

Temporary Agency Workers – Their Employment Conditions and Prospects

Temporary agency work¹ is one of the most rapidly expanding forms of employment in Germany, and it is thus of great importance for employment policy. The purpose of the amendment to the Law on Staff Leasing passed at the end of 2002² as part of the First Law for Modern Services on the Labour Market (Hartz 1) is therefore to make better use of the employment potential in temporary agency work. At the same time the new legislation will fundamentally change the employment conditions for temporary agency workers from 2004. In particular, from then temporary agencies will be obliged by law to guarantee that their 'temps' will receive the same wages and enjoy the same working conditions in their customer firms as the full-time employees of that firm (the principle of equal pay and equal treatment).³

What are the present employment conditions for temporary agency staff? So far few studies exist on this question for Germany. This article evaluates for the first time data on the working conditions in temporary employment agencies contained in the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) of DIW Berlin since 2001.⁴ In addition, the career prospects of the employees before and during their employment as temporary agency staff are examined in detail.

¹ Temporary agency work is a triangular relationship in which the temporary agency leases its employees (the temporary agency workers) to a customer firm for limited periods in return for a fee. Temporary agency work is also known as 'staff leasing'. In this article the terms 'temporary agency worker' and 'leased worker' are synonymous.

² The Law on Staff Leasing contains the legal conditions regulating temporary agency work that have been in force since 1972.

³ However, if a binding collective agreement is in force, deviations from the equality principle are allowed. The first collective wage agreements in the branch have already been signed – between the German Trade Union (DGB) Wage Negotiation Group for Temporary Agency Work and the two biggest employers associations for temporary agency work, the Interest Association of German Temporary Agencies (IGZ) and the Confederation of Temporary Agency Personnel Services. A collective agreement was signed in January 2003 by the SME Employers Association for Temporary Agencies (MVZ) and the Negotiating Committee of the Christian Unions of Temporary Agency Workers and the Christian Trade Union Association (CGB).

⁴ The results are based on a still unpublished study by Michael Kvasnicka: 'Arbeitsbedingungen in der Zeitarbeit. Eine Bestandsaufnahme', manuscript, Humboldt University, Berlin.

The results show that many more temporary agency workers who have been employed before lost their former jobs as a result of closure or were made redundant than other workers; compared with these they also much more rarely had concrete prospects of a new job when their old job came to an end. Temporary agency workers do take a less positive view of the ensuing job change than persons in the economy as a whole who change jobs, but in view of their own career experience most of them regard the employment and working conditions in their new jobs as of the same quality or even better than they had before. Altogether temporary agency workers are almost as satisfied with their conditions as comparable workers in other types of employment. While there are no significant differences in the assessment of their present working climate and chances of further training, temporary agency workers state more frequently than other, comparable workers that they are exposed to harmful environmental factors and risk of accident. In regard to career prospects temporary agency workers do not assess the risk of losing their jobs as greater than other workers. However, they are more likely to look for a new job themselves, make a new start or change to self-employment, for they do not think it very likely that they could advance in their present employment. All in all, the conditions and career prospects for temporary agency workers, and their expectations, are much more heterogeneous than those of workers in the economy as a whole, but the conditions are not, as has often been assumed to date, worse throughout.

Conditions in temporary agency work between deregulation and regulation: Hartz 1

Temporary agency work is growing in importance for the economy as a whole in Germany owing to its very rapid expansion. The First Law for Modern Services on the Labour Market (Hartz 1), which was passed at the end of last year, actually makes temporary agency work a cornerstone of the labour market policy measures introduced by the Federal Government to combat the persistently high level of unemployment in Germany. The amendment to the existing legislation removes most of the former restrictions on temporary agency work to enable its employment potential to be better utilised, but it also introduces a general principle on equal pay and equal treatment for temporary agency workers.⁵ In justification, reference is made in this context to the fact that conditions in temporary agency work were often worse than in other forms of employment. How-

ever, temporary agency workers are not directly suffering from inadequate legal protection compared with other workers, as the legal status of temporary agency employment hardly differs now from that of 'normal' employment.⁶ If temporary agency work is regarded as 'atypical', this is largely because temporary agency workers do not, as other workers do, perform their functions for their legal employer (the temporary agency) but for another company (the firm that has leased them). Besides the orientation of temporary agency work to certain types of activity and the fact that the temporary work industry operates largely independent of collective wage agreements, it is this particular tripartite arrangement, and the short-term nature of the employment with the various leasing firms, that can give rise to very specific demands on temporary agency workers and cause strain.

