

Evaluating Part-Time and Fixed-Term Employment Schemes by Employees Using the Example of a Financial Insurance Company*

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All forms of employment, part-time and fixed-term employment included, are sustainable only if they create mutually beneficial conditions both for employers and employees. While benefits for employers are more obvious in these particular forms of employment, employees' preferences are less frequently discussed. The study is a comparative analysis between employees with part-time and fixed-term and with typical employment contracts with respect to exit rate and chances of corporate career development. The data pool consisted of 4,683 employees employed by a large Hungarian corporation. In contrast to previous studies, instead of using qualitative methods, a quantitative analysis of employees' attitude towards part-time and fixed-term employment was carried out as part of the research. The focus of our investigation was to find out whether or not employees perceived atypical employment as advantageous. Based on the results obtained, it can be stated that compared to employees in typical forms of employment, the exit rate among members of the two atypical employment groups was higher, and their career development opportunities were also more limited.

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1. Introduction

Over the past 10–15 years, the global economy has had to grapple with a number of different challenges. Both written and unwritten economic rules were rewritten by the 2008 financial crisis, followed by an extended period of global economic growth, and

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then the emergence of the Covid-19 epidemic in 2019, which swelled to a pandemic in 2020 (Hausmann 2020). The economic repercussions of these phenomena are not without precedence in our history, but rarely have we seen such vast changes occurring over such a short period of time. These events may serve as a warning for economic players that the constant, rapid changes to the rules may force even the strongest and most resilient economies or organisations to their knees. Reducing operational costs and optimising operations when managing quickly changing conditions are of the utmost importance in all industries, and are thus also naturally vital in the banking sector as well (Vörös 2020). Increasing the operational flexibility of this sector is not only important as an action on its own, but could be of crucial significance from the perspective of the entire national economy, as recovery from a possible global recession may be hastened if the banking sector is able to maintain its effective operation (Asztalos et al. 2017). Consequently, increasing efficiency and optimising operations are seen as important goals by default; however, if we also take into account how working patterns have changed in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, it can be stated that addressing this issue is of strategic importance both at the corporate level and that of the national economy. The repercussions of the pandemic also hit Hungarian banks, as their operational conditions needed to be fundamentally redefined. In terms of customer service, the working conditions of employees underwent vast changes, e.g. in terms of the active use of medical protective equipment, while in the case of back office staff, atypical forms of employment took centre stage. The spread of home-office or remote work (Béres Mártha – Maklári 2021) may, in parallel, result in a number of different atypical forms of employment gaining further ground, even in the short run. Work-life balance, as such, may become even more highly valued with part-time employment playing a key role in the process; however, project-based work may also become more popular, thus shaping attitudes towards platform work or fixed-term contracts. The labour market has been transformed due to Covid-19 (Costa Dias et al. 2020; Szellő 2020), the question is whether these changes will persist in the long run. In finding an answer to this question, it is crucially important to consider the benefits the various forms of atypical employment have to offer for companies, individuals and, of course, the state. It is worth examining this relationship from a number of different angles. Using a corporate database of employees, the present study aims to gain an insight into individuals' attitudes toward the two most popular forms of atypical employment, i.e. part-time and fixed-term employment. It is important to note that the focus of the present study is an analysis of part-time and fixed-term employment which does not allow for drawing general conclusions with respect to atypical employment. The various forms of atypical employment should be examined individually, as – among many other factors – the pertaining regulations, underlying motives and the sociocultural background render their uniform interpretation especially difficult.

In our view, if we are to exploit the advantages of the changes that occurred on the labour market in the longer term, the needs of both employers and employees

in atypical employment must be met. The advantages and disadvantages of part-time and fixed-term employment are discussed in detail in *Section 2*; however, beyond these factors, meeting expectations is also significantly affected by the employees' attitude toward the examined employment forms. In the study, we conducted an analysis of the impact of part-time and fixed-term employment on turnover rate and career development, in order to obtain a more accurate picture of attitudes toward these employment forms. In contrast to earlier research (e.g. *Poór et al. 2016; Clinebell – Clinebell 2007*), instead of using qualitative methods, we set out to explore exit rates and career development patterns for typical and the two atypical forms of employment. Two hypotheses were generated before conducting our research. According to the first, the attitudes of employees toward part-time and fixed-term employment was expected to be positive if the exit rate in the two atypical employment forms examined is not higher than that of their typical counterparts. This would suggest that the employees do not perceive their atypical employment status as a punishment. In our second hypothesis, we assumed that career development is equally possible both in the case of the two atypical employment forms as well as in typical ones. Therefore, we look at which group of employees (those in typical or atypical employment schemes) in our sample are more likely to be promoted or hired for certain career levels.

Prior to conducting the analysis, it was anticipated that in the case of the company examined, owing to the positive effects of the two atypical forms of employment, which are described in detail at a later point, the exit rate of the employees concerned would not be higher than that of their counterparts in typical forms of employment. Furthermore, we also expected to find identical or at the very least highly similar career development patterns for the two groups. The analysis, however, yielded results contrary to what had been expected.

In *Section 2*, we present the theoretical background of part-time and fixed-term employment. *Section 3* provides an overview of our system of hypotheses, as well as the characteristics of the database we used. In *Section 4*, we discuss the detailed description of the results, and finally, in *Section 5*, we summarise the conclusions of the study.

