

PENSIONS POLICY INSTITUTE

PPI

THE UNDER-PENSIONED:
NON-STANDARD EMPLOYMENT

The Under-pensioned: Non-standard employment

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Non-standard employment: Introduction

*The Under-pensioned*¹ identified a range of factors that are likely to lead to low pension income. It concluded that

- For most people pension income is likely to be lower than that of the 'stereotype' person typically used in policy planning
- Low earnings is the most important cause of low pension income
- Any time not spent in full-time work reduces pension income
- Low or irregular private pension contributions reduce pension income
- Retiring later can improve pension incomes
- Living to older ages reduces pension income
- Disadvantage is cumulative
- The current pension system will not resolve the under-pensioned problem

This report is one in a series of four looking at the particular characteristics of under-pensioned groups, linked to the factors identified in *The Under-pensioned*. The other reports cover women, ethnic minorities and disabled people.

Chapter 1 of this report outlines the relative numbers and demographic characteristics of non-standard workers.

Chapter 2 identifies the specific characteristics of non-standard workers linked to the causes of low pension income identified in *The Under-pensioned*, and looks at the cumulative impact.

Chapter 3 examines how recent changes in the UK pension system will change the relative risk of low pension income for non-standard workers.

Data limitations

Much of the analysis contained in this chapter looks at characteristics over a working lifetime, and so uses longitudinal data. The most recent comprehensive longitudinal analysis is in *Lifetime Experiences of Self-Employment* by Knight and McKay, published in 2000. This uses the Family and Working Lives Survey (FWLS), as it contains relatively detailed information on employment patterns and pension history built up over a number of years. The FWLS was collected in 1994/5. Although the 'current activity' findings may be a little out of date compared to other sources (such as the Labour Force Survey), the FWLS remains the best longitudinal data source, and Knight and McKay (2000) is used heavily throughout this report.

Summary of conclusions

40% of workers are in non-standard employment - self-employment, part-time working and temporary working. The rate of self-employment increases with age, but both younger and older workers are more likely to be in non-standard employment. Most self-employed workers are men, and most part-time workers are women.

Low earnings and time not spent in full-time work reduce pension income. People stay in non-standard employment for a number of years, but rarely for a full working life. Many non-standard workers are in industries with low levels of employer pension provision, and few are in senior management positions. Most non-standard workers have lower earnings than full-time permanent employees.

Low or irregular private pension contributions reduces pension income. Non-standard workers are less likely to have private pension provision than permanent full-time employees. The self-employed are just as likely as employees to have ever had a private pension, but tend to contribute for shorter periods of time. Almost half of the self-employed have little or no savings.

Retiring later can improve pension incomes. People who have been self-employed at some point during their working lives are more likely to work past state pension age. Non-standard employment in general is much more likely than working full-time in a permanent job past state pension age. It is not clear if continued working beyond state pension age is a positive choice, or a necessity to maintain a reasonable level of income.

Disadvantage is cumulative. An illustrative non-standard worker receives a pension income one-third lower than the policy stereotype. Lower earnings reduce entitlement to SERPS/ S2P and private pension income. Self-employment leads substantial reduction in state pension income, through not qualifying for SERPS/S2P, and private pension income through lower and less regular contributions. This is partially offset by higher state and private pension income from continuing to work up to and beyond SPA.

Recent reforms to the current system will not resolve these problems. Although marginally smaller, the gap in pension incomes will continue to exist in the future. Increases in S2P offset the direct and indirect impact of lower earnings. PC partially offsets fewer private pension contributions, and time not spent in work. **The close link to labour market participation in the current pension system means that many people with experience of non-standard work will receive low pension incomes in the future.**

Chapter 1: Non-standard employment in the UK

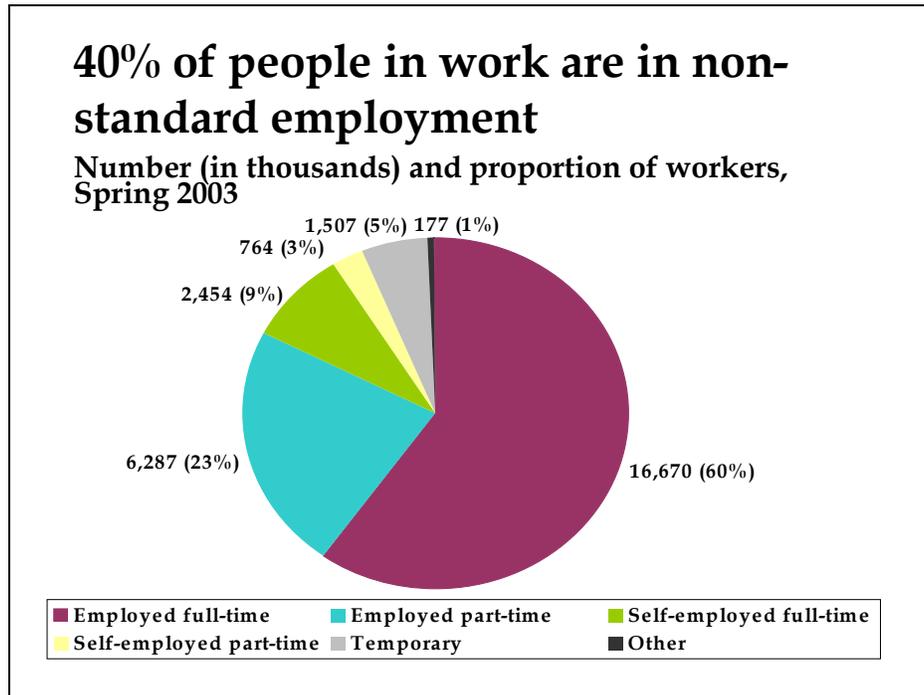
40% of workers are in non-standard employment - self-employment, part-time working and temporary working. The rate of self-employment increases with age, but both younger and older workers are more likely to be in non-standard employment. Non-standard employment is often reported as a choice, rather than a necessity, with only a minority of temporary or part-time workers claiming to prefer a permanent or full-time job.

Non-standard employment accounts for 40% of UK workers

The most common form of work is as a full-time employee with a permanent contract. However, a large number of workers do not fit this standard category. The 'non-standard' category includes people working part-time, the self-employed, and those with temporary contracts².

The number of people in non-standard employment - self-employment, part-time working and temporary working - has increased in recent years. Together, they account for 11 million people, or 40% of the workforce (Chart 1). This proportion has remained stable since the mid-1990's.

Chart 1³



² Temporary work is often casual, or seasonal, but can also cover probation or training periods before a position becomes permanent.

