

Background

Self-perceived job insecurity captures individual's perception of labour market conditions. This perception is closely linked to objective job features such as the type of contract. Objective and subjective insecurity are, however, not fully identical. Research has shown that it depends on individual characteristics such as age, gender and employability (De Witte & Näswall 2003). Furthermore, the past experience can affect the current perception of labour market conditions (Lübke & Erlinghagen 2014). This raises the question whether (and for whom) job insecurity may become a chronic experience that last for a longer time.

Research aim

This study provides a longitudinal view on the prevalence of self-perceived job insecurity. It aims to reveal the frequency of (great) worries about the future job in the life-course.

Method and data

Typical patterns of self-perceived job insecurity will be identified and described using data from the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP, 1985-2012). Therefore, methods of sequence analysis and optimal matching are applied (Brzinsky-Fay et al. 2006).

Ten years sequences consist of yearly information on job insecurity whereas the following elements are distinguished: very concerned; somewhat concerned, not concerned at all about job security, and not employed.

The analysis is restricted to those West Germans aged 20 to 49 years who were employed at least once during the observation (N = 4,135).

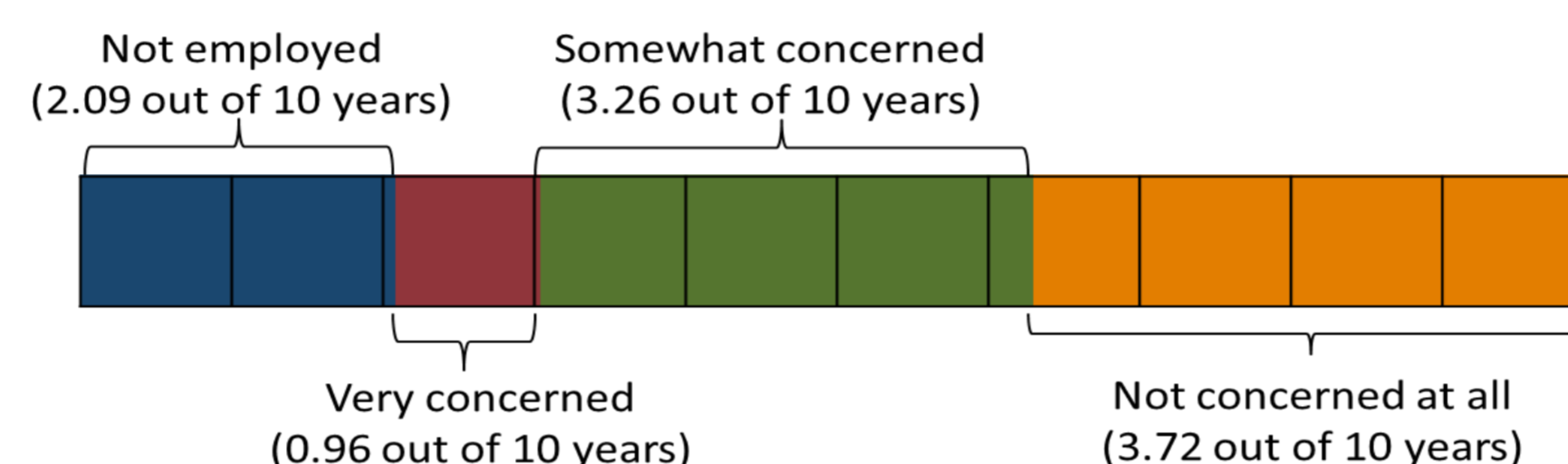
Results

How many people experience job insecurity at all during their life course?



Note: Share of West German worker who reported at least once in ten years to be (very/somewhat) concerned about job stability, based on SOEP data (1985-2012), own calculation.

How often in ten years do workers worry about their job security?



Note: Average sequence of self-perceived job insecurity in West Germany (without taking account of the order), result of sequence analysis based on SOEP data (1985-2012), own calculation.

Which typical patterns of self-perceived job insecurity can be distinguished?

| Cluster name/description | Mean time spend in different statuses | | | | N | Share |
|---|---------------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|----------------------|-------|-------|
| | Not employed | Very concerned | Somewhat concerned | Not concerned at all | | |
| 1 Persistent absence of any job insecurity | 0.36 | 0.15 | 1.46 | 8.03 | 1,437 | 29.9 |
| 2 Hardly any job insecurity despite frequent non-employment | 3.96 | 0.24 | 1.17 | 4.63 | 483 | 12.6 |
| 3 Dominant minor job insecurity (mostly somewhat concerned) | 0.18 | 0.77 | 6.73 | 2.31 | 1,006 | 23.2 |
| 4 Dominant minor job insecurity and frequent non-employment | 3.86 | 1.12 | 3.62 | 1.31 | 544 | 12.6 |
| 5 Equally minor and great job insecurity | 0.59 | 3.13 | 4.37 | 1.91 | 230 | 4.9 |
| 6 Chronic job insecurity | 0.48 | 6.01 | 2.68 | 0.82 | 188 | 4.0 |
| 7 Dominant non-employment | 7.75 | 0.31 | 0.79 | 1.15 | 547 | 12.8 |

Note: Results of cluster analysis based on SOEP data (1985-2012, weighted), own calculations. Figures in bold indicate the dominant status(es) within one cluster.

Summary

Great worries about the future job are in general short-term (on average less than 1 out of 10 years), however, about 43 per cent of workers have this experience at least once during ten years. In the long run, a large part of workers experiences hardly any job insecurity during the ten years of observation. There is, however, a small group of workers (4 per cent) that experiences great worries chronically, meaning more than 7 out of 10 years.

Conclusion

Job insecurity can be indeed chronic – even though only for a small group of workers. This has various consequences for the social meaning of self-perceived job insecurity:

- The negative consequences (e.g. for health or family) may increase with the persistence of job insecurity. Future research has to take account of the different frequencies of self-perceived job insecurity.
- Chronic job insecurity affects a selective group and may therefore be an indicator of a social inequality. Future research has to study who experiences chronic job insecurity.
- Cross-sectional analysis are insufficient as they hide a polarisation between those who are constantly of risk to worry about their jobs and those that are most of the time protected against this feeling.

References

Brzinsky-Fay, C., Kohler, U., & Luniak, M. (2006). Sequence analysis with Stata. *Stata Journal*, 6(4), 435–460.
De Witte, H. & K. Näswall, 2003: 'Objective' vs 'Subjective' Job Insecurity. *Economic and Industrial Democracy* 24: 149–188.
Lübke, C & Erlinghagen, M. (2014): Self-perceived job insecurity across Europe over time: Does changing context matter? *Journal of European Social Policy* (forthcoming).