2. Part-time and fixed-term employment

According to the definition of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), those forms of employment are called atypical which in some way deviate from traditional forms of employment (full-time and non-fixed employment).¹ Based

¹ Non-standard employment around the world: Understanding challenges, shaping prospects, International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO. 2016.
https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_534326.pdf. Downloaded: 1 May 2022.

on this interpretation of the concept, part-time and fixed-term employment are also regarded as atypical forms of employment (*Kalleberg 2000*). Therefore, we consider it important to provide a background of atypical employment schemes and to briefly highlight the difficulties in formulating a definition. This multidisciplinary topic is a popular area of research, especially in legal, sociological and economic studies. On the one hand, it is a fortunate situation as the available literature covers most aspects of atypical employment (*Córdova 1986*). On the other hand, it makes the matter of providing an accurate definition of the concept more complicated (*Hovánszki 2005*). In his study, *Bankó (2008)* points out that atypical employment is a relative definition since in order to understand its atypical nature, it is also necessary to provide a definition of typical forms of employment. *Hárs (2013)* also states that any form of employment that differs from typical employment at least in one or more of its aspects can be regarded as atypical. *Ásványi et al. (2017)* also confirm this line of interpretation. They say that an atypical form of employment is one which in some of its aspects (time, place) is not typical. As to what counts as typical or atypical on the labour market, this is a matter that may be influenced not only by the regulatory environment, but also by social and cultural factors, which combined may result in different interpretations in various geographical locations (*Ogura 2005*). In this study, a particular form of employment is considered to be atypical, if: 1) the place of work is not the headquarters or a branch of the company; 2) the duration of work is less than eight hours daily; and 3) if the employment agreement serving as its basis was not concluded directly between the employer hiring the personnel and the employee. The dynamic development of atypical forms of employment is best illustrated by the fact that apart from its traditional variants, other forms have also emerged over the past couple of years. The former group includes, for example, the focus of our study, i.e. part-time and fixed-term employment, and for example, 'gig work' belongs to the latter (*Woodcock – Graham 2019*). All three of the above-mentioned variants can be regarded as atypical forms of employment, but since part-time and fixed-term employment are considered to be the most general, and as such, the least atypical, gig work, which has started growing dynamically over the past several years, is atypical in all of its aspects. Gig work, in essence, is project-based work (*Bihary – Kerényi 2020*), and apart from often possessing many of the characteristics of fixed-term and part-time employment, it also has other atypical traits. As our investigation is centred on part-time and fixed-term employment, the study does not include an overview of the various atypical forms of employment. The diverse and expansive nature of the topic simply does not allow for such an overview due to present limitations, and furthermore, we are not investigating employee attitudes towards atypical employment in general.

The most widespread form of atypical employment in Europe is part-time employment. This statement is supported by *Bankó (2008)* as well, but is also

confirmed by the fact that the proportion of individuals between the ages of 20 and 64 in part-time employment was 19.1 per cent in 2019 in the total employment rate of the 27 member states of the European Union.² Concerning the definition, based on Ásványi and Barakonyi (2010), it can be stated that an individual working less than full-time hours can be considered as a part-time employee. Due to the difference in social, cultural and historical backgrounds of different countries, the regulatory framework may also show some variation (e.g. in terms of defining an upper limit for part-time employment, Hárs 2013), however, in general, we deem this definition as acceptable.

Figure 1
Proportion of part-time employment in Hungary and the eurozone, as well as in the financial insurance sectors

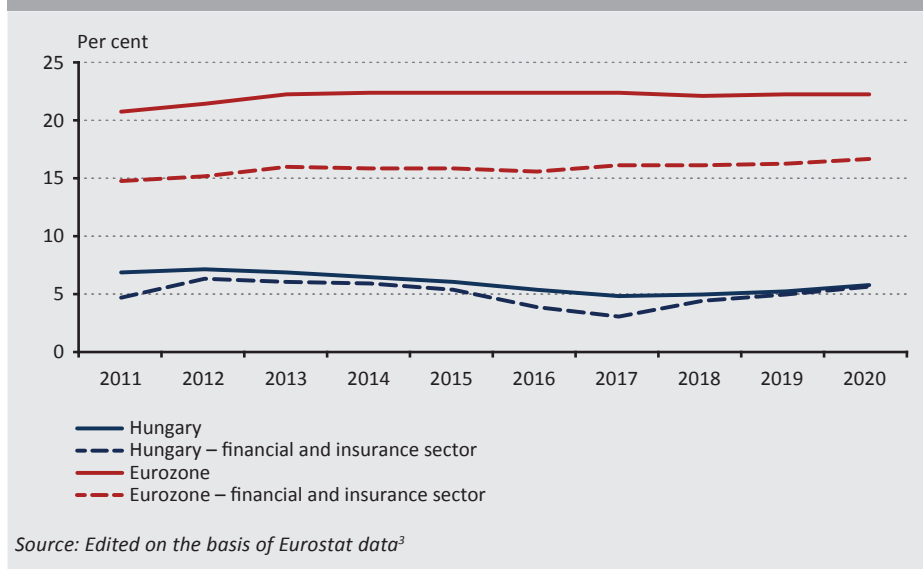


Figure 1 shows that the proportion of individuals in part-time employment is higher in the eurozone countries than in Hungary. One possible way to explain this is that in Hungary part-time employment is predominantly perceived as a means of crisis management, rather than an opportunity to increase competitiveness (Seres 2011).

The perception of part-time employment is fairly controversial. This is not only exemplified by the variance in terms of its proportions across European countries, but also by the different approaches adopted in studies on the subject. On the one

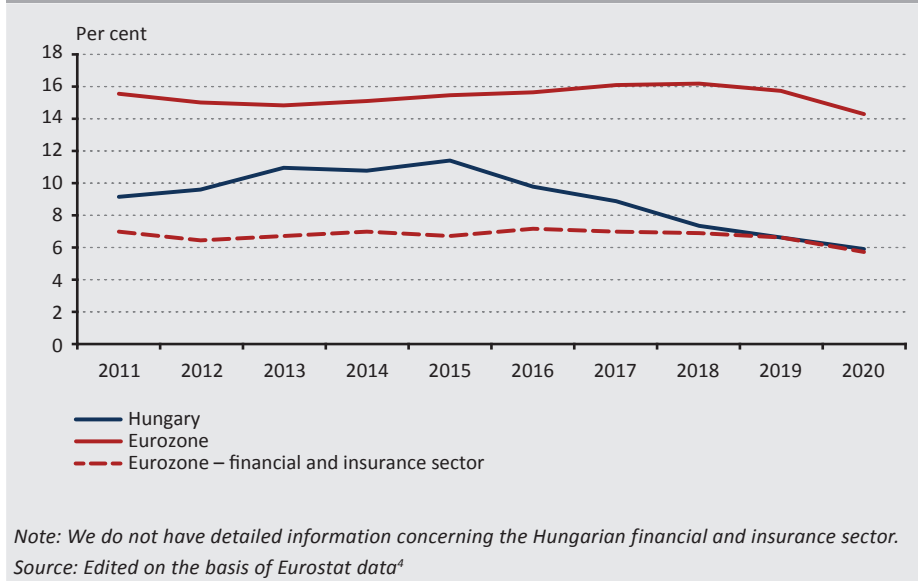
² Persons employed part-time – Total. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00159/default/line?lang=en>. Downloaded: 7 February 2022.

