



# Motivation, Migration, and Nonstandard Employment: A Survey Among Temporary Agency Workers<sup>1</sup>

■ **Anders Underthun<sup>2</sup>**

*Senior researcher, Oslo Metropolitan University, the Work Research Institute, Norway*

■ **Aadne Aasland**

*Senior researcher, Oslo Metropolitan University, the Norwegian Institute of Urban and Regional Research, Norway*

## ABSTRACT

Research suggests that migrants have a greater tendency to end up in nonstandard employment arrangements than native citizens do, but less attention has been paid to motivational differences within and between migrant groups. On the basis of a survey of temporary agency workers in Norway, we investigate the effect of different country backgrounds on the perceived suitability of nonstandard employment (NSE) at present and in the future. For the perceived current suitability, we find less variation between country backgrounds, but Norwegian workers are much less likely to accept NSE as suitable in the future. An ordinal regression shows that motivation (positive and negative) rather than country background is the strongest predictor of finding NSE employment suitable. As such, the article contributes to understandings about voluntary or involuntary motivations to engage in NSE in a way that informs discussions about migrants in different power positions in a Nordic labor market context.

## KEYWORDS

*migrant background / motivation / nonstandard employment / temporary agency work*

## Introduction

Nonstandard employment (NSE) arrangements<sup>1</sup> such as labor hire have become an integral part of the flexibilization of work (Jordhus-Lier et al. 2015; Kalleberg 2000; Ward et al. 2001). This has prompted debates on the precarization of vulnerable groups, the growing segmentation of permanent workers and temporary workers (Allen & Henry 1997; Kalleberg 2003; 2009), and the motivations for accepting NSE arrangements (de Jong et al. 2009; de Jong & Schalk 2010; Lopes & Chambel 2014). Research on migrant labor suggests that migrants tend to end up in NSE arrangements to a greater extent than native citizens do (Ødegaard 2014; Raess & Burgoon 2015) and that this further contributes to segmentation in the labor markets of host economies (McDowell et al. 2009). Migrant workers are also overrepresented in the temporary work agency (TWA) industry, reflecting the industry as both a common entry point to the labor market for migrants and a place where migrant workers tend to stay longer

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<sup>2</sup> Corresponding author: Anders Underthun, Work Research Institute, Oslo Metropolitan University, PB 4. St. Olavs Plass, 0130 Oslo, Norway. E-mail: [anders.underthun@oslomet.no](mailto:anders.underthun@oslomet.no)



whether or not by choice (Kogan 2011). As such, migrants can be expected to have a less linear route to regular employment than native citizens, but few studies have looked specifically at whether and how migrants differ in their motives for choosing NSE arrangements (Bernhard-Oettel et al. 2012; De Cuyper & De Witte 2008). In this paper, we address this void by investigating how temporary agency workers with different country backgrounds in Norway vary in their motivation for finding this employment relationship suitable. We also relate this to other factors that influence perceptions about employment through a TWA.

NSE is particularly controversial in a Norwegian context, where alternative employment forms have sparked considerable debate and public dissonance. Compared with most countries in Europe, including Sweden and Finland (Berglund et al. 2017), Norway has a remarkable track record for retaining and strengthening the standard employment relationship (SER) (Vosko 2010), with only around 8% of the workforce in temporary employment positions (Nergaard 2017b). The percentage is also relatively low for TWA employment, with an estimate of 1.5% of the workforce<sup>2</sup> engaged by temporary work agencies. Three main questions guide our paper:

1. Are there significant differences between temporary workers with different country backgrounds with regard to finding TWA employment suitable?
2. What characterizes temporary workers' motivations to find work through a TWA?
3. What are the most important factors influencing the likelihood of temporary agency workers finding employment through a TWA suitable?

The paper is based on a Norwegian survey conducted in 2016 with 1259 workers who, at the time of the survey, were employed by temporary work agencies. Of the 1259 workers, 30% had non-Norwegian backgrounds. We organize the paper in the following manner: We start by discussing the workers' perspectives on motivations for accepting temporary employment in general and employment through temporary work agencies more specifically. We relate this discussion to the debate on migrant positions in the labor market. Thereafter, we present our methodology and selected descriptive data from our survey that highlight our first guiding question. We then present a factor analysis of core variables from our survey in an attempt to categorize the main motivations among migrant temporary agency workers in Norway, and answer our second guiding question. To answer our third and final question, we present the results of our ordinal logistic regression analyses in order to examine how migrants' backgrounds, motivations, and other core variables influence their likelihood of accepting or rejecting NSE arrangements in a TWA.

## Motivation for nonstandard employment

Working through labor intermediaries is not a new phenomenon, but has become more widespread following waves of deregulation and flexibilization of the employment relationship (Connelly & Gallagher 2004; Vosko 2010). Typically, the emergence of the staffing industry has dovetailed the liberalization of employment contracts, including arrangements such as zero-hour contracts without a right to receive payments between assignments. A typical legitimization of the industry is that temporary work agencies

provide a stepping stone or easy entry into the labor market for vulnerable segments of the workforce. This is endorsed by the industry as a response to labor market failures or labor market discrimination (CIETT 2015).

The motivation for working through a NSE relationship has been scrutinized by researchers in different disciplines within the social sciences (Lopes & Chambel 2014). In his typology of temporary agency workers in the USA, Henson (1996) distinguishes between three main motivational positions, which he labels ‘transitionals’, ‘sidebets’, and ‘lifers’. *Transitionals* represent a rather diverse group of agency workers who are motivated to find work through TWAs because it is either instrumental in a professional transition or a way back into the labor market. The second group, *sidebets*, comprises workers who use work obtained through the TWA as a means of breadwinning to support other pursuits, such as other professional careers (Lindstrøm 2016) or leisure activities, or to improve their work–life balance. *Lifers* represent those workers who are attracted to the flexible nature of TWA employment affiliation or for various other reasons prefer this type of attachment to the labor market over standard employment.

