

# The Strength of Ties in the Polish Labor Market

## How the Conditions of Local Economy Impact on Getting a Job

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# The strength of weak ties (SWT)



Summer 1969: survey among 282 male professional, technical and managerial workers in Newton (a Boston suburb) who acquired a new job in the last 5 years.

“the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (Granovetter 1973: 1361).

The strength of ties operationalized by frequency of contacts.

Method used	
Formal means	18.8%
Personal contacts	55.7%
Direct application	18.8%
Other	6.7%
N	282

Strength of tie	
Strong	16.7%
Weak	83.3%

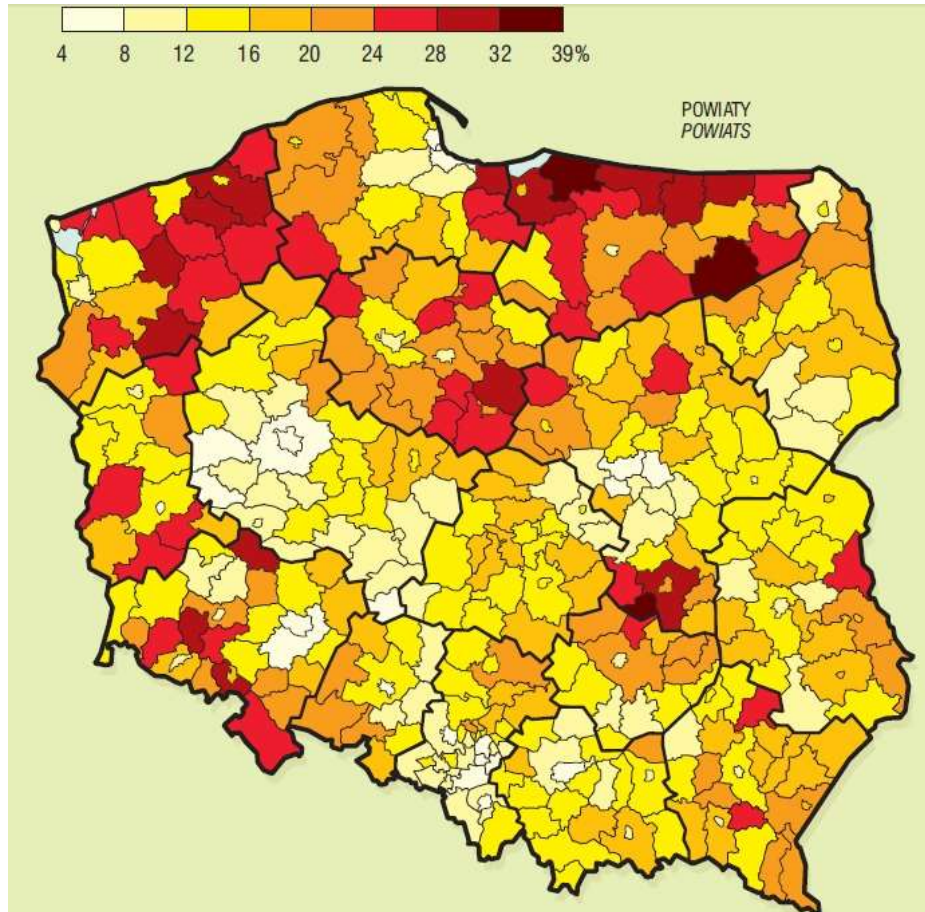
# Key issues in SWT studies

- Ambiguous results regarding the influence of job obtaining methods on income (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Bridges, Villemez 1986; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988; Smith 2000; Mouw 2003; McDonald 2015).
- Jobs obtained by personal contacts increase job satisfaction (Granovetter 1995; Flap, Völker 2001).
- Ambiguous results regarding the influence of job obtaining methods on occupational status (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Wegener 1991; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988).
- Strong ties are more often used in communist and post-communist societies (Bian 1997; Völker, Flap 1999; Yakubovich 2005). There is no difference in strong ties use between post-communist and other societies (Słoczyński 2013; Letki i Mieręna 2015).
- Refining the operationalization of tie strength: perception of closeness as a better proxy of tie strength (Marsden, Campbell 1984).