³ Persons employed part-time – Total. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00159/default/line?lang=en>. Downloaded: 7 February 2022.

hand, a number of studies address the fact that employees are more vulnerable in this form of employment (*Lang et al. 2013*), and their working conditions are also worse (*McDonald et al. 2009*). Most of the affected part-time employees have no control over these matters, the reason for which is that changes on the labour market demand (increasing flexibility in work organisation and production for the sake of competitiveness) also point in this direction (*Euwals – Hogerbrugge 2006*). On the other hand, the supply side is also changing in the labour market, which means that changes in employee preferences (e.g. due to younger generations entering the market – *Pyöriä et al. 2017* or *Cseh-Papp et al. 2017*) require employers to adopt new solutions. Of course, the emerging need from workers for shorter working hours and flexible employment is not a novelty. Finding the right work-life balance has long been a popular research subject with part-time employment also playing a key role in such investigations (*Guest 2002* or *Fleetwood 2007*). Another matter partly related to this subject, from a different perspective, is that part-time employment is a tool for facilitating women's return to the labour market after giving birth. This field also has a large body of literature, as it aims to gain insight into a very important social and economic issue (*Hill et al. 2004*). More recent studies examine the possible effects of lower working hours on the environment, individual well-being and the economy on the whole (*Antal et al. 2020*). Our previous study also shed light on the fact that in some cases the performance of part-time workers is better than that of their full-time counterparts, which clearly shows that the economic benefits of part-time employment cannot only be felt in an indirect way, but even directly as well (*Vörös – Fűrész 2021*).

Although in Europe the percentage of people in fixed-term employment is lower than that of part-time employees, in terms of atypical forms of employment the share of fixed-term contracts is rather significant. *Figure 2* highlights the fact that even though the percentage of fixed-term employees is lower in Hungary than in the eurozone countries, the difference between the two figures is smaller than in terms of part-time employment (*Figure 1*).

Figure 2
Proportion of fixed-term employment in Hungary and the eurozone as well as in the eurozone's financial and insurance sectors



Similarly to part-time work, defining fixed-term employment is a fairly straightforward task, because every employment contract with a termination date agreed upon by both parties is to be regarded as a fixed-term agreement. The date of termination can be the end of a project, the return of another employee to work, or any other date agreed upon in advance. In the present study, those employees are considered as fixed-term employees who have a termination date set in their employment contract.

According to *Portugal and Varejão (2009)* companies typically hire employees with fixed-term contracts for three reasons: 1) Cutting back on expenses, 2) replacing/hiring staff temporarily, and 3) screening. The cost-reducing effect of fixed-term contracts becomes most apparent primarily at the termination of the employment agreements (since in these cases no further compensation is payable to the employee). Temporary involvement of resources may be an option in the case of seasonal or project-based employment, but it can also serve as an effective tool for managing temporary shortages in human resources. As regards screening, it is important to note that the agreement between the employer and the employee

⁴ *Employees by sex, age and economic activity* (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2) – 1 000, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSA_EEGAN2__custom_1848902/default/table, *Temporary employees by sex, age and economic activity* (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2) – 1 000, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/LFSA_ETGAN2__custom_1848893/default/table. Downloaded: 4 January 2022.

may not be directed at damaging the rightful interests of the employee; therefore, we cannot claim that fixed-term agreements are concluded purely because of screening. Nonetheless, it needs to be acknowledged that this factor is an added advantage for the employer.

Besides companies, employees may also benefit from fixed-term employment as it may offer them a way out of less favourable alternatives, e.g. a worse job with lower salary or a shorter employment period. Unemployment may also be among those less favourable alternatives. In their study, *Grün et al. (2010)* investigated the subject of whether unemployment from the perspective of subjective satisfaction may be a better alternative than a poor job opportunity. Based on their results, it can be stated that unemployment is the worst scenario, as they could find no factors that made a workplace become a less satisfactory choice than unemployment. *Beckmann et al. (2007)* found that in terms of job security, fixed-term employees basically have a more disadvantageous position compared to their non-fixed counterparts, but fixed-term employees are more satisfied. This can be explained by the fact that fixed-term employees typically receive their status after being unemployed, and therefore, they appreciate their position and are more motivated to work, hoping to make it into a long term job opportunity.

Analyzing a corporation, *Vörös et al. (2021)* investigated whether non-fixed or fixed-term employees are more productive in terms of certain performance rates. Their results show that, in general, non-fixed employees are more efficient, but there are cases where fixed-term employees have proven to be more productive. Younger employees, for example, to whom fixed-term contracts actually give the chance to enter the labour market, perform better in positions which require skills that can be acquired in a fast and simple way. As a result, it can be concluded that fixed-term status not only has an effect on the cost side of the company, but may also increase its revenues.

3. Background to the research

The effects of part-time and fixed-term employment are typically different, or at least significant differences can be found in the underlying processes of motivation. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify that this study does not aim to investigate the advantages of atypical employment in general: its purpose is to shed light on the advantages of part-time and fixed-term employment as the subsets of atypical employment which could stand out as separate research topics as well. As described in *Section 2*, researchers have examined the topic from several aspects, based on which they reflected on the advantages and disadvantages of these employment forms. From these studies, as well as from our own experience, we have collected the most typical advantages and disadvantages of part-time and fixed-term employment at the corporate and individual levels (*Table 1*).

