

Irregular/On-call Work Schedules and their Effects on Worker Well-Being: Evidence from Research about from the General Social Survey (GSS)

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Irregular scheduling and Variable Hours

General Social Survey (GSS), is a bi-annual, nationally representative survey, which every 4 years has attached to it the “Quality of Worklife” module. Pooled for the years 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014, the sample size of employed workers is over 5 thousand.

I use this for scholarly research intended for both academic journals and for wider-audience policy research.

Key Question:

Which of the following best describes your usual work schedule?

- 1 Day shift
- 2 Afternoon shift
- 3 Night shift
- 4 Split shift
- 5 Irregular shift/on-call**
- 6 Rotating shifts

Key Descriptive Findings:

- About 10 percent** of the workforce is assigned to **irregular and on-call work** shift times
- this figure is likely low, conservative, under-estimates, because shift times can change *within* a given day, afternoon or night shift.
 - (Another 7 % work on split or rotating shifts, which is more common among hourly workers than it is among salaried...)
 - 6 percent of hourly workers, 8 percent of salaried and a whopping 30 percent of those paid on some other basis, work irregular or on-call shifts.
 - **Among just part-time workers, 16 percent of on irregular/on-call schedules (one in 6);**
 - **25 percent work on irregular/on-call shifts.**

For Context:

- Just under 20% of the overall work force is **part time**;
- 52 percent are paid hourly, 36 percent of employed are salaried (remainder 12 % are contractors, contingents).

Key Descriptive Findings, GSS, cont'd, by Income, Hours and Sector

By income level, the **lowest income workers** face the most irregular work schedules.

- Workers earning under \$22,500 per year are more likely to work on irregular schedules than workers in the income bracket above that (the current salary minimum threshold for assured FLSA overtime coverage even if one is a “salaried” employee).
- Irregular/on-call shift work is associated positively with **working longer weekly hours**.
- By **industry type**, irregular scheduling is somewhat more prevalent in agriculture, **personal services, business/repair services, entertainment/recreation, finance/insurance/real estate, retail trade, and transportation communications**.
- By **occupation (job) type**, about **15 percent of sales and related occupations** have irregular or on-call schedules—this rate is about one and a half times the national average.

In the monthly US Current Population Survey (CPS)

- In CPS, workers asked to specify “usual” workweek length -- about one in every 11 or 12 say their “hours vary.”
 - Part-timers have more than double the likelihood of having hours that vary weekly.
 - Such variable workweeks is higher in certain occupations, such as sales, and lower in professional, managerial, and administrative support.
 - The probability of having “hours vary” is reduced for union members, married workers, government employees, whites, men, and workers with a higher level of education.

Recent PPP poll, for EINet (Employment Instability Network, University of Chicago): Higher incidence found for Irregular schedules and hours that “vary”

Q6 Thinking of your main job, which of the following best describes the hours you *usually* work: a regular day shift, an evening shift, a night shift, a rotating shift, a split shift, **an irregular schedule**, or something else?

<i>Regular day shift</i>	67%
<i>Evening shift</i>	5%
<i>Night shift</i>	3%
<i>Rotating shift</i>	5%
<i>Split shift</i>	3%
<i>Irregular schedule</i>	16%
<i>Something else</i>	2%

Q7 Does the number of hours you work **vary from week to week?**

Yes.....	55%
No	45%

Part-time workers have less discretion over their work schedule, and more changes to their schedule, usually with less than 1-2 weeks notice or less...MN as an example

	Base	Full Time or Part Time			
		Regular full-time job	Regular part-time job	Temporary job	Something else
How Work Hours Decided					
Starting and ending times are decided by your employer with little or no input from you	38%	37%	43%	37%	45%
Starting and ending are decided by your employer but with your input	32%	30%	37%	47%	44%
Decide your own starting and ending time within certain limits	27%	31%	15%	2%	12%
Entirely free to decide when you start and end work	3%	2%	4%	14%	-

	Base	Full Time or Part Time			
		Regular full-time job	Regular part-time job	Temporary job	Something else
Work Schedule How Far Advance					
One day or less in advance	8%	8%	9%	13%	22%
2-3 days in advance	8%	7%	9%	19%	29%
4-7 days in advance	8%	8%	6%	5%	31%
1-2 weeks in advance	12%	8%	30%	9%	-
3-4 weeks in advance	11%	11%	13%	-	11%
4 or more weeks in advance	12%	12%	11%	4%	-
Schedule never changes	42%	47%	22%	50%	8%

Source: Public Policy Polling, March 27-31, 2015, State of Minnesota, shared by EINet, University of Chicago.

Workers with Irregular/on-call Shift Schedules are most common in 2 (non-agricultural) Industries : **Retail/Wholesale Trade, and Food Services/Production** – where part-time jobs are most prevalent– although they are present in all industries

	Base	Industry							
		Professional services	Retail or wholesale trade	Education, healthcare, or a non-for-profit organization	Construction or manufacturing	Transportation or utilities	Agriculture	Food services or production	Something else
Job Classification									
Regular full-time	73%	84%	48%	72%	88%	79%	78%	36%	74%
Regular part-time	22%	11%	47%	24%	3%	21%	-	60%	18%
Temporary job	2%	3%	2%	1%	-	-	13%	5%	5%
Something else	3%	2%	2%	4%	9%	-	12%	-	3%

	Base	Industry							
		Professional services	Retail or wholesale trade	Education, healthcare, or a non-for-profit organization	Construction or manufacturing	Transportation or utilities	Agriculture	Food services or production	Something else
Type of Shift									
Regular day shift	67%	71%	44%	81%	77%	58%	43%	40%	60%
Evening shift	5%	3%	6%	4%	-	9%	5%	18%	5%
Night shift	3%	3%	3%	1%	5%	6%	-	12%	-
Rotating shift	5%	1%	12%	1%	8%	8%	-	8%	8%
Split shift	3%	3%	3%	1%	-	8%	9%	-	3%
Irregular schedule	16%	16%	29%	9%	10%	7%	42%	21%	20%
Something else	2%	2%	2%	2%	-	3%	-	-	3%

In State of CA: **Part-time** workers are more at risk (43 percent vs. 30 percent) of **working fewer hours per week than they preferred** during at least one of the past four weeks.