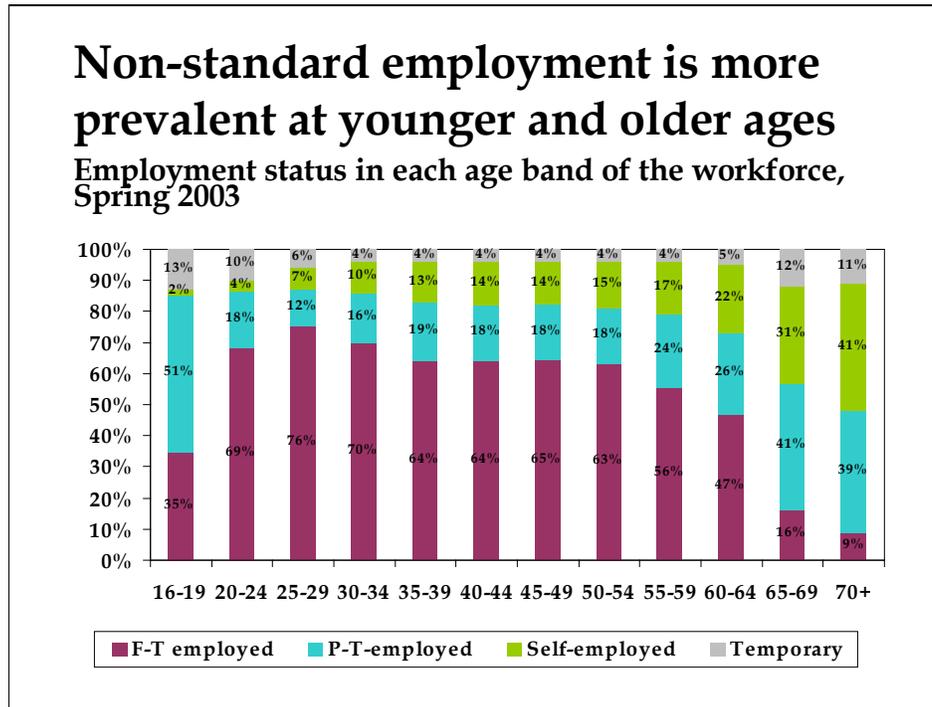
4 ³ Derived from ONS (2003 LFSQS)

Younger and older workers are more likely to be in non-standard employment

The proportions of people in non-standard employment, and the type of non-standard employment, varies with age. Non-standard employment in general is more common at younger and older ages – two thirds of those in work under age 19 and over 85% of those in work aged 65 or above are in non-standard employment. Temporary work tends to be concentrated among those aged under 30, or above 60. Part-time work is less common when people are in their twenties (Chart 2).

Self-employment is more likely with age. The rate of self-employment increases for every age group. 10% of those aged 30 to 34 are self-employed, and over 40% of those aged 70 or older. Almost half of the self-employed became self-employed before the age of 30⁴.

Chart 2⁵



Women are more likely than men to be in non-standard employment in general, but men and women are usually in different types of non-standard employment. For example, 73% of self-employed people are men, while 82% of part-time workers are women⁶.

⁴ Knight and McKay (2000)

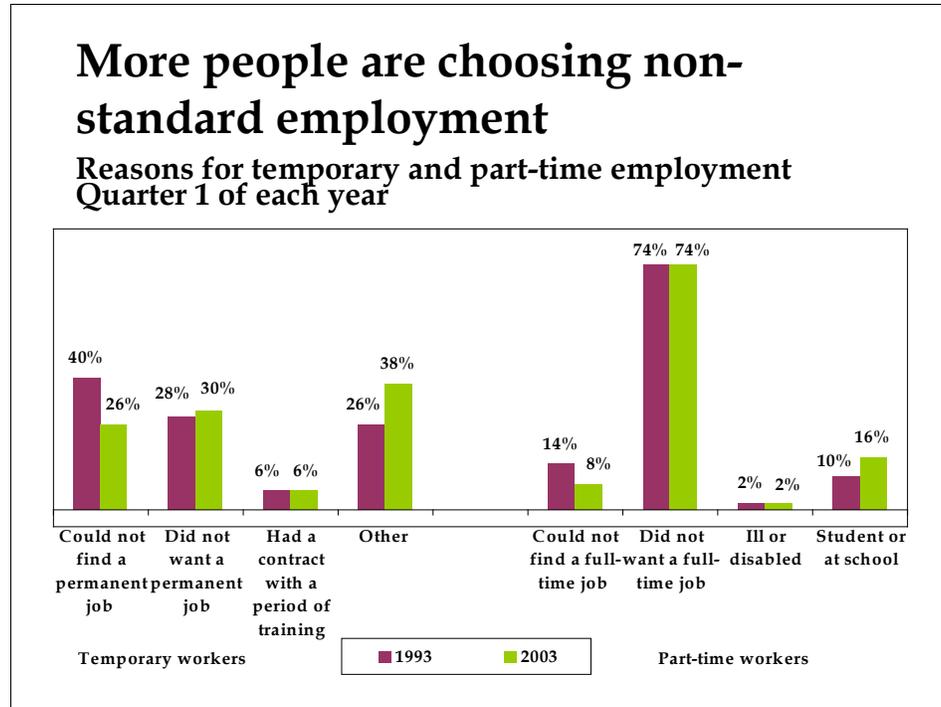
⁵ PPI analysis of the Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003

⁶ PPI analysis of the Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003

Most people in non-standard work say they choose to be so

Non-standard employment is increasingly a conscious career choice, rather than a second-best alternative to finding a full-time, permanent job. Almost a third of temporary workers said they did not want a permanent job, and only a quarter say they are working in a temporary job because they could not find a permanent position. Three-quarters of part-time workers (including part-time self-employed) said they did not want to work full-time (Chart 3).

Chart 3⁷



It is not clear how realistic these findings are. It may be that people currently in non-standard employment might prefer a full-time or permanent job if one was available on their terms – for example, with flexible hours, or increased personal responsibility. There may also be an element of self-justification in responses to these questions.

However, responses may also reflect positive household-based decisions – women are more likely to work part-time, or to be in temporary employment, and so may be at least partly reliant on the income of a partner. There are 4.1 million couples with one partner in full-time work, and one partner working part-time⁸.

Over half of self-employed people gave positive reasons for becoming self-employed (such as *flexibility of being own boss*), while only 12% gave negative

⁷ ONS (2003 LMT)

reasons (such as *could not get another job*)⁹. Self-employment may however, play another role, as a way out of unemployment. 11% of self-employees were unemployed before starting self-employment. This varies by age, with 26% of the self-employed aged 16 - 29 starting from unemployment¹⁰.

There is very little difference in the proportions of employees and the self-employed who have spent some time unemployed. However, self-employed people are more likely to have been unemployed for 6 months or longer¹¹.

