

**Research report 2018/3**

Stephanie Plenty, Anton B Andersson, Simon Hjalmarsson,  
Carina Mood, Frida Rudolphi and Georg Treuter



# How are our young adults doing?

**A report on labour market activities  
and living conditions**

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Institute for  
**FUTURES STUDIES**

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## About the report

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Shortly before the publication of this report, the Inquiry on Youth Not Who Neither Work nor Study (Swedish: Samordnaren för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar), published "Our Shared Responsibility – For Young People Who Neither Work nor Study (Swedish: Vårt gemensamma ansvar – för unga som varken arbetar eller studerar)."<sup>1</sup> We have greatly benefited from discussions and comments from Oscar Svensson, Secretary for this inquiry, and we thank him for this. A special thank you to the respondents in YES! and CILS4EU, whose participation made this research possible.

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1. National Public Inquiries 2018:11

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In recent decades the transition from compulsory education to higher education and full-time work in OECD countries has become longer and more complex than previously.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, employment conditions have changed, and the proportion of the population with higher education has increased, meaning that work and education do not provide the same level of labour market security as before. Youth unemployment is also more sensitive than adult unemployment to economic downturns.<sup>2</sup> Although these factors underly important challenges for young adults, gaps in knowledge regarding young people's entry into the labour market remain. For example, we do not know how many are in particularly vulnerable situations, or about the living conditions for youth with different activities statuses. The aim of this report is therefore to describe young adults' first steps into the labour market and their living conditions, focusing particularly on those in vulnerable situations.

Numerous investigations and research projects have informed us about factors that increase in transitions from school to higher education or employment, and the focus has often been on youth that are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET). Lacking upper secondary education and having an immigrant background are two key risk factors for being NEET or unemployed.<sup>3</sup> Young adults with a disability, and those whose parents have low education or are unemployed, are also at increased risk of experiencing difficulties in the labour market and in studies.<sup>4</sup> Despite the extensive knowledge on single risk factors, the Swedish Governmental Strategy on NEET youth acknowledged that large gaps in knowledge remain and confirmed that more information is needed to meet the needs of today's young adults.<sup>5</sup>

NEET youth are undoubtedly an important group to study, but it is important to keep in mind that working or studying does not necessarily imply a problem-free situation. Among those who work, some youth have temporary contracts, others have less work than they would prefer, or have jobs that are physically or mentally exhausting.<sup>6</sup> Among those who are studying, some youth fail to make progress, and others study but would prefer to work if they could find employment.

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1. Furlong, 2009; Furlong et al., 2003; Quintini et al., 2007

2. Goshray et al., 2016; Scarpetta et al., 2010

3. Engdahl & Forslund, 2016; Eurofound

4. Carcillo et al., 2015; Eurofound, 2012; Quintini et al., 2007; Siraj et al., 2014

5. Ministry of Education and Research, 2015

6. Anderson et al., 2006; Furlong, 2006; MacDonald, 2011

It is therefore important not only to study NEET youth, but also other types of vulnerability related to work or education.

The existing knowledge about the labour market situation of young adults in Sweden is primarily based on data from administrative registers, and from the Labour Force Surveys (Swedish: AKU, Arbetskraftsundersökningarna). These data contain no or very limited information about youth's own perspectives, something we need in order to understand how youth themselves define their situation and which circumstances they experience as problematic.<sup>7</sup> Qualitative studies collect youth's own perspectives but using small and often selective samples that cannot be generalised to other individuals. In this report we use a nationally representative data set where young adults themselves report on their situation, and where this information is matched to register data for the same individuals. Using these data sources, we can address limitations in knowledge about young adults' activities and difficulties related to entering the labour market in Sweden.

## Aims

This report has three aims:

1. To describe the activity statuses of young adults aged 19–20 years, based on their own reports.
2. To identify vulnerable subgroups. This is done among NEET youth, but the perspective is widened by also considering vulnerable positions among youth in work or education.
3. To describe the living conditions for young adults in different activity types and with different degrees of vulnerability.

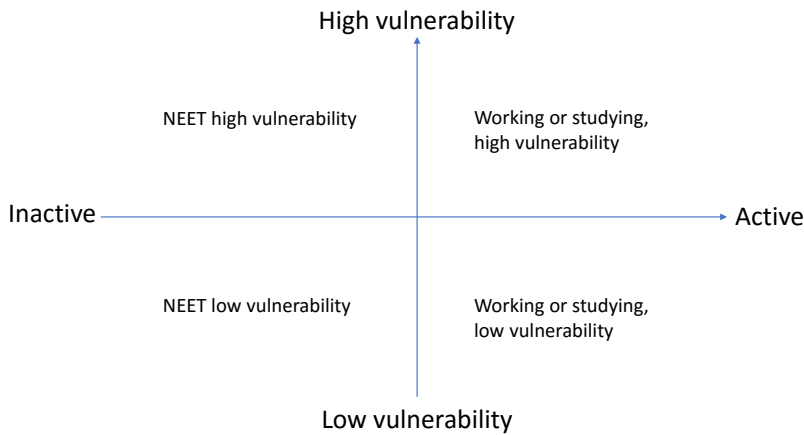
To identify youth with difficulties establishing themselves on the labour market, we classify their position according to two dimensions – their activity type and their degree of vulnerability. Figure 1.1 illustrates the principle behind this classification. Our point of departure is that these two dimensions can provide a better understanding of labour market-

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7. Cf. Maguire, 2010; Simmons & Thompson, 2013

related difficulties than by only considering one’s activity status. With the concept of vulnerability, we aim to capture how strong or weak one’s attachment to work and/or education is. Those we define as more vulnerable are youth with more precarious circumstances who can be assumed to be at higher risk of future labour market problems (e.g., the unemployed who are not job-seeking, students who make little progress in their education, or workers who work few hours in temporary employment).

*Figure 1.1. Classification of activity types and vulnerability*



## Overview of the report

In Chapter 2 we investigate what young adults’ activities look like according to their own reports and according to administrative register records. These two data sources complement each other and together they provide a more comprehensive picture than usual.

Chapter 3 presents a more nuanced understanding of NEET by examining (a) those who define themselves as job seekers, (b) those who report an alternative activity to working, studying, or job-seeking, and (c) those who report that they have no activity at all. Among other things, we ask: How large a proportion of the youth in our cohort are

NEET? How do they describe their activity? What do they see as the reasons for being NEET? Which strategies do they use to find a job or enter education, and how actively do they try to change their situation?

Chapters 4 and 5 present the situation for youth in employment and education, respectively, and we describe groups in more secure situations and those in more precarious situations. We ask questions such as: Which type of jobs do working youth have? How do they perceive their working conditions, and how stable is their employment situation? Which types of education are studying youth enrolled in, and how many make little or no progress in their studies?

In chapter 6 we summarize how many of young workers and students are in positions characterised by lower versus higher vulnerability and how many NEET can be considered as particularly vulnerable. We also show how the activity- vulnerability categories are related to background factors such as gender, immigrant background, parental education and previous school performance.

In Chapters 7 and 8 we investigate how living conditions, such as economic resources, social relations, and leisure-time activities, vary with activity type and vulnerability. We also describe associations between the activity-vulnerability categories with multiple aspects of young adult's mental well-being, what they worry about, and how they envisage their opportunities and their future. Chapter 9 concludes the report with a summary of our results and key points.

## Data collection and procedure

Data comes from the Youth in Europe Study (YES!), in which we follow a nationally representative sample of Swedish youth who were in grade 8 of compulsory school during the academic year 2010–2011 (most of them born in 1996). In this report we observe the outcomes of these individuals on the labour market and in education until autumn 2016, when they were 19–20 years old. The survey addresses youth's own reports on labour market activities and living conditions, and these responses are combined with administrative register data on education, employment, unemployment and income. This report uses predominantly self-reported data from wave 4 of the study (December 2015 to March 2016) ( $n = 2,524$ , 46 percent of the original grade 8 sample). In some cases, we also study outcomes based on register records from 2015 and 2016. Statistics Sweden (SCB) was responsible for

the field work, including sampling and data collection. The sample was stratified, oversampling schools with a high proportion of immigrant background students to enable detailed studies of integration. To be able to generalise to the cohort of youth who were in grade 8 in 2010–2011, we correct for different sampling probabilities by using probability weights constructed by Statistics Sweden.

When generalising from a sample to a population there is always a degree of statistical uncertainty. Throughout the report we present 95-percent confidence intervals around estimates in the figures, but we refrain from commenting on statistical certainty for every analysis in order to avoid making the report cumbersome to follow. Confidence intervals include with 95 percent certainty the value that we would have obtained if our data covered the full population (all Swedish youth who were in grade 8 in 2010–2011). However, selective non-response may limit the representativeness of the sample, as the respondents in wave 4 (2015/2016) were somewhat positively selected, e.g., having slightly better school grades than non-respondents. The Appendix contains more information about YES! and survey non-response.

## Focus and limitations

This report presents information about young adults' labour market-related activities within the framework and aims listed above. Our ambition is not to study the causes leading to different activity types or vulnerability positions. In our description of the living conditions for young adults, the different activity-vulnerability categories should not be understood as the cause of different standards of living. It is perfectly possible that differences in living conditions can affect activity types and the risk of being in a vulnerable position – youth with poorer health may for example have difficulties establishing themselves on the labour market – and there may be additional factors that affect both one's activity-vulnerability and living conditions. The reader should also keep in mind that we focus on young adults who have grown up in Sweden or immigrated before grade 8. We investigate the situation of these individuals when they are 19–20 years old, and therefore the results cannot be generalised to other age groups or to more recent immigrants.



# Primary activity and overlapping activity types

One of the aims of this report is to provide an overview of the labour market-related activities of 19–20-year-olds. In this section we use survey data combined with register data to describe young adults’ primary and overlapping activities. Table 2.1 shows the primary activity at the time of the survey, based on survey responses. The results show that working is the most common primary activity at 47 percent, followed by studying at 37 percent, and job-seeking at 12 percent. Four percent respond that they have some other activity type, or no activity at all.

Table 2.1. Primary activity (n = 2,517)

	%
Studying	37
Working	47
Job-seeking	12
Other activity	1
No activity	3
Total	100

A limitation in examining primary activity is that it misses an important and common experience for young people, namely to simultaneously have different activities. We can see in Table 2.2 that many young adults have secondary activities in addition to their primary activity. The total proportion who work is much larger than the proportion who consider working as their primary activity. In total, more than 60 percent work, but only 47 percent see it as their primary activity. Altogether, 42 percent respond that they are studying, which is only slightly more than the 37 percent who see studying as their primary activity. A relatively large proportion report that they are job-seeking – approximately 40 percent – but only 10 percent see job-seeking as their primary activity. Among those who indicate studying as their primary activity, it is common to also work or look for work. Among those who nominate working as their primary activity, it is relatively common to



also look for alternative or additional jobs (14 percent) but uncommon to also be studying (3 percent). A relatively small group report that they are primarily job-seeking but have also have employment or are also studying (in total 3 percent).

We define NEET as those who are neither in work nor in education (for a more detailed description, see Chapter 3). This means that the NEET group consists of those who are job seekers only (9.5 percent) and those who have some activity other than work or education, or no activity at all (4 percent in total). Thus, NEET youth comprise 14 percent of the sample.

In the survey we also asked for retrospective information about the activities of respondents during at least three consecutive months, on at least a half-time basis, since June 2015 (Panel B in Table 2.2). For most respondents, this corresponds to the six months preceding the survey. They could select multiple response options if they had been in more than one activity status. The rates of previous activity types are similar to those observed for current primary activity types. However, a somewhat higher proportion – almost a fifth – has been NEET for at least three consecutive months when we consider retrospective information. This is in line with previous research showing that it is not unusual for young adults to have shorter spells of inactivity and that their labour market situation at this early age is not yet very stable.<sup>1</sup> We will return to the question of activity status over a longer period in Chapter 3 on job seekers and NEET.

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1. Erikson et al., 2007

Table 2.2. *Overlapping and previous activities (n = 2,517)*

<b>Panel A – Current activity status</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Primary activity: studying</i>		37
Studying only	15.9	
Studying and working	7.5	
Studying and job-seeking	8.5	
Studying, working and job-seeking	4.6	
<i>Primary activity: working</i>		47
Working only	29.3	
Working and studying	2.5	
Working and job-seeking	13.8	
Working, studying and job-seeking	1.2	
<i>Primary activity: job-seeking</i>		12
Job-seeking only	9.5	
Job-seeking and studying	1.4	
Job-seeking and working	1.4	
Job-seeking, studying and working	*	
<i>Primary activity: no or other activity</i>		4
Total	100	100
<b>Panel B – Activities at least three months in a row since June 2015</b>		
Studied at least half-time	41.1	
Worked at least 20 hours/week	54.0	
Neither worked nor studied	19.5	

Note: Panel A is based on questions about current activities (December 2015 – March 2016); Panel B is based on questions about activities engaged in for at least three months in a row since June 2015.

\* Job seekers were not asked if they were both studying and working while looking for work.