	Base	Full-Time or Part-Time			
		Full-time	Part-time	Temporary	Something else
How Many Weeks Fewer Hours Than Prefer					
One week	13%	12%	13%	-	66%
Two weeks	6%	5%	12%	13%	-
Three weeks	1%	1%	1%	-	7%
All four weeks	8%	5%	17%	42%	7%
Never worked fewer hours per week than you preferred	71%	77%	57%	45%	20%

Irregular Scheduling Effects: reported **work-family conflict and work stress**

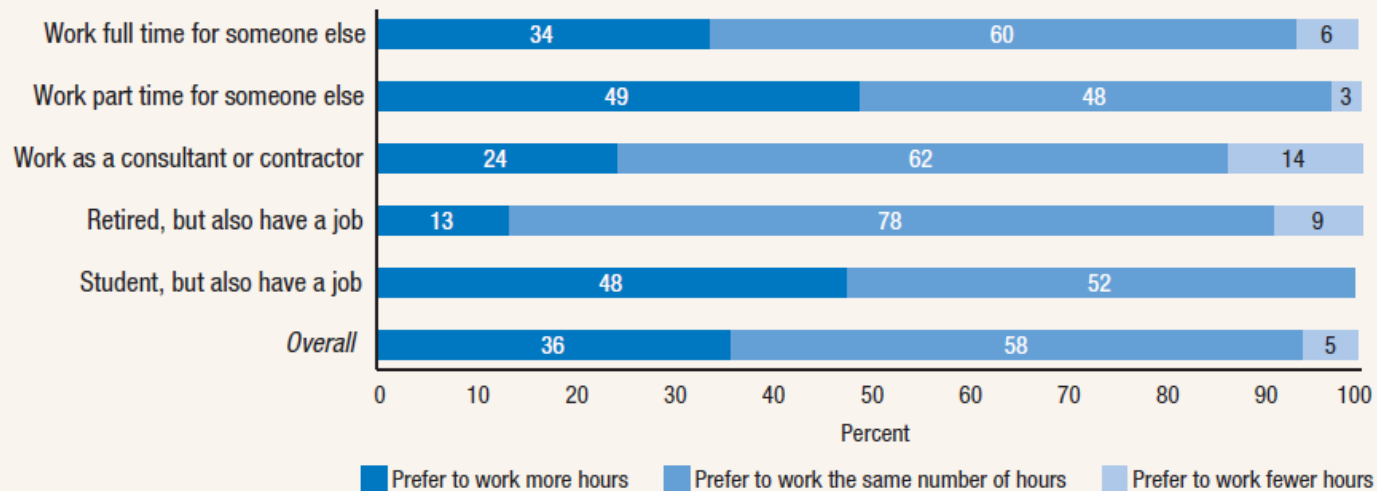
- While 11% on “regular” schedules report “often” experiencing **work-family conflict**, as much as **26% on IRREGULAR schedules “often”** do.
- When controlling for length of weekly hours of work and other demographic and work characteristics, **work-family conflict is worsened** when having **irregular/on-call shift** work
- for **both hourly and salaried** workers, but particularly strongly for salaried workers, even when controlling for their relatively longer work hours.
- Irregular/on-call work is **moderately** associated with higher work stress.
 - **Hourly** workers, in this case, experience the enhanced work stress more so than salaried workers.
- **Having overtime work that is mandatory (“required by the employer”)** contributes to both work-family conflict and work stress.

From GSS/ISSP 2005 data:

- Being underemployed (willing to work more hours) does NOT have the advantage of reducing work-family conflict, despite their shorter hours.
 - However, part-time workers who prefer that part-time status experience less work-family conflict.
 - Whereas being overemployed (willing to reduce work time for less pay) somewhat exacerbates work-family conflict, no matter what is the level of weekly hours.

2015 Federal Reserve Report on Household Well-Being in the US: a measure of overemployment and underemployment

Figure 2. Would you prefer to work more, less, or about the same amount as you currently work at your current wage? (by employment status)



Note: Among respondents who are currently employed.

Underemployment is currently pervasive, particularly among part-timers, while overemployment is less so, it is high in pockets, such as twice as present among full-timers than part-timers...

● Policy recommendations/implications – new, innovative labor-employment regulations to keep up with challenges of just-in-time scheduling, and the stubbornly high level of underemployment in the US labor market,

- particularly in certain industries, and especially by substitution of part time for full time positions...

- Altering the current incentives, with:

- “Predictability Pay” advance notice for work schedules, compensation if employers change work schedules after the schedule is posted, access to full time hours.

- Minimum Reporting Pay

- Doesn't ban the practices, just shifts some of the “cost” of them back on to employers, not just employees.