
How Do Potential New Employers Evaluate Workers in Part-Time Jobs, “Temp” Jobs, or Jobs Beneath Their Skill Level?

David Pedulla

SUMMARY

Working in part-time positions, through temporary help agencies, and at jobs below one’s skill level have become common experiences for U.S. workers navigating an economy in which external candidates are often hired to fill vacancies.

This study examines the consequences of having a history of part-time work, “temp” agency employment, or a job beneath one’s skill level when applying for a new position. The research analyzes the callback rates received by fictitious job applications that were randomly assigned different employment histories as well as a gender, signaled by the name of the fictitious applicant. The article also suggests possible explanations for employers’ treatment of applicants with different employment experiences.

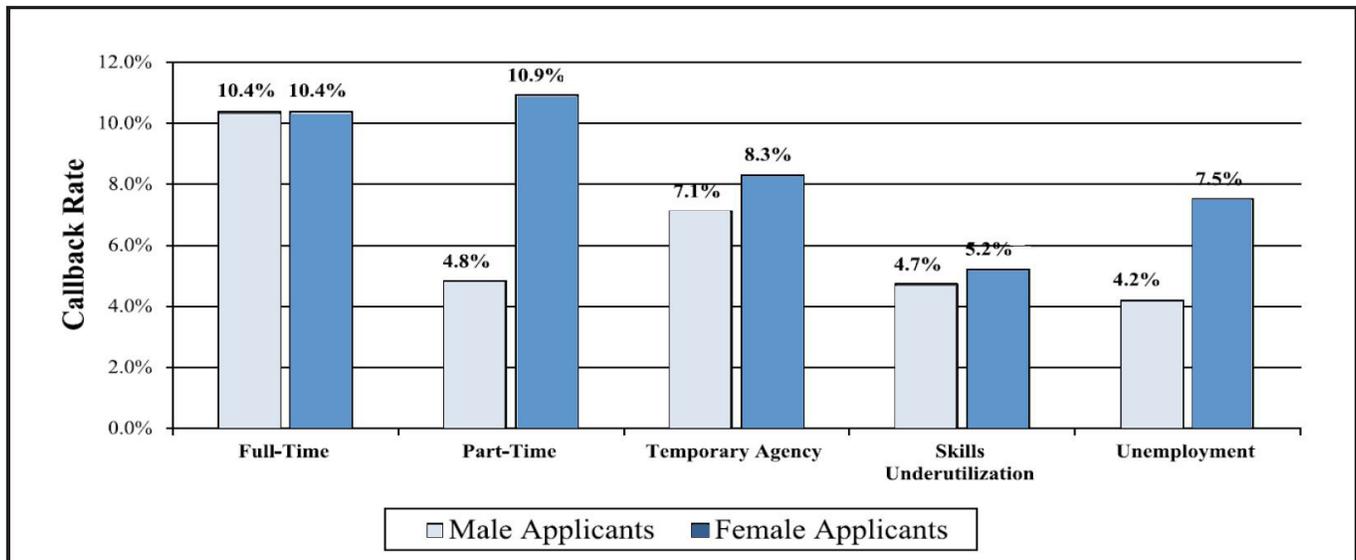
KEY FINDINGS

- > Taking a job below one’s skill level is severely penalizing for both men and women.
- > Unlike women, men experience significant penalties for working in part-time position. For them, it is as bad as having a spell of unemployment.
- > Temporary agency employment had a limited effect on the outcomes of male and female workers.
- > “Perceived competence” and “perceived commitment” assist in explaining the consequences of these employment histories for applicants.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This research complicates “work first” programs that operate on the premise that any job is better than no job by raising questions about whether all types of work opens up new labor market opportunities for workers. Jobs below one’s skill level and, for men, part-time positions may penalize workers in ways similar to remaining unemployed.

CALLBACK RATES BY EMPLOYMENT HISTORY AND GENDER



This chart illustrates a key finding that taking a job below one's skill level, here noted as "skills underutilization," is severely penalizing for both men and women. Furthermore, when it comes to having a part-time employment history, women, noted in dark blue, fare better than men, noted in light blue.

REFERENCE

Pedulla, D. S. (2016). "Penalized or protected? Gender and the consequence of nonstandard and mismatched employment histories." *American Sociological Review*, 81(2), 262-289. <http://asr.sagepub.com/content/81/2/262.full.pdf+html>

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