

Call for Papers

Precarious Employment and Well-Being during the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Mini Conference and Special Issue

Work and Occupations

This call invites papers for a mini conference and subsequent special issue of *Work and Occupations* dedicated to precarious employment and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prospective contributors should submit a full paper as a single document to the conference organizers by November 15, 2021. We encourage submissions from scholars of different demographic backgrounds, nationalities, career stages, theoretical frames, and methodological orientations. All submissions must be original work that has not been previously published in part or in full. The conference organizers and special issue guest editors are Quan Mai (Rutgers University), Lijun Song (Vanderbilt University), and Rachel Donnelly (Vanderbilt University).

The authors of accepted papers will be invited to a virtual one-day mini conference where they will present their paper and receive feedback from conference organizers and other invited participants. The mini conference is scheduled to take place on Friday, January 21, 2022. Based on the conference organizers' recommendations, discussions at the conference, and the fit with the special issue, the guest editors will invite a subset of authors to submit their papers to *Work and Occupations* with the expectation that their manuscripts will be published in the special issue if they pass the external peer-review process. The authors will be notified of editorial evaluations in September 2022. Last round revisions are due in early November 2022.

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In recent decades, a wave of structural changes contributes to the troubling rise of precarious employment in both the developed and developing worlds. The adverse effects of precarious work extend beyond workers' employment-related dimensions such as pay, benefits, and job satisfaction. Emerging scholarship on this topic documents how this mode of employment generates significant negative consequences for various aspects of workers' lives, including their physical and mental health, prospects for social mobility, family life, and socioeconomic well-being more generally.

Since late 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc on billions of workers' employment experiences across the globe and damaging their well-being and livelihoods. The impact of the pandemic is particularly profound among precariously employed workers in nonstandard employment arrangements, especially at a time when many countries have spent decades rolling back social safety nets. Precarious workers in healthcare, nursing homes, grocery and retail stores, transportation, and delivery have been unable to work remotely and had to interact closely with customers and patients often without sufficient safety measures. Workers in restaurants, bars, and movie theaters have been laid off and faced a reduction in benefits, adding great uncertainty to their already precarious working conditions. Many self-employed workers, independent contractors, gig-workers, and freelancers have been facing unemployment without being laid off as their contracts go unrenewed. With limited access to collective bargaining power and adequate protective measures, precarious workers have been exposed to higher risks of unfair

treatment and exploitation. The pandemic also put workers in otherwise "good" jobs in precarious situations. Millions of high-skilled and high-paid workers in full-time positions have experienced precarity after being temporarily furloughed or forced to work on reduced hours, often for an unspecified amount of time.

The special issue aims to bring together cutting-edge studies from diverse disciplinary backgrounds on precarious work and well-being during the pandemic. The topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- the influence of employment precarity on workers' risk of exposure to and infection with COVID-19;
- the influence of employment precarity on workers' mental, physical, and socioeconomic well-being;
- changes in employment precarity during the pandemic and subsequent short- and long-term consequences for well-being;
- the influence of employment precarity on workers' healthcare accessibility and utilization;
- individual and family adaptations to the risks of unemployment and illness;
- the influence of employment precarity and risk of illness on social relationships between co-workers and between front-line workers and customers/patients;
- public policy adaptations to mitigate the risks of unemployment, precarious employment, and illness;
- employer and labor union interventions to mitigate the risks of unemployment and illness; and
- social disparities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class) and global variations in all the above themes.

Prospective contributors are welcome to consult with any of the conference organizers and guest editors about the potential fit of their projects. To submit your paper, please email it to wox_workwellbeing2021@sociology.rutgers.edu by November 15, 2021.