Insufficient research on the conditions of temporary agency work

Studies on the employment and working conditions of temporary agency workers are scarce, not least owing to the lack of suitable data.⁷ The criticisms often directed at temporary agency work, such as the assumed higher risk of job loss,⁸ lower pay,⁹ fewer possibilities for further training and promotion,¹⁰ greater physical and mental strain¹¹ and greater risk of accident have not so far been adequately documented and quantified for Germany.¹²

⁵ Regulations dropped include the ban on temporary employment contracts, on re-employment and synchronisation, the restriction of leasing to 24 months and the ban on leasing workers in the building sector. For a survey of the individual measures see e.g. Katrin Vitalis: 'Die Regulierung der Zeitarbeit in Deutschland'. In: *Duisburger Beiträge zur Soziologischen Forschung*, no. 5/2003 (in preparation).

⁶ Cf. Ulrike Pietrzyk: 'Flexible Beschäftigungsform 'Zeitarbeit' auf dem Prüfstand'. In: *Arbeit*, vol. 12, no. 2/2003, pp. 112-130. Cf. also Bundesregierung: 'Neunter Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Erfahrungen bei der Anwendung des Arbeitnehmerüberlassungsgesetzes (AÖG) sowie über die Auswirkungen des Gesetzes zur Bekämpfung der illegalen Beschäftigung (BillBG)'. In: *Bundestagsdrucksachen* 14/4220 of 4 October 2000, p. 17.

⁷ Cf. Manfred Cathammer: *Temporary Agency Work*, National Reports, Germany, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin 2002. The data sources frequently used in empirical labour market research in Germany either do not cover temporary agency workers (the microcensus) or they do not contain enough information on their working conditions (IAB Beschäftigtenstichprobe), so that studies on Germany to date have mainly used their own data. The OECD and Eurostat have not harmonised statistics on temporary agency work, either, which makes international comparisons of national markets for temporary agency work very difficult.

This article uses a new data source to examine the relative working conditions and prospects of temporary agency workers in Germany, namely the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) a regular survey by DIW Berlin. Temporary agency workers have been included in the SOEP since 2001 (for the database and methods see box).

The quantity of information thus obtained allows us to study the working and employment conditions of temporary agency workers, both compared with their previous jobs and compared with workers in the economy as a whole. Any differences in the assessment of their career prospects by temporary agency and full-time workers are also analysed and evaluated.

As table 1 shows,¹³ men, foreigners, younger workers and single persons are over-represented, in some

⁸ The evidently shorter periods of employment in temporary agency work are generally equated with job uncertainty and seen as evidence that temporary employment is very precarious. However, 'as no statistics are available on the reasons for terminating this employment it is not possible to make statements about its short-term nature.' Helmut Rudolph and Esther Schröder: 'Arbeitnehmerüberlassung: Trends und Einsatzlogik'. In: *Mitteilungen aus der Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1997, pp. 102-126. However, new findings on the reasons for terminating temporary employment suggest a high share of voluntary terminations or termination by mutual consent. Cf. Michael Kvasnicka: 'Inside the Black Box of Temporary Help Agencies'. In: *Discussion Paper*, no. 43, 2003, Sonderforschungsbereich 373, Humboldt University, Berlin (www.sfb.wiwi.hu-berlin.de/papers/2003/dpsfb200343.pdf.zip).

⁹ Temporary agency workers do earn less than comparable workers in the economy as a whole. However, the wage differential is firstly less than was assumed for a long time, and secondly, workers seem to benefit over the long term in their income development after leaving temporary agency work; cf. Michael Kvasnicka and Axel Werwatz: 'The Wage Effects of Temporary Agency Work'. In: *DIW Economic Bulletin*, vol. 40, no. 2/2003.