More recent evidence suggests that those with fewer, and shorter, experiences of unemployment are now more likely to move into self-employment¹². However, periods of self-employment after unemployment tend to be shorter than other periods of self-employment¹³, suggesting that for many it may be a stepping-stone to employment.

⁹ Knight and McKay (2000)

¹⁰ Knight and McKay (2000)

¹¹ Knight and McKay (2000)

¹² Kellard et al (2002)

¹³ Knight and McKay (2000)

Chapter 2: The causes of low pension income

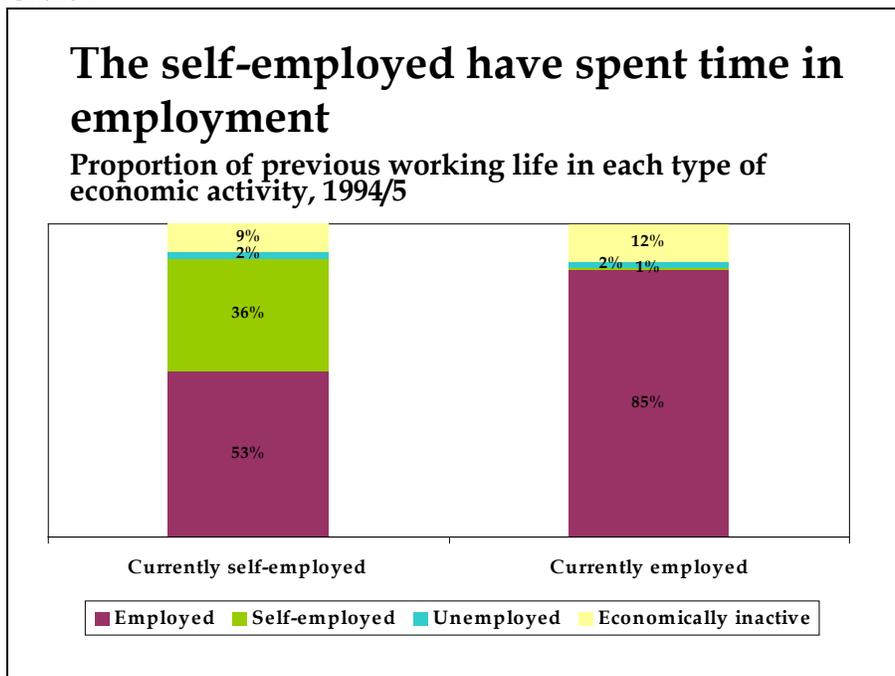
Low earnings and time not spent in full-time work reduce pension income

People stay in non-standard employment for a number of years, but rarely for a full working life. Non-standard workers are more likely to work in industries with low employer pension provision, and less likely to have senior or managerial roles. Most non-standard workers have lower earnings than full-time permanent employees.

People stay in non-standard employment for a number of years, but rarely for a full working life

Non-standard employment often does not last throughout a full working life. 96% of self-employed workers in 1994/5 had previous experience of working as an employee (after age 16). Conversely, 7% of employees in 1994/5 had previously been self-employed, so that 14% of employees and the self-employed were either self-employed or had been self-employed in the past¹⁴. Of those currently self-employed, over half of their working life had been spent as an employee (Chart 4).

Chart 4¹⁵



¹⁴ Knight and McKay (2000)

¹⁵ Knight and McKay (2000)

Almost two-thirds of spells of self-employment last for more than 5 years, and almost half last longer than 10 years. Older self-employed workers tend to have longer spells of self-employment than their younger counterparts, and after allowing for the fact that older workers have had more opportunity to work for longer, spells of self-employment started more recently tend to be shorter¹⁶.

On average a spell of self-employment lasts almost 8 years. This is similar to the length of time of the average employment spell, just under 9 years¹⁷. This includes people changing jobs but still remaining employed or self-employed. Looking at single spells in the same job, self-employment is more stable than employment, with a median completed spell of almost 8 years, compared to 5 years for the median completed job as an employee¹⁸.

The average length of time spent in temporary work is much shorter. The median length of time spent in temporary work before finding a permanent position (either in the same firm or a different one) is around 3 ½ years for fixed-term contracts, and 18 months for seasonal work¹⁹.

¹⁶ Knight and McKay (2000)

¹⁷ Knight and McKay (2000)

¹⁸ Taylor (1998)

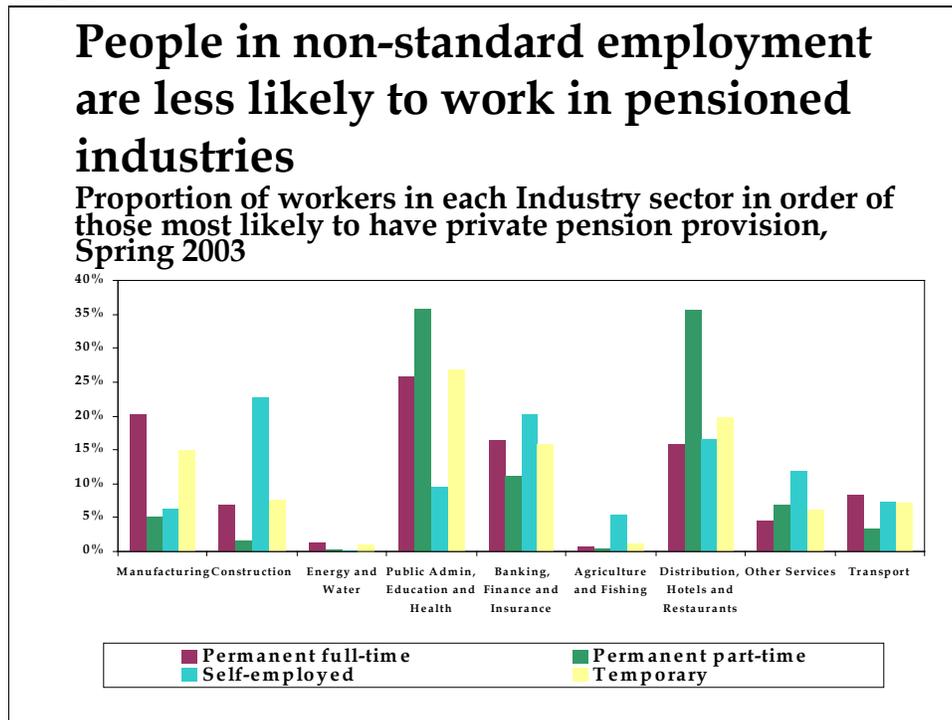
¹⁹ Booth et al (2000)

Non-standard workers are more likely to work in industries with low employer pension provision, and less likely to have senior or managerial roles
 People in non-standard work tend to work in different industries from permanent full-time employees, and are less likely to work in industries where employer pension provision is highest (Chart 5).