Table 1				
Potential advantages and disadvantages of part-time and fixed-term employment				
	Part-time employment		Fixed-term employment	
	Pros	Cons	Pros	Cons
Corporate perspective	more flexible work organisation	lower employee engagement, if not voluntary	reducing costs	increasing costs (in certain cases)
	higher employee engagement (due to WLB*)	less attractive employer brand, if not voluntary	longer screening period	deteriorating employer brand
	more attractive employer brand	lower productivity, if not voluntary	addressing temporary resource shortages	high rate of employee turnover
	higher productivity	declining brand value (CSR), if not voluntary	increasing productivity	low loyalty
	higher brand value (e.g. due to CSR)			low engagement
	more flexible operation			
Individual perspective	finding the right work-life balance	lower salary	access to employment	insecurity
	access to employment	feeling discriminated	possibility of proving themselves	feeling discriminated, outcast
	improving well-being	more difficult career development	gaining experience	continuous compulsion to conform
	concentrated work			not being eligible for certain benefits
	increasing productivity			more difficult career development
				vulnerability

*Note: * work-life balance*

Part-time and fixed-term employment can be maintained in the long run if they create mutually beneficial conditions both for employers and employees, i.e. if the expectations of employees and employers are in compliance, and even in the individual and corporate dimension, most of the advantages listed in *Table 1* come true, but no potential disadvantages are present, or only some of them.

Empirical analysis of the advantages and disadvantages listed in *Table 1* provides a number of interesting research opportunities. In the present study, three elements were in focus, i.e. access to employment, work-life balance, and more difficult career development.

Many studies can be read on the issue of whether or not fixed-term employment can be regarded as a transition between long-term unemployment and non-fixed employment (*Güell – Petrongolo 2007; De Graaf-Zijl et al 2011*). We assume that employees working in this form of employment see fixed-term employment as an opportunity, as a transition period between unemployment and permanent employment. In Hungary, the law stipulates that the length of a fixed-term employment contract may not exceed five years, which also determines the possibilities of individuals working in this form: 1) having a fixed-term employment contract for up to five years; 2) leaving the job; 3) being transferred to non-fixed status; and 4) going on maternity leave.

Regarding part-time employment, based on the studies cited, it can be stated that if the employee voluntarily chooses reduced working time, this form of employment may stay permanent due to the work-life balance it provides. On the other hand, if part-time employment, similarly to fixed-term status, is necessary to have access to (typical) employment, but the employee could work more, the status can be regarded as a transition, except for the fact that the law does not maximise the years spent in this form of employment.

In the case of fixed-term employment, we can expect that the vast majority of employees spend a short period of time in this status and then will be transferred to non-fixed employment, or otherwise resign. We assume that fixed-term employees have a positive attitude toward their status as they use it as a stepping-stone, which will be reinforced by the career paths and turnover rate as well. As for part-time employees, we believe that work-life balance will gain higher appreciation, and more employees will opt for reduced working time, which will result in permanent part-time status. We should not overlook the fact that the examined company operates in the financial and insurance sector, where higher pay rates may have an even more significant effect on permanent part-time statuses. This is further confirmed by the fact that the average rate of part-time employees at the company was 14.3 per cent during the investigated period (the rate of fixed-term employees was 8 per cent), which is a higher value than the Hungarian average. Bearing all of this in mind, we expect that a significant proportion of part-time employees are satisfied with their situation, which means that the majority will not transfer to typical employment, and their exit rate will also be lower than of their counterparts

working in fixed-term and typical employment. Our first three hypotheses were formulated based on these assumptions:

H1: The rate of fixed-term employees changing for non-fixed status is higher than their exit rate.

H2/1: Among the part-time employees, there are more employees working part-time during the whole period examined than the ones changing for typical employment.

H2/2: The exit rate of part-time employees is not worse than that of employees in typical employment.

One of the possible fears of part-time and fixed-term employees about their job status is that they have less favourable chances for career development than employees in typical employment. Several studies detail the fact that the decision makers of a company usually work in typical employment (e.g. *Jacobsen 2000*), which in itself means that employees in atypical employment are mainly positioned at the lower levels of corporate hierarchy. However, it does not imply that employees do not wish for career development; therefore, we find it crucial to carry out an empirical analysis of the question whether part-time and fixed-term employees are always at a disadvantage with respect to career development. Furthermore, we also examine if part-time and fixed-term employees are typically placed at lower career levels compared to employees in typical employment, which may also provide insight into further aspects of career development, that is whether career development typically takes place at lower or higher levels of the career. On the whole, however, the company examined in the study has a higher rate of part-time and fixed-term employment than the Hungarian average, and therefore, in contrast to previous studies, we expected similar career development patterns regarding typical and atypical employment. Hypothesis H3 is based on our assumptions about career building:

H3: At the company examined, the career opportunities of part-time employees with fixed-term employment are not worse than that of their peers in typical employment.

To conduct the study, we collected data from a large Hungarian enterprise, which is the Hungarian unit of a multinational company operating in the financial and insurance industries, with the intention of excluding the various effects of efforts related to employee turnover and career development. The analysis is limited to one enterprise in order to have a better chance of examining the reality of the effects of part-time and fixed-term employment. However, we understand that at the same time we create a limit to the study as *general conclusions may not be drawn from the data*. As mentioned before, the total number of the primary dataset was 4,683 people. The rate of part-time employees was 14.3 per cent in the period examined,

while the rate of fixed-term employees was 8 per cent. The distribution of database variables is shown in *Table 11* in the Appendix.

Important aspects in selecting the company were to operate in the competitive sector, to offer a clear and open career path for every employee, and to be cooperative. The latter criterion may not seem to have professional significance, but it proved to be the most important aspect as data in this field of research is hardly available. This is also supported by the fact that the industry data in Figures 1 and 2 are also incomplete or less reliable in Eurostat's systems. Although no general conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the sample of 4,683 people from one company, testing the hypotheses may lead to interesting results due to the difficult access to data.