## A comparison between activities according to self-report and register data

By matching survey data to register information, we can assess whether these sources provide a similar picture of young adults' activities. This comparison can reveal whether there is a group that is poorly captured by one of the data sources. To classify activity type using register data, we use data from 2015 and a definition based on Theme Group Youth's (Swedish: Temagruppen Unga i arbetslivet) definition,<sup>2</sup> but we modify it to better suit our population. Most of our respondents completed upper secondary school (gymnasium) in June 2015, and at the time of survey participation they had spent six to seven months in post-school activities. We therefore reduce Theme Group Youth in Working Life's work income limit by half to 22,500 SEK, and we categorise those who have work incomes above this cut-off as working. Moreover, we increase the study income limit to be classified as a student from having received any student allowance to having received at least 6,300 SEK. Using this cut-off, we avoid classifying those in upper secondary school during the first half of 2015 as students.\* Thus, we define as students those who have been registered as students during the 2015 autumn term, and who have received a student allowance above 6,300 SEK during the same year. We define as job seekers as those who have been registered with the Swedish Public Employment Service (Swedish: Arbetsförmedlingen) for at least one day during 2015. Finally, we define NEET as those who have not been in work or education according to the above definitions.

Table 2.3 shows the respondents' activities according to administrative registers. It is important to note that the activities derived from register data are not mutually exclusive – an individual can be in more than one activity, and therefore the percentages do not sum to 100. Rather, Table 2.3 indicates how many individuals have a given activity regardless of their other activities. We see that 46 percent are in some form of study, which is close to the percentage (42 percent) who report studying as

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2. Statistics Sweden, 2015; National Public Inquiries, 2017

\* The study allowance is 1,050 SEK per month and upper secondary students can receive it for 6 months during the 2015 spring term. <https://www.csn.se/bidrag-och-lan/studiestod/bidrag-for-gymnasiestudier-i-sverige.html#>

their primary or secondary activity (see Table 2.2, Panel A). Sixty-four percent are categorised as working, and 12 percent as NEET, and also in this case there is a good correspondence between survey data and register data. According to register data, 18 percent had been registered as job seekers at the Public Employment Service in 2015. This is a somewhat larger group than the group who self-reported job-seeking as their primary activity, but a smaller group than those who self-reported any job-seeking (40 percent, see Table 2.2, Panel A). It is likely that many of those who report job-seeking in the survey are not registered with the Public Employment Service.

*Table 2.3. Activity types according to register data, 2015 (n = 2,517)*

Activity status	%
Studying	46
Working	64
Job-seeking	18
NEET	12

Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive. Studying – Individuals registered for studies in the autumn semester 2015 and/or receiving study allowance above 6,300 SEK; Working – Individuals with income above 22,250 SEK; Job-seeking – those who were registered for at least one day with the Public Employment Service; NEET – Individuals neither working nor studying.

Although roughly the same rates are observed for the activity types regardless of whether we use survey or register data, it does not mean that individuals always fall into the same categories across the two data sources. When self-reports are compared with register data it is important to remember that register data reflect activities during the entire or large parts of the 2015 calendar year, while the survey data typically refer to respondents' situation in December 2015 or January 2016. Thus, the observation windows differ.

Table 2.4 compares the self-reported primary activity type with the register-based activities. Almost 90 percent of those who report working or studying as their primary activity have the same activity according to register data. Despite the high correspondence in prevalence of NEET, the individual-level overlap is much lower – only 49 percent of those defined as NEET according to survey data are also defined as NEET

when using register data. The most likely explanation is the mobility into and out of the NEET status over time.

*Table 2.4. Overlap of activity status according to survey and register data, proportions by primary activity type (n = 2,517)*

Survey 2015/2016	Register 2015						
	Studying		Working		NEET		
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	Total
Studying	11	89					100
Working			15	85			100
NEET					51	49	100

Note: NEET are defined as those neither working nor studying.

## Summary

- 37 percent of the young adults in YES! report studying as their primary activity. Only 16 percent have no other activity, and 21 percent work and/or seek jobs simultaneously.
- 47 percent see working as their primary activity. However, 14 percent of working young adults are also looking for work, and a small group of 3 percent study simultaneously.
- 12 percent see job-seeking as their primary activity.
- 4 percent are neither working, studying, nor job-seeking.
- 14 percent are defined as NEET, as they are not working or studying.
- There is a high consistency in activity status according to self-reports and register data for individuals who are working or studying, but a lower level of consistency in the classification of NEET.





# Job-seeking and NEET

This chapter focuses on young people who are not working or studying as their primary activity, according to their own reports in YES! Young people who are not actively working or studying are often the focus of policy discussions. This is with good reason because they are likely to have labour market-related difficulties, and an increased risk of marginalization and long-term problems. Young people's problems on the labour market can be studied in terms of unemployment, and unemployment is generally defined as not having a job and looking for employment. This definition also includes young people who are primarily studying, but looking for extra work,<sup>1</sup> which includes a group that does not necessarily have problems in the labour market. In addition, the unemployment measure excludes young unemployed people who are not actively seeking employment, a group that probably stands further from the labour market than those looking for work.<sup>2</sup>

In order to capture a broader group of young people with labour market-related problems, the term NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training, and the Swedish equivalent UVAS - Unga som Varken Arbetar eller Studerar/Youth Who Neither Work nor Study) is commonly used. This concept explicitly aims at including not only the unemployed, but also other young people who are not working or studying.<sup>3</sup> In Sweden there are two established measures of NEET/UVAS: one based on survey data from the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and one based on register data according to a model established by Theme Group Youth in Working Life (Theme Group Youth).<sup>\*</sup> The LFS measure includes individuals have not worked for at least one hour, nor participated in formal or informal education or training during the week of the survey or three weeks earlier.<sup>4</sup> Theme Group Youth's measure is based on register information on study enrolments, student income allowance and earned income, and is summarised on an annual

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1. Eurostat, 2017

2. Cf Engdahl & Forslund, 2016

3. Eurofound, 2012; SOU, 2013, 2017

4. National Public Inquiries, 2013; Statistics Sweden, 2015

\* Sometimes a distinction is made between NEET and UVAS where the LFS measure is seen as a measure of NEET, while Theme Group Youth's registry-based measure is seen as a measure of UVAS. Since the measure used in this report has similarities with both dimensions, such a distinction is not meaningful here (cf. SOU, 2017).



basis.\*\* An important difference between these measures is therefore that Theme Group Youth's register-based measure summarises activity status for one year, while the LFS measurement is based on the weeks preceding the survey and includes any type of education or training. Since the two NEET indicators are based on different measurement methods, they should be seen as complementary.

In this section we analyse young adults who are job seekers and NEET, with definitions based on respondents' own reports on their primary activity. Table 3.1 shows how many consider themselves as primarily job seekers, divided into four subgroups. The majority of job seekers are openly unemployed (57 percent), while a smaller proportion of job seekers participate in a job and development programme (19 percent) (Swedish: arbetsmarknadspolitiskt program, provided by the Public Employment Service). Just over 23 percent of young people who see themselves as primarily job-seeking are also working or studying to some extent. Because the latter group see themselves as job seekers and have responded to the survey's items on job-seeking, we include them in this section.

Table 3.1 also shows how many youth neither work, study nor seek employment, divided into two subgroups. Three percent indicate that they do not have any labour market activity at all, and one percent state that they have some other activity (that is, an activity that does not involve working, studying, or job-seeking).

In Table 3.1 we see which individuals are categorised as NEET - all who have reported that they are neither working nor studying, which includes those in job and development programmes. In total, almost 14 percent are NEET using this definition. The majority of NEET are openly unemployed (51 percent), while one fifth are participating in a job and development programme (17 percent). In total, 69 percent of NEET are job seekers, while a smaller but sizeable proportion of NEET are not-job seekers (31 percent).

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\*\* Note that this refers to Theme Group Youth's updated model, changed in 2014 following recommendations in SOU (2013) [http://www.temaunga.se/sites/default/files/NEET\\_nya\\_modellen.pdf](http://www.temaunga.se/sites/default/files/NEET_nya_modellen.pdf)

*Table 3.1. Job-seeking and not job-seeking, by subgroups. Proportion of total sample, job seekers, and NEET (n = 440)*

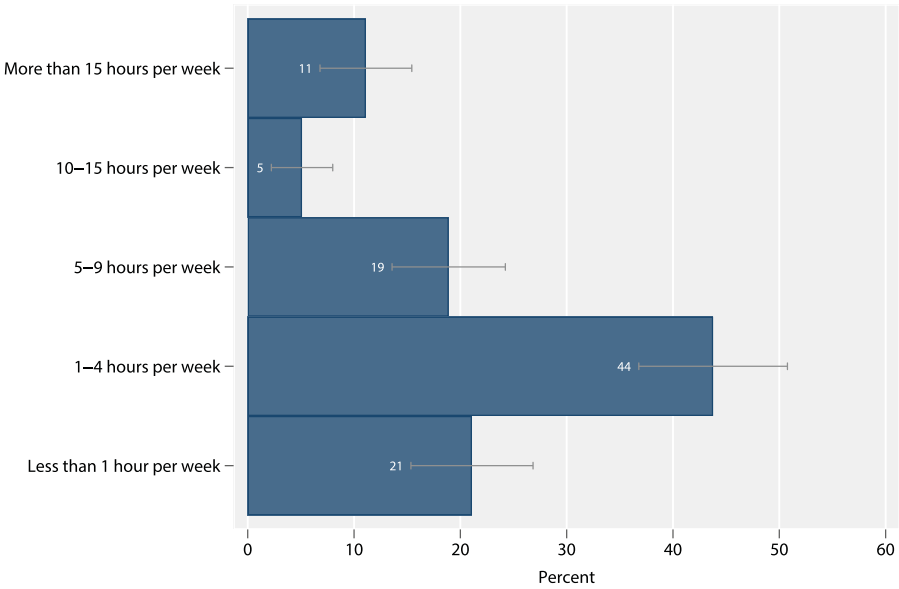
Activity	NEET	Of total sample	Of job seekers	Of NEET
Job-seeking, working	No	1.4	11.6	-
Job-seeking, studying	No	1.4	11.6	-
Job-seeking, openly unemployed	Yes	7.1	57.4	51.3
Job-seeking, job & development programme	Yes	2.4	19.4	17.3
Not job-seeking, no activity	Yes	3.3	-	23.9
Not job-seeking, other activity	Yes	1.0	-	7.5
Total		16.6	100	100

## Job seekers

How much time do job seekers spend on looking for work and what strategies do they use? How difficult do they find it to get work, and what obstacles do they perceive? In this chapter, we answer these questions and we include *all* who see themselves as primarily job-seeking. Since those we classify as job-seeking have nominated this as their primary activity, we expect job-seeking to be an important part of these young people's lives, even for those who have indicated that they are also working or studying simultaneously.

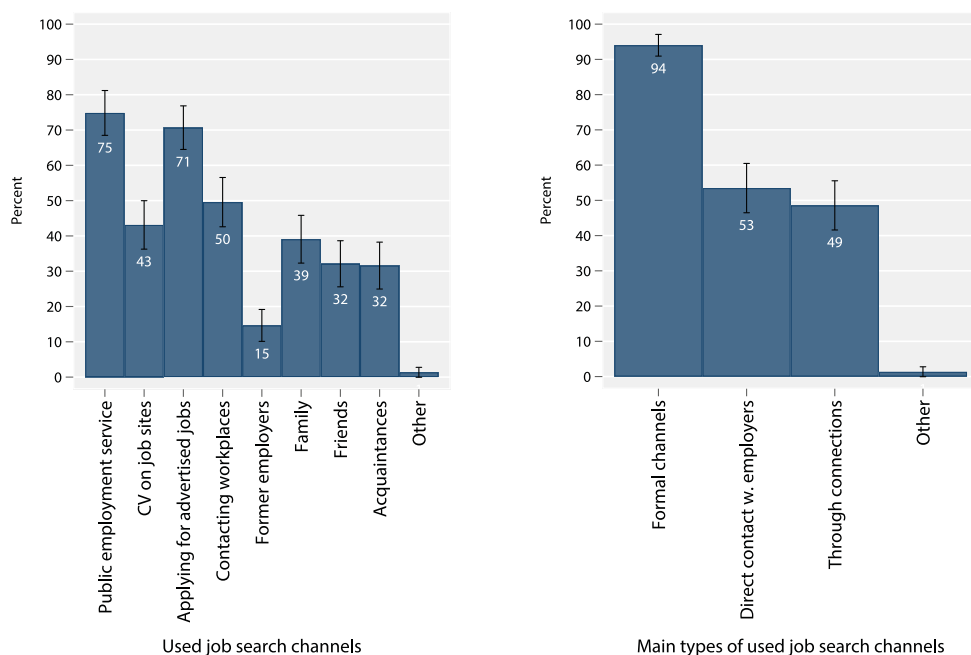
A surprising result is that the majority (65 percent) spend less than five hours a week looking for work (Figure 3.1). Those who are openly unemployed have a lower search intensity than those who participate in a job and development programme. For example, only about 31 percent of the openly unemployed spend more than five hours a week on job-seeking, compared with 48 percent of those in a job and development programme (not shown). This may indicate that job and development programmes attract individuals who are more motivated, but it is also possible that job and development programmes often contain components that involve or encourage actively job-seeking.