However, Henson is not explicit in terms of whether the motivation is based on voluntary choice. Ellingson et al. (1998) emphasize that some workers choose temporary employment voluntarily because of the freedom associated with flexible work hours and workloads. De Cuyper and De Witte (2008) distinguish between a lack of choice or freedom of choice, but also identify a third motive, which relates to the instrumentality of temporary work as a stepping stone to permanent work. The stepping stone motive is perhaps the most frequently discussed motive relating to temporary work in general (Booth et al. 2002; Lopes & Chambel 2014), including the discussion about the counterhypothesis of whether NSE rather leads to an entrapment situation (Scherer 2004). In this respect, studies suggest that workers who enter the job market through fixed-term contracts (typical in TWA employment) have a higher exit rate from the job market than other workers (Baranowska et al. 2011). Other studies support this claim by pointing out that fixed-term contracts extend probationary or screening periods (Scherer 2004).

In a factor analysis, de Jong and Schalk (2010) combine and present many of the dimensions linked to accepting NSE. First, de Jong and Schalk refer to the motivations for obtaining regular employment, reflecting a transitional and instrumental form of stepping stone motivation. The second motivation is ‘flexibility to obtain a better family–work balance’. The third motivation relates to the expectation that ‘there are no regular jobs available to me’. Interestingly, de Jong and Schalk (2010) find that the motivations influence how workers consider the fairness of their contract, as well as their future prospects.

It is important to recognize that motivational positions are influenced by a range of structural factors, including the type of job (Tan & Tan 2002) and the differing demographic and educational backgrounds of workers (Fang & MacPhail 2008). Unsurprisingly, Reichelt (2015) finds that the motivation for entering a temporary employment relationship that relates to stepping up to regular employment increases according to skills level. Similarly, from a survey conducted in Norway in 2009, Kalleberg et al. (2015) find that a preference for temporary work is highly associated with job satisfaction among TWA employees. The above-cited authors also find that job satisfaction among temporary agency workers is higher among those with higher or more specialized skills.

For our analysis of temporary agency workers with different country backgrounds, we expected to find variants of de Jong and Schalk’s motivational factors (2010) and



that those motivated by stepping up to regular employment would score higher on finding TWA employment suitable at present.

## Migration and accepting nonstandard employment

Migration is frequently discussed in relation to the more precarious or vulnerable segments of host labor markets (Cochrane & McKeown 2015; McDowell et al. 2009; Strauss & McGrath 2017). In his account of a ‘dual labour market’, Piore (1979) argues that migrants fill other segments of the labor market than do ‘native citizens’. McDowell et al. (2009) assert that migrants often end up in the lower segments of the labor market despite having high levels of education and skills.

One explanation for the segmentation of migrant workers is that they are pigeon-holed due to ethnic stereotyping and that this contributes to the production and embodiment of ethnic hierarchies in the labor market (McDowell et al. 2007; Waldinger & Lichter 2003). Ethnic stereotyping as a basis for recruitment and group skills identification has also been found to be important in a Norwegian context (Friberg & Midtbøen 2017; Henningsen et al. 2014). Possible effects of ethnic stereotyping include work mismatch and deskilling. Markova and Black (2007) suggest deskilling as a kind of default effect of labor migration for low-skilled or medium-skilled workers with a foreign background. However, some studies show that migrants who are recruited for their particular skills (e.g., nurses) have a higher likelihood of positive labor market outcomes compared to other migrants that do not have this characteristic (Cobb-Clark 2000). Other factors, most notably language proficiency, are also linked to higher employment probability for migrants (Dustmann & Fabbri 2003).

Additionally, the segmentation of migrant groups is related to the type of employment in which migrants engage. Research on migrant labor suggests that migrants have a higher likelihood of ending up in nonstandard or atypical employment arrangements (Ødegaard 2014; Raess & Burgoon 2015). For Norway, this applies both to short-term circular migration and to longer-term migration (Nergaard et al. 2011).

Hence, migrant workers are often overrepresented in the TWA industry. One explanation is that this is an easier entry point to the labor market, but it is also important to recognize the role the industry has had in terms of facilitating cross-border mobility (Coe et al. 2009, 2010; Friberg 2016). In Norway, approximately 40% of registered employees in the staffing industry in 2016 had a different citizenships than Norwegian (NHO Service 2017) compared with approximately 25% just six years earlier (Nergaard et al. 2011). What about labor market outcomes? Research from Germany suggests that migrant workers are less inclined to use TWAs as a stepping stone to permanent work than are native workers (Kogan 2011).

Do migrants or workers with a different country background end up in NSE arrangements voluntarily or because alternatives are lacking? Different contributions suggest that an important explanation has to do with different expectations. The circular or seasonal migrant may have other expectations of their employment contracts in liminal or exceptional spaces in their host countries (Longva 1997) than they would in their home country, which Waldinger and Lichter (2003:40) term a ‘dual frame of reference’. Other contributions point to the different expectations of the labor market when mobility stems from necessity rather than choice (Duncan et al. 2013; Lusic &

Bauder 2010). In a study from Norway, Abrahamsen and Drange (2015) demonstrate that while career ambitions for students with different ethnic backgrounds are similar, career expectations are considerably lower among ethnic minority students. However, Parutis (2014) reminds us that it is important to recognize the dynamic aspects of career expectations for migrants. In her account of Eastern European workers' experiences in London, she finds that the workers move from accepting 'any job' to aspiring to their 'dream job' as they build experience and achieve higher mobility power in the foreign labor market. Thus, motivational positions may shift for migrants, dependent upon their moving from short-term circular labor migration, through open-ended transnational commuting, to settlement and family reunification (Friberg 2012).