In the selection of jobs, we paid special attention to employees working in customer service areas, as these jobs were considered standard enough to make comparisons. The database includes the monthly distribution of data retrieved between January 2017 and December 2019.

In order to examine employees in atypical employment, the categorization shown in *Table 2* was prepared.

Table 2		
Employment matrix		
	Part-time	Full-time
Fixed-term	A	B
Non-fixed	C	D

In the table 'A' indicates employees who are concerned with all types of atypical employment examined, i.e. they work part-time and have fixed-term employment contracts. The designation 'B' stands for full-time employees with fixed-term contracts, 'C' stands for part-time employees with non-fixed contracts, and 'D' includes employees in typical employment forms. In our study, a total of 4,683 persons were categorised as described above.

During the three years of available data, the categories of employees in *Table 2* underwent a significant number of changes: therefore, all 'employment paths' realised were identified and categorised. This means that we identified the employment path of each employee surveyed, and based on them, all employees were listed into groups. All personnel changes of staff who were employed on 1 January 2017 were tracked during the three years of the study. As a result, not only did we receive an accurate picture of employee promotions, but also of employment

status changes and exits. Because of the latter, 52 ‘employment paths’ were defined in total, as we set different groups for employees exiting within 3 years, and for employees staying in employment throughout the whole period. To simplify the above categorization, we identified (1) those who worked part-time or fixed-term throughout the three years (marked as atypical in the table due to simplification, but standing for only the two atypical forms examined), (2) those who stayed in typical employment all along, and also (3) those affected by both statuses. *Table 3* was created based on these, showing groups of different cardinality:

Form of Employment	Total (persons)	Distribution (%)
1. Atypical	1,180	25.2
2. Typical	2,363	50.5
3. Mixed	1,140	24.3
Total	4,683	100.0

With the help of the employment paths identified, we applied simple descriptive statistics to examine the transition and exit rates between the forms of atypical and typical employment.

The company analyzed provides transparent career opportunities to its employees, where different positions are listed into six distinctive career levels, with level 1 indicating the lowest career level, and level 6 indicating the highest. In our research, we also examined the movements of 4,683 employees at different career levels, which allowed us to compare the career development practices of atypical and typical employees.

4. Results

After the identification of employment paths, the exit rate of the groups indicated in *Table 3* was examined. The results are presented in *Table 4*. As a conclusion, we can say that the group of atypical employment had the highest exit rate, which means the employees that worked in part-time and/or fixed-term employment during the whole course of the three years examined. Occasionally, some employees switched between the three categories, but had atypical employment contracts throughout. Employees of typical employment came in second place. They had a typical employment contract throughout the whole period under review. The lowest exit rate of employees occurred among those who took part in both typical and atypical employment during the three years.

Table 4
Simple employment routes and exit rates

Employment type	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
Atypical ('A', 'B', 'C')	47	53
Typical ('D')	67	33
Mixed	77	23
Total	65	35

Note: In the table 'A' refers to part-time employees with fixed-term contracts, 'B' refers to full-time employees with fixed-term contracts, 'C' to part-time employees with non-fixed contracts, and 'D' to full-time employees with non-fixed contracts.

It may serve as a possible explanation of the results that employees in the 'Mixed' category of atypical employment thought of the atypical status as a stepping-stone, while the ones whose atypical status was not voluntary and did not have chance to change it stayed in the 'atypical' category and exited the company for a more favourable job opportunity on the market. The analyses in *Tables 4 to 8* were also carried out on personnel between the ages of 26 and 55, in order to filter out the distorting effect of frequent changes of workplaces typical at retirement or the beginning of their career; however, *Tables 12 to 16 of the Appendix* show no significant differences between the two age groups. All in all, it is worth noting that the exit rate is significantly higher for employees in atypical employment. In order to conclude the significance of the difference of the ratios, we performed a χ^2 test, which confirmed ($p < 0.01$) that the differences are significant (*Hunyadi et al. 2011*).

As a step forward, we analysed the typical-atypical status of certain employees in the last available month in the period examined, regardless of their employment path. A number of reasons may occur for leaving a job, one of which can be the type of employment. Therefore, we narrowed our research to one company to minimise the different effects between companies. Even after all of this, we cannot state that exits happened due to the type of employment, but we may understand that atypical employment has a significant effect on the individual's engagement (*Martin – Sinclair 2007; Omar, 2013*), which has an overall influence on the employee's decisions at work and significantly reduces other negative effects. Based on this, we accept that the employment status of the employee at the time of exit is related to the exit. Our results are summarised in *Table 5*. Looking at the ratios, we can see that most people exiting were in category 'A' (in staff overall as well, but the ratio is even higher among the employees aged 26 to 55, see *Table 13* in the Appendix), which accounts for the common subset of part-time and fixed-term status. Category 'B' including full-time but fixed-term status has a slightly lower result, which is followed by category 'C' of non-fixed part-time status. In *Table 13*

in the Appendix, we can see that the exit rate among employees aged between 26 and 55 in category 'C' is lower than in the whole sample, which can be explained by the fact that work-life balance in this age group is more valuable compared to, for example, younger workers who have not started a family yet. In order to reveal the reasons for differences, further examinations would be required. The lowest number of employees exiting was found among those who spent their last month at work in typical employment. This time as well, the difference between the exit rates of the categories, similar to employment types (*Table 4*), can be claimed to be significant (p -value for test χ^2 is less than 1 per cent).

Categories	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
'A'	41	59
'B'	42	58
'C'	59	41
'D'	71	29
Total	65	35

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract.

Based on our results so far, we can see that the exit rate in typical employment is less characteristic than in the two forms of atypical employment examined. As *Table 4* shows, the lowest exit rate was in the 'Mixed' category, and – complemented with the results in *Table 5* – it can be concluded that moving from atypical employment to typical employment is more preferred in the 'Mixed' category than vice versa. If we examine not only the status of the last month for each employee, but also the *changes* in the different statuses, the above conclusion is reinforced.