# Explanations of labor market variation

- Cultural context:
  - Strong ties in Mexico (Rogers, Kincaid 1981); Different meaning of friendship in Japan (Wanatabe 1987); *Guanxi* networks in China (Bian 1997).
- Institutional context:
  - Formal job matching institutions in communist countries (Bian 1997; Völker, Flap 1999, 2001); Significance of formal recruiters in a given labor market (Pellizzari 2010); The role of job-matching based on educational achievements (Chua 2011).
- Structural context:
  - Composition of broader networks providing access to social resources / social capital (Lin, Ensel, Vaughn 1981; Bridges, Villemez 1986; Marsden, Hurlbert 1988; Wegener 1991; Montgomery 1992); Locality context: rootedness (Hanson, Pratt 1991; Granovetter 1995) or locality size (Gerber, Mayorova 2010); Network size (Letki, Mieriņa 2015).
- Economic context:
  - Poverty correlated with informal job acquisition (Elliott 1999); Strong ties are more often used in declining industries than in growing industries (Brown, Konrad (2001); 'In recessions, word-of-mouth recruitment increases' (Granovetter 1995: 159).

# Diversity of local economic conditions in Poland



Registered unemployment rate per *powiats* [counties] in 2013 as of 31 XII (Statistical Yearbook of the Regions – Poland 2014, Central Statistical Office).

- Unemployment rate
  - Min: 3.2%; Max: 34.7%; Poland: 9.0%
- Commune income (PLN)
  - Min: 2,229; Max: 48,680; Mean: 3,424
- Mean of employees income (PLN)
  - Min: 2,456; Max: 6,641; Poland: 4,004
- Rate of employment in agriculture
  - Min: 0.4%; Max: 79.6%; Poland: 11.5%
- Rate of employment in services
  - Min: 15.3%; Max: 86.7%; Poland: 58.0%

Data on economic conditions in Poland for 2013/2014 (Central Statistical Office).

# Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: *Employees are more likely to use personal contacts to obtain jobs in localities with worse economic conditions.*
- Hypothesis 2: *Employees are more likely to use strong ties to obtain jobs in localities with worse economic conditions (absolute importance of strong ties).*
- Hypothesis 3: *The relative importance of strong ties versus weak ties is higher in localities with worse economic conditions.*

# Research design

**Research tool:** An adaptation of the Granovetter questionnaire from the getting a job study.

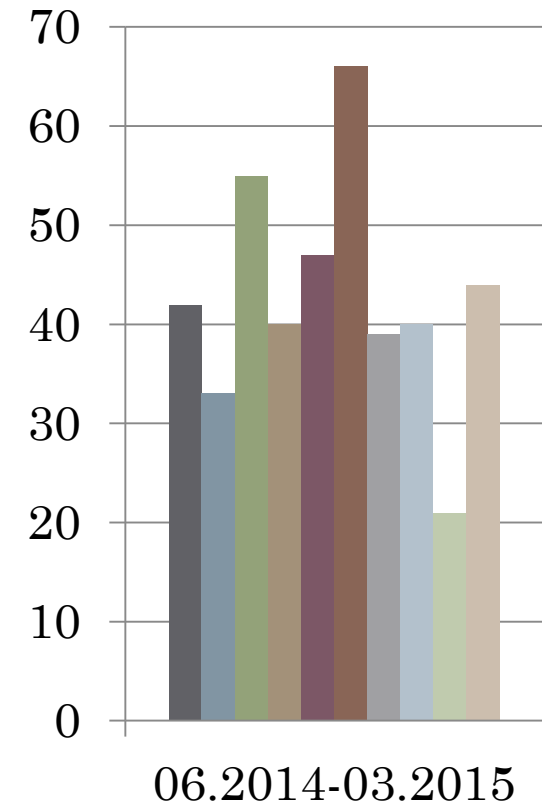
**Sampling:** Subsample of respondents who acquired a job, one year prior to the interview, filtered out during the omnibus survey carried out by the Public Opinion Research Center on a nationwide representative sample, in 10 subsequent waves.

**Research execution:** July 2014 – March 2015, Poland.

**Dataset:** Resulting database of 428 observations. Questionnaire data supplemented with data from the Central Statistical Office of Poland on the economic conditions of the localities of the respondents' residence.