¹⁰ Cf. Werner Nienhüser and Wenzel Matiaske: 'Der 'Gleichbehandlungsgrundsatz' bei Leiharbeit - Entlohnung und Arbeitsbedingungen von Leiharbeitern im europäischen Vergleich'. In: *WSI Mitteilungen*, no. 8, 2003, pp. 466-473.

¹¹ Cf. e.g. Rainer Wieland, Petra Grüne, Ursula Schmitz and Karsten Roth: 'Zeitarbeit optimal gestalten. Spezifische psychische Belastungen bei Leiharbeit'. In: *Schriftenreihe der Bundesanstalt für Arbeitsschutz und Arbeitsmedizin*, Dortmund 2001; Nathalie Galais and Klaus Moser: 'Zeitarbeit als Sprungbrett in ein 'Normalarbeitsverhältnis'? Individuelle Determinanten der Übernahme und des Wohlbefindens von Zeitarbeitnehmern'. In: Jeannette Zempel, Johan Bacher and Klaus Moser, (eds.): 'Erwerbslosigkeit, Ursachen, Auswirkungen und Intervention, Psychologie sozialer Ungleichheit', vol. 12, Opladen 2001, pp. 251-265.

¹² Cf. Markus Werthebach, Daniel Sodenkamp and Klaus-Helmut Schmidt: 'Merkmale, Bedingungen und Folgen von Rollenklarheit bei der Arbeit - Ein Vergleich zwischen Leiharbeitnehmern und Mitarbeitern der Stammebelegschaft eines Produktionsbetriebes'. In: *Arbeit*, vol. 8, no. 4 2000/2, p. 8; Donald Storrie: 'Temporary Agency Work in the European Union'. In: *European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*, 2002, p. 43.

¹³ In calculating the figures for tables 1 to 8 the SOEP random sample weightings were used.

Statistical study of the relative working conditions of temporary agency workers: database and method

Data

- The data base is the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) of DIW Berlin, an annual survey of persons in Germany carried out since 1984.
- In 2001 SOEP again carried out a comprehensive survey on working conditions. For the first time the survey included work with a temporary agency employment agency.
- The analysis is limited to persons in dependent employment aged between 18 and 65 who are not in training. At the time of the survey in 2001 a total of 169 persons in the Panel were employed in a temporary staff agency.

The advantages of SOEP:

- A large quantity of very up to date information is obtained, and this enables a detailed study to be made of the present working conditions of temporary agency workers compared with workers in the economy as a whole.

The disadvantages of SOEP:

- So far it has not been possible to differentiate within SOEP between temporary agency workers and the core personnel of the agency.¹ However, the latter will only account for a very small percentage.

Methods

- To measure the relative working conditions (tables 9 and 10) and how temporary agency workers assess their future career patterns (table 11) compared with workers in the economy as a whole, a statistical matching approach was used.
- Temporary agency workers and non-temporary agency workers are matched in regard to elementary characteristics in order to isolate the influence of temporary agency work on working conditions and so to quantify it.²
- Aspects considered included the sex of the worker, family status, nationality, age, schooling and occupational training, the region (east/west), the immediately preceding occupational status, the reasons for termination of the previous employment and the length of an earlier period of unemployment.

1 The question (No. 38) addressed to persons in employment in the SOEP 2001 individual questionnaire 'Is your employer a temporary agency?' leaves open whether the worker is a full-time employee of the firm or a 'temp'. This has been concretised for the new 2003 survey (Question 64: 'Are you in temporary agency or leased employment?') but this data is not yet available for evaluation.

2 For a detailed discussion of the statistical method used here see the work by Michael Kvasnicka, *Arbeitsbedingungen*, loc. cit., on which this article is based. The PSMATCH2 routine of the STATA software has been used. Cf. E. Leuven and B. Sianesi: 'PSMATCH2:

State Module to Perform Full Mahalanobis and Propensity Score Matching', Common support Graphing and Covariate Imbalance Testing, Version 1.1.6, 2003 (www.ideas.repec.org/c/boc/bocode/s432001.html). To each temporary agency worker members of the control group of workers in the economy as a whole are assigned who appear to have a similar inclination to take up temporary agency work (propensity score) and had similar career patterns before their employment in 2001 (balancing score). Cf. J.J. Heckman, H. Ichimura and P.E. Todd: 'Matching as an Econometric Evaluation Estimator'. In: *Review of Economic Studies*, 65, 1998, pp. 261-294.