Table 6
'Direction' of changes in employment types

	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
A-B	2	2
A-C	5	2
A-D	9	2
B-A	2	2
B-C	1	1
B-D	29	8
C-A	0	0
C-B	0	0
C-D	17	5
D-A	0	0
D-B	0	0
D-C	9	4
Total	75	25

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract. The first letter indicates the type of employment registered in the starting month, and the second letter indicates the last month. There may be additional categories between the two.

Of the 4,683 people examined, 1,341 people had their employment status changed during the three years of the study, corresponding to 29 per cent. Based on *Table 6*, it can be concluded that out of 1,341 people (regardless of the fact whether they stayed at the company or exited), 70 per cent changed atypical employment for typical employment, 17 per cent changed atypical employment for atypical employment, and 13 per cent changed their typical employment for atypical employment (almost the same result was found in the age group of 26 to 55, see *Table 14* in the Appendix).

As a result, most of the changes took place in the direction of typical employment, the effect of which on the exit rate was also examined, with the results presented in *Table 7*. As we can see, 80 per cent of the employees of fixed-term and/or part-time status changing for typical employment stayed at the company during the period examined, and only 20 per cent exited, which means a considerable improvement compared to the data in *Table 4*, however, in terms of the relating χ^2 test, the difference is insignificant ($p > 0,10$).

Table 7
Effect of switching from atypical to typical employment on exit

Category changes	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
A–D	84	16
B–D	79	21
C–D	79	21
Total	80	20

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract.

In addition, we examined which changes were the most typical in each category. In *Table 8*, we can see that 20 per cent of the employees who started to work in part-time and fixed-term employment (category 'A') exited if their status did not change. Changing the employment contract to a non-fixed contract significantly improved the chances of staying at the company. Changing for typical employment offered the greatest chance to stay at the company for employees that had fixed-term employment, but worked in full-time positions.

Table 8
Rates of change within each category

	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
A–A	12	20
A–B	8	5
A–C	16	5
A–D	29	5
B–A	3	3
B–B	18	27
B–C	1	1
B–D	37	10
C–A	0	0
C–B	0	0
C–C	29	27
C–D	35	9
D–A	0	0
D–B	0	0
D–C	5	2
D–D	62	31

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract.

Part-time employment with non-fixed terms had a greater likelihood of continuous employment in typical employment, and changing atypical employment for typical employment rarely happened.

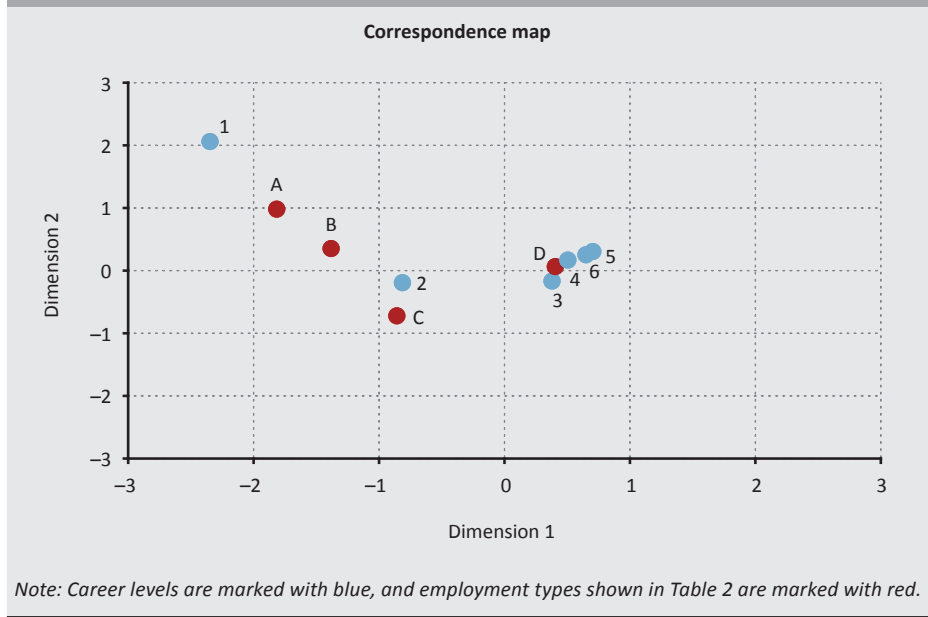
As we have already pointed out, general conclusions cannot be drawn from the results received, but in the case of the company, it can be claimed that in terms of *hypothesis H1* (i.e. *the rate of fixed-term employees changing for non-fixed status is higher than their exit rate*), many employees see fixed-term status as an opportunity; however, its acceptance is not at all as obvious as we had previously assumed. *Table 5* shows that the exit rate is the highest in fixed-term status (category 'A' and 'B'), which leads us to the conclusion that the attitude of employees is rather negative towards this category of employment. On the other hand, if we examine the changes as well, it can be concluded that the exit rate decreases significantly when employees manage to enter into a non-fixed contract (*Tables 7 and 8*). Considering that 40 per cent of the employees with a fixed-term contract at the beginning of the period examined changed for a non-fixed contract and stayed at the company, and 39 per cent exited regardless of their status received later on, we can conclude that this opportunity represented a stepping-stone roughly to same extent as it meant a dead-end. On the whole, it can be said about *hypothesis H1* that while fixed-term employment proved to be a good opportunity, and so the attitude of employees could be positive, the exit rate is very high, which can result in at least the same extent of negative attitude as well. With the help of the quantitative analysis applied, we cannot make a conclusion about the attitude of employees towards fixed-term employment in the case of the company examined.