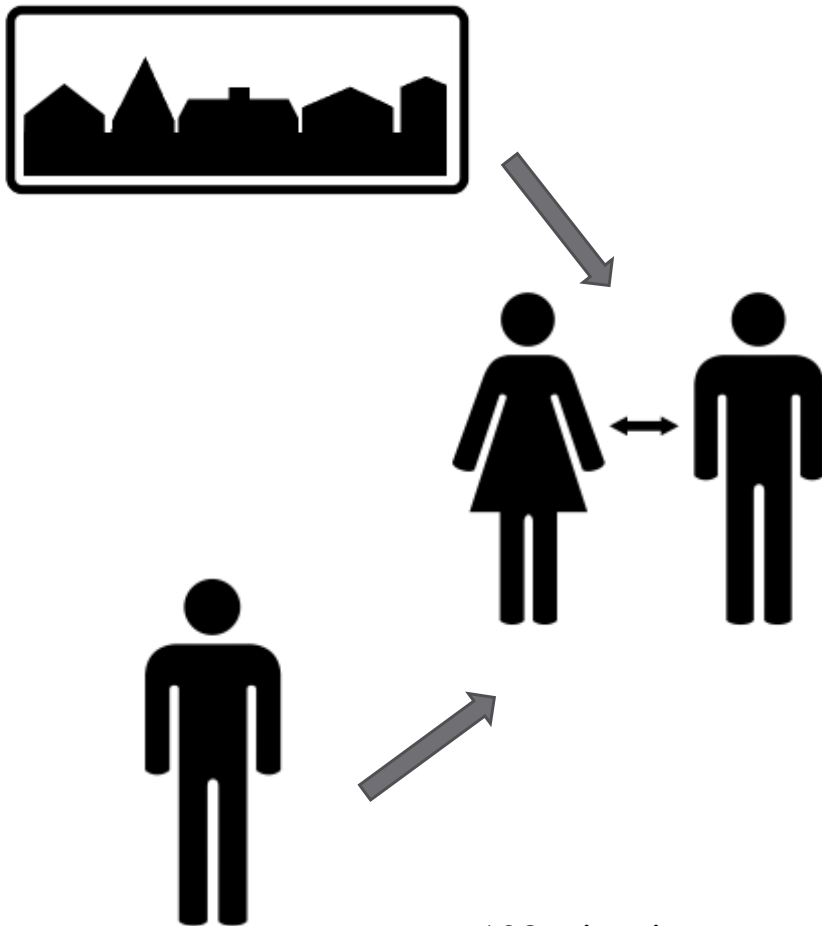
**Analysis:** Statistical analyses of relations between variables, multinomial and binary logistic regressions, statistical significance  $< 0.05$ .

**Controls:** Status on the labor market, age, income, change of income, searching for a job, job satisfaction, former job satisfaction, change of satisfaction, occupational status, education.





# Multilevel structure of analysis



Independent variables on the local level: unemployment rate, commune income, mean income, employment in agriculture rate, employment in industry rate, employment in services rate.

Dependent variables on the relational level: method of getting a job, tie strength (frequency and closeness).

Control independent variables on the individual level: status on the labor market, age, income, change of income, searching for a job, job satisfaction, former job satisfaction, change of satisfaction, occupational status, education.

