



Multiple job-holding

What is multiple job-holding?

Multiple job-holding arises when individuals work in more than one job at the same time. Some workers take on an additional job to enable them to maintain their standard of living. Multiple job-holding can also be a technique used by the self-employed to minimize the impact of economic downturns on their income.

How does the legal framework affect multiple job-holding?

National laws do not usually prohibit workers from holding two or more jobs. However, the attractiveness of multiple job-holding will be influenced by a country's social security and tax systems. German law, for example, exempts marginal employment in a second job from social security contributions, thereby increasing the incentive for the use of this employment strategy.

The extent of multiple job-holding

Multiple job-holding appears to have increased considerably in a number of countries in recent decades, particularly in the transition economies of eastern Europe. In Russia, it almost doubled in the early 1990s, from 5.6 per cent in 1992 to 10.1 per cent in 1996.¹

Multiple job-holding has also grown in some industrialized market economy countries. In the United States, for example, it increased from 4.9 per cent to 6.2 per cent of employed workers between 1979 and 1989. The increase in multiple job-holding in the United States has been especially strong among female employees: while in 1979 the multiple job-holding rate among women was only 60 per cent of that of men, the two rates were almost identical by 1996.²

It should also be noted that official

statistics on hours of work typically consider only the primary (main) job, and therefore, if multiple job-holding is common, actual hours of work will be higher than otherwise indicated.

Information on multiple job-holding is scant for developing countries. Yet the available evidence indicates a significant presence of multiple job-holding. In Brazil, for example, the number of multiple job-holders increased from 2.9 million in 1992 to 3.4 million (or 5 per cent of the total workforce) in 1999.³ These workers were on average working 21 hours per week in their secondary jobs. A much higher proportion of multiple job-holders was reported for Nepal, where more than 40 per cent of workers had secondary jobs in 1998-99.⁴ Not surprisingly, secondary jobs concentrated in agriculture and fishery, and elementary occupations.

The advantages and disadvantages of multiple job-holding

Advantages

- Provides workers with supplementary income.
- Diversification of work activities: may be beneficial, especially if repetitive tasks are undertaken in the worker's main job.
- Independence/personal fulfilment, especially if the secondary job is related to a hobby or other personal interest.

Disadvantages

- On-call work practices: workers may be called on to work at any time and thereby prevented from adequately planning their domestic or other responsibilities in advance.
- Can involve a high expenditure of time, for example to organize transport between jobs.
- Potential conflicts between the demands of an individual worker's primary and secondary jobs.
- Potential negative health impacts of working long hours due to multiple jobs.

Case example: Farm households in New Zealand

Analysis of the 2001 Census data from New Zealand found that the agricultural sectors of the economy have the highest incidence of multiple job-holding.

Interviews carried out in 2002-2003 among 15 farm households found women to have higher rates than men of multiple job-holding. For these women, there was an important relationship between their off-farm work and cycles of family development: the interviews showed that a number worked full time before having children and moved into part-time work as they returned to work, in order to balance their paid work with their child rearing responsibilities.

A number of the women asked about their motivation for holding an extra job mentioned working to pay for the education of their children. Indeed, for many of the off-farm employment households, the additional income was not driven by the need to sustain farm finances, but for "extras", such as clothing, education, children's activities and holidays. In addition, for most of the women interviewed, off-farm employment provided a means to increase their independence, raise their status and give them a sense of personal identity.

Source: N. Taylor et al.: *Multiple job holding of farmers in New Zealand*, paper presented at the Agrifoods X Conference, Akaroa, 21-24 April 2003, available at http://www.tba.co.nz/frst_projects/Agrifoods2003.pdf, 2003.

¹ M.C. Foley: *Multiple job holding in Russia during economic transition*, Discussion Paper No. 781 (Yale University Economic Growth Center, August 1997), available at http://www.econ.yale.edu/growth_pdf/cdp781.pdf.

² Employment Policy Foundation (1997), available at <http://www.epf.org/pubs/newsletters/1997/et970715.asp>.

³ J. Saboia et al.: *Working time and work organization in Brazil*, unpublished report, ILO, 2002.

⁴ Nepal Labour Force Survey 1998/9.