The literature on labor market segmentation and motivation for work among migrants provided us with certain expectations in our survey analysis. First, we expected to see that migrants with different country backgrounds found TWA employment more suitable at present because this kind of affiliation is an easier entry to the labor market for an outsider with a weaker structural position. Second, we expected that those with a different country background would tend to be less voluntarily motivated by TWA employment in the future due to lower expectations. We also expected to see positive rather than negative motivation in TWA workers that reported high skills and high employability (cf. Cobb-Clark 2000). A good example is the high status and demand of Swedish agency nurses working in Norway (Kiil & Knutsen 2016), and we expected this group to have high scores on 'desired flexibility'. Following Kogan's (2011) findings from Germany, we expected to find that Norwegians were motivated by stepping up to regular work to a greater extent than were those with a different country background, while we had less clear expectations about the motivation related to the desired flexibility associated with TWA employment.

## Data and methodology

The data presented in this paper are based on an electronic survey of individuals registered as employees in temporary work agencies. The survey was conducted by the Norwegian branch of Ipsos on behalf of the Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences in December 2015 (the approach is described in more detail by Ellingsen et al. 2016).

We sent the electronic questionnaire with Norwegian and English-language options to a gross sample of 11,953 individuals, and we received 1259 completed electronic forms. With a large number of languages used by different groups of migrant workers and potential translation problems, we decided not to translate the questionnaire into additional languages, while acknowledging the risk that some of the less integrated agency workers could opt out due to lack of language competence. The nonresponse analysis showed that more of the younger respondents seemed to abandon the survey than did the older respondents. Our response rate was relatively low, close to 11%. This may have several explanations. First, temporary agency workers may feel less willing to answer this kind of survey due to a lack of commitment, as the majority of agency workers have very short tenure with the TWAs. Second, there was a high nonresponse rate among TWA workers in the construction industry, which could indicate that a significant number of Eastern European workers did not respond to Norwegian or English, or



did not respond because of a lack of access to PC, tablets, or smart phones during work hours. Other groups were overrepresented in the survey, including TWA workers with long tenures, clerical workers, and workers within education and childcare. Compared with the statistics from NHO Service, Norwegians and Swedish workers were overrepresented in our survey, possibly due to language proficiency.

Since we do not have information on ethnicity or citizenship, we used the country of birth as a proxy for nationality. To avoid too many categories with few respondents in each group, we grouped the respondents into four regions that reflected expected divisions in the labor market. Whether or not a migrant originated from a country within the European Economic Area mattered for their ease of access to and rights in the Norwegian labor market. The division between Western and Eastern Europe is important, due to the differences in salary levels between the sending and receiving countries for those coming from the new EU member states in Eastern Europe. We checked whether our categories corresponded with actual differences in results along core variables among large nationality groups. This was most often the case, though some categories turned out to have considerable internal variation.<sup>3</sup> However, we still decided to keep the theoretically defined categories. The country background of the respondents in our survey (unweighted) was as follows: 67.8% (854 persons) were born in Norway, 11.1% (140 persons) in other Nordic or Western European EU countries, 11.3% (142 persons) were born in Eastern European EU countries, whereas 7.5% (94 persons) came from the rest of the world. Additionally, 29 people (2.3%) did not report their country background. Compared with the staffing industry statistics for 2016, this shows that Norwegians were somewhat overrepresented in our survey. In their annual statistics (based on register data), NHO Service shows that 59% of TWA workers were Norwegian in 2016 (NHO Service 2017). NHO Service also found that the group of Nordic TWA workers dropped drastically between 2013 and 2016, while the number of other EU citizens among TWA workers in Norway increased, albeit at a modest rate, the majority of whom were Polish. This finding corresponds to the increasing importance of the construction industry as a recipient of staffing services (Nergaard 2017a).

In terms of *type of industry* to which the staffing industry provide services, Norwegians were dominant in industries such as education and childcare (78%), IT (90%), and finance and accounting, office, and administration (86%). Other Nordic workers (Swedes in particular) (about 43%) were dominant in health services, while Polish and other Eastern European workers were dominant in the construction industry (close to 70%). Those in the 'Rest of the World' category were mainly employed within the hospitality industry, health services, and education and child care.

The data were weighted according to age, gender, and market share of the TWA. Factors such as a low response rate and the likelihood that certain groups of respondents (e.g., those with a limited proficiency in Norwegian or English) were poorly represented in the survey, suggested that some degree of caution was needed during the analysis of the data. In particular, we cannot rule out a certain bias for univariate distributions on key-dependent variables. However, while individual variables can be noticeably biased due to low response rates, their relationships with each other tend not to be biased (Astin & Panos 1969; Dey 1997). According to Rindfuss et al. (2015), low response rates are much less of an issue when examining relationships in multivariate analyses in which a variety of background variables are controlled for. Since the main purpose of this article is to explore relationships between different variables and not to present

univariate distributions, we are quite confident that the findings from the multivariate analyses are meaningful and reflect actual patterns among temporary agency workers in Norway. Still, a limitation of the study is that one cannot exclude that the nonresponse is linked to some of the variables that the study investigates and thus that the results better reflect tendencies among the more integrated segments of the agency workers.