Non-standard workers tend to be highly concentrated in particular industries. Over 40% of temporary workers and one-third of part-time workers work in public administration, education and health, where private pension provision is relatively high. However, a further one-third of part-time workers work in distribution, hotels and restaurants, where coverage is low. Most other temporary workers work in industries where employer pension provision is low. Very few part-time or temporary workers work in manufacturing, where employer pension provision is highest.

One-quarter of self-employed people work in construction, and there are further concentrations in banking and finance and distribution, hotels and restaurants. By definition, the self-employed do not have access to an employer’s pension scheme or contribution.

Chart 5²⁰



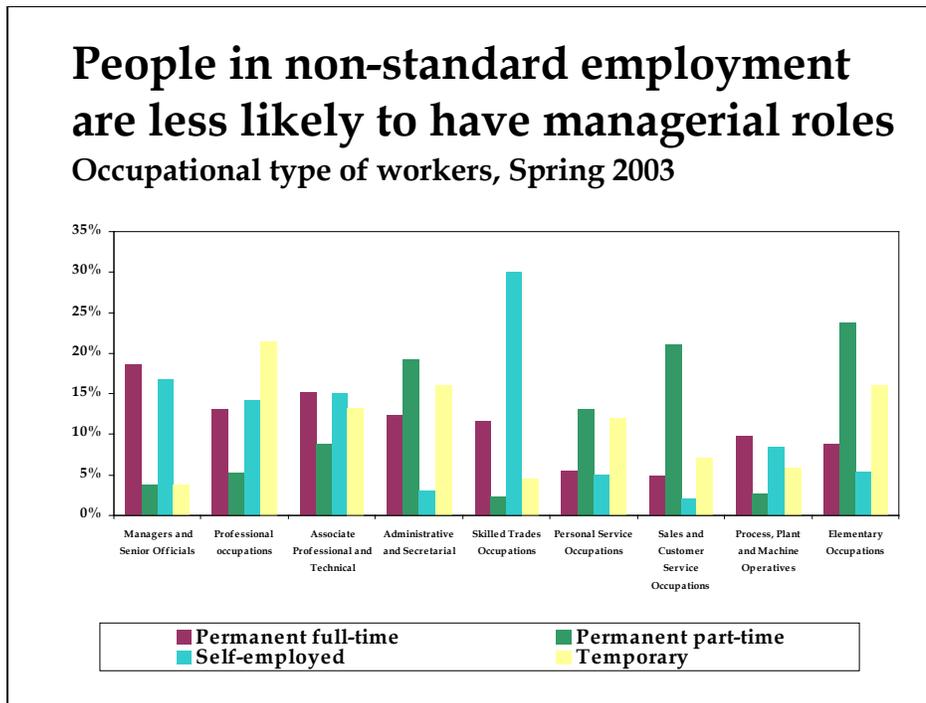
Non-standard workers (with the exception of the self-employed) are also less likely to be in senior and managerial roles at work (Chart 6). These occupations

²⁰ PPI analysis of the Labour Force Survey Spring 2003. Smith and McKay (2002) page 24 show the proportion of organisations in each industry with occupational pension provision

are likely to have the highest earnings, and be most likely to have employer pension provision. One-quarter of part-time workers are in elementary occupations, and a further one-fifth are in sales occupations. Relatively few are in senior or professional positions. Although one-fifth of temporary workers are in professional occupations, a further one-fifth are in elementary occupations, perhaps reflecting the different types of temporary work (casual work and training posts).

One-third of self-employed people are in skilled trade, and most are in skilled, professional or management occupations.

Chart 6²¹



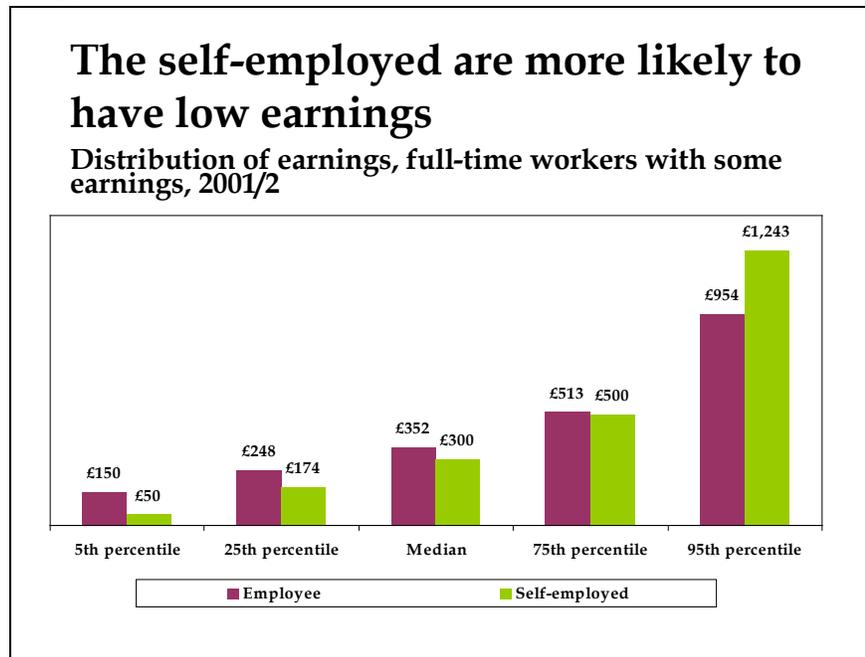
²¹ PPI analysis of Labour Force Survey, Spring 2003

Most non-standard workers have lower earnings

The earnings of people in non-standard employment tend to be lower than those in full-time employment. Part-time workers, who are mostly women, earn on average £148 per week, compared to the average full-time wage of £465 per week²².

Average earnings of the full-time self-employed are £150 per week higher than the average earnings of full-time employees²³. However, the distribution of earnings is very different. The self-employed are more likely to have low earnings than employees, but also more likely to have very high earnings (Chart 7). A quarter of full-time self-employed people earn less than £174 per week, while 5% earn more than £1,243 per week.

Chart 7²⁴



Average full-time earnings across temporary employees are 20% lower than the average across permanent employees²⁵. This could be for a number of reasons – such as the types of job that are temporary, and the younger average age of temporary workers.

Temporary work is often a step into permanent employment, for example through completing training. But even after becoming permanent employees, people who started in temporary work have on average lower earnings throughout the rest of their career²⁶.