Figure 3.1. Number of hours job seekers spend looking for work. Proportion of job seekers (n = 325)



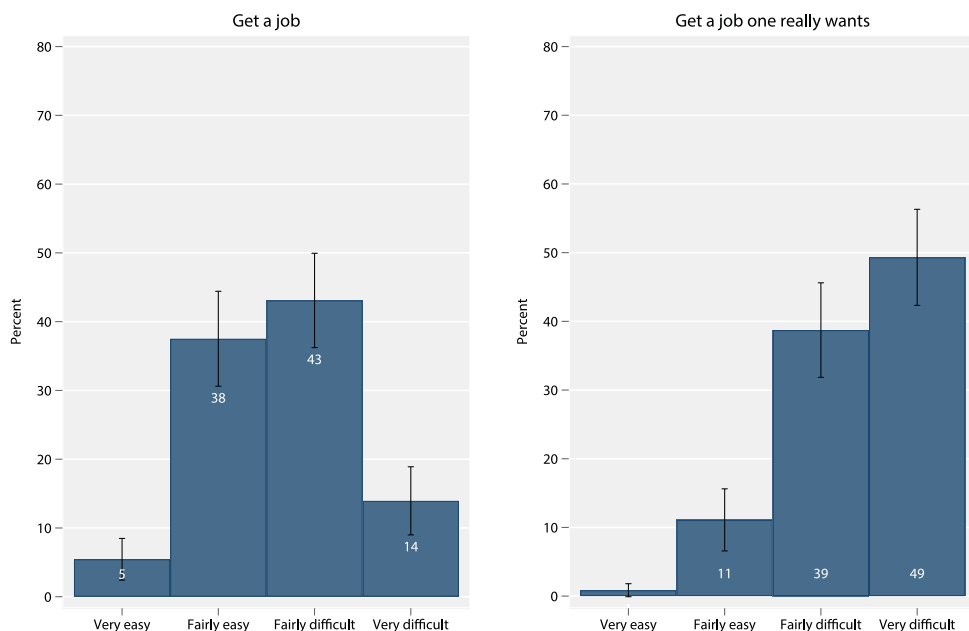
In regard to the strategies that job seekers use to gain employment, the survey asked respondents to nominate the three channels most commonly used. The results are shown in Figure 3.2. We find that almost all job seekers use formal channels (the Public Employment Service, applying for advertised jobs, and posting CVs on job sites), while fewer use direct contact with employers, or social contacts (family, friends or acquaintances).

Figure 3.2. Channels used for job-seeking. Proportion of job seekers ( $n = 326$ )



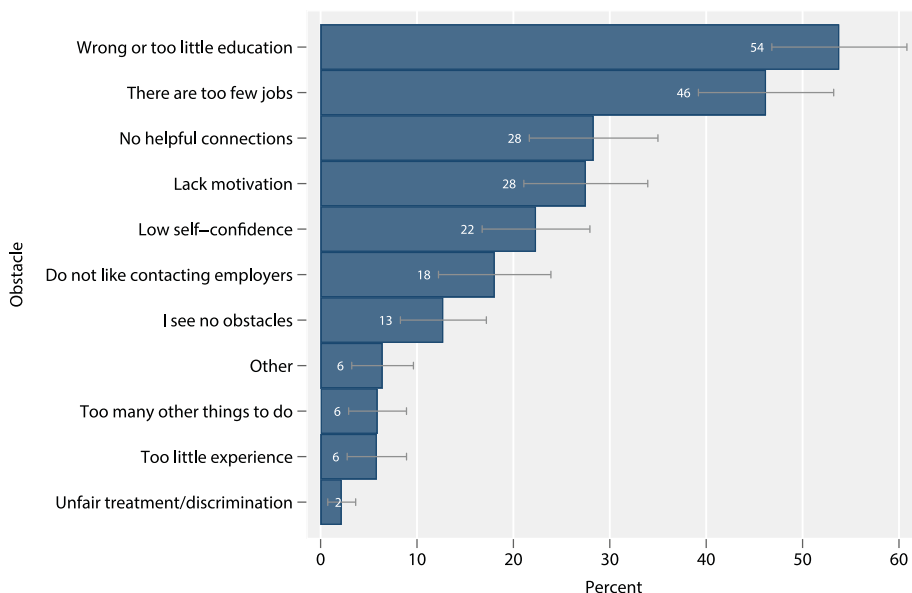
How do job seekers perceive their opportunities on the labour market? Importantly, a large proportion, 86 percent, indicate that it is very important to start working or studying during the next year (not shown). In Figure 3.3, we see that many, 43 percent, consider it *fairly easy* or *very easy* to get a job - but a larger group, 57 percent, consider it *fairly difficult* or *very difficult*. Pessimism is even greater when it comes to finding a job one really wants: In this case, 88 percent consider it *fairly difficult* or *very difficult*.

*Figure 3.3. Proportion of job seekers indicating it is easy/difficult to get a job and to get a job one really wants (n = 325)*



Job seekers also reported on what they see as the biggest obstacles to gaining employment, and they could select up to three response alternatives from a list. Figure 3.4 clearly shows that lacking the right kind or level of education (more than half of job seekers selected this option), and that there are too few jobs available are most commonly nominated as important obstacles. These responses can be understood as acknowledging that there is a lack of jobs with suitable qualification requirements. Obstacles related to personal attributes are less common, but not uncommon. More than a quarter of job seekers indicate that they lack motivation, and almost as many people see poor self-esteem as a key obstacle. Just under a fifth do not like to make contact with employers. A positive result is that there are surprisingly few, only 2 percent, who nominate unfair treatment and discrimination as a leading obstacle to gaining employment. However, this measure refers to the perception of discrimination – it does not capture discrimination on the labour market that the respondent did not perceive.

*Figure 3.4. Proportion of job seekers that nominate types of obstacles to getting a job (n = 324)*



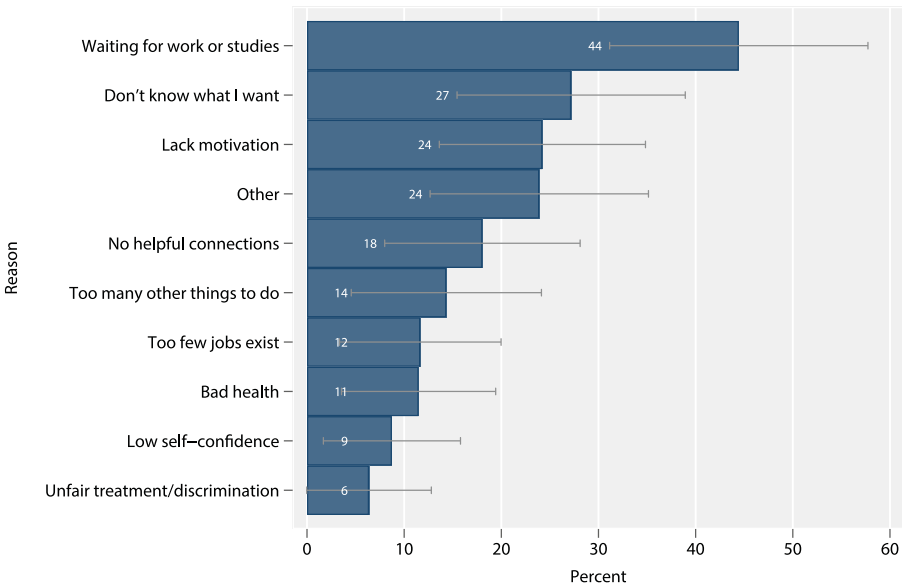
## NEET who are not job-seeking

To better understand the situation for non-job seeking NEET, we asked if they had any other activity. Respondents could provide an open response describing the activity. In the small group that reported having an activity other than working, studying, or job-seeking (one percent), the most common response is that they are on sick leave or caring for their child/children. In addition, a few respondents indicated that they are travelling.

Those who stated that they had no activity at all (3 percent) were asked to nominate up to three reasons why they were not working or studying. A list of response options was presented together with an open response option. The responses are shown in Figure 3.5. The most common reason for not having an activity is waiting for a job or education to begin – just over 40 percent nominated this reason. Other reasons are, for example, lacking motivation or not knowing what one wants to do. As in Figure 3.4, discrimination is the reason chosen most rarely. Among the open responses, we find many different reasons,

some of which signal more problematic reasons (e. g., poor mental health) than others (e.g., recently finishing a job).

Figure 3.5. Non-job seeking NEET. Reason for being inactive (n = 87)



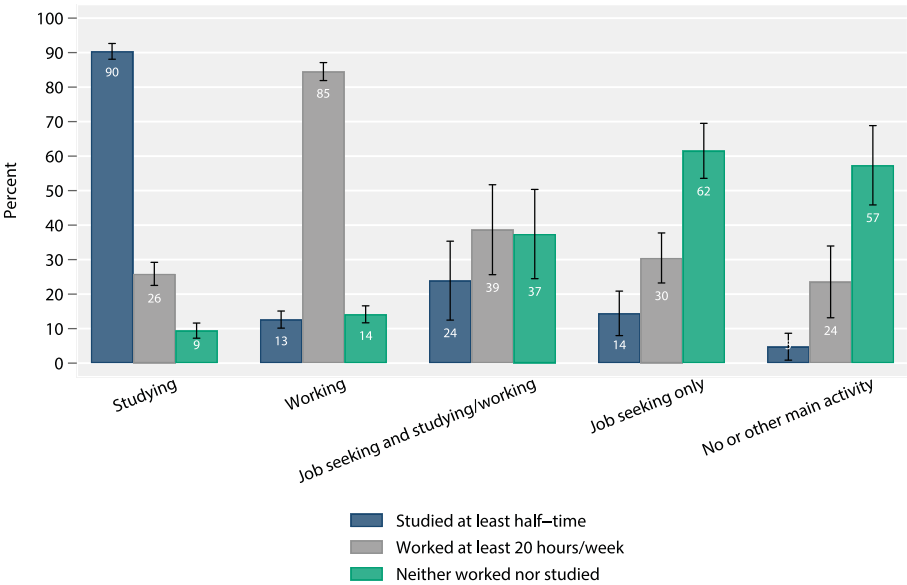
As with job seekers, we also asked non-job seeking NEET how important it is to start working or studying during the next year. Although most (57 percent) indicated that it was very important, this is a significantly lower proportion than among job seekers (86 percent). Unsurprisingly, non-job seekers are thus less eager to start working than job seekers are.

## Longer periods without or with an activity

The survey also included questions about respondents' activities of at least half-time for at least three consecutive months since June 2015, corresponding to approximately the six months before survey participation. The results in Figure 3.6 show that many young people who are not currently working or studying also have longer periods

without work or study behind them. About 60 percent of those who are job seekers only have been without work or study for at least three months in the past six months, and the rate is similar for young adults who have no activity, or an activity other than working, studying, or job-seeking. However, about 30 percent of those who are only job seekers have had an extended period of employment, and about 14 percent have studied at least half-time. Those with no/other primary activity have more rarely worked or studied in the past six months, suggesting that individuals in this group tend to stand further from the labour market than those who are job seekers. The small group of job seekers who are also working or studying have more often than other job seekers had previous periods of work or study, but not as often as those whose primary activity is working or studying. Students and workers have mostly (90 and 85 percent, respectively) had the same type of activity in the past six months, although a small minority have been without work and study during this period.

Figure 3.6. Activities engaged in for uninterrupted periods of at least three months since June 2015. Proportions by primary activity status at the time of survey (n = 2,514)





## Vulnerability among young adults who neither work nor study

We have shown that NEET youth are a heterogeneous group, and some subgroups appear to be more vulnerable than others. Among job-seeking NEET, it is likely that those who have had a weak connection to the labour market for an extended period have particularly challenging difficulties. Therefore, in the group of job-seeking NEET, we define high vulnerability as having had a three-month period without work or studies during the last six months.

Non-job seeking NEET have provided many reasons for not working or studying, for example, illness, family responsibilities, or being voluntarily engaged in some other activity than working, studying, or job-seeking. Some of these reasons signal more precarious situations than others.<sup>5</sup> We have therefore chosen to define NEET with low vulnerability as those who are in an activity that can be classified as being close to the labour market, or an activity that signals voluntary inactivity. This group includes for example, those who are waiting for work or studies to begin, those who are travelling, and those who say that they have too much to do.

Table 3.2 shows the four NEET groups that this classification results in. Here we see that 31 percent of NEET are job seekers with high vulnerability and 17 percent are non-job seekers with high vulnerability. In total, 48 percent of NEET have a high vulnerability. Of the non-job seekers, the high vulnerability group is approximately the same size as the low vulnerability group - both represent about 15 to 17 percent of all NEET and about 2 percent of all respondents. This result is interesting because the degree of vulnerability in the subgroup of non-job seeking NEET is something that is frequently discussed but rarely observed.<sup>6</sup> Although there is a risk that this analysis underestimates vulnerability among NEET due to a likely higher non-response among the more vulnerable, we believe that our estimates are an accurate reflection of the population (see Appendix for more information about non-response). The proportion of the NEET group that is particularly vulnerable is likely to vary with age and business cycles, and it is important for future studies to measure the relative size of groups during different periods and in different age groups. In the

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5. Cf. Eurofound, 2012

6. Cf. Eurofound, 2012

remainder of the report we do not distinguish job-seeking and non-job seeking NEET, but use only two categories: NEET with high and low vulnerability.