cases considerably, in temporary agency work compared with the economy as a whole. Moreover, very many more temporary agency workers have not obtained a school-leaving qualification from either elementary or junior school; similarly secondary school-leaving certificates, entrance qualifications for technical college or university are also less frequent. Significant differences are also evident in occupational qualification. More than a quarter of the temporary agency workers have no occupational qualification, while this only applies to around one sixth of the workers in the economy as a whole. While every fifth worker in the econ-

omy as a whole has a university qualification, only every eighth temporary agency worker has. These differences are directly relevant for this study, as workers with fewer or lower qualifications generally have worse career prospects than workers with higher educational and occupational qualifications. In the new federal states the share of temporary agency work is higher than in the old states. The degree of unionisation is not much lower in temporary agency work than in the economy as a whole.

Temporary agency work as (re-)entry into employment

In an analysis of working conditions the differences in the career patterns of temporary agency workers and others have to be taken into account. Hence, the employment immediately before the present one and the job search methods employed are considered first. Table 2 shows the kind of occupational change involved for the 87 temporary agency workers and 2 134 employed in the economy as a whole who took on their present jobs after 31 December 1999 and were included in the SOEP survey in 2001.

For both temporary agency and other workers the main change was to a different employer. Around one third of the workers in both groups had started working again after a break; but first-time employees were more frequent among the temporary agency workers than among the others. In the group who had terminated their last job after 31 December 1999 (table 3),¹⁴ many more temporary agency workers had lost their previous job owing to closure or redundancy. Conversely, work-

Table 1
Characteristics of Workers in Temporary Agency Work and in the Economy as a Whole in 2001

In %

	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
Age (in years)	37.5	41.4
Men	61.8	54.3
Foreigners	22.5	7.2
Married	50.2	61.3
School qualifications		
None	5.7	1.5
Elementary school	34.6	29.6
Secondary school	23.2	32.6
Technical university/university entrance	17.8	26.5
Other	15.4	6.0
None as yet	1.0	0.4
Occupational qualification ¹		
None	27.4	14.4
Yes	61.0	71.6
University degree	13.2	20.8
Member of a trade union	15.7	19.8
Old federal states	73.0	83.0
Cases observed (number)	169	11 054

¹ The shares with an occupational qualification do not add up to 100, as workers may have both an occupational qualification and a university degree.
Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

Table 2
Type of Job Change by Workers who Started their Present Jobs after 31.12.1999

In %

	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
First job	9.1	5.7
Resumed employment	36.4	31.7
New employer	50.4	51.9
Taken on by firm (after training /job creation scheme or freelance worker there)	0	2.9
Change of job within same firm	4.1	7.7

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

ers who quit their previous job were considerably under-represented in temporary agency work.

Therefore it is not surprising that twice as many of the workers outside the temporary agency industry had already had the offer of a new job when they ended their previous employment and that the number of workers outside the temporary agency industry that had actually signed a new employment contract was one-third higher than that of temporary agency workers (table 4).

Thus, none of these aspects applied to four out of ten workers who later joined a temporary agency when they ended their last employment. But a good quarter found a job in another sector. In view of the comparatively less rosy career prospects it is thus not surprising that temporary agency workers more frequently found their present employment by active search (table 5).

Moreover, as table 6 shows, most of those who were successful in finding another job did so through friends or acquaintances. That applies to both temporary agency workers and workers in the economy as a whole. The main difference between the two groups is in the use of the public employment service. Far fewer temporary agency workers return to their former employer than workers in the economy as a whole.¹⁵

Results to date show that more temporary agency workers not only left their previous jobs involuntarily but also had far fewer real prospects of follow-on employment at that point in time than other workers. But they are frequently more active in looking for a new job, and they have more frequent recourse to the public employment service.

¹⁴ That applies to 38 temporary agency workers and 943 workers in the economy as a whole.

¹⁵ Cf. the case study by Michael Kvasnicka: 'Inside the Black Box', loc. cit, p. 10.