Table 1 lists descriptive statistics relating to the independent variables used in the subsequent analyses and shows the distribution of respondents' country backgrounds. The low proportion of female Eastern European EU migrants (25%) and the high

**Table 1** Univariate distributions of background variables for respondent TWA employees

Variable	Norwegian		Nordic + Western Eur. EU	Eastern Eur. EU	Rest of the World	Total
	N	%	%	%	%	
<b>Gender</b> ( $\chi^2 = 48.5^{**}$ )						
Male	623	43.4	43.2	74.6	48.6	47.1
Female	636	56.6	56.8	25.4	51.4	52.9
<b>Age, years</b> ( $\chi^2 = 108.1^{**}$ )						
Below 25	244	32.3	23.5	8.5	9.3	27.0
25–34	459	36.1	33.3	46.9	39.3	37.2
35–44	249	14.6	16.7	30.8	29.9	17.8
45–54	168	11.1	14.4	11.5	16.8	12.0
55+	138	5.8	12.1	2.3	4.7	6.0
Missing	1					
<b>Educational level</b> ( $\chi^2 = 9.5$ )						
No education + primary	71	6.2	3.9	4.7	7.5	5.9
Secondary	503	41.1	38.8	42.6	35.8	40.5
Higher	671	52.7	57.4	52.7	56.6	53.6
<b>Involuntary without work</b> ( $\chi^2 = 41.3^{**}$ )						
Never	740	69.7	57.8	42.1	66.0	65.5
Sometimes	301	22.5	32.0	43.5	25.8	25.8
Often	103	7.8	10.2	14.0	7.4	8.6
Missing/Do not know	115					
<b>Ease of finding new job</b> ( $\chi^2 = 62.5^{**}$ )						
Very easy/quite easy	318	25.4	47.6	25.2	12.9	26.7
Neither easy nor difficult	303	25.6	20.5	29.9	27.5	25.6
Very difficult/quite difficult	589	49.0	32.3	44.9	59.8	47.7
Missing/Do not know	49					
<b>Duration of employment in temp. agency</b> ( $\chi^2 = 30.3^{**}$ )						
Less than 6 months	397	34.7	21.4	36.2	25.5	32.7
6 months – 2 years	539	45.1	40.5	36.2	46.2	43.8

(Continued)



(Continued)

Variable	Norwegian		Nordic + Western Eur. EU	Eastern Eur. EU	Rest of the World	Total
	N	%	%	%	%	
More than 2 years	321	20.2	38.2	27.7	28.0	23.5
Missing/Do not know	2					
<b>Industry</b> ( $\chi^2 = 529.0^{**}$ )						
Education	139	14.5	6.3	6.5	17.3	13.0
Manufacturing	102	8.4	3.9	13.7	7.1	8.4
Hospitality	63	4.7	1.6	8.1	12.2	5.4
Health	133	6.0	40.6	3.2	16.3	10.4
Construction	119	2.9	7.0	50.0	8.2	8.8
Transport, etc.	151	12.3	21.1	12.9	12.2	13.3
IT	74	8.2	3.9	0.8	1.0	6.3
Office work	383	43.1	15.6	4.8	25.5	34.4
Other/Missing	95					

N = 1259 (unweighted) and Valid % (weighted), with Chi-square associations with region of origin.\*

\*Weighted for gender, age, and employment sector.

\*\*Significant at the 0.01 level.

presence of this migrant group in construction (in which 50% of the Eastern European migrants worked) are particularly noteworthy. Nordic and Western European migrants were overrepresented in the health sector (41%), and Norwegian workers in clerical work (43%). The experience of involuntarily being without employment, which most often implies being without pay, was most widespread among Eastern European workers. By contrast, Nordic and Western European workers expressed the highest degree of employability if they were to lose their current job, while workers from 'Rest of the World' were at the opposite and negative end on this variable. By conducting an ordinal logistic regression, we were able to control for such covariation between the independent variables in the models.

### Accepting nonstandard employment at present and in the future?

It is hard to ask survey questions that fully cover the aspect of accepting or preferring NSE over standard employment. According to Bernhard-Oettel et al. (2012), a proxy for testing how voluntary temporary work is perceived by a worker can be to ask how well the employment type or employment contract suits the worker *at present* and how well it will suit them *in the future*. How well the employment type suits the worker now is not necessarily a question of accepting NSE as a permanent condition, but can often be seen as an appropriate step to enter the labor market and then obtain regular employment at a later stage. Bernhard Oettel et al. therefore argue that this item should be combined with asking how well the employment type will suit the worker

**Table 2** Level of agreement with two statements about suitability of TWA employment contract now and in the future, by country background.

Variable	Norwegian		Nordic + Western Eur. EU	Eastern Eur. EU	Rest of the World	Total
	N	%	%	%	%	
<b>TWA employment suits me now</b> ( $\chi^2 = 39.5^{**}$ )						
Fully disagree	232	20.0	14.6	13.3	18.6	18.6
Tend to disagree	248	22.5	15.4	16.7	10.8	20.2
Neither, nor	152	10.9	8.5	23.3	15.7	12.3
Tend to agree	310	23.5	28.5	30	29.4	25.2
Fully agree	291	23.1	33.1	16.7	25.5	23.7
Missing (incl. 'do not know')	27					
<b>TWA employment will suit me in the future</b> ( $\chi^2 = 92.6^{**}$ )						
Fully disagree	613	57.4	34.9	26.6	34.6	50.0
Tend to disagree	207	17.0	13.2	21.8	13.5	16.8
Neither, nor	103	6.7	11.6	12.9	12.5	8.4
Tend to agree	165	10.4	22.5	22.6	18.3	13.6
Fully agree	139	8.4	17.8	16.1	21.2	11.3
Missing ('do not know')	31					

Per cent. N = 1232 (now) and 1220 (in the future).

in the future, as this would allow for a stronger expression of volition as well as job expectations.

In our survey, we asked the respondents to what extent they agreed with the following two statements: 'The employment contract I have with the TWA suits me now', and 'The employment contract I have with the TWA will suit me in the future'. The respondents were able to indicate their level of agreement on a scale from 1 (fully disagree) to 5 (fully agree) as summarized in Table 2. A much larger number of TWA workers were positive toward NSE at present compared with in the future: 24% fully agreed with the employment type suiting them now, while only about 11% fully agree with the employment type suiting them in the future. As many as 50% fully disagreed with the suitability of their employment type in the future.

When we looked at the responses from each migrant group, we found considerable variation. Workers from Nordic and Western European EU countries tended to be more likely than workers with other country backgrounds to report that their current employment type suited them now, but differences between country groups were not very pronounced, and only differences between Norwegian and Nordic and Western European workers were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).<sup>4</sup>

When the respondents were asked about accepting a TWA contract in the future, their answers were quite different. There were considerable (and statistically significant) differences between Norwegian workers and those with a different country background.