Regarding our *hypothesis H2/1* (*Among the part-time employees, there are more employees working part-time during the whole period examined than the ones changing for typical employment*), we can say that according to *Tables 6, 7 and 8*, a considerable number of employees changed part-time status for typical employment; as a result, we could not provide an objective view of the opportunities of part-time employment in the company's sample. The previous conclusion was also justified by the fact that (non-fixed, part-time) employees who worked in category 'C' at the beginning of the period examined and changed for typical employment had a 20 per cent higher rate than those who stayed in this category. Although we had expected part-time status to be attractive to many, the result of the sample examined did not confirm this hypothesis. We reject *hypothesis H2/2* (*The exit rate of part-time employees is not worse than of typical employment*) based on *Table 5*, as it was revealed that the exit rate in category 'C' was higher than in the ones in typical employment status.

In the analysis of *hypothesis H3* (*The career opportunities of part-time and fixed-term employees are not worse at the company examined than of those who worked in typical employment*), we took the following employees out of the sample: those

working for less than 6 months at the company, those at the top career levels, and those more than 50 years old. It was thought that maintaining these conditions would significantly distort the results obtained. We do not certainly claim that career development is typical for employees under 50, but we are suggesting that employees in the position examined have a good chance of reaching the highest career level by the age of 50. The data table thus obtained included the values of 2,905 persons. After filtering the database, we looked for answers to the question whether the different elements of the matrix in *Table 2* can be associated with different career levels, i.e. whether a significant relationship can be detected between certain types of employment and career levels. Based on the correspondence analysis performed ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$ and Inertia = 0.3), it can be stated that a significant relationship was detected between the examined variables. The correspondence map below (*Figure 3*) shows that on the one hand, category 'D', i.e. typical employment, is definitely associated with career levels 3, 4, 5, and 6, i.e. the higher levels, while on the other hand, atypical employment types can only be associated with career levels 1 and 2.

Figure 3
Correspondence map showing the relationship between employment types and career levels



This result is also suggested by the distribution of career levels and type of employment, which is also included in *Table 9*.

Table 9
Distribution of workers by career level and type of employment

	Matrix				
Career level	A	B	C	D	Total
1	14%	9%	3%	0%	2%
2	80%	73%	66%	24%	37%
3	4%	9%	21%	29%	25%
4	1%	6%	6%	19%	15%
5	1%	1%	2%	15%	11%
6	0%	2%	2%	13%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	Matrix				
Career level	A	B	C	D	Total
1	26%	44%	21%	9%	100%
2	8%	18%	26%	48%	100%
3	1%	3%	12%	84%	100%
4	0%	4%	6%	90%	100%
5	0%	0%	3%	97%	100%
6	0%	2%	4%	94%	100%
Total	4%	9%	14%	73%	100%

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract.

The data table incorporates the results of 2,905 persons in a monthly distribution showing whether the employees changed their career level between January 2017 and December 2019 or not, and if yes, which type of employment the employee had in that month according to the classification in *Table 2*. As not all employees worked through the entire period of the 36 months of analysis, we had a total of 75,218 records.

Table 10
Aggregation of career level changes by employee

Career level changes	Quantity (persons)
-4	1
-3	2
-2	15
-1	25
0	1,652
1	668
2	387
3	115
4	39
5	1
Total	2,905

1,253 employees changed their career level upwards or downwards out of 2,905 persons, altogether 1,617 times. *Table 10* also shows that 1,652 persons, i.e. more than half of the employees did not change their career level during the three years of the analysis. After identifying all career level changes in the sample and listing each employee’s monthly employment type into the categories in *Table 2*, we examined the distribution of career level variables for each employment type, as shown in *Figure 4*.

Figure 4
Distribution of workers changing career levels by type of employment

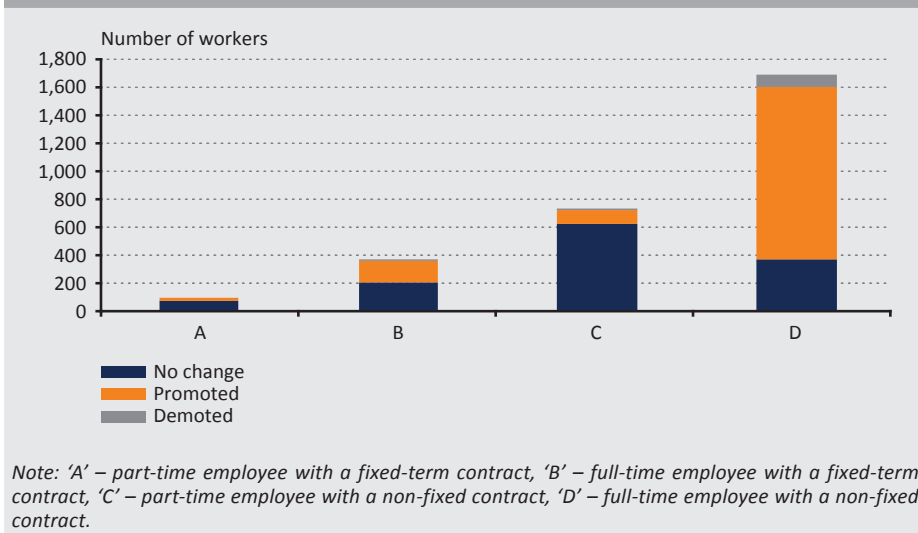


Figure 4 clearly shows that, proportionately, employees in typical employment changed their career level the most often, and part-time and fixed-term employees managed to make a step forward on their career ladder less frequently.

Thus, our research also did not confirm our hypothesis H3, and taking the above mentioned limits of the database into consideration, we can state that employees in typical employment hold positions at higher levels of the organisational hierarchy and have better chance to build a career than their peers in atypical employment.

5. Summary

In our opinion, atypical employment will play a greater and greater role in the labour market. We think this is true not only because of the reorganisation of the labour market due to Covid-19, but also because of the pressure of dynamically increasing competition. In our study, we highlighted the effects on the individual, the organisation and the whole national economy by the two forms of atypical employment examined, i.e. part-time and fixed-term employment. Along with the disadvantages, both part-time and fixed-term employment are considered to be enhancing tools of competitiveness.