Table 3
Reason for Terminating Previous Employment,
if after 31.12.1999

In %

	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
Firm closure, job finished	25.6	7.7
Gave notice	28.9	55.1
Made redundant	28.0	11.2
Contractual termination/mutual agreement	9.4	8.6
End of a short-term contract/training	6.6	12.6
Pensioned off/Retired	0.0	0.5
Sabbatical	0.0	1.5
Ceased operating (self-employed)	1.4	2.8

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

Workers' conditions tend to improve when they join a temporary work agency

For workers who changed jobs or started a new job after 31 December 1999 SOEP carried out a comprehensive survey of the present working conditions compared with those in the previous job.¹⁶ The results are summarised in table 7. In eight out of the nine aspects surveyed workers in the economy as a whole said more frequently than temporary agency workers that they had improved their position. The exception was working time arrangements. Surprisingly, there is little difference between the two groups in their assessment of the value of occupational skills. Temporary agency workers see their job change as much less positive than workers in the economy as a whole in regard to the type of work, chances of promotion, company social benefits and job security. However, workers now engaged in temporary agency work may not have had the same labour market prospects and options as workers in the economy as a whole.

The results have clearly shown that temporary agency workers do differ from other workers in a number of job-relevant characteristics (tables 1 to 4), so that their own assessment of their job change is more informative (cf. the first three columns in table 7).¹⁷ We can say that temporary agency workers have on aver-

¹⁶ Assessments of their present working conditions are available from 65 of the temporary agency workers surveyed in 2001 and 1 566 non-temporary agency workers, all of whom had started their present jobs after 31 December 1999. Workers returning to their former employer are not included.

Table 4
Prospects when Job Ended for Workers who were no Longer in their Old Jobs after 31.12.1999

In %

	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
New job already in view	18.6	36.2
New employment contract already signed	19.6	34.3
Neither	41.8	26.0
Did not look for a job	20.0	3.5

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

age improved or maintained their working conditions in regard to all the aspects listed in table 7. Particularly high percentages have registered an improvement in the nature of the work, their earnings and working time arrangements, while chances of promotion, strain at work, company social benefits and job security have relatively low shares. However, for these four aspects, too, clearly more than two thirds of all the temporary agency workers surveyed said that they had maintained or actually improved their situation compared with their previous job. So workers moving to temporary agency work from full-time jobs did take a positive view of the change in the majority of cases.¹⁸

Table 5
Active Job Search

In %

	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
Actively searching	57.2	54.3
Just happened	42.8	45.7

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

¹⁷ In this comparison of the working conditions for one person with the same person's conditions in an earlier job (before-after comparison) the person's own qualities are implicitly taken into account in the analysis. The results of the comparisons thus reflect the differences in the nature of the employment (temporary agency work, other) and not only the characteristics of the workers (e.g. level of education) who would tend to prefer one or the other type of employment.

¹⁸ In six out of nine comparisons more temporary agency workers said their position had improved rather than deteriorated.

Table 6
Job Search Method
 In %

Heard of job through...	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
Public employment service	17.5	10.7
Private placement agencies	1.5	2.1
Advert in newspaper	21.1	17.4
Advert on the Internet	1.6	2.9
Through friends, acquaintances etc.	36.2	35.3
Returned to former employer	7.1	12.1
Other	14.9	19.3

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

Temporary agency workers more frequently employed outside the occupation they have trained for

Table 8 shows characteristics of current employment. It shows that temporary agency workers are more frequently on short-term contracts,¹⁹ they are more rarely

¹⁹ To the authors' knowledge, apart from Michael Kvasnicka's recently published case study 'Inside the Black Box' (loc. cit., p. 10) this is the first statistical survey of the spread of short-term employment contracts in temporary agency work. The reform of the AÜG in 1997 made it much easier for employers to offer short-term contracts in temporary agency work.