Respondents with country of origin outside Norway were much more prone to agree with the statement.

We will return to these dependent variables later in this paper, but next we move on to our analysis of the patterns in motivation for NSE.

### Motivation for nonstandard employment—a factor analysis

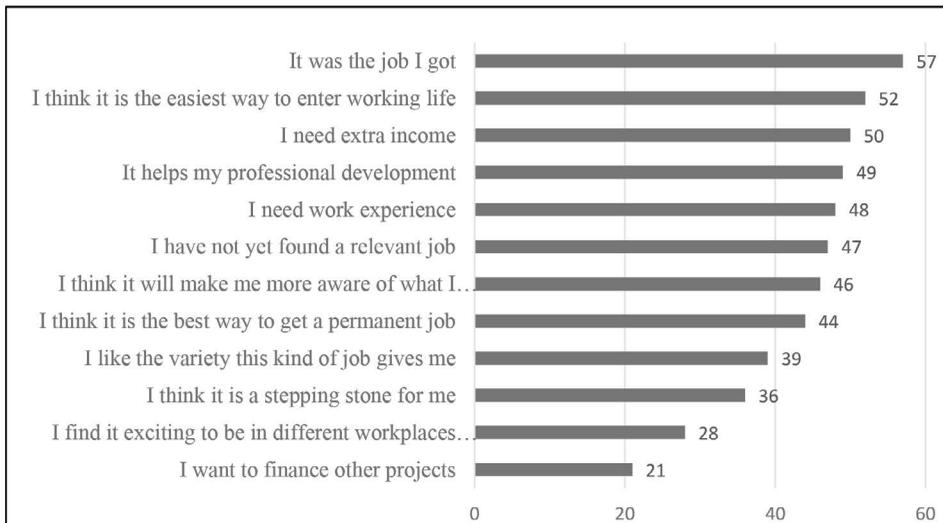
In the survey, we asked a number of questions about the respondents’ motivation for employment in a TWA. The questions were informed by contributions that put an emphasis on the motivation for temporary work (de Jong et al. 2009; Lopes & Chambel 2014). Respondents could give answers on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from ‘very applicable’ to ‘not at all applicable’. Figure 1 shows the proportion of respondents who answered ‘very applicable’ or ‘fairly applicable’ to 12 different motivational items.

We then conducted a factor analysis (principal component analysis) with all of the listed motivation items to explore whether we could reduce the items to a smaller number of factors or dimensions. After all items in the battery had been transformed into standardized variables, we applied varimax rotation. Components with an eigenvalue of 1.0 and above were identified as separate factors. The analysis resulted in three components or dimensions. The pattern matrix, sums of squared loadings, and explained variance are presented in Table 3. For ease of reading, only factor loadings of 0.4 and higher are listed.

Varimax rotation pattern matrix, sums of squared loadings, and explained variance. Loadings of 0.4 and above are listed (N = 1251).

The first dimension, for which seven of the items had a high factor score, and which accounted for 27% of the variance, we interpret as representing what can be regarded

**Figure 1** Applicability of reasons and motivations for obtaining work through temporary work agencies.



Percentage answering ‘very applicable’ or ‘fairly applicable’ (N = 1241).

**Table 3** Principal component analysis

Variable	Component		
	1	2	3
I think it is a stepping stone for me	0.79		
I think it is the easiest way to enter working life	0.77		
I think it is the best way to get a permanent job	0.77		
It helps my professional development	0.71		
I think it will make me more aware of what I want to work with	0.61		
I need work experience	0.59		
I want to finance other projects		0.78	
I need extra income		0.73	
I find it exciting to be in different workplaces for shorter periods		0.62	
I have not yet found a relevant job			0.79
It was the job I got			0.78
I like the variety this kind of job gives me	0.41	0.53	-0.40
Rotation sums of squared loadings	3.28	2.04	1.74
Explained variance (percentage)	27.4	17.0	14.5

Extraction method: principal component analysis  
 Rotation method: varimax

as a *stepping stone* motivation. High factor loadings (i.e., the relation of each variable to the underlying factor) on this dimension were obtained for items associated with working in temporary work agencies for easing access to the labor market, having an entry point for making a future career, gaining experience, and contributing to personal professional development. The second dimension accounted for 17% of the variation across the variables. The four items with a high factor loading on this dimension had in common that work obtained through the agency represented a secondary activity, which primarily provided valued extra income, but for some also offered welcomed work variation (*desired flexibility*). The third dimension, which accounted for 15% of the variation, had a high factor score on two items, both of which were related to being ‘the only job available’ to the respondents. This dimension can be interpreted as representing a more *stuck* motivation and often an involuntary motivation (Ellingson et al. 1998) for accepting to find work through a TWA. It should be noted that the item ‘I like the variety this kind of job gives me’ had a relatively high loading on all the three components, although in reverse for the third component, indicating less variation in ‘stuck’ jobs.