*Table 3.2. Distribution of NEET over job-seeking status and degree of vulnerability. Proportion of NEET (n = 349) and of total (n = 2,517)*

	Of NEET	Of total sample
Job-seeking, low vulnerability	37.6	5.2
Job-seeking, high vulnerability	30.9	4.3
Not-job seeking, low vulnerability	14.7	2.0
Not -job seeking, high vulnerability	16.7	2.3
Total	100	13.8

## Summary

- Of those who see job-seeking as their primary activity, 23 percent are also working or studying to some extent.
- Job seekers use formal channels more often than informal channels to look for work.
- 86 percent of job seekers and 57 percent of non-job seekers think that it is very important to start working or studying the next year.
- 69 percent of NEET see their primary activity as job-seeking.
- 48 percent of NEET have a high degree of vulnerability, defined as having a weak connection to the labour market, or having no activity that can be classified as being close to the labour market.

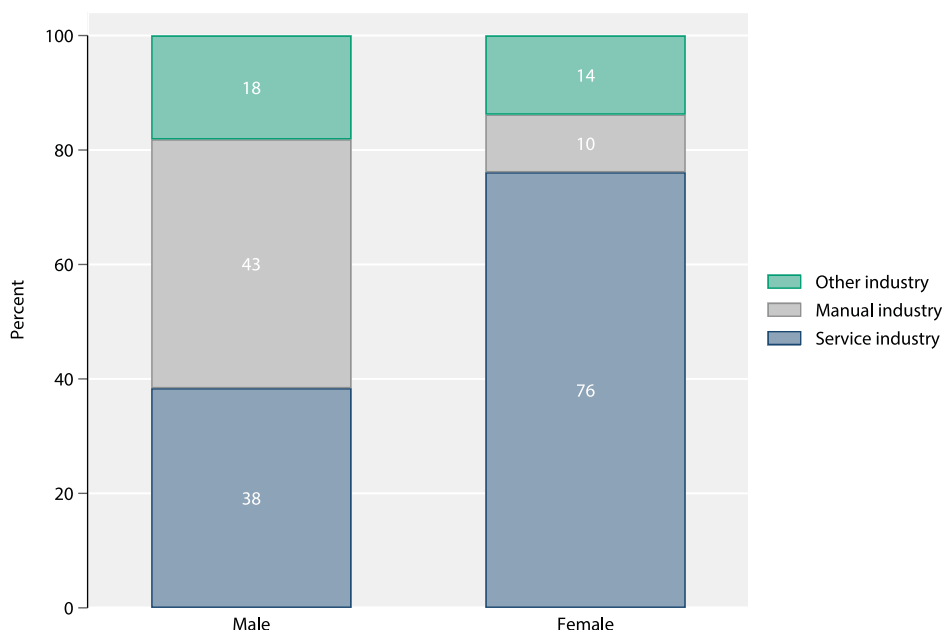


In discussions about young people's position in the labour market, the focus is often on unemployment. This is not surprising, because unemployed youth have, on average, worse chances of labour market success. At the same time, young people who are actually working comprise a large group of all young people, and their employment situation can play an important role in their everyday lives, and for their future careers and living conditions. Different jobs can entail very different conditions in terms of, e.g., job security, working hours, wellbeing, and income. Knowledge about this variation is necessary to understand young people's circumstances on the labour market. In this chapter we therefore take a closer look at the group of young people who see working as their primary activity, regardless of how much they work or how stable the job is. We answer questions such as: What kind of jobs do young people have, how did they find work, and how secure is their employment situation? How much do they work, and what do they get paid? And to what extent do young people think the job is, for example, fun, meaningful, stressful, or dangerous? We conclude the chapter by identifying a group of working young adults who can be considered vulnerable.

## Type of job

Most working young people have a job that does not require any specific education. Service industry jobs in shops or restaurants, or in support work (e.g., childcare, disability work or elderly care) are the most common types of work. The service industry dominates among women, with 76 percent of working women having such jobs. Among men, manual jobs are more common, with more than 40 percent having such jobs. Nearly 40 percent of men have jobs in the service industry.

Figure 4.1. Types of jobs. Proportion of workers (n = 1,059)



## Job security

Having a permanent contract entails a greater of security than having a fixed-term contract. Previous analyses based on the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) show that among young Swedish people who work, just over 20 percent of 16–19 year-olds and about 50 percent of 20–24 year-olds have permanent employment contracts.<sup>1</sup> Our results provide a similar picture: Less than one third (29 percent) of those aged 19–20 who see working as their primary activity have permanent employment, and the rest have different forms of temporary contracts. Because our respondents have only been in the labour market a brief period, it is unsurprising that the level is not higher. There is, however, a large gender gap in the proportion with a permanent contract: 45 percent of men have one, but only 21 percent of women – this can to some extent,

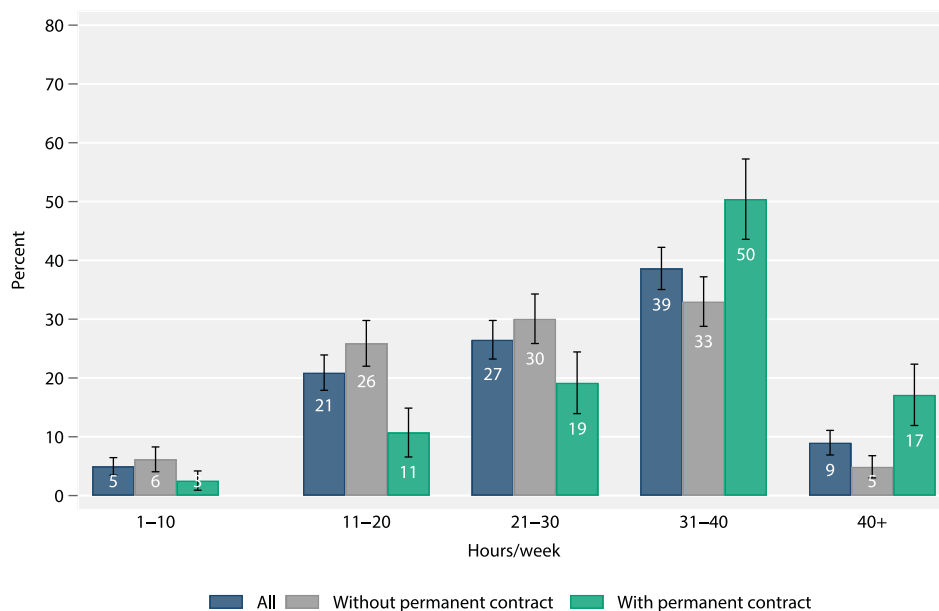
1. Engdahl & Forslund, 2016

but not entirely, be explained by the fact that men more often have upper secondary school qualifications for occupations where permanent employment is common (e.g., car mechanic, electrician). There is also a small (not statistically significant) difference in the proportion with permanent contract between young people with immigrant background and other young people (25 compared to 30 percent).

A more extreme case of insecurity is not having an employment contract at all, that is, to work “off the books”. As many as 10 percent of working youth indicate that they have no employment contract, and another 5 percent do not know whether they have a contract or not. However, a comparison with register data shows that the clear majority (86 percent) of the 10 percent who responded that they do not have a contract are registered as employed in the income and taxation register, which suggests that many have a contract but do not know about it. The job referred to in the survey may not be the same job the administrative registers refer to, but nevertheless the results indicate that only a small subgroup of working youth work entirely “off the books”.

In line with previous findings on Swedish young adults<sup>2</sup>, we find that part-time work is common: Less than half of those with working as their primary activity work more than 30 hours a week, one quarter work 21–30 hours a week, and another quarter work less than 21 hours a week (Figure 4.2). Unsurprisingly, those with permanent contracts work more: About 70 percent of permanent employees work 31 hours or more, compared to 40 percent of non-permanent employees.

Figure 4.2. Working hours during a typical week. Proportion of workers (n = 1,059)



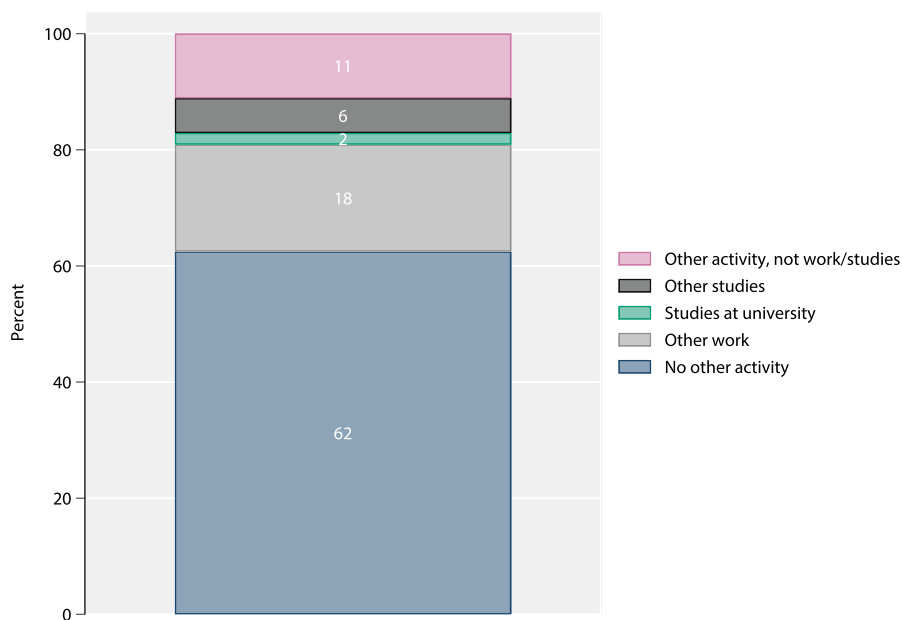
Although it is common to have an insecure employment situation, very few workers are members of a trade union (17 percent) or have income insurance (Swedish: A-kassa) (19 percent). A surprisingly high proportion, 15–20 percent of workers, do not know whether or not they are members of a trade union or have income insurance. The gender differences are large: 26 percent of men compared to 12 percent of women are union members, and for income insurance the corresponding figures are 28 and 15 percent, respectively. The membership rates are also lower among young people of immigrant background than among others (trade unions: 10 compared to 19 percent; Income insurance: 14 compared with 21 percent). It is noteworthy that the groups that more often lack permanent jobs (women, young people with an immigrant background) are the same groups who most often lack the protection offered by union memberships and income insurance.

## Activities besides primary employment

Most (62 percent) young people who see working as their primary activity respond that they have no other activity in addition to their employment. Nearly one fifth of workers have more than one job, and almost a tenth study simultaneously – mostly in non-tertiary education (see Figure 4.3). Around 11 percent of workers indicate that they have some other activity, but that this activity does not involve working or studying. These respondents were asked to describe the activity in an open response, and about half (corresponding to just over 5 percent of all workers) stated a sports-related activity (usually their own training, but also in roles as a referee or coach). Other responses indicated some form of aesthetic activity (e.g., music, art, film making), or non-profit work related to, for example, church, political parties or NGOs. Although these activities lie outside the labour market, and although they are unlikely to provide any income, it is interesting that so many young people consider them important enough to nominate them as a secondary activity. These activities can also signal interests or talents that may shape future pathways and success in working life.

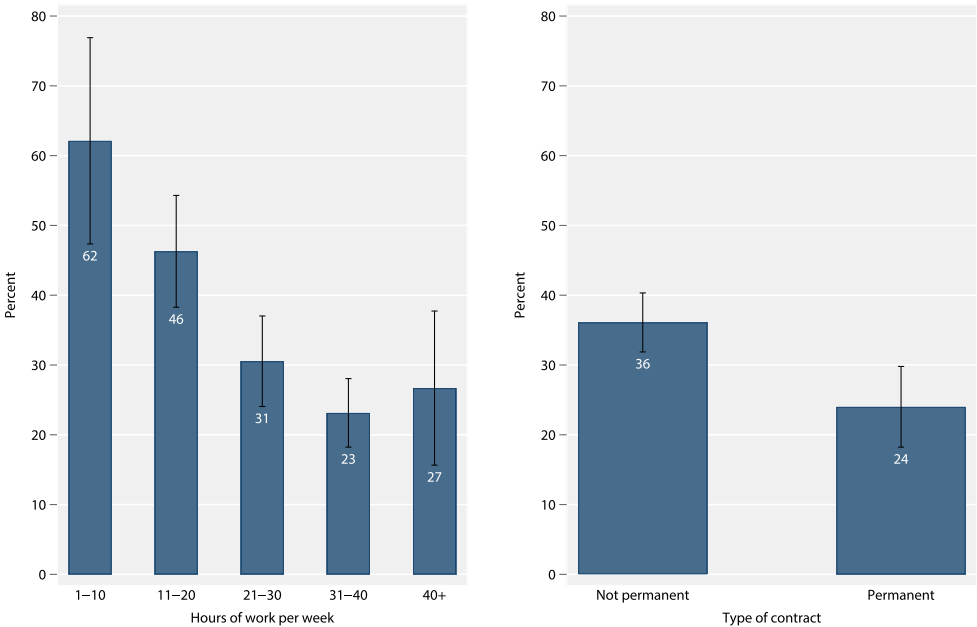


Figure 4.3. Proportion of workers with secondary activities ( $n = 1,061$ )



One third of young people with working as their primary activity are also looking for other work. As shown in Figure 4.4, this is, as expected, related to working hours. Among those who work 10 hours or less a week, over 60 percent are job-seeking, compared with just 23 percent among those working 31–40 hours a week, and 27 percent among those working more than 40 hours a week. It is also more common among those without permanent contract to be job-seeking, but the difference between this group and those with permanent contract is surprisingly small: 36 compared with 24 percent. The fact that a quarter of those with permanent contract are looking for other work is an unexpected result, and possibly indicates that the mobility of young people in the labour market is not only driven by the difficulty of getting and keeping a job, but also driven by young people wanting to try other things, or to find employment that better suits them.

