

Multiple job-holding: Career pathway or dire straits?

Moonlighting responds to economic needs, but can generate new skills and careers

Keywords: multiple job-holding, job quality, skills, careers, mobility, entrepreneurship

ELEVATOR PITCH

Multiple job-holding, or “moonlighting”, is an important form of atypical employment in most economies. New forms of work, driven by digitalization, may enable its future growth. However, many misconceptions exist, including the belief that multiple job-holders are only low-skilled individuals who moonlight primarily for financial reasons, or that the practice increases during economic downturns. Recent literature highlights the significant links between moonlighting and job mobility. Multiple job-holding allows for the development of workers’ skills and spurs entrepreneurship.

KEY FINDINGS

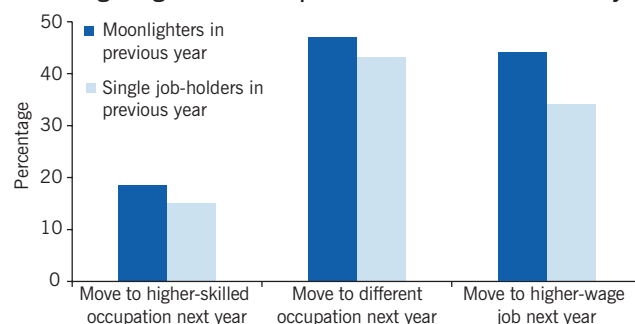
Pros

- ⊕ Higher net income and financial security can be secured by holding multiple jobs, especially when the primary job is constrained by hours or earnings.
- ⊕ More task variety associated with a second job can motivate and increase work satisfaction.
- ⊕ A second job can increase development of new job skills.
- ⊕ Multiple job-holding has positive effects on future job mobility and career prospects.
- ⊕ Holding multiple jobs may foster increased entrepreneurship and can lead to a new job that better matches a worker’s skills.

Cons

- ⊖ Inferior job quality, including adverse working conditions, haphazard working hour arrangements and absence of social insurance entitlements, form a risk for multiple job-holding.
- ⊖ Multiple job-holding is associated with a greater risk of both workplace and non-work injuries.
- ⊖ Multiple job-holding can deplete physical and psychological well-being and foster identity conflict.
- ⊖ The transition to more than one job can compromise work-life balance, especially for those with children.
- ⊖ Moonlighting can compromise organizational commitment.

Moonlighting facilitates upward labour market mobility



Note: Sample of UK male adult workers who moved to new paid employment by previous moonlighting status, 1991–2005.

Source: Based on Figure 3.

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AUTHOR’S MAIN MESSAGE

Multiple job-holding can help workers maintain their desired standard of living when their primary job does not provide adequate hours or income. Moreover, skills acquired when moonlighting can influence subsequent occupational mobility—including a move to self-employment. However, a second job may also be associated with greater physical and mental hardship and overall lower job-quality. As such, policies related to multiple job-holding should shield vulnerable workers from being exposed to precarious or informal work conditions. Beyond this protectionary role, they can also form part of a strategy that seeks to further stimulate labor market mobility and entrepreneurship.