After identifying the three dimensions that covered variations in the motivation for finding employment through a TWA, standardized factor scores from the principal component analysis were computed for each respondent, using our statistical software. We then analyzed these factor scores to find out whether respondents with different country backgrounds could be associated with similar or different scores on the three variables. Table 4 summarizes a comparison of the means of the factor scores on the three factor variables for the different country groups. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests confirmed statistically significant differences between the scores of the four country groups on all the three dimensions.<sup>5</sup> Norwegian workers had average scores on the first two dimensions, but considerably lower scores than workers in the other country groups on the ‘desired

**Table 4** Mean scores on standardized factor score variables by country backgrounds (N = 1251)

	<b>Stepping stone</b>	<b>Desired flexibility</b>	<b>Stuck</b>
Norway	-0.00	-0.15	0.00
Nordic + Western European EU	-0.38	0.28	-0.41
Eastern European EU	0.11	0.52	0.30
Rest of the World	0.36	0.30	0.12
Minimum	-2.5	-2.3	-3.0
Maximum	2.2	2.6	2.3
Eta	0.17	0.24	0.17
Eta squared	0.03	0.06	0.03
Significance	0.00	0.00	0.00

flexibility dimension'. Nordic and European EU respondents were motivated by desired flexibility, but had low scores on the other factors. A low score on the 'stuck' factor suggests that, unsurprisingly, this is a more confident group of workers. A low score on the 'stepping stone' factor may reflect that these workers are less motivated by TWA as a transition to permanent work or as an instrumental step in career development. Eastern European TWA workers' motivations scored higher than average for all three dimensions, but had particularly high scores on the stuck and desired flexibility dimensions. Workers in the 'Rest of the World' group also exhibited a variety of motivations for agency work, yet stepping stone motivation and desired flexibility seem to be the most important.

### **Effects of background variables on the acceptance of nonstandard employment relations**

The next step in our analysis was to perform ordinal logistic regression analyses in order to identify the effects of four different sets of variables on the two dependent variables of our analysis: the perceived suitability of employment obtained through temporary work agencies, (1) at present, and (2) in the future. The two dependent variables are ordinal with a scale ranging from 1 (not suitable at all) to 5 (very suitable). We did the regressions through four models, systematically introducing new variables (presented in the 'Data and methodology' section above) (Table 5). In the first model, we included only country background as an independent variable. In the second model, we controlled for differences in the composition of the country groups in terms of age, gender, educational level, industry type, and tenure in the TWA industry. In the third model, we introduced two more independent variables that, from our descriptive analysis, we considered were important proxies for workers' power position in the labor market, namely: 'Involuntarily without assignments in the TWA'<sup>6</sup>, and 'Perceived difficulty or ease of finding a different job' (employability). In the fourth and final model, we introduced the three motivational dimensions identified in the preceding section, and represented by the standardized factor scores. In this model, we identified the effects of country background and motivation on perceived acceptance of being in a TWA employment relationship, while simultaneously controlling for a number of other independent variables with potential effects on the dependent variables.

**Table 5** Ordinal logistic regression analysis with four sets of models

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
	<i>Suits now</i>	<i>Suits future</i>						
Norway (reference cat.)								
Nordic + Western Europe EU	0.66**	1.11**	0.48*	0.79**	0.24	0.69**	0.34	0.64**
Eastern Europe EU	-0.12	0.99**	0.38	1.15**	0.35	1.08**	0.03	0.71**
Rest of world	0.34	1.02**	0.25	0.82**	0.41	0.93**	0.25	0.65**
Women (vs. men)			-0.21	-0.30*	-0.13	-0.32*	-0.25	-0.31
Age (years)			0.01	0.04**	0.01	0.04**	0.01*	0.05**
Lower education (vs. higher)			0.57*	0.28	0.61*	0.40	0.42	0.29
Medium-level education (vs. higher)			0.03	0.09	0.08	0.17	0.00	0.17
Less than 6 months in agency (vs. 2+ yrs)			0.42**	0.28	0.31	0.26	0.27	-0.18
6 months – 2 years (vs. 2+ yrs)			0.18	0.13	0.09	0.05	0.20	-0.10
Health (reference cat.)								
Education			-0.44	-0.45	-0.20	-0.22	0.13	-0.26
Manufacturing			-1.17**	-0.90**	-0.86**	-0.66*	-0.13	-0.20
Hospitality			-0.92**	-0.72*	-0.67*	-0.47	-0.16	-0.61
Construction			-1.75**	-1.33**	-1.51**	-1.03**	-0.70	-0.36
Transport, etc.			-1.42**	-1.20**	-1.19**	-1.05**	-0.56	-0.60
IT			-1.40**	-1.11**	-1.50**	-0.98**	-0.97**	-0.84*
Office work			-1.19**	-1.08**	-1.10**	-0.81**	-0.29	-0.36
Never without assignments (vs. often)					1.06**	0.97**	1.12**	1.09**
Sometimes without assignments (vs. often)					0.68**	0.59*	0.71**	0.61**
Easy to find new job (vs. hard)					1.41**	0.91**	1.05**	0.46**
Neither hard nor easy (vs. hard)					0.65**	0.36*	0.38*	0.08*
'Stepping stone' motivation (factor score)							0.46**	0.43**
'Desired flexibility' motivation (factor score)							0.67**	0.72**
'Stuck' motivation (factor score)							-0.51**	-0.44**
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (Cox & Snell)	0.01	0.07	0.09	0.15	0.20	0.21	0.35	0.33

Dependent variables: Employment in TWAs suits me now (A), Employment in TWAs suits me in the future (B). Scales 1-5; 5 = 'very applicable'. Parameter estimates. (N = 1251)7. \*Significant with a significance level of 0.05, \*\*Significant with a significance level of 0.01.



### **Results of the ordinal logistic regression analysis**

In the following, we present the results of our regression analysis. The data fulfilled the proportional odds assumption ( $p < 0.05$ ) in seven out of the eight models. In model 1B, however, this assumption was not fulfilled.

#### **Model 1**

Model 1 confirmed that there were greater differences between the groups with different country backgrounds in how they viewed the suitability of temporary agency employment in the future compared with at present. While pseudo  $R^2$  was only 0.01 in Model 1A, it was 0.07 in model 1B.

With regard to the suitability for agency work both at present and in the future, there were statistically significant differences between the different country groups. In Model 1A, compared with the Norwegian reference group, workers with a Nordic or Western European country background were more likely to say that their present work situation suited them than were those with other country backgrounds.

In Model 1B, there was a marked division between Norwegian workers and migrants of all backgrounds in their assessment of future acceptability of TWA employment, with Norwegian workers being much less inclined to accept this employment type.