Figure 4.4. Proportion job-seeking by working hours during a typical week, and by type of contract. Proportion of workers (n = 1,061)



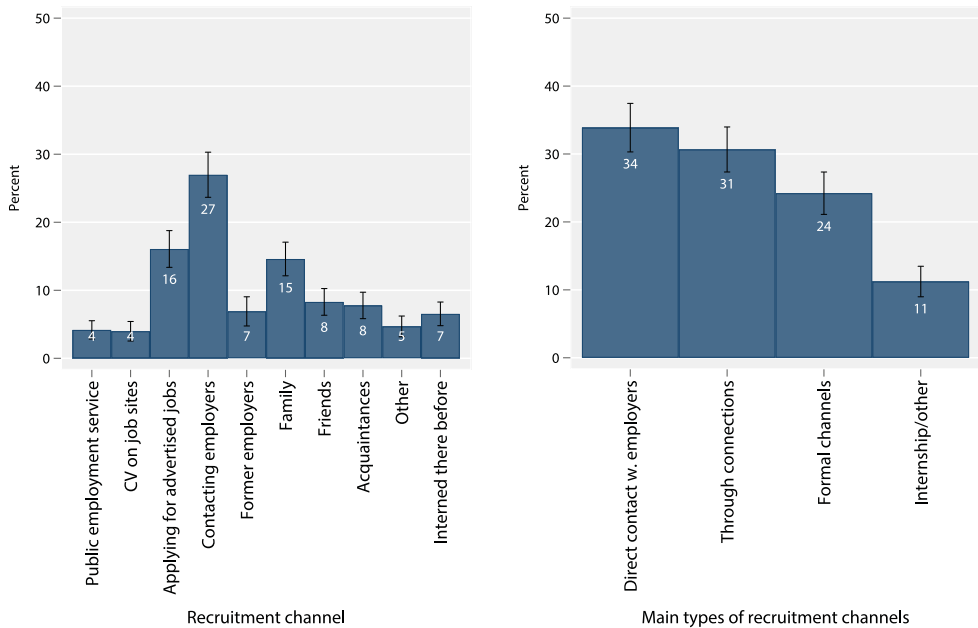
## How workers found their job

Figure 4.5 shows the channel young people reported having used to find their job (only one response option could be selected). By far the most common strategy was to contact the employer directly, without applying for an advertised job: 27 percent found their job this way. Another 16 percent applied for and got an advertised job, and a smaller group gained employment through a former employer. About one third found the job through social contacts (family, relatives, friends, or acquaintances), and only a small group found the job via the Public Employment Service. Five percent reported that they got their job through other channels, for example, other types of social contacts or getting in touch with the employer through school.

The small proportion that found work through the Public Employment Service should be interpreted with caution. If one applies for an advertised job that the Public Employment Service has

recommended, the respondent is likely to indicate having got the job by applying for an advertised position. Nevertheless, only a quarter of workers found employment through any of the formal channels (advertised jobs, public employment agency or CV on job sites), which points to the strong importance of informal channels for young adults' entry into the labour market. This differs substantially from the strategies nominated by the unemployed to find work (Figure 3.2), which could possibly be explained by unemployed youth having lower self-esteem or smaller social networks than those who currently have a job.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 4.5. Channels used to find the job. Proportion of workers (n = 1,068)



## Salary and employment

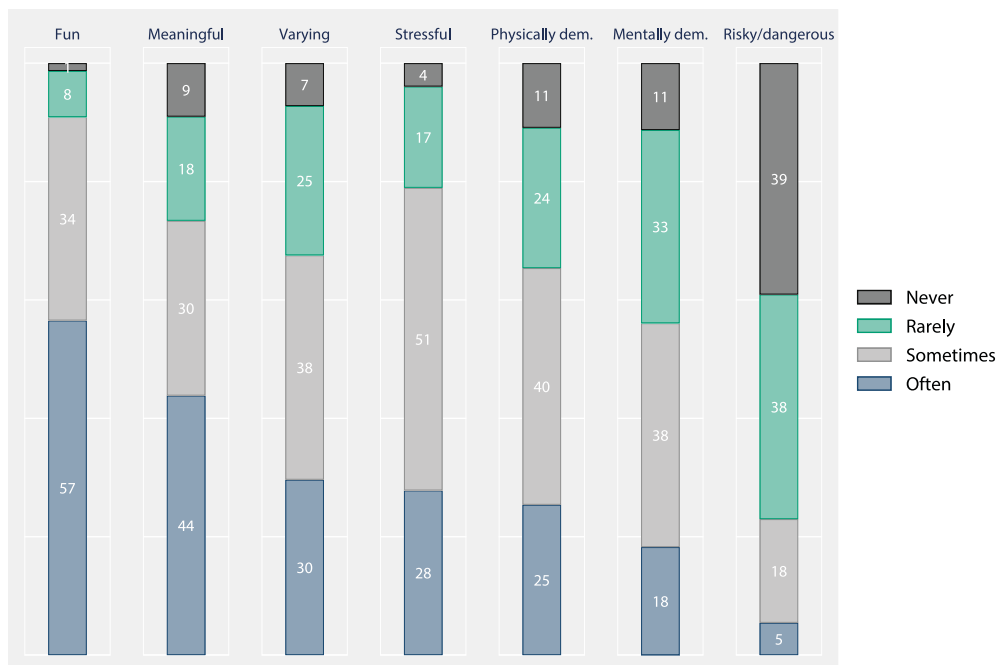
A key benefit of working is having a job that provides an income that allows for self-sufficiency. Our results show that among 19–20 year-olds it

3. Cf. Andersson, 2017

is much more common to have hourly wages than monthly wages, which is unsurprising considering that so many are employed in the retail and restaurant sectors where hourly wages are particularly common. Of all workers, 67 percent receive hourly wages, with a median salary (gross) of 117 SEK per hour, and 25 percent receive monthly wages with a median salary (gross) of 18,000 SEK a month. This monthly salary represents approximately 61 percent of the median salary (full-time) among all employed individuals in 2016 (which, according to Statistics Sweden's Wage Structure Statistics - Swedish: Lönestrukturstatistik), was 29,300 SEK) – however, it must be noted that we have not rescaled respondents' monthly salary to a full-time equivalent. What we report is the actual salary based on the actual time worked, as this shows the opportunity for self-sufficiency. For both hourly and monthly wages, average wages are somewhat lower for women than for men, and slightly higher for those with an immigrant background than for others, although the differences are not statistically significant.

Figure 4.6 shows what young people who see working as their primary activity think about the jobs they have. Although the jobs that 19–20 year-olds tend to have (e.g., cashier, serving staff, support worker) are often demanding, more than half say that their job is *often* fun and less than 10 percent say that the job is *rarely* or *never* fun. Moreover, young people usually see their job as meaningful: Just under half report that the job is *often* meaningful, but a relatively large minority – 27 percent – feel that it is *rarely* or *never* meaningful. About a quarter of working youth have jobs that are *often* stressful, and an equally large group have jobs that are *often* physically exhausting. Only 30 percent find that the job is *often* varied, while 32 percent find it *rarely* or *never* varied. Approximately one-fifth experience their jobs as *often* mentally exhausting. Although many think the job is demanding, they seldom consider them as dangerous – 23 percent say that the job is *sometimes* or *often* dangerous. Overall, young people provide overwhelmingly positive reviews about their work.

Figure 4.6. *Opinions about job characteristics. Proportion of workers (n = 1,061)*



## Vulnerability among young adults who are working

As we have shown, most young adults who work have a temporary contract, many work part-time, and few are members of a trade union or have income insurance. This means that, on average, young people in the labour market are more sensitive than others to recessions and job cuts. It is also important to remember that the boundary between having work and being unemployed is not clear-cut but rather fluid. You can have a job, but with fewer working hours than preferred, or have temporary or seasonal jobs mixed with periods of unemployment.

To gain an approximation of the size of the group who are working but are in a particularly vulnerable situation on the labour market, we identify individuals who are (1) not employed, (2) work less than 21 hours a week, and (3) do not participate in any education, as well as (4a)

either looking for different/more work or (4b) have been NEET for at least three months in the past six months. In addition, we include (5) young people who are primarily job-seeking but report that they are also working (see Table 3.1).

Table 4.1 shows the proportion of workers who are categorised as having high vulnerability, and the proportion of people who do not experience their job as meaningful. Approximately 14 percent of workers have a high vulnerability, which corresponds to 7 percent of all respondents. Although the highly vulnerable are a relatively small group, it is a group that deserves attention: It represents young adults who have weak attachments to the labour market, who are also often overlooked in policy discussions and public debate. In Table 4.1 we see that a larger proportion of workers with high vulnerability state that their job is *never* or *rarely* meaningful, compared with workers with low vulnerability.

*Table 4.1. Distribution of low and high vulnerability over workers (n = 1,109), of total sample (n = 2,517), and proportion never/rarely finding their job meaningful (n = 1,069)*

	Of working	Of total sample	Never/rarely meaningful
Working, low vulnerability	86	42	23
Working, high vulnerability	14	7	33
Total	100		24

Note: Working includes those primarily working and also those primarily job-seeking who also work.

## Summary

- Service industry jobs, usually in retail or restaurants, which do not require any special education, are the most common type of jobs among young adults.
- It is unusual to have a stable connection to employment. Less than a third of youth who see working as their primary activity have permanent contracts, less than half work 30 hours or more a week, and one third seek other jobs.
- It is unusual to be a member of a trade union or to have income insurance. Women are much less likely to be members, despite more often having fixed-term contracts.
- Most young workers think that their job is fun and meaningful.
- Approximately 14 percent of youth who see working as their primary activity have a high vulnerability.







Education is a key resource that affects one’s opportunities on the labour market and chances to receive a high income. Young adults with low educational attainment are at greater risk being NEET<sup>1</sup> and to have persistently low income<sup>2</sup>. At 19–20 years of age, many individuals are still studying, and others will re-enter education while they remain young adults. In this chapter we take a closer look at the group who see studying as their primary activity. We examine what type of education they are enrolled in, and if they are making progress in their studies. Based on this information, we then identify subgroups among students who are considered to be in particularly vulnerable situations.

We have seen earlier (in Table 2.1) that approximately one third of all participants in YES! see studying as their primary activity. Among students, just over half study at the tertiary level (university or university college; Swedish: *Universitet/Högskola*), one third remain in upper secondary school (Swedish: *Gymnasium*), one tenth study in municipal adult education (Swedish: *Komvux*), and smaller groups are in other types of education, such as folk high school (Swedish: *Folkhögskola*, an independent adult education college), or higher vocational education (Swedish: *Yrkehögskola*). The distribution of educational types is shown in Table 5.1. Here we see that among all 19–20-year olds, about one fifth (19 percent) study at a university or university college, while 12 percent are still attending upper secondary school.

*Table 5.1. Type of education. Proportion of total sample (n = 2,524) and of those studying (n = 1,009)*

Activity	Of studying	Of total sample
University/University college	51	19
Upper secondary school	32	12
Municipal adult education	8	3
Folk high school	5	2
Higher vocational education	3	<1
Other	1	<1
Total	100	

1. Niknami & Schröder, 2014

2. Statistics Sweden, 2017

Among young people who see studying as their primary activity, 87 percent study full-time. 33 percent of students report also working, and 36 percent are looking for work. Having some form of employment while primarily studying is equally as common among youth with and without an immigrant background. However, as observed among workers, women who are studying are also employed more often than men who are studying, and the most common type of work is in the service industry. However, students work markedly less than those who see working as their primary activity: 90 percent work a maximum of 20 hours during a typical week (compared with 26 percent among those with working as their primary activity) (not shown).

## Students at university or university college

The largest group, just over half of all students, study at university or university college. In this group, almost everyone (96 percent) studies full-time. Despite the high proportion in full-time studies one third (31 percent) are looking for work, and one third (33 percent) also work in addition to studying.