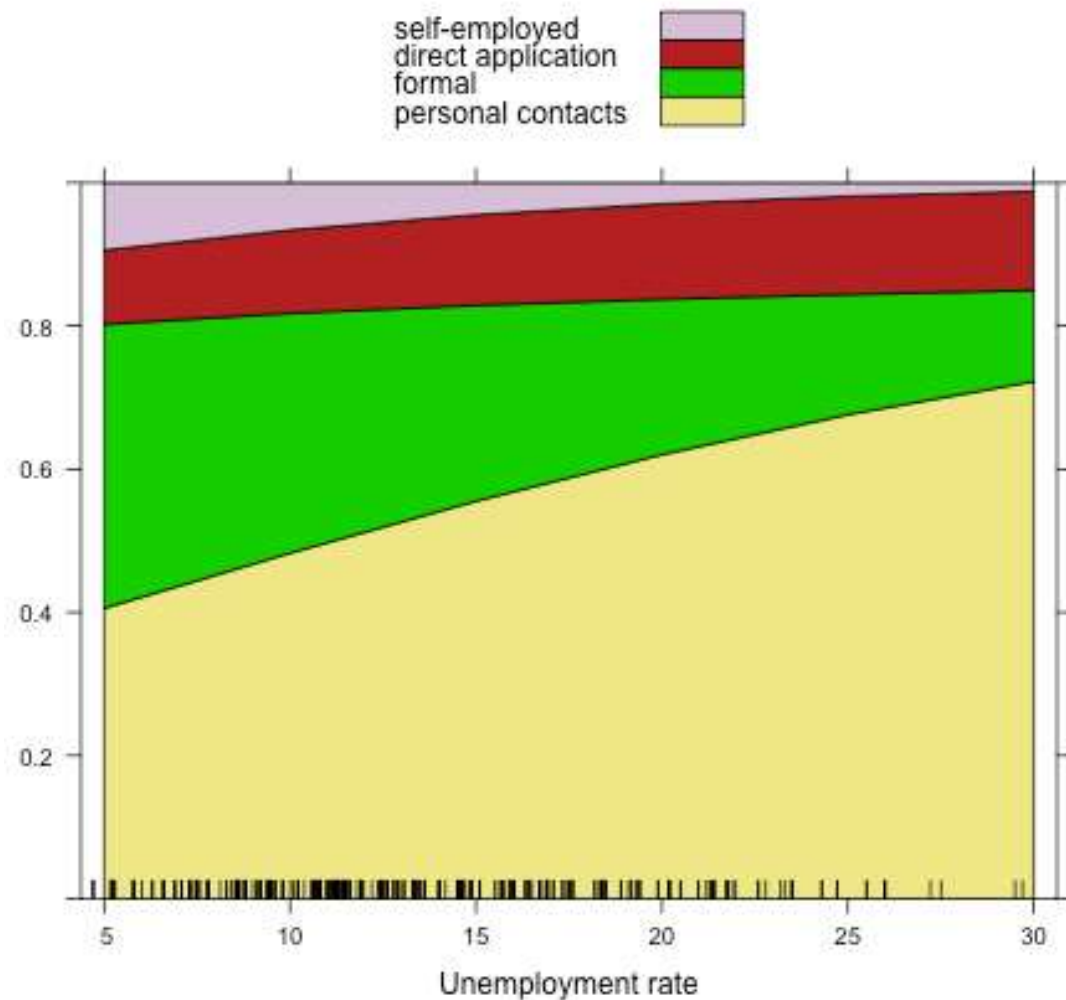
198 trivariate regression models were estimated.

# Getting a job in Poland

Method used	Newton 1969	Poland 2014/15
Formal means	18.8%	29.9%
Personal contacts	55.7%	49.1%
Direct application	18.8%	11.9%
Other	6.7%	13.2%
N	282	428

Strength of tie	Newton 1969 Contacts	ISSP 2002 Closeness + family	Poland 2014/15 Contacts	Poland 2014/15 Closeness
Strong	16.7%	51.1%	52.2%	32.0%
Weak	83.3%	48.9%	47.8%	68.0%

