

# Scarring Due to Unemployment in the Health Sector: A Comparison of Four European Countries<sup>☆</sup>

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## Abstract

The allocation of individuals to occupations is a main mechanism of social reproduction and social stratification. Many studies elucidated the individual antecedents and consequences of this process. An interest has often been in how social origin moderates the transition from education to employment. However, empirical evidence on the role of recruiters in this fundamental social process is scarce. Against this backdrop, we examine how these gatekeepers evaluate hiring chances of young job applicants. In our contribution, we specifically focus on scarring due to unemployment in the health sector. Drawing on human capital theory and signalling theory, we expect variation in the hiring chances of male vs. female job seekers with respect to the length of previous and current unemployment spells.

Using data from a recent large-scale factorial survey of recruiters in four European countries ( $N \approx 2,000$ ) and employing multilevel linear regression models, we find, overall, evidence for heterogeneous scarring effects. Young male job applicants who were unemployed received less favourable assessments compared to their female counterparts. Having been unemployed or being currently unemployed was not associated with hiring chances in young females. Our preliminary findings constitute new evidence on gender differences in scarring due to unemployment. They further contribute to the literature on transitions to employment.

*Keywords:* Unemployment, Scarring, Hiring, Health, Factorial Survey

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