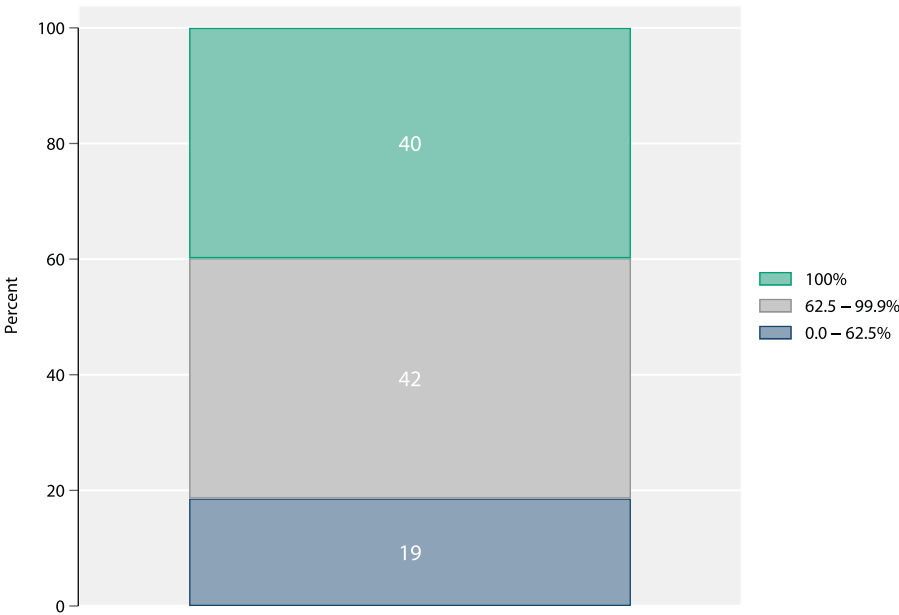
With the help of administrative register data, we can investigate the progress of those who are studying at university or university college. The survey data from wave 4 were collected from December 2015 to March 2016 (with the majority participating in December – January). Administrative register data for study enrolments for most types of education are available until the end of 2015.

Among those who report studying at university or university college, there are small groups who are not found in the university administrative registers: 4 percent study abroad (have study allowance for international studies), 3 percent are in a so-called STEM bridging year (this qualifies the student for tertiary education in STEM fields and targets individuals whose upper secondary education was in another discipline), and 2 percent are not listed as students in the administrative registers. We exclude individuals in these three groups from the following analyses.

Figure 5.1 shows the study progress for university and university college students, measured as the percentage of credit points completed of the total number of points for which one was registered for during

the 2015–2016 academic year (August 2015 – June 2016). Completing a minimum of 62.5% of points is used as an indicator of progress because this is the proportion required by The Swedish Board of Student Finance (Swedish: Centrala Studiestödsnämnden) to continue receiving any student income allowance or loans. We find that one fifth of tertiary level students fall below this requirement, and two fifths complete all the points that they have been registered for. Another two fifths do not complete all their points but still enough points to retain their student funding. The median student completes approximately 90 percent of their points, so the most common situation is one of progress. However, as Figure 5.1 demonstrates, a rather large group of tertiary students fail to make adequate progress.

*Figure 5.1. Proportion completing their university/university college credit points according to administrative registers (n = 483)*



## Students at upper secondary school

The majority of the 19–20 year-olds in this study graduated from upper secondary school in June 2015, approximately six to seven months before responding to the survey. These individuals have completed a three-year upper secondary programme that they began immediately after compulsory education. However, it is well known that a large proportion of young people do not complete upper secondary school within this timeframe.<sup>3</sup> In line with this, we saw in Table 5.1 that one third of youth who study are still attending upper secondary school. In this group, 81 percent study full-time, 35 percent work extra in addition to studying, and 39 percent are looking for work (results not shown).

Students who are still in upper secondary school were asked why this was so. The response options and frequencies are shown in Figure 5.2. The most common reason - as nominated by almost 40 percent - is having changed educational course or track (e.g., from an academic to vocational track). We can compare this with the trends published by the Swedish National Agency for Education's figures for all upper secondary school students in Sweden: 38 percent of those who did not complete upper secondary school within three years have changed programme or track during the first two years.<sup>4</sup> We can note however, that in the survey students also reported several other important reasons for remaining in upper secondary education. Needing more time, having lived abroad, having been ill or injured, or having had study breaks - were each reasons nominated by between 9 to 14 percent of respondents. There is also a small group of students who provided another reason in open responses. For example, that they are studying a four-year upper secondary school course.

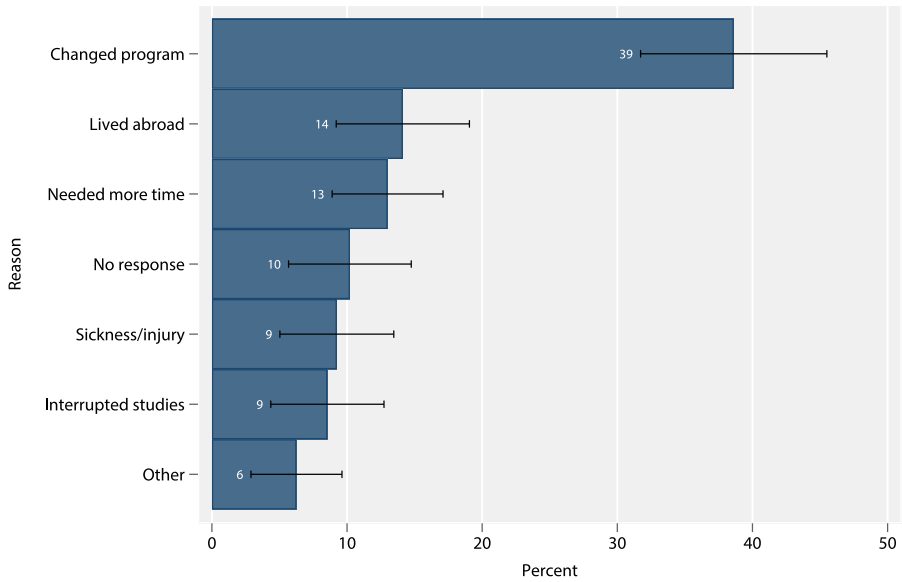
From Figure 5.2 we can conclude that it is not necessarily problematic to remain in upper secondary school longer than three years. For example, students who have lived abroad are a positively selected group with respect to, amongst other things, school achievement in compulsory education (results not shown).

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3. National Public Inquiries, 2016

4. National Agency for Education, 2011

Figure 5.2. Reason for still being in upper secondary school according to survey data. Proportion of students in upper secondary school (n = 301)



We do not have access to grades for those who have not yet completed upper secondary school, but administrative registers still provide an opportunity to illustrate the study progress of these students. Table 5.2 provides an overview of the pathways through upper secondary school for those remaining there after three years. There are students who have taken a study break or begun upper secondary school one year later (20 percent). Approximately half have changed programmes and in connection with this, repeated a year, and a quarter have repeated a year within the same programme. A relatively high proportion have completed an introductory programme (20 percent), and most of these students continue to another programme. In summary, among students who remain in upper secondary school, we observe several relatively large groups who have had difficulties in progressing in their studies.

Table 5.2. Reason for still being in upper secondary education according to administrative registers. Proportion of students in upper secondary school ( $n = 296$ )

Reason	%
Repeated year: different programme	52
Repeated year: same programme	24
Introductory programme	20
Interrupted studies (went 3 years) or started upper. sec. one year later	20
Not in administrative registers 2015, went 1-3 years	8
Enrolled in a 4-year programme	4

Note: The categories of reasons are not mutually exclusive.

## Students in other types of education

Students in other types of education consist of all respondents who indicate studying as their primary activity, but who neither study at university, university college nor at upper secondary school. These students are enrolled in municipal adult education, folk high school, higher vocational education, or another form of education, and they comprise about 17 percent of students (see Table 5.1). These are very different education types, and the group is therefore heterogeneous.

Among those studying at *municipal adult education*, only 44 percent are enrolled on a full-time basis, and it is very common for these students to be looking for work (58 percent). Almost one third (30 percent) work in addition to studying.

Of those in *higher vocational education*, almost all study full-time, and compared with other student subgroups, only a small proportion work in addition to studying (21 percent). However, 44 percent are looking for work.

All students at *folk high school* responded that they study full-time. The proportions who work (30 percent) and who are looking for work (34 percent) are similar to the proportions observed among university and university college students.

Unfortunately, no data is available in the administrative registers that allow us to assess progress for students who are not in university, university college nor upper secondary school. The closest to an indicator of achievement available for these students comes from completion of upper secondary school. We see that among students in *municipal adult education*, just over half have no upper secondary school qualification. It is likely that many of these students are currently in upper secondary programmes with the aim gaining this qualification. In *folk high school* one third of students have not completed upper secondary school. However, almost no one lacks an upper secondary school qualification among students in *higher vocational* or *other* types of education.

## Vulnerability among young adults who are studying

As we have seen in this chapter, facing challenges in studies is not limited to young people who remain in upper secondary school or who are in municipal adult education. Difficulties progressing in studies are also observed among those studying at university or university college. Among young adults who see studying as their primary activity, we identify a group of young people who are considered to have precarious circumstances. We base this definition on how well one's education has progressed because those who fail to make progress risk poorer outcomes upon entry into the labour market.<sup>5</sup>

Because our indicators of study achievement vary between the different education types, our procedure for classifying students as vulnerable also varies. For university and university college students, we use administrative register data on completed credit points. For upper secondary students we assess whether the programme is completed on time, or whether students have repeated a year or changed programmes. For students in other types of education, we use information from compulsory and upper secondary education. We define the following groups of young adults who are studying as being in a particularly vulnerable situation: Those who, according to the survey:

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5. Hällsten, 2017



1. study at university or university college, but according to administrative registers (1a) are not registered in any course, or (1b) have taken less than 62.5 percentage of registered credit points, or
2. study at upper secondary school, but according to administrative registers (2a) have not reached the third grade by autumn 2015 or (2b) have repeated a year within the same programme or (2c) have repeated the first year because they lacked qualifications for upper secondary school, or
3. study at municipal adult education or folk high school but according to administrative registers lack an upper secondary school qualification.
4. In addition, we include young people are primarily job-seeking but report that they are also studying (see Table 3.1)

In total, we estimate that 33 percent of youth who are studying have a high vulnerability (not shown). Table 5.3 shows the distribution of high vulnerability within the different types of education, across the total sample, and also the proportion within each education type who report their studies being more difficult than expected. We see that the proportion of students with high vulnerability is largest among those in upper secondary school and in “other” types of education (48 percent and 43 percent), while it is least common among university and university college students (25 percent). It is much more common among highly vulnerable university students than among other university students to report studies as being more difficult than they had expected (45 percent compared to 25 percent). This is a vulnerable group that is rarely given attention, perhaps because their earlier school achievements are significantly better than those of other students with high vulnerability (results not shown).

*Table 5.3. Distribution of low and high vulnerability by education type, of the total sample (n = 2,517), and the proportion reporting their education is more difficult than expected (n = 1,009)*

	Within education type	Of total sample	Education more difficult
University/University College, low vulnerability	75	15	25
University/University College, high vulnerability	25	3	45
Upper. sec. school, low vulnerability	52	6	19
Upper. sec. school, high vulnerability	48	5	18
Other, low vulnerability	57	4	18
Other, high vulnerability	43	2	13
Total			23

Note: Numbers are rounded and therefore “Of total sample” does not sum to 36 percent.

## Summary

- Of those who see studying as their primary activity, just over half study at university or university college and one third study at upper secondary school. The remainder study in other types of education, such as municipal adult education, folk high school, or higher vocational education.
- Among the young adults remaining in upper secondary school, the most commonly reported reason is a change of programme. Other common reasons are needing more time, spending time abroad, or illness.
- The majority of young people studying at university or university college make good progress, but about 25 percent of these students have high vulnerability, defined as not having reached at least 62.5 percent of the credit points they are registered for. This is a group of students who have performed relatively well in compulsory and upper secondary school, but who risk not completing the tertiary education that they have started.
- 33 percent of all youth who are studying have a high vulnerability, and this is particularly common among those still in upper secondary school.





In previous chapters we have distinguished between three primary activity types – working, studying and NEET – and we have defined subgroups within these based on the degree to which individuals are in what we classified as a vulnerable situation (See Appendix for a summary of high vulnerability criteria within the different activity types). With the conceptualisation of vulnerability, we aim to capture young people who have a weak or precarious attachment to their studies or the labour market and are thus at risk of more persistent problems. It is important to remember that vulnerability has different meanings depending on the activity type, and that the most meaningful comparison is made between those who have high and low degree of vulnerability within a given activity.

In this chapter we examine how activity and vulnerability are related to gender, immigrant background, parental education, as well as youth’s own previous education and school achievement – key background factors often discussed in relation to NEET and unemployment.<sup>1</sup> Table 6.1 shows the distribution of vulnerability within the three activity types. In total, 14 percent of workers, 33 percent of students, and 48 percent of NEET have high vulnerability according to our classification.

*Tabell 6.1. Proportion with low and high vulnerability for each activity type (n = 2,517)*

Activity	Vulnerability		Total
	Low	High	
NEET	52	48	100
Working	86	14	100
Studying	67	33	100
Total	74	26	100

1. Carcillo et al., 2015; Niknami & Schröder 2014; Theme Group Youth, 2017

## Gender, immigrant background and parental education: How are they related to activity type and vulnerability?

Table 6.2 shows how common it is to have a certain combination of activity and vulnerability among men and women, young adults with and without an immigrant background, and those whose parents have and do not have a university education. The bottom row also shows the total share belonging to each activity-vulnerability category.\*

In regard to gender, we can see that there are differences in activity type and degree of vulnerability. Working is more common among women, while studying and NEET are more common among men. Women are more often than men working with high vulnerability (women 8 percent, men 4 percent). Expressed as the proportion of those working, 16 percent of female workers and 10 percent of male workers have a high degree of vulnerability. Men are more often studying and NEET with high vulnerability than women, but expressed as a proportion within these groups, the distribution is even (i.e., of students, it is equally common for women and men to be in highly vulnerable situations, and a similar pattern is observed for NEET). The largest category among men and women are workers who have a low degree of vulnerability, and the second largest are students with low vulnerability.