employed in the occupation they have trained for, or they do not have an occupational qualification. They more frequently have to travel long distances to work and less frequently receive bonus payments (holiday, Christmas bonuses etc.) than other workers. That temporary agency workers are less frequently employed in their own occupations cannot necessarily be seen as a tendency for de-qualification, as temporary agency work can be a period of occupational reorientation or a bridging phase when there are no other prospects. As was already evident in tables 3 and 4, temporary agency workers much more frequently left their former employment unwillingly and had fewer prospects of a new job at that time than other workers. While full-time employment is the norm in both groups, more temporary agency workers say they are only employed for a few hours a week. The percentage travelling a long distance to work (more than 30 km) is also much higher in temporary agency work than for the economy as a whole. In contrast to the estimate by the Federal Government, nearly half of all temporary agency workers are in firms that have a works council or a personnel council, that is, an organ to represent the workers' interests within the firm.²⁰

²⁰ The Federal Government's latest report on experience with temporary agency work (published in 2000) states that 'as a rule works councils are not elected in the temporary agencies' (Bundesregierung Neunter Bericht, loc. cit. p. 15). However, empirical evidence for this is not given. It is also possible that in answering the question whether they had a works council 'in their firm' the respondents to the SOEP survey were referring to the firm to which they were leased and not the agency that employed them.

Table 7
Comparison of Working Conditions between Present and Former Job
 In %

	Temporary agency work			Economy as a whole		
	Improved	About the same	Worse	Improved	About the same	Worse
Type of job	32.9	52.8	14.3	51.0	36.9	12.1
Earnings	42.8	33.3	23.9	53.4	25.1	21.5
Chances of promotion	21.2	46.1	32.7	32.6	51.0	16.4
Strain at work	21.6	50.6	27.8	30.9	45.6	23.5
Distance to work	29.5	43.8	26.8	36.6	37.3	26.1
Working time arrangements	47.6	33.6	18.9	42.6	41.2	16.2
Company social benefits	18.1	59.9	22.1	30.5	55.7	13.8
Job security	21.3	58.2	20.2	30.2	58.1	11.7
Value of occupational skills	28.9	43.2	27.9	32.0	46.5	21.5

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

Table 8
Characteristics of Current Job
 In %

	Temporary agency work	Economy as a whole
Employment contract		
Limited	16.0	7.1
Unlimited	70.3	79.1
No contract	13.8	13.7
Has trained for this work		
Yes	41.9	58.6
No	40.3	35.1
Unskilled	17.9	6.3
Working time		
Full-time	65.4	77.4
Part-time	18.1	17.7
A few hours a week	16.5	4.9
Distance to work		
Less than 10 km	40.7	54.5
10 km to 30 km	38.8	32.1
More than 30 km	20.4	13.4
Special benefits in 2000		
Holiday bonus	28.6	55.9
Christmas bonus	22.6	39.1
13th month's salary	24.7	33.2
Works council or personnel council in the firm	46.8	54.5

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

Temporary agency workers hardly less satisfied than other workers

In the SOEP 2001 survey workers were also questioned in detail about their present working conditions.²¹ To find out whether temporary agency work per se entails

²¹ The questions related to 'their work and the working conditions on their job' (Question 43 in the SOEP 2001 individual questionnaire).

working conditions that differ from those in other types of employment a statistical matching procedure was used. This method matches workers in temporary agency work with workers in the economy as a whole in regard to important characteristics that are relevant to employment, in order to establish the influence of temporary agency work as a type of employment on the working conditions, independently of the composition of the two groups (see box). The results of the evaluations are given in tables 9 and 10 (present working conditions) and table 11 (career prospects). As the matching approach is data-intensive, while the number of temporary agency workers in SOEP is relatively small, the results in these tables contain considerable random sample uncertainties. Hence statistically significant differences are highlighted in the tables.

There are differences between temporary agency workers and the comparable group of other workers in the economy as a whole in their assessment of their present working conditions. The main aspects identified were independence in organising their work, stringency of performance controls, harmful environmental factors, the degree of nervous strain at work and the potential risk of accidents (table 9).²² For example, fewer temporary agency workers have the possibility of organising their work (either entirely or partly) themselves. On the contrary, they are subject to more stringent control of performance, and they are more exposed to harmful environmental factors, considerable nervous strain at work and greater risk of accident. However, no significant differences between the groups were established in regard to the other factors.

²² The figures in tables 9 and 10 are based on information from 51 temporary agency workers and 1 390 workers in other sectors.

