



# Contingent and Alternative Employment: Lessons from the Contingent Worker Supplement

## SUMMARY

In 2019, the Chief Evaluation Office's Evaluation Logistics and Technical Support contract, implemented by Manhattan Strategy Group, partnered with the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research to produce a series of papers on Contingent and Alternative Employment in the United States. The first paper in the series, *Contingent and Alternative Employment: Lessons from the Contingent Worker Supplement, 1995-2017*, uses data from the Current Population Survey's (CPS) Contingent Worker Supplement (CWS) to analyze trends in contingent work and provide an in-depth picture of the nature of contingent and alternative work in the United States and how employment arrangements are changing.

This Department of Labor-funded study contributes to the growing labor evidence-base to inform [worker protection, labor standards, and workplace-related benefits](#) programs and policies and addresses Department strategic goals and priorities.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Researchers found that **individuals who have lost their jobs, are unemployed, or are out of the workforce but want employment commonly end up in contingent and alternative work arrangements.**
- Although the CWS shows no overall trend increase since 2005 in any contingent or alternative work arrangement, **researchers found subgroup trends within certain arrangements.** The data show a significant increase since 2005 in the use of temporary help workers in manufacturing and also in production and transportation and material moving occupations, which are heavily used in the manufacturing sector.
- **Temporary help jobs are disproportionately held by those without a college degree, minorities, and youth.** On-call jobs are disproportionately held by those with less formal education.
- **Dissatisfaction with alternative work arrangements was relatively high** and subsequent employment rates are relatively low, particularly among those who had transitioned to contingent, temporary help, day laborer, and on-call jobs.

[SEE FULL STUDY](#)

**SUBMITTED BY:** Manhattan Strategy Group  
**DATE PREPARED:** February 2021

**PARTNER AGENCY:** DOL Wage and Hour Division  
**SPONSOR:** DOL Chief Evaluation Office  
**CEO CONTACT:** [ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov](mailto:ChiefEvaluationOffice@dol.gov)





# Contingent and Alternative Employment: Lessons from the Contingent Worker Supplement

*The Department of Labor's (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO) sponsors independent evaluations and research, primarily conducted by external, third-party contractors in accordance with the [Department of Labor Evaluation Policy](#). CEO's research development process includes extensive technical review at the design, data collection and analysis stage, including: external contractor review and OMB review and approval of data collection methods and instruments per the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA), Institutional Review Board (IRB) review to ensure studies adhere to the highest ethical standards, review by academic peers (e.g., Technical Working Groups), and inputs from relevant DOL agency and program officials and CEO technical staff. Final reports undergo an additional independent expert technical review and a review for Section 508 compliance prior to publication. The resulting reports represent findings from this independent research and do not represent DOL positions or policies.*