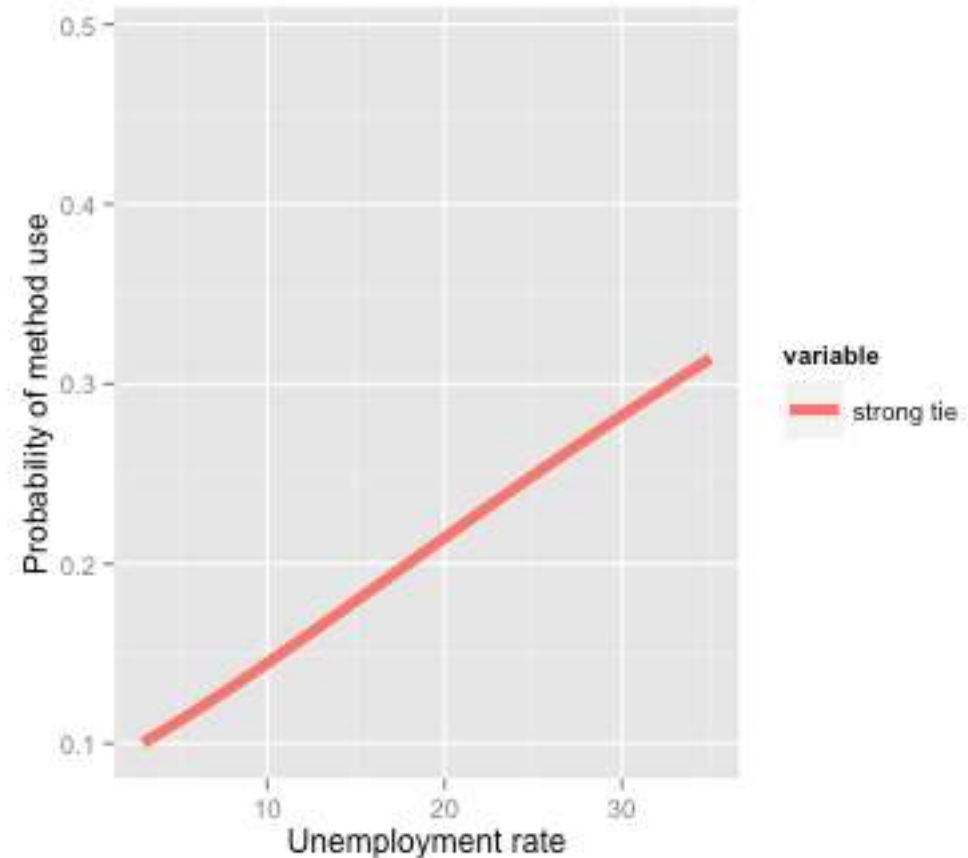
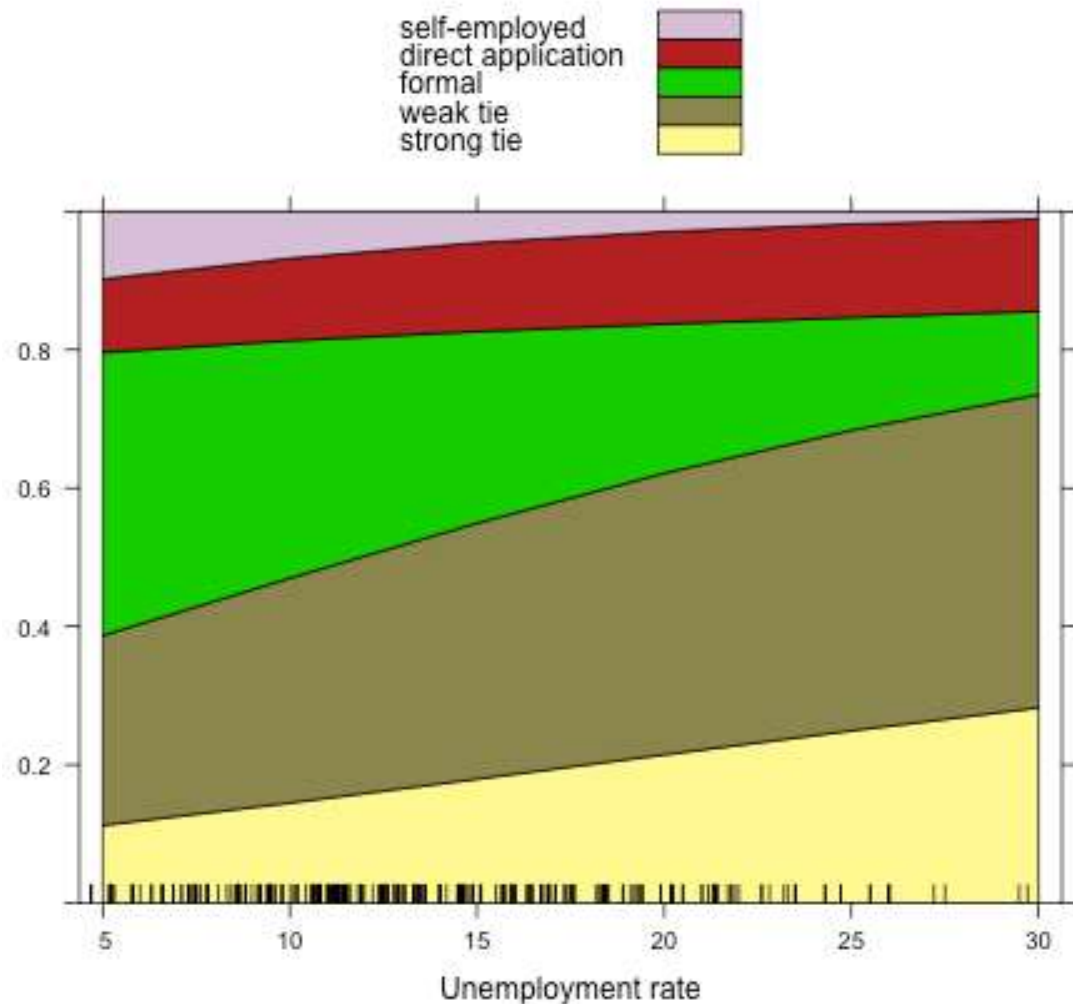
# Methods of getting a job and the conditions of local economy