#### **Model 2**

Introducing background variables such as age, gender, educational level, industry type, and the tenure of temporary agency employment enhanced the models' capacity to predict the outcome variables (pseudo  $R^2 = 0.09$  for Model 2A and 0.15 for 2B). For the perception of future suitability, age had a strong positive effect on the dependent variable: the higher the age of the respondent, the more likely he or she was to accept temporary agency work in the future. In both models, the type of industry in which the respondents worked had a big impact on their responses to the perceived suitability of agency work: compared with the health sector, all industries had lower suitability scores, and respondents in IT, in transport, logistics and warehouse work, and in construction were particularly negative toward temporary agency employment. With regard to the respondents' current situation, short tenure in the temporary agency had a minor positive effect on their likelihood of accepting the same type of employment.

#### **Model 3**

In Models 3A and 3B, two variables representing different forms of vulnerability in the labor market were introduced: 'Having experience of working without assignments' and 'Perceived difficulty of finding a new job if one were to lose the current one'. Their inclusion further enhanced the models' ability to predict the scores on the outcome variables (with pseudo  $R^2$  of 0.20 and 0.21, respectively). Both new independent variables had statistically significant effects. A perceived ease of finding a new job (employability) (Forrier & Sels 2003) had the greatest impact with regard to a positive evaluation of

the suitability of the employment type at present. The experience of involuntarily being without assignments in the TWA had a negative effect on the respondents' perceived suitability of temporary agency work. Nevertheless, the introduction of the two new variables only had a minor impact on the effects of the other variables in the model.

#### **Model 4**

The inclusion of the three motivational variables (Models 4A and B) (i.e., the factor scores from the factor analysis presented earlier in this paper) resulted in two much stronger models (pseudo  $R^2$  of 0.35 and 0.33, respectively). All three motivational dimensions were strongly associated with the scores on the two dependent variables. However, while the *stepping stone* and *desired flexibility* dimensions had positive associations with accepting temporary agency employment (both at present and in the future), the *stuck* dimension had clear negative effects. Thus, when motivation for this type of employment was instrumental in obtaining regular employment or related to secondary benefits such as extra income, more family-home flexibility, or providing for other pursuits, the respondents were more likely to find the employment type suitable. By contrast, if TWA workers had a *stuck* or involuntary motivation ('It was the job I got'), they were less likely to find the employment type suitable.

Introducing new variables in the models modified the effects of some of the other independent variables. With regard to the first research question, it is important to note that the effect of country background, which had been statistically significant in the first two models, was no longer so for the first dependent variable (suitability at present) in the last two models. The effects of country background were also reduced for the second (future suitability), as shown by the changes in the parameter estimates. The latter reduction from Model 1 to Model 4 was particularly large for agency workers from Eastern Europe and Rest of the World. Furthermore, with the exception of the IT sector, the effects of providing TWA services to specific industries, such as construction or health services, disappeared when controlling for the motivational factors for temporary agency employment. Thus, while perceptions of accepting this employment type at first appeared to be strongly associated with migration background or the type of industry in which the respondent was employed, the motivation for taking this type of employment explained most of the variation. However, these motivations happen to be unevenly distributed among respondents with different migration backgrounds and employment in different industrial segments of the economy.

The complete regression analysis is summarized in Table 5.

#### **Conclusion**

In this article, we have investigated differences between the country backgrounds of temporary agency workers in Norway with regard to finding NSE arrangements suitable, and divided into four groups: Norwegian, other Nordic and Western European EU, Eastern European EU, and Rest of the World. We have also explored the motivation for having a NSE affiliation, and how motivational patterns and other important independent variables correspond to country backgrounds and the likelihood of finding NSE



arrangements suitable. The article contributes to bridging understandings about voluntary and involuntary motivation to engage in NSE in a way that particularly informs discussions about migrants in different power positions in a segmented labor market.

We found relatively small, but significant differences between the country groups when asking about the suitability of a NSE affiliation. The TWA workers from other Nordic and Western European EU and Rest of the World groups were moderately more likely to answer that the employment type suited them at present, while those in the Norwegian and Eastern European EU groups were less likely to give a positive answer. However, when asked about the future, TWA workers in the three groups with a different country background than Norwegian were significantly more likely to give a positive answer.

We identified three main motivational dimensions: *stepping stone* motivation; *stuck* or involuntary motivation; and *desired flexibility* motivation. The reference group, Norwegian, had average scores on both stepping stone and stuck motivation and a lower than average score on desired flexibility. The country group other Nordic and other Western European EU (dominated by Swedes) had low scores on stepping stone and stuck motivation, but a somewhat higher score on desired flexibility, possibly indicating that a large number of respondents in that group were health workers who found the affiliation with TWAs convenient. The Eastern European EU group had a relatively high score on stuck motivation and desired flexibility, as well as a higher than average score on stepping stone motivation, indicating that this group was relatively heterogeneous in terms of what motivated the workers' affiliation to their TWA. The Rest of the World group similarly not only had high scores on stepping stone motivation and desired flexibility but also a higher than average score on stuck motivation.

In an ordinal logistic regression analysis, we found statistically significant differences between the country groups. The greatest differences related to whether the employment type would suit the workers *in the future*. When introducing other variables into the model, we found that age, industries/types of work, tenure as a TWA worker, lack of assignments in the TWA, and self-perceived employability also produced significant differences for finding NSE suitable. However, when we introduced the three motivational dimensions (stepping stone, stuck, and desired flexibility), we found that these strongly predicted the two dependent variables of finding NSE suitable (both at present and in the future). As such, the effect of country background on finding NSE in a TWA suitable disappeared for the first dependent variable (suitability of employment at present), and the effect of country background was reduced for future suitability. The effects of different industry types (i.e., health services or construction) were also significantly weakened when we controlled for motivation. We therefore conclude that while acceptance of or perceived suitability of NSE among TWA workers in Norway appears to have been strongly associated with country background or the type of industry to which the TWAs provide services, the *motivation* for engaging in TWA work explained more of the variation in our model.