Young people with an immigrant background have a much lower probability of working, and a significantly higher probability of studying, compared with other young people. However, there is no significant difference in being NEET. It may seem surprising that more young adults with an immigrant background are not NEET. However, to a large extent this can be explained by the fact that many young adults with an immigrant background are highly vulnerable

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\* Among the respondents, studying is more common among men than among women, both according to survey data and register data for the 2015 autumn term. However, in the full sample, slightly more women than men study according to the administrative data for the 2015 autumn term. This means that men in education are somewhat over-represented and women in education somewhat underrepresented among wave 4 respondents. However, the differences in participation rates are small.

students: this applies to 28 percent of first generation and 20 percent of second generation immigrants, compared with only 10 percent of individuals with Swedish-born parents. Among first generation immigrants, as many as 20 percent remain enrolled in upper secondary school, compared to 9 and 11 percent among second generation immigrants or respondents with Swedish-born parents, respectively. Previous research has shown that although students with an immigrant background have, on average, poorer school grades, they are more likely to choose academic upper secondary programmes and progress to higher education, given a certain grade.<sup>2</sup> Based on this knowledge we can expect this group to experience more difficulties than others in completing the studies they have chosen.

*Table 6.2. Activity-vulnerability categories by gender (n = 2,517), immigrant background (n = 2,517) and parental education (n = 2,508). Percent within each background characteristic*

Activity type	Stud.	Stud.	Work.	Work.	NEET	NEET	Total
Vulnerability	low	high	low	high	low	high	
<i>Gender</i>							
Male	27	14	38	4	9	8	100
Female	24	11	45	8	6	6	100
<i>Immigrant background</i>							
Parents born in Sweden	25	10	45	7	7	6	100
Second generation	31	20	26	7	7	9	100
First generation	23	28	27	6	9	6	100
<i>Parental education</i>							
Less than university	21	14	42	7	8	8	100
University degree	32	10	42	6	6	4	100
Total	26	12	42	7	7	7	100

2. Jonsson & Rudolphi, 2011; Jackson et al., 2011



## School achievement in grade nine

Table 6.3 shows how previous school achievement in grade nine (the final year of compulsory school) is related to activity type and degree of vulnerability. Among students, those with high vulnerability had a lower average Grade Point Sum (GPS) in grade 9 than those with low vulnerability (196 and 255, respectively). There are also differences in GPS between young adults with high and low vulnerability among working youth and NEET, but these differences are smaller than among students. Students and NEET with high vulnerability have the lowest compulsory school achievement, measured as GPS. It is worth noting that of students with high vulnerability, those who remain enrolled in upper secondary school had clearly the lowest academic achievement in grade nine: The average GPS of this group is 162 (results not shown).

A significantly higher proportion of young adults who finished compulsory school with incomplete grades are in situations of high vulnerability (63 percent) than young adults with complete grades from compulsory school (23 percent). By the age of 19–20 years most individuals with incomplete grades (and therefore ineligibility for upper secondary school) are studying with high vulnerability (48 percent). However, a relatively large group is working with low vulnerability (28 percent). This differs significantly from the situation of young adults with complete grades (and therefore eligibility for upper secondary school): the most common categories are working with low vulnerability (43 percent) or studying with low vulnerability (27 percent).

*Table 6.3. GPS and proportion with incomplete and full grades from year nine, according to activity-vulnerability categories (n = 2,550)*

Activity	Stud.	Stud.	Work.	Work.	NEET	NEET	Total
Vulnerability	Low	high	low	high	low	high	
<i>Grade point sum</i>	255	196	236	228	214	197	216
<i>Eligibility for upper. sec. ed.</i>							
No (incomplete grades)	2	48	28	3	7	12	100
Yes (complete grades)	27	10	43	7	7	6	100

## Upper secondary school programme

Figure 6.1 shows the upper secondary school programme track (academic or vocational) that the respondents have attended, and whether they have complete grades, and eligibility for university or not. Completed grades indicate that they have graduated, i.e., passed the courses and met requirements for the programme.\* Those who completed an academic programme always have basic qualifications for higher education, while those who completed a vocational programme may have this eligibility or not, depending on the course choices they have made.

For young adults with incomplete upper secondary grades or who have not yet finished upper secondary education, it is common to be in highly vulnerable situations, either as students or NEET. As many as 42 percent of individuals who have incomplete grades from vocational programmes are NEET, and 27 percent are NEET with high vulnerability. Another 17 percent are students with high vulnerability. The disadvantage for young people with incomplete grades compared to those with full grades is also observed among those who have completed academic programmes. If no upper secondary education has been finished, it is most common to be studying with high vulnerability (44 percent). Of young adults without an upper secondary school education, another 20 percent are NEET, including 13 percent NEET with high vulnerability.

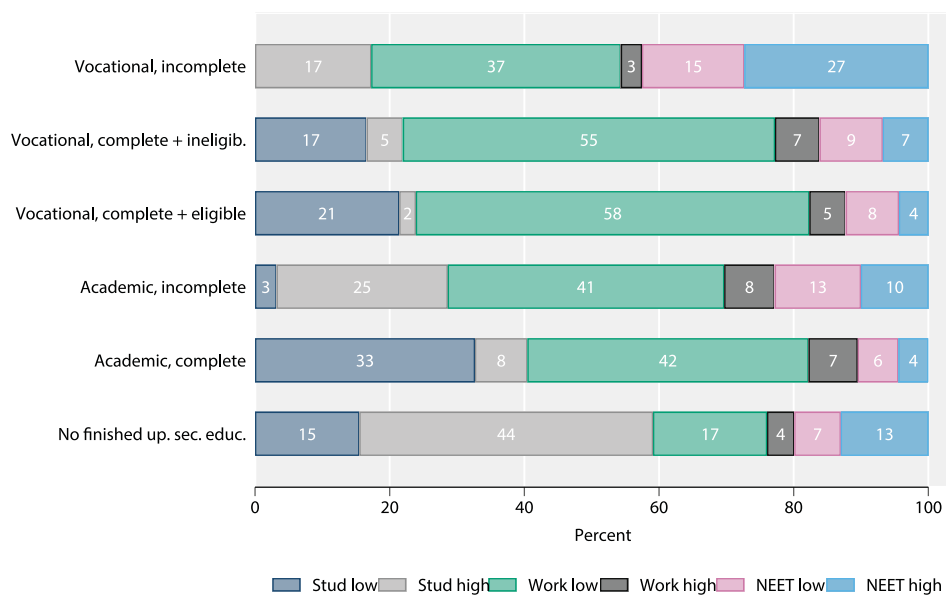
Academic programmes mainly aim to prepare students for higher education rather than to provide qualifications that may be useful in the labour market immediately after upper secondary school. In line with this, we see in Figure 6.1 that young adults who attended academic programmes are working to a much lesser extent than young adults who attended vocational programmes. Among those who have complete

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\* To qualify for an upper secondary school certificate, according to current requirements, students must have completed 2,500 points, of which 2,250 of the points received at least a pass grade. For a vocational programme, students must have passed Swedish 1 (or Swedish as a Second Language 1), English 5, Mathematics 1 and Upper Secondary Term Paper (individual work done during the final year), as well as 400 credit points from programme-related subjects. For an academic programme, students must have passed Swedish 1, 2 and 3 or Swedish as second language 1, 2 and 3, English 5 and 6, Mathematics 1, and Upper Secondary Term Paper. If the programme requirements are not met, students' grades are classified as incomplete.

grades from academic programmes, this seems to be due to the fact that a large proportion are studying with low vulnerability.

*Figure 6.1. Distribution of activity-vulnerability categories by upper secondary education. Proportion in the respective type of education (n = 2,517)*



## Summary

- Gender, immigrant background, parental education and youth's own educational background coincide with both activity type and degree of vulnerability within a given activity.
- More working women are in situations of high vulnerability than working men, but more studying men are in situations of high vulnerability than studying women.
- A larger proportion of young adults with an immigrant background are studying, and fewer are working than other young adults. Both first and second generation immigrants are overrepresented among students with high vulnerability. Many are at considerable risk of transitioning to NEET in the near future.
- Young adults with an immigrant background are only slightly overrepresented among NEET. This is likely because we do not investigate recent immigrants, and also because we study respondents at an age when a large proportion of vulnerable individuals still remain enrolled in upper secondary school.
- Young adults whose parents have a university degree are less likely than others to be NEET with high vulnerability, and more likely to be studying with low vulnerability.
- Those who have incomplete grades from compulsory or upper secondary school are at greater risk of high vulnerability, regardless of the activity type.



# Introduction

Early adulthood is a life phase that for most individuals involves a gradual transition to more independence and self-sufficiency, in the form of completed studies or transition to higher education, moving out of the parental home, financial independence, and developing social relations beyond the school context.<sup>1</sup> The opportunities to reach these milestones can be assumed to vary between young people with different labour market activities and with different degrees of vulnerability. In this chapter we investigate the living conditions among young people according to the six activity-vulnerability categories we have identified. Do living conditions differ between these groups? We describe participants' financial situation, housing situation and social relations.

## Financial situation

Financial difficulties are more likely for people with a weak position on the labour market because low and unpredictable income can make it difficult to meet daily economic needs or unanticipated expenses. Young adults can be economically exposed because they have had limited opportunities and time to build their own financial buffer. This means that the possibility of temporary assistance from others (e.g., parents) can be of key importance to this group. A strained financial situation can also negatively affect one's social life, for example through a lack of economic means to participate in social activities. In the survey we asked whether participants had a cash margin to meet unforeseen expenses, whether they had experienced financial problems during the past six months, and if so, whether they had received financial assistance. We also asked how often respondents refrain from doing activities with friends because they cannot afford it.

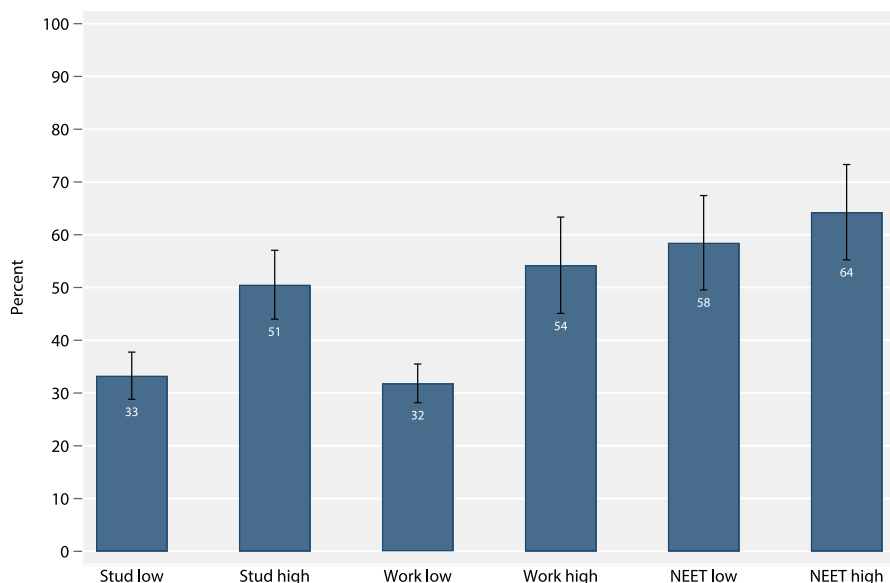
Figure 7.1 shows that many young people have had difficulty making ends meet in the last six months. It is especially common among individuals with high vulnerability as well as NEET with low vulnerability, where between 51 and 64 percent indicate that they have had financial problems. NEET with high vulnerability is the group that is most economically exposed in this regard. Economic problems are also relatively common among young people with low vulnerability:

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1. Cf. Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011

32 and 33 percent of workers and students with low vulnerability, respectively, have experienced economic problems. In addition, many of those who have had financial problems indicate that they have not received any financial assistance (about 24 percent for both NEET and other activity types, not shown). These young people can be considered to face particularly large financial challenges.