²² ONS (2003 NES)

²³ £580 per week compared to £430 per week – PPI analysis of the Family Resources Survey 2001/2, excluding those with zero earnings

²⁴ PPI analysis of Family Resources Survey 2001/2, excluding those with zero earnings

²⁵ PPI analysis of the Labour Force Survey Q1 2003

²⁶ Booth et al (2002)

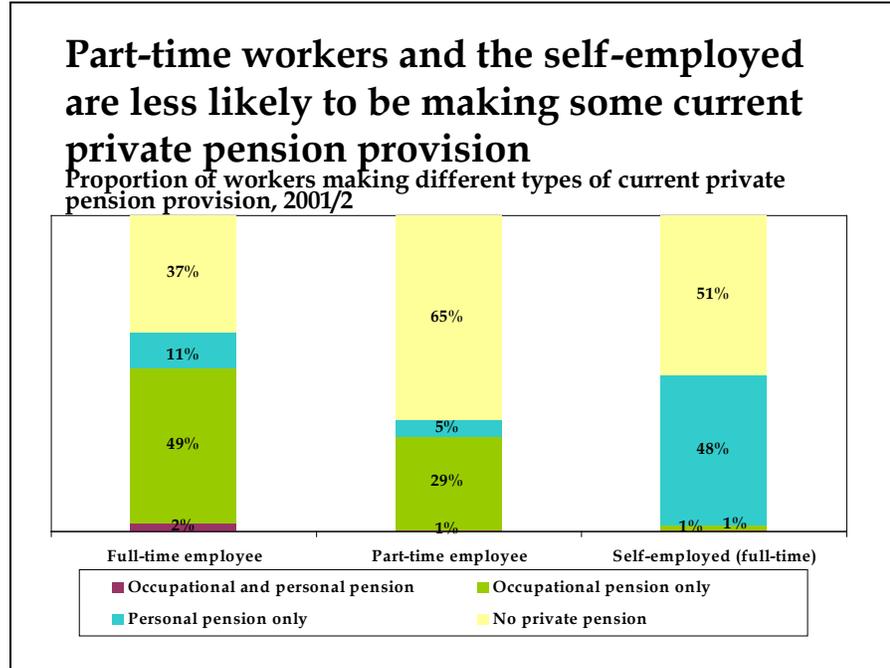
Low or irregular private pension contributions reduces pension income

Non-standard workers are less likely to have private pension provision than permanent full-time employees. The self-employed are just as likely as employees to have ever had a private pension, but tend to contribute for shorter periods of time. Almost half of the self-employed have little or no savings.

Non-standard workers are less likely to be making some current private pension provision

Almost two-thirds of full-time employees are accruing some current non-state pension provision²⁷. Only a third of part-time employees have private pensions, and around a half of the self-employed have little or no savings (Chart 8).

Chart 8²⁸



Low coverage of occupational pension schemes is likely to be caused by a combination of inter-related labour market factors. Non-standard employment tends to be low in industries where occupational pension coverage is traditionally high, although it is higher in some other industries such as public administration where occupational pension coverage is also relatively high. Occupational pension coverage is more common at higher managerial levels, and a smaller proportion of non-standard workers are in these positions²⁹. Even in industries with good occupational pension

²⁷ Including employer contributions

²⁸ PPI analysis of Family Resources Survey 2001/2

²⁹ See Charts 5 and 6

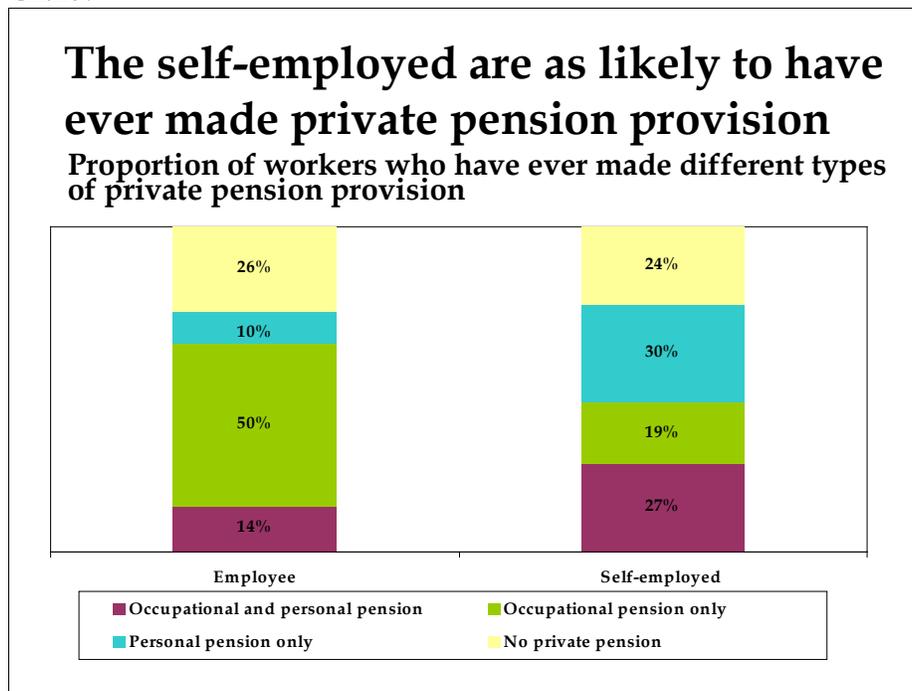
coverage, if non-standard workers have some occupational pension, it is likely to be worth less than that of a permanent full-time worker due to lower earnings levels.

Low earnings also helps explain low levels of coverage of private pensions, as private pensions are more prevalent at higher earnings levels³⁰.

The self-employed have past private pension contributions, but for shorter periods

Many self-employed individuals have previously been employees, and some have private pensions related to earlier employment. Taking into account these past experiences, the self-employed are just as likely as employees to have ever had a private pension (Chart 9).