In our study, our assumption was based on the fact that competitive advantage can only remain in place, i.e. the labour market can only remain sustainably flexible, if both employers and employees are able to find personal advantages in atypical employment types. Although part-time employment supports work-life balance, and fixed-term employment has cost-cutting effects, wider groups of employees see part-time and fixed-term employment as rather disadvantageous. The research was conducted based on the sample of the employees of a multinational large enterprise in Hungary, including the data of a total of 4,683 persons. It was a great help in filtering out the different effects employers had on employment, but at the same time, it also was a great disadvantage that general conclusions could not be drawn from the results. In order to conduct an empirical analysis on the matter of employees' attitudes toward atypical employment, i.e. from certain perspectives they see it as a real advantage, or at least not worse than the conditions of typical employment forms, as opposed to previous studies, we carried out a quantitative analysis based on some of our assumptions, instead of making qualitative analyses. To anticipate an employee's positive attitude toward part-time and fixed-term employment, we expected a low exit rate and a low transition rate to typical employment, while career development opportunities were assumed to be an important element in job selection that would also increase employee engagement. Career-building opportunities had been previously thought to be of at least the same extent as in case of employees of typical employment. On the whole, our hypotheses regarded the attractive feature of the two atypical employment

forms examined, thus ensuring the company a possibility to create a permanent competitive advantage through flexible employment.

However, we *obtained results contrary to our hypotheses* from our study. *The highest exit rate of employees occurred in the examined atypical form, and the movement between employment forms also typically took place from atypical to typical.* This is also supported by the fact that, according to the data, the chance of exiting was further reduced if employees were able to change atypical employment for typical employment. If we accept our previous hypotheses, we can claim that employees do not see part-time and fixed-term employment as advantageous. Looking at career development opportunities, results show that part-time and fixed-term employment typically takes place at lower career levels, while employees usually work in typical employment at higher career levels. The result is further enhanced by the fact that employees in typical employment change their career levels more frequently than part-time or fixed-term employees. Based on these facts, it can be concluded that employees in typical employment have better chances for career development, and as such, part-time and fixed-term employees involuntarily face disadvantages. The matter cannot necessarily be resolved by employers, as transition from atypical employment to typical employment is a special form of career development, employees may consider it a zero milestone, and thus perceiving the status change a reward that serves as a start for promotions to further career levels. If we accept the latter explanation, or we impute different career development opportunities to the company, the study obtains the same result, i.e. *atypical employees may feel disadvantaged against typical employees.*

We consider the results of our study to be important because – although numerous studies have addressed the effects of different forms of atypical employment on the individual and the organisation, even showing that the employees' subjective feelings are fundamentally positive – the objective corporate employment statistics we used in our study for part-time and fixed-term employment did not support these results. This does not mean that part-time and fixed-term employment are disadvantageous, or that the previous studies did not have firm bases. It rather suggests that more time and energy need to be spent on demonstrating the advantages of part-time and fixed-term employment so that their perception can be improved. Their positive effects are obvious, but our results lead to the conclusion that their negative features are more visible. In the future, we intend to expand our research by involving other economic players to provide more reliable results, and thus to be able to draw general conclusions. If the present results are reinforced in a wider scope of research, the advantages of part-time and fixed-term employment definitely deserve to be examined in detail, as, in our opinion, they provide an excellent opportunity to improve competitiveness, both at micro- and macro-economic levels.

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Appendix

Table 11		
Distribution of workers by category on which the empirical study is based		
Variable	Category	Ratio (%)
Age, years	19–20	0.2
	21–30	23.6
	31–40	30.8
	41–50	23.5
	51–60	16.6
	61–	5.4
Location	Balaton	1.9
	Budapest	30.2
	Other	67.9
Education	Primary school	0.1
	Vocational school	0.1
	Specialised training school	0.0
	Vocational secondary school	37.4
	Secondary school leaving certificate	27.2
	Technical school leaving certificate	0.8
	College	14.1
	University	3.4
	Postgraduate	0.1
N/A	16.7	
Gender	Male	12.8
	Female	87.2
Position	Basic task	63.2
	Complex task	36.8

Table 12
Exit rate by employees within the age range of 26–55 by simple employment routes

Employment type	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
Atypical ('A', 'B', 'C')	46	54
Typical ('D')	69	31
Mixed	77	23
Total	66	34

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract. There are 3,740 employees in the data pool between the ages of 26 and 55.

Table 13
Exit rate by detailed employment routes among employees within the age range of 26–55

Categories	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
'A'	35	65
'B'	38	62
'C'	63	37
'D'	72	28
Total	66	34

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract. There are 3,740 employees in the data pool between the ages of 26 and 55.

Table 14

The 'direction' of changes in employment types among employees within the age range of 26–55

	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
A–B	2	2
A–C	5	2
A–D	9	2
B–A	2	2
B–C	1	1
B–D	31	8
C–A	0	0
C–B	0	0
C–D	18	5
D–A	0	0
D–B	0	0
D–C	8	4
Total	75	25

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract. There are 3,740 employees in the data pool between the ages of 26 and 55. The first letter indicates the type of employment registered in the starting month, and the second letter indicates the last month. There may be additional categories between the two.

Table 15

Impact of switching from atypical to typical employment within employee age range of 26–55

Category changes	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
A–D	81	19
B–D	78	22
C–D	80	20
Total	79	21

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract. There are 3,740 employees in the data pool between the ages of 26 and 55.

Table 16
Proportions of changes within each category within employee age range 26–55

	Stayed (%)	Exited (%)
A–A	9	20
A–B	5	5
A–C	17	6
A–D	31	7
B–A	2	2
B–B	16	28
B–C	1	1
B–D	39	11
C–A	0	0
C–B	0	0
C–C	28	21
C–D	41	10
D–A	0	0
D–B	0	0
D–C	4	2
D–D	65	29

Note: 'A' – part-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'B' – full-time employee with a fixed-term contract, 'C' – part-time employee with a non-fixed contract, 'D' – full-time employee with a non-fixed contract. There are 3,740 employees in the data pool between the ages of 26 and 55.