The probability of personal contacts use increases from 40.6% in localities with the lowest unemployment rate to 72.2% in localities with the highest unemployment rate.

**Hypothesis 1 is supported.**

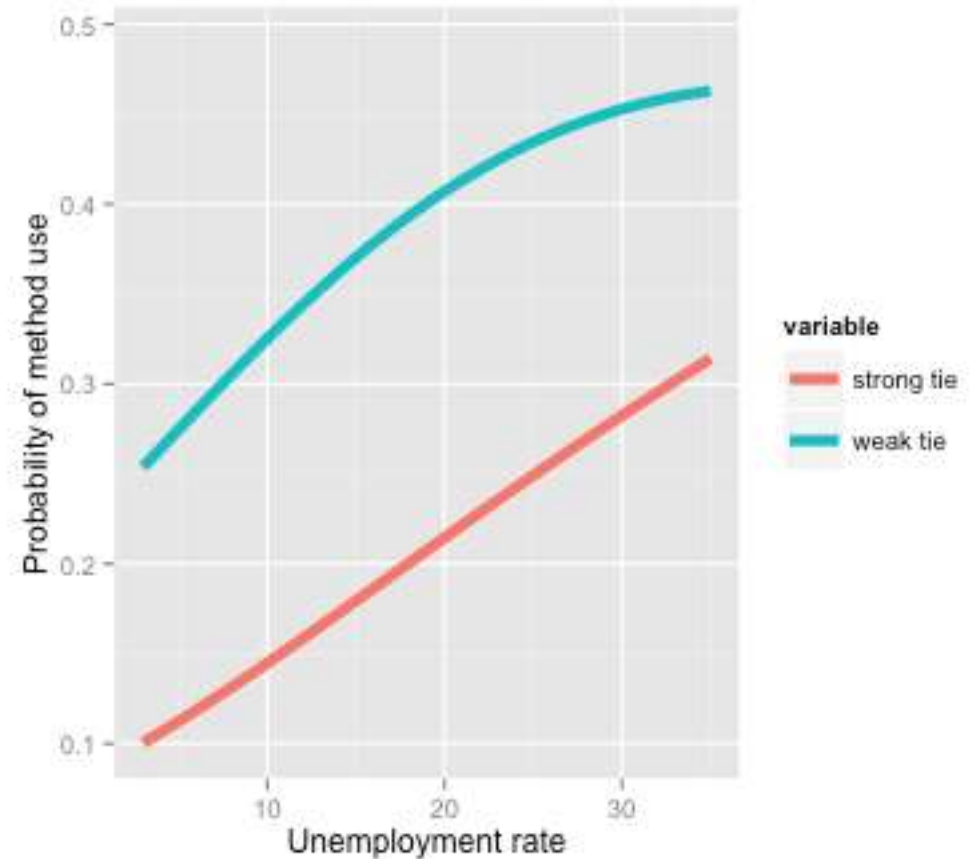
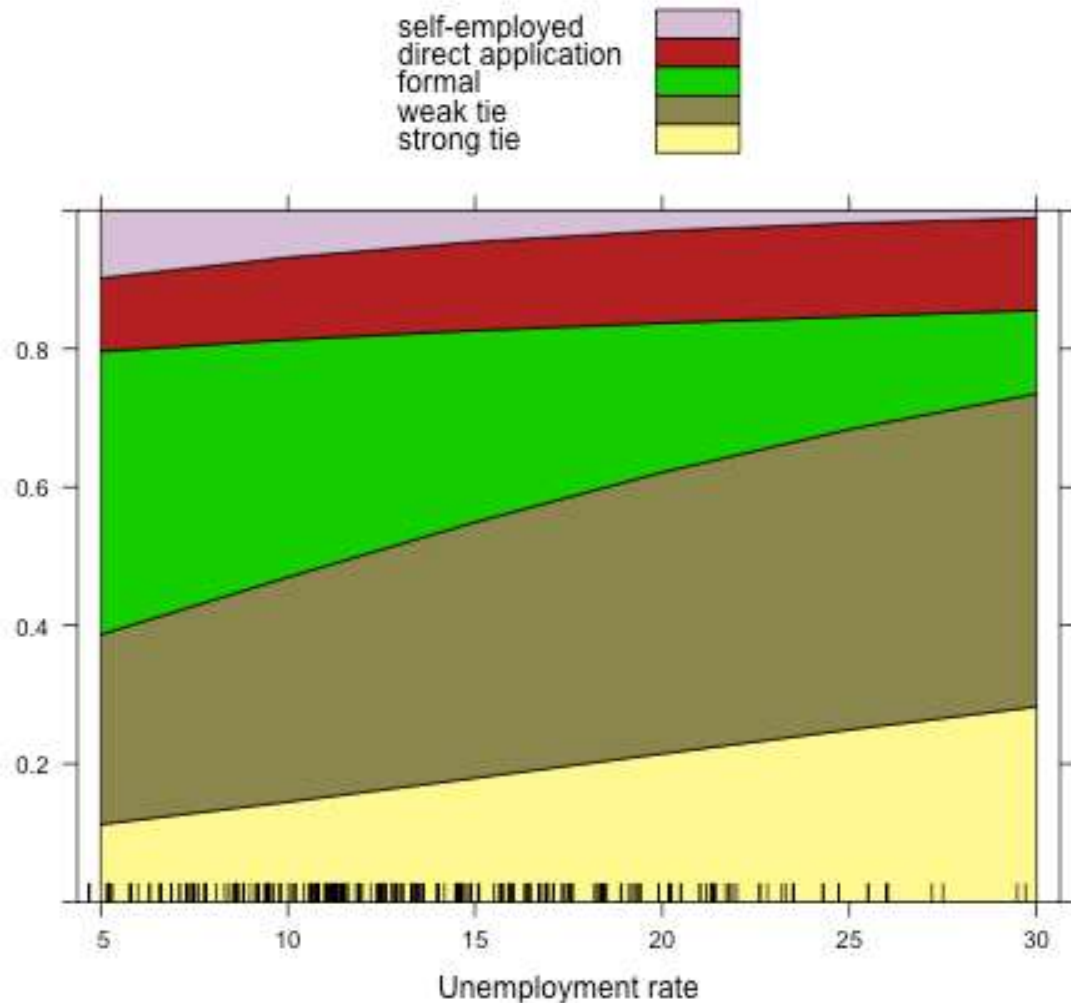
# Absolute importance of strong ties



