males this decline has been even sharper, with the share working on permanent contracts falling from 73.1 percent to 71.2 percent during the same time.

The report likewise found a global rise in part-time employment. “In the vast majority of countries with available information, the rise in the number of part-time jobs outpaced gains in full-time jobs between 2009 and 2013.”

The ILO notes, “In France, Italy, Japan, Spain and the [European Union] more broadly, increases in part-time

employment occurred alongside losses in full-time jobs—leading in some instances to overall job losses during this period.” Since 2009, the number of full-time jobs in the European Union fell by nearly 3.3 million, while part-time employment increased by 2.1 million.

Meanwhile, legal protections assuring workers a stable employment schedule have been slashed, with the ILO noting that, “labour protection has generally decreased since 2008.”

“The shift we’re seeing from the traditional employment relationship to more non-standard forms of employment is in many cases associated with the rise in inequality and poverty rates in many countries,” said Guy Ryder, Director-General of the ILO.

The report found “a shift away from the standard employment model, in which workers... have stable jobs and work full time. In advanced economies, the standard employment model is less and less dominant.”

This phenomenon was mirrored in developing countries where, “at the bottom of global supply chains, very short-term contracts and irregular hours are becoming more widespread.” As a result, “in emerging and developing economies, the historical trend toward more wage and salaried employment is slowing down.”

The report notes that “nearly eight years have passed since the first signs of crisis emerged in the global economy,” yet “the more recent period has seen global unemployment march higher” and has been “characterized by an uneven and fragile job recovery.”

The ILO estimates that the number of people unemployed worldwide hit 201 million last year, up by 30 million since the eruption of the global financial crisis in 2008. The report notes that, far from making any significant dent in the number of people unemployed worldwide, “providing jobs to more than 40 million additional people who enter the global

labour market every year is proving to be a daunting challenge.”

The ILO notes that employment growth has largely stalled worldwide, with the number of jobs available growing by only 0.1 percent each year in developed countries since 2008, compared to a rate of 0.9 percent between 2000 and 2007.

This has corresponded with an overall slump in economic growth. For the “advanced economies” as a whole, growth in the period between 2007 and 2014 averaged about 0.7 percent per year, compared with an annual growth rate of two percent in the period before the crisis.

The report warned that falling wages and continued mass unemployment have contributed to a structural weakness in global demand, resulting in a further slump in the labor market. Director-General Ryder added, “These trends risk perpetuating the vicious circle of weak global demand and slow job creation that has characterized the global economy and many labour markets throughout the post-crisis period.”

The increasing prevalence of low-wage, part-time and contingent work has coincided with a massive enrichment of the financial elite. Since 2009, the wealth of the world’s richest 400 individuals has nearly tripled, from \$2.4 trillion to \$7.05 trillion in 2015, according to *Forbes* magazine. This massive growth of inequality has been the direct outcome of policies carried out by governments throughout the world, which responded to the 2008 crash by pumping trillions of dollars into the financial system while slashing social services and promoting poverty-wage employment.

The findings of the report constitute a scathing indictment of the capitalist system, which is incapable of addressing mass unemployment, poverty or any other social problem. Developing countries, robbed and exploited by imperialism, remain backward and impoverished, while in the “advanced” economies the ruling classes have carried out a relentless assault on jobs, wages and living conditions for the great majority of the population.

There is nothing in the 155-page report to indicate any prospect for improvement in the near future. This fact constitutes an implicit admission that soaring inequality, falling wages, mass unemployment and increasingly contingent employment constitute

essential features of the present social order.



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