It is still worth dwelling on how the country groups varied with respect to motivation. For instance, we found that Norwegians were less motivated by TWA work as a stepping stone than TWA workers in other country groups. Although our study looked at motivation rather than actual outcomes, this finding is paradoxical when considering Kogan's (2011) study, which showed that native citizens achieved regular employment through TWAs more frequently than did migrant groups. This suggests

that migrant groups tend to view TWA affiliation as a launch pad for regular employment or career development to a higher degree than the reference group (Norwegians). A possible explanation could be that Norwegians do not associate TWA affiliation with a transition to permanent work or as an integral part of career development, perhaps partly due to the low occupational status of this affiliation in the Norwegian labor market, even for transitional purposes (cf. Piore 1979). The finding may also reflect that Norwegians tend to put lower values on all motivational variables for the same reasons. The other Nordic and Western European EU category is harder to explain in terms of a low score on 'stepping stone' motivation, as this group stands out in terms of reporting high employability and high job satisfaction as TWA workers. One interpretation is that the respondents were not highly motivated by the stepping stone dimension precisely because they were happy with what the affiliation offered them at present, and because the majority of these workers were engaged as TWA workers within health services (associated with high employability). The group scored higher on 'desired flexibility' and this may be interpreted as a reason for scoring lower on 'stepping stone' motivation. As for the remaining country groups, one interpretation of high 'stepping stone' motivation is that the relatively vulnerable position in the labor market, not least affected by processes of ethnic stereotyping and segmentation (Friberg & Midtbøen 2017), implies that TWA employment is considered an important or necessary step in order to climb career ladders or to achieve permanent employment. It should also be borne in mind that many of the respondents in the country groups 'Eastern European EU' and 'Rest of the World' work in industries in which NSE relations are more common, such as construction (especially for the Eastern European EU group) (Friberg & Haakestad 2015) and hospitality (Rest of the World) (Jordhus-Lier & Underthun 2014).

With regard to the 'stuck' and involuntary motivation factor, those with a Nordic or other Western European EU country background had a low score. This group included a high number of workers associated with health services, and it is likely that a significant proportion of the respondents has been recruited for their skills. As Cobb-Clark (2000) points out, migrants with in-demand skills have more options and a stronger power position in host country labor markets. Contrasting this group, The Rest of the World and Eastern European EU groups were more likely to have a 'stuck' motivation, possibly reflecting a perception of having fewer options in the labor market.

Although the Nordic and other Western European EU country group scored above average along the 'desired flexibility', dimension, it is worth noticing that the score was lower than Rest of the World and Eastern European EU. The fact that these typically more vulnerable migrant groups have higher scores along this dimension may reflect the sometimes blurred lines between voluntary and involuntary motivation (de Jong et al. 2009). Did the respondents answer that they were motivated by flexibility and variation because they genuinely meant that, or did a positive inclination on these motivational variables rather reflect other career expectations in a segmented labor market (Abrahamsen & Drange 2015)? The 'dual frame of reference' (Waldinger & Lichter 2003, p. 40) may explain somewhat paradoxical attitudes of subordination and optimism in liminal migrant spaces (Henningsen et al. 2014). That said, the inclination to give positive answers on this dimension may also be attributed to the need to combine different jobs and therefore by the extra income provided by TWA work. This echoes Piore's (1979) insight that migrants are more concerned about income security than occupational status and that TWA employment may be one of many ways to achieve this.



However, it is important not to treat the different groups as static, and some of the paradoxes highlighted above may also be due to heterogeneity within the country groups, both when it comes to power position and tenure as a temporary agency worker. The somewhat crude categories used in this paper do not capture the full extent of this heterogeneity, in particular when it comes to the time aspect. As Parutis (2014) argues, time may alter ambitions, expectations, and not least, motivation, as the migrant becomes more settled in the host labor market. We think that further exploring this heterogeneity is an important agenda for future research on migrants' positions in Nordic labor markets. However, heterogeneity in terms of *tenure* is not enough. The temporary agency workers in our study are also divided in terms of their power positions in the labor market, and this is due to a broad range of factors that go beyond country background.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Nonstandard employment is an umbrella term used by, for example, the ILO (2017) and Vosko (2010) to capture employment forms that do not conform to the standard employment form of permanent, full-time positions. The term is used interchangeably with atypical employment.
- <sup>2</sup> The majority of jobs in the industry are recorded by NHO Service (2017) each year, and in 2016 corresponded to just over 1% of the total number of jobs in Norway. However, there is a growing number of jobs within labor hire outside the member firms of the NHO Service. According to an extended list of firms within this industry code in the Brønnøysund Register Centre, the percentage could be closer to 2%, particularly within construction (Jordhus-Lier 2017; Nergaard 2017a).
- <sup>3</sup> Most importantly, Swedes could have been singled out as a separate category due to diverging results on some key variables. Swedes tended to be younger and to have shorter time



horizons for work in Norway than the more established migrants from other parts of Europe.

- <sup>4</sup> Measured by pairwise post-hoc one-way ANOVA tests.
- <sup>5</sup> Post-hoc one-way ANOVA tests (LSD) also confirmed statistically significant pairwise differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) between all groups except the following: ‘Stepping stone’: Norway vs Eastern European EU, and East European EU vs Rest of the World. ‘Stuck’: Norway vs. Rest of the World. ‘Desired flexibility’: Rest of the World vs. Nordic + Western European EU, and Rest of the World vs Eastern European EU.
- <sup>6</sup> According to NHO Service (2017), the most common contract type among TWA workers in Norway is ‘Permanent job without the right to pay between assignments’. Thus, the contract implies a zero-hour situation whereby the worker is dependent on jobs to earn a salary. Therefore, a question about how often the worker experienced a situation in which he or she was involuntarily without a job assignment from the TWA was included in the survey.