The probability of strong ties use increases from 11.2% in localities with the lowest unemployment rate to 28.2% in localities with the highest unemployment rate.

**Hypothesis 2 is supported.**

# Absolute importance of strong ties



However, there is a **similar pattern for weak ties**: probability of weak ties use grows from 27.5% to 45.2%.

# Relative importance of strong ties

**Binary logistic regression.**

**Dependent variable:** weak ties vs. strong ties.

**Independent variable:** Unemployment rate, controlled for effects of micro level characteristics

	LR Chisq	Df	significance level
Unemployment rate	0.50	1	0.48

The relative importance of using strong ties versus weak ties does not depend on local economic conditions.

**Hypothesis 3 is falsified.**

# Conclusions

- The patterns of getting a job behavior in Poland are similar to the ones described in classic studies.
- In the localities with worse economic conditions, jobs are more often obtained via personal contacts (H1 supported).
- In the localities with worse economic conditions, jobs are more often obtained via strong ties (H2 supported).
- However, the proportion of strong and weak ties remains constant across different levels of local economic situations (H3 falsified).
- The fact that the variation of getting a job methods depends on local economic conditions puts into question extrapolations and international comparisons based on local samples.
- Future research should include data on economic conditions when making comparisons of different institutional settings.



**Thank you for your attention!**

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More about this research: <http://mikolajpawlak.bio.uw.edu.pl/research/sociological-vacuum/>