Chart 9³¹



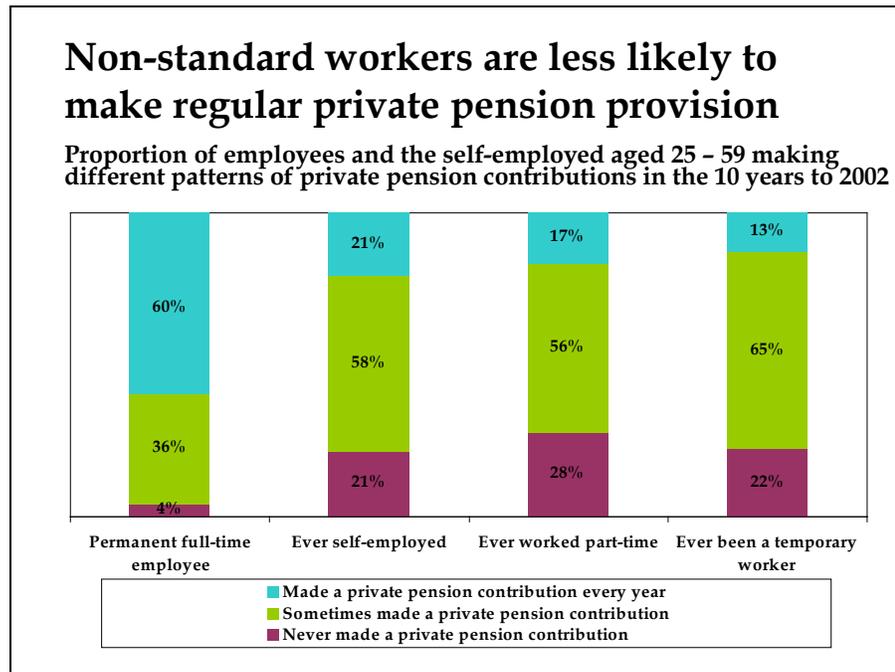
Occupational pensions are the most common type of private pension provision for employees (full-time and part-time), while the self-employed are heavily reliant on personal pensions. In the absence of an employer contribution, the self-employed would need to contribute more each year, or smaller amounts for a longer period of time, to achieve a similar level of private pension income. There is no data to enable an assessment of whether they do so or not. As the self-employed are not accruing rights to the State Second Pension, this group will also receive smaller state pensions than equivalent employees.

³⁰ Curry and O’Connell (2002) pages 38 – 39

³¹ Knight and McKay (2000)

Non-standard workers are less likely to make regular contributions to private pensions. Nearly all workers who had worked full-time in a permanent job in each of the last 10 years had made a private pension contribution in at least one year, and nearly two-thirds had made a private pension contribution in every year. Less than one-fifth of those who had ever been self-employed, worked part-time or had a temporary job had made private pension contributions every year, and a similar proportion had not made any private pension contributions (Chart 10).

Chart 10³²

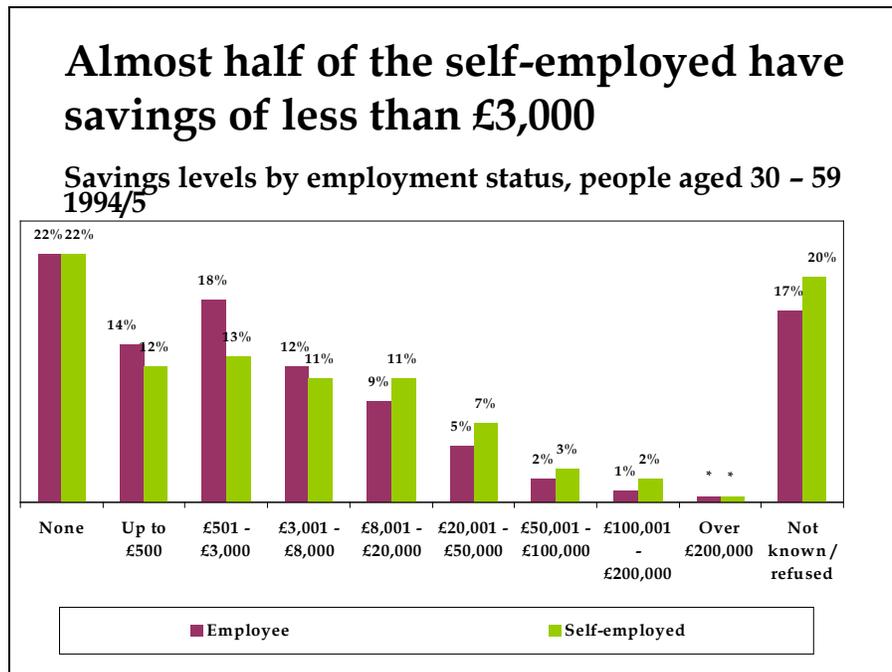


³² Based on analysis of the British Household Panel Survey waves 2 - 11, carried out for the PPI by the Gerontology Data Service of the Institute of Gerontology, Kings College London

Almost half of the self-employed have little or no savings

As well as pensions, other assets can be used to fund an income in retirement. Although the self-employed are more likely to have higher amounts of savings than employees of similar ages, almost half have assets of less than £3,000 (Chart 11).

Chart 11³³



There is no evidence available to show what proportion of the self-employed will have business assets available to help fund their retirement. However, it is unlikely that the large majority - 77% - of self-employed people who work by themselves have significant business assets³⁴.

Rates of home ownership are similar amongst the self-employed and employees, at around 80%. The self-employed are more likely to own their home outright, and on average have higher value property. Self-employed people are also much more likely to own a second property. More than one-fifth of self-employed people owned a second property, compared to less than one-tenth of employees³⁵. A significant minority of self-employed people may therefore be able to supplement retirement income with the proceeds of property investments.

³³ Knight and McKay (2000). * - represent less than 1%. This chart looks only at those aged 30 - 59 as the self-employed are generally older than employees.

³⁴ PPI analysis of the Labour Force Survey, Winter 2002/3

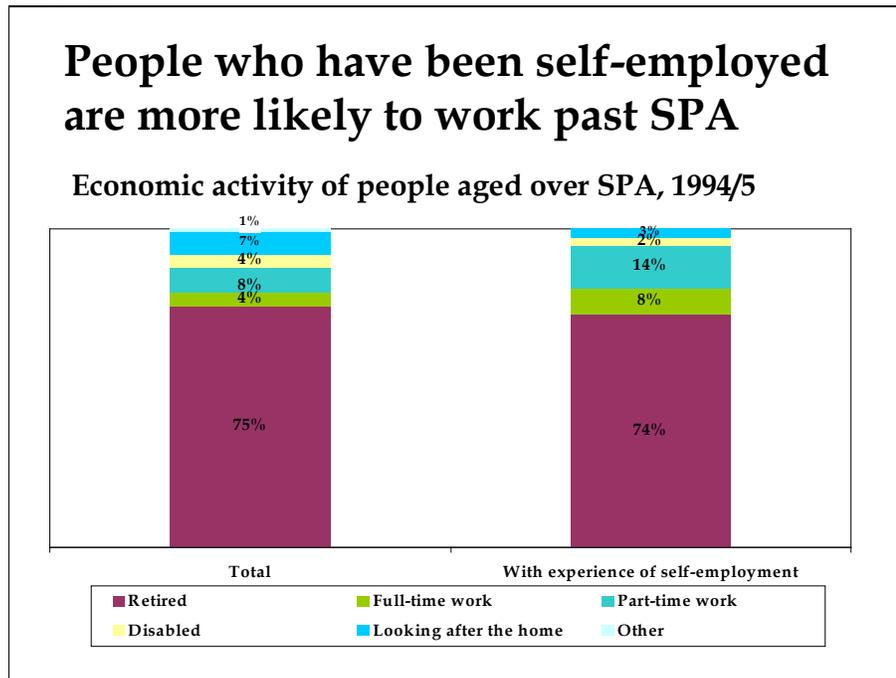
³⁵ McKay (2002)

Retiring later can improve pension incomes

People who have been self-employed at some point during their working lives are more likely to work past state pension age. Non-standard employment in general is much more likely past state pension age. It is not clear if continued working beyond state pension age is a positive choice, or a necessity to maintain a reasonable level of income.