Table 9
Assessment of Present Working Conditions
 In %

	Temporary agency work			Comparable group in economy as a whole		
	Applies fully	Applies partly	Does not apply	Applies fully	Applies partly	Does not apply
Work is varied	56.9	29.4	13.7	58.8	35.3	5.9
Heavy physical work	25.5	45.1	29.4	27.5	39.2	33.3
Can organise own work	25.5	33.3	41.2	19.6	49.0	31.4
Working time depends on demand	39.2	35.3	25.5	37.3	35.3	27.5
Stringent controls on performance	19.6	54.9	25.5	13.7	56.9	29.4
Further qualification on the job	39.2	39.2	21.6	41.2	41.2	17.6
Conflicts with superiors	0.0	19.6	80.4	2.0	15.7	82.4
Good relation with colleagues	78.4	21.6	0.0	76.5	21.6	2.0
Harmful environmental factors at work ¹	33.3	31.4	35.3	23.5	17.6	58.8
Great nervous strain at work ¹	25.5	49.0	25.5	25.5	39.2	35.3
Greater risk of accident at work	23.5	35.3	41.2	15.7	19.6	64.7

¹ Differences between temporary agency workers and comparable group in the economy as a whole are statistically significant at the 5% or 10% level.
 Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

Table 10
Job Satisfaction

Temporary agency workers	Comparable group in economy as a whole	Difference
6.6	7.3	-0.7

Averages of data on a scale from 0 (utterly unsatisfied) to 10 (entirely satisfied)
Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

As table 10 shows, temporary agency workers are on the whole almost as satisfied with their working conditions as workers in the matched non-temporary agency groups.

Temporary agency work: a secure job or bridging a gap?

Surprisingly, temporary agency workers hardly differ from workers in the comparable non-temporary agency group in regard to the expectation of losing their jobs in the near future (cf. table 11).²³ This may be because more temporary agency workers say in any case that they will soon be looking for a new job, making a new start in a different occupation or changing to self-employment.

As temporary agency workers do not regard advancement in their present firm as very likely in the near future most of them see their career prospects not in their present jobs. In contrast to other workers they regard further training by attending courses as unlikely in the next two years.

Conclusion

The main conclusion to be drawn from these results is that many more temporary agency workers who were employed before not only had not left their previous employment voluntarily, but also that they much less frequently have real prospects of another job when that job ends than other workers.

Despite this unfavourable starting situation most temporary agency workers classify the conditions in temporary agency work as just as good or even better than those in their former jobs. The study has also shown that temporary agency workers are more rarely

²³ This evaluation is based on information from 51 temporary agency workers and 1 389 workers in other sectors.

Table 11
Assessment of Career Prospects

Probability of ... within the next 2 years	Temporary agency work	Comparable group in economy as a whole	Difference
Job loss	38.2	43.9	-5.7
Looking for new job (own initiative) ¹	58.2	43.1	15.1
Give up this occupation and start a fresh in a different one	34.5	24.3	10.2
Self-employed, freelance work	11.0	8.2	2.8
Promotion in present firm	16.2	20.6	-4.4
Demotion in present firm	16.3	12.2	4.1
Further training in courses	36.5	48.2	-11.8

Averages of data on a scale from 0 (certainly not) to 100 (definitely).

Differences between temporary agency workers and group in the economy as a whole are statistically significant on the 10% level.

Source: Socio-Economic Panel, 2001 survey.

employed in the occupation they have trained for and that they are less likely to receive specific benefits, such as holiday and Christmas bonuses, than other workers. Also, they are more frequently on short-term contracts. Nevertheless, on the whole temporary agency workers are hardly less satisfied with their jobs.

In regard to the working conditions the picture is uneven. Major differences are not evident in some cases (e. g. the assessment of the climate at work and possibilities of further training), but some striking differences are also apparent. For example, temporary agency workers more frequently state that they are exposed to harmful environmental factors, nervous strain and risk of accident. While the risk of losing their jobs is not assessed more highly by temporary agency workers than by others, they do regard it as more likely that they will soon be looking for another job or making a new start in a different occupation. Hence the relative working conditions and the career prospects of temporary agency workers are heterogeneous, including both risks and shortcomings as well as opportunities and advantages.

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