People who have been self-employed at some point during their working lives are more likely to work past state pension age (Chart 12).

Chart 12³⁶



Non-standard employment in general is much more likely past state pension age. Less than 15% of those working over the age of 65 are in full-time work, with more than 40% working part-time. Over a third are self-employed, and more than 10% are in temporary employment³⁷.

It is not clear if continued working beyond state pension age is a positive choice, or a necessity to maintain a reasonable level of income, but it is likely that both factors play a part³⁸. The self-employed may have more choice in the time that they retire, but this can be offset by less retirement provision. Working longer allows for more contributions to be made to private pensions, and for the resulting pension to be paid over a shorter period of time, increasing income in retirement.

³⁶ Knight and McKay (2000)

³⁷ See Chart 1

³⁸ Meager et al (1996)

The increased likelihood of the self-employed continuing to work after state pension age makes a true comparison of *pension* income difficult. There is no conclusive evidence that people who have been self-employed face lower overall incomes in retirement, but this is distorted by the amounts received from earnings.

Disadvantage is cumulative

An illustrative non-standard worker receives a pension income 15% lower than the policy stereotype. The direct impact of lower earnings is to reduce entitlement to SERPS/ S2P and reducing private pension income. Private pension income is reduced by lower and less regular contributions during spells of self-employment. The main impact of self-employment is substantial reduction in state pension income through not qualifying for SERPS/S2P. This is offset by higher state and private pension income from continuing to work up to and beyond SPA.

An illustrative non-standard worker

For reference, the PPI is using a policy stereotype individual³⁹ who:

- starts work at age 21
- works 44 years in continuous full-time employment
- at median age-specific earnings
- makes private pension contributions of 8% per year and
- retires at state pension age (65).

The analysis in this paper suggests that an illustrative non-standard worker is likely to have very different characteristics. People who have experienced non-standard employment:

- have lower earnings on average
- are less likely to have private pension provision
- are less likely to make regular contributions to private pensions
- are likely to have lower private pension contributions, in the absence of an employer's contribution
- are more likely to work past state pension age, in non-standard employment

Therefore the pension prospects for an illustrative person with a history of non-standard employment might be represented by the following assumptions:

- 80% of median age specific earnings (based on the difference between self-employed/temporary employment earnings and full-time earnings)
- A short spell of temporary work, without private pension provision, more likely at earlier ages: say, age 25 to 27
- A longer spell of self-employment later in working life: say, from age 40
- Less regular, and lower contributions to private pensions while self-employed: say, starting at age 50 at 4% of earnings
- A longer working life: say, not retiring until age 67 (but working part-time and not contributing to a private pension after SPA)

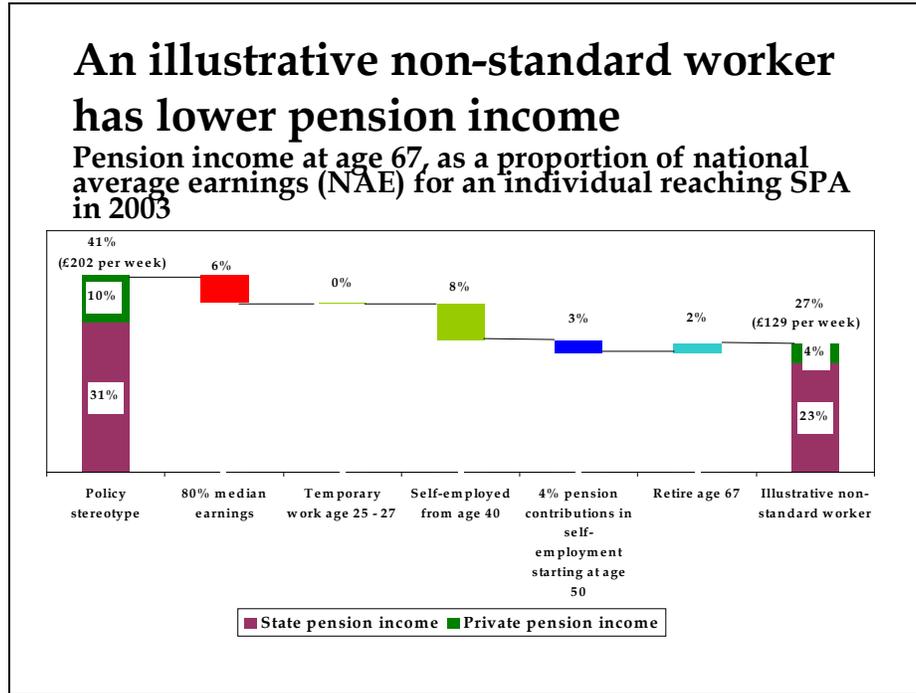
No one individual is likely to have these exact characteristics – any more than anyone will have the same characteristics as the policy stereotype. Temporary workers, the self-employed and part-time workers are all likely to have very different lifetimes. Some individuals, particularly women who are the majority of part-time workers⁴⁰, will spend less time working, on lower earnings and with fewer pension contributions. Given that the illustrative individual works past SPA, he has a longer working life than even the policy stereotype. The illustrative characteristics are not the ‘average’ of all non-standard workers, but an indication of the type of characteristics that some of them may have, used to illustrate the impact on pension income.

The cumulative impact of these particular characteristics is to reduce pension income, compared to the policy stereotype.

A man reaching state pension age in 2003 with illustrative non-standard employment characteristics would receive a total pension income of 27% of national average earnings (NAE) (Chart 13) at the age of 67. This is almost one-third lower than the policy stereotype receives at the same age. That the fall is ‘only’ this much is due to the additional years of work after state pension age. The illustrative non-standard worker would also be entitled to the Pension Credit as soon as he retires.

⁴⁰ The separate paper on women contains analysis of an illustrative woman

Chart 13⁴¹



The direct impact of lower earnings appears to be relatively large, reducing entitlement to SERPS/ S2P and reducing private pension income. A short spell of temporary work has little direct impact on private pension income, but lower and less regular contributions during a spell of self-employment has a larger impact. The main impact of self-employment is substantial reduction in state pension income through not qualifying for SERPS/S2P. This is offset by higher state and private pension income from continuing to work up to and beyond SPA.

Chapter 3: The future under-pensioned

Recent reforms to the current pension system will not resolve the under-pensioned problem

Although the reduction in pension income from female characteristics is less for future generations, the final pension income is only marginally higher relative to NAE than it is for those retiring today. Increases in S2P offset the impact of lower earnings. PC partially offsets fewer private pension contributions, and time spent in self-employment.

However, the close link to labour market participation in the current pension system means that many people with experience of non-standard work will receive low pension incomes in the future.

Future non-standard workers

A different pattern is seen for the illustrative individual's son (who has the same characteristics) reaching state pension age in 2028 (Chart 14), and his grandson reaching state pension age in 2048 (Chart 15)⁴².

The reduction in pension income from non-standard employment characteristics is less for future generations, and the final pension income is higher relative to NAE than it is for the illustrative non-standard worker retiring today. This is because of the availability of S2P in years in which the individual is employed, offsetting low earnings. PC also partially offsets the impact of making fewer private pension contributions, and years where self-employment is not covered by S2P. The impact of working until 67 is still substantial, increasing final retirement income by up to 10%.

Prospects for the future

A large proportion of the population are likely to have periods of non-standard work during their working life. 40% of workers in any one year are not in full-time, permanent employment. For many of them this will lead to periods of lower earnings and potentially less coverage by the state pension system, as well as reducing the scope to build up private pension savings.

The figures shown here are an illustration of the type of impact that different characteristics, normally associated with non-standard workers, can have, and do not represent an 'average' non-standard worker. Some non-standard workers will receive higher pension incomes than that illustrated, but some - particularly women who work part-time - will have lower pension incomes. The current pension system allows a wider range of possible outcomes. The close link between eventual pension income and standard labour market participation means that many people in non-standard employment will receive low pension incomes.

⁴² Charts 14 and 15 assume exactly the same characteristics as Chart 13. The difference in results is purely down to the way in which the pension system changes over time.

Chart 14⁴³

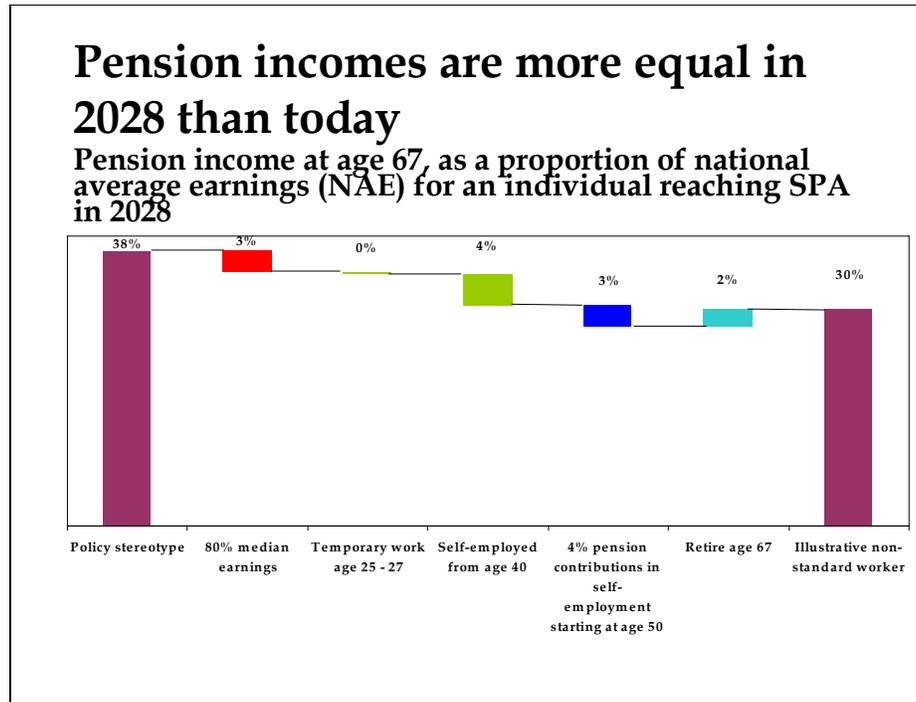
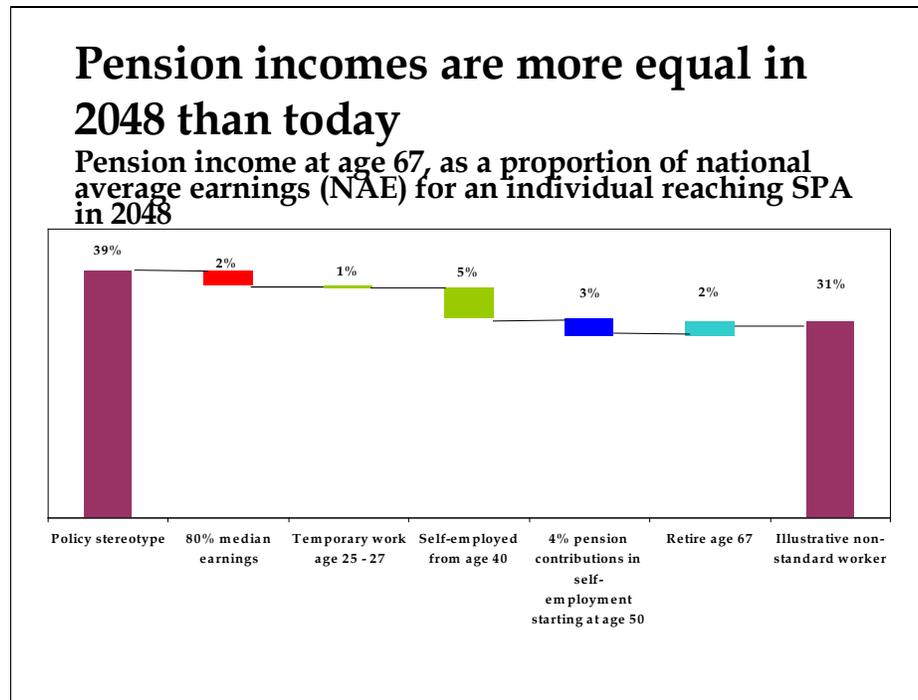


Chart 15⁴⁴



⁴³ PPI IM model calculations

⁴⁴ PPI IM model calculations

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Data from the British Household Panel Survey, the Labour Force Survey and the Family Resources Survey are supplied by the UK Data Archive (BHPS and LFS) and the Department for Work and Pensions (FRS). Neither the Archive or the originators (Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex for the BHPS, the Office for National Statistics for the LFS and the Department for Work and Pensions for the FRS) bear any responsibility for analysis presented in this paper.

The author takes responsibility for any remaining errors and omissions.
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