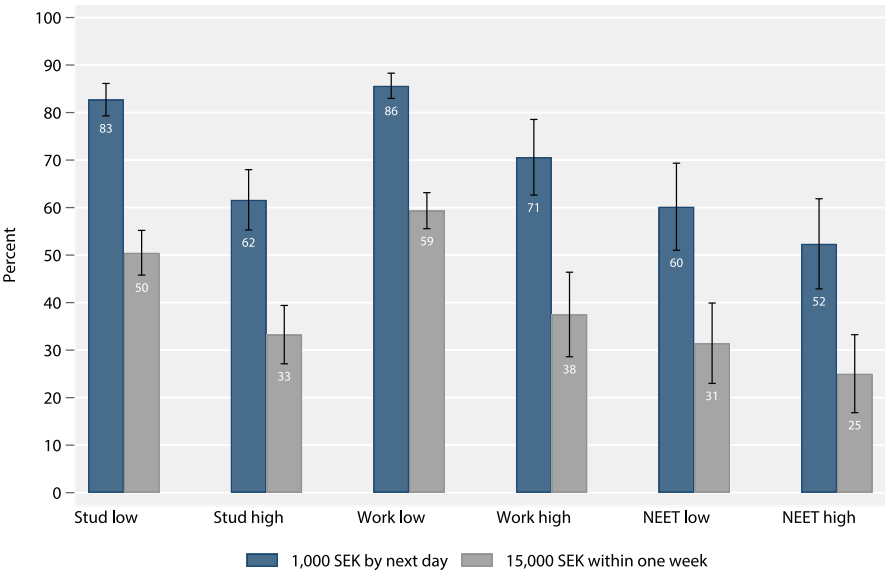
*Figure 7.1. Economic problems in the previous six months: Difficulty making ends meet some or more times. Proportion according to activity-vulnerability categories (n = 2,512)*



Having access to a smaller or larger sum of money at short notice is a resource that is important in the event of large or unforeseen expenses, which may occasionally occur. It can also have a positive impact on quality of life by increasing an individual's sense of security and reducing worries about one's economic situation. The ability to pay an unexpected expense within a certain period is usually referred to as having a cash margin, and to measure this we asked if participants could obtain (a) 1,000 SEK by the next day and (b) 15,000 SEK within a week.

Figure 7.2 shows the proportion of young adults that can access 1,000 SEK by the next day, and 15,000 SEK within one week according to the activity-vulnerability categories. For the lower sum, the majority of respondents in all categories have this cash margin – 52 to 86 percent – although it is less common among NEET (60 and 52 percent for low and high vulnerability NEET, respectively). In regards to the substantially higher sum of 15,000 SEK, as expected, it is less common to have such a cash margin. Nevertheless, the differences between young people with different activity types and degree of vulnerability are similar to the differences observed for the lower sum. About half (50 to 59 percent) of those who are studying or working and in low vulnerable situations have a cash margin of 15,000 SEK, while it is less common among students and workers with high vulnerability (33 and 38 percent, respectively). It is least common to have a cash margin of 15,000 SEK among NEET, 28 percent (25 percent for NEET with high vulnerability, 31 for NEET with low vulnerability).

Figure 7.2. Cash Margin: Access to 1,000 SEK by the next day, and 15,000 SEK within a week, according to activity-vulnerability categories (n = 2,513)

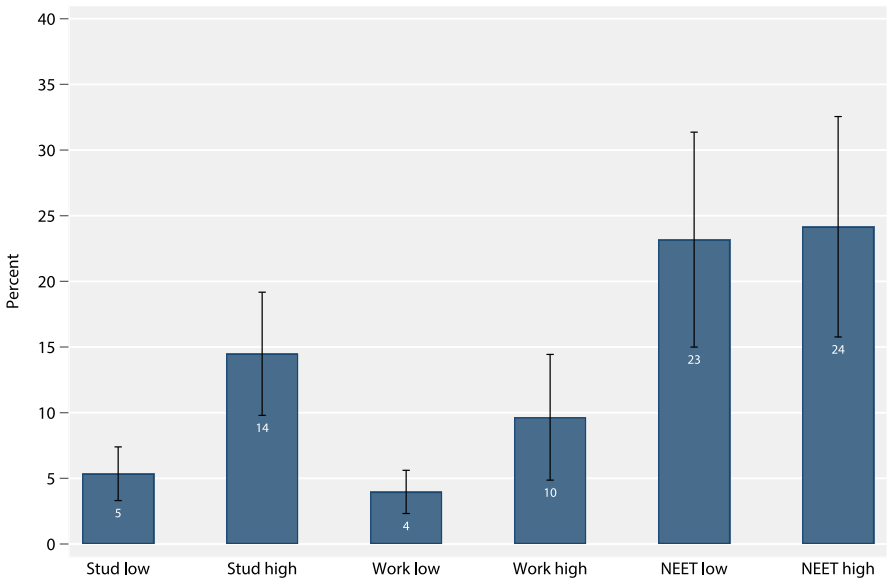




Another aspect of financial problems is being unable to participate in activities with friends due to a lack of money. This measure of financial resources captures a subjective aspect where one’s own situation is judged relatively to the finances of others, and it has been observed, at least in mid-adolescence, to vary with both psychological wellbeing<sup>2</sup> and poorer relationships with classmates.<sup>3</sup>

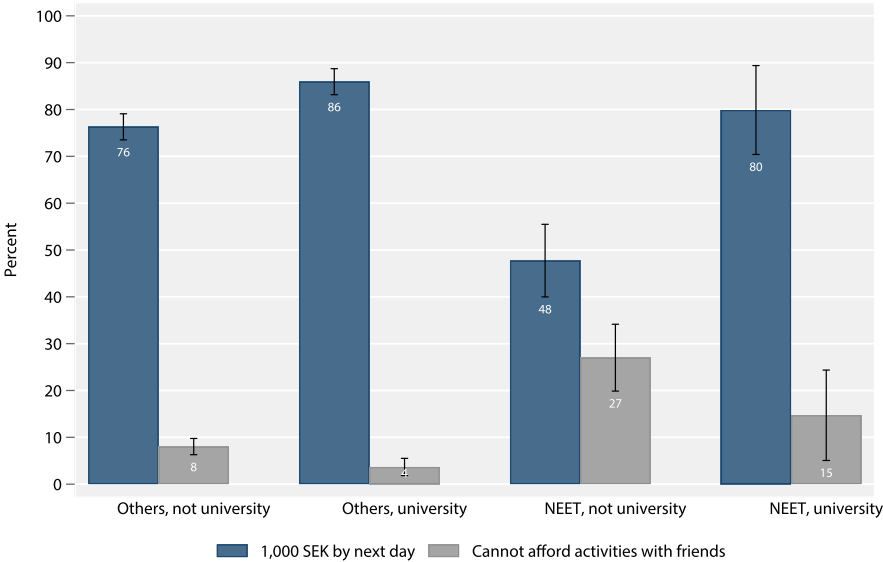
The proportion of young adults who indicate that they *often* or *always* miss activities with friends because they cannot afford it is shown according to the activity-vulnerability categories in Figure 7.3. This indicator of perceived economic deprivation shows a similar pattern as the other financial situation measures: those who are studying or working miss out on social activities the least, especially those with low vulnerability. For students and workers with low vulnerability, only 5 and 4 percent respectively, *often* or *always* refrain from activities with friends because they cannot afford it. For NEET, missing out on social activities is much more common, at almost 25 percent, and there is no significant difference between those with high and low vulnerability.

Figure 7.3. How often do you miss out on activities with friends because you cannot afford it? Proportion responding often or always, according to activity-vulnerability categories (n = 2,515)



For all three dimensions of young adult’s financial situation shown here, there is a disadvantage for young people with a foreign background and for youth whose parents are not university graduates. A result worth mentioning is that the difference in financial security between those with university educated parents and others is slightly higher among NEET than among other activity types. Figure 7.4 shows that among NEET, 48 per cent of those whose parents do not have a university education have a cash margin (the lower amount), compared to 80 per cent of those whose parents do have a university education. The corresponding prevalence for other young adults are 76 and 86 percent. For the more unusual situation where one often misses activities with friends because of economic constraints, a similar pattern is observed.

Figure 7.4. Proportion with access to 1,000 SEK cash margin and often/always miss out on activities with friends because one cannot afford it, according to NEET status and parental education (n = 2,506)



# Housing

Moving out of the parental home is part of adulthood and a prerequisite for (or consequence of) studying in a new place or forming a family.<sup>4</sup> The percentage of young people moving from home varies depending on where in the country they live.<sup>5</sup> In Sweden it is less common for young people to move out of home in metropolitan regions where it is more difficult and more expensive to find housing.<sup>6</sup> In this report we will provide a brief overview of the housing situation of young adults, but it is worth remembering that there are regional differences.

Youth's housing arrangements also vary with other conditions, not least employment. According to an estimate from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (Swedish: *Myndigheten för Ungdoms- och CIVILSAMHÄLLESFRÅGOR*)<sup>7</sup>, based on survey data from 2007–2009, most 18–25 year-olds who were working had moved out of home (70 percent). Having a job supports one's ability to move away from the parental home. It is less likely that students and other young people without stable income can afford to move away from home and for students, it may also be difficult to find student housing. A somewhat unexpected result observed by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society's study is that a larger percentage of young people who are neither in education nor in employment have moved out of home (about 48 percent) than those who are studying (40 percent).

We find that the proportion of young people who have moved out of home is low – only 22 percent. As previously pointed out, respondents in the current report are young, about 20 years old, and previous Swedish studies of housing often use a wider age range, which also includes young adults who are a few years older and have thus had longer time to move out of the parental home.

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4. Statistics Sweden, 2008

5. Statistics Sweden, 2008; Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, 2011

6. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, 2011, Figure 2.3

7. Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, 2011

Figure 7.5. Living arrangements for NEET and non-NEET. Proportion in each situation (n = 2,515)

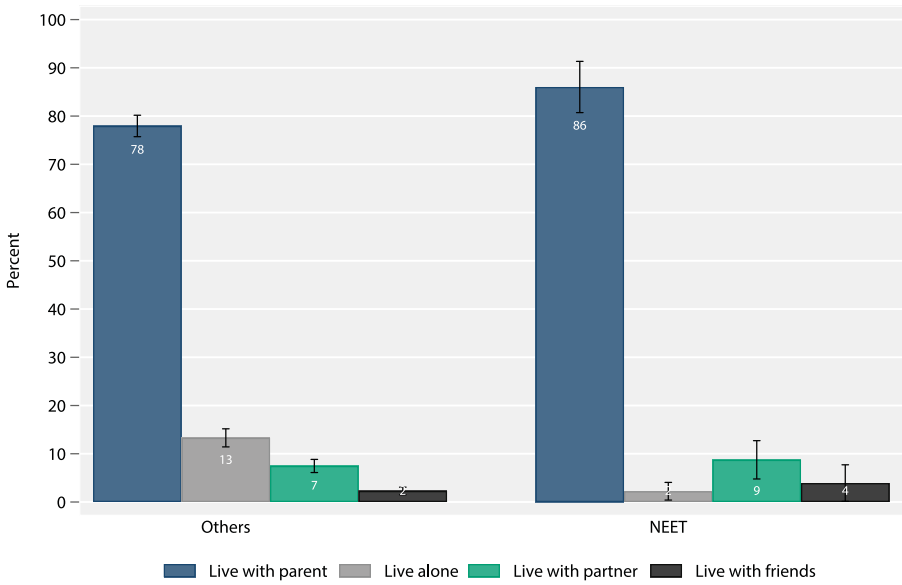


Figure 7.5 shows the living arrangements for NEET and other young adults. The majority still live with one or two parents, but this is somewhat more common among NEET (86 percent) than among other young people (78 percent). Another difference between the groups is that a very small proportion of NEET live alone, while 13 percent of other young people live alone. However, it is about as common to live with a partner among NEET as among other young adults (9 and 7 percent respectively). The categories shown are not mutually exclusive. There are, for example, respondents living both with a partner and with parent/parents, but it is relatively unusual.

The most common living arrangements are to reside with parents and to live alone. Students are the least likely to live at home with their parents (68–75 percent, compared to 80–87 percent among those working and NEET). In regard to living alone, both activity and vulnerability appear to be of importance: Students with low vulnerability often live alone (24 percent) while it is very uncommon among workers with high vulnerability and NEET (not shown).

## Social relations

Work or studies often function as social contexts where interactions and joint tasks involve opportunities for building and maintaining social relationships.<sup>8</sup> Being outside these social environments can therefore make it more difficult to have an active social life. Previous research also indicates that financial resources affect social relationships and activities,<sup>9</sup> and the findings presented above show that NEET are more likely have strained finances and limited participation in social activities due to economic reasons. At the same time, social relations can in themselves influence the risk of unemployment: poor relationships with schoolmates can contribute to school incompleteness;<sup>10</sup> and information that can prevent or shorten unemployment is often shared through social contacts.<sup>11</sup> Most likely, links between labour market activity and social relations are due to reciprocal effects, as well as other factors related to both one's activity type and social relations.

Respondents answered questions about their friends, romantic partner, and about leisure activities. Figure 7.6 shows three different indicators of social relations, according to activity and vulnerability. The first column of each category shows the proportion that report having at least one close relationship (a friend or a romantic partner). The majority of respondents in all categories have at least one close relationship. However, among NEET, both for those with low and for those with high vulnerability, it is less common to have at least one close relationship (85 percent in both groups) than among young adults in the other activity-vulnerability categories. The difference between NEET and other groups is greater among men than among women (not shown).

The second column shows how often respondents meet friends or acquaintances on a weekly basis, and if we compare the activity-vulnerability groups, we see that a lower proportion of NEET with high vulnerability meet friends or acquaintances in their free time (55 percent). For NEET with low vulnerability (68 percent), the situation is more comparable to the situation of students (69–71 percent).

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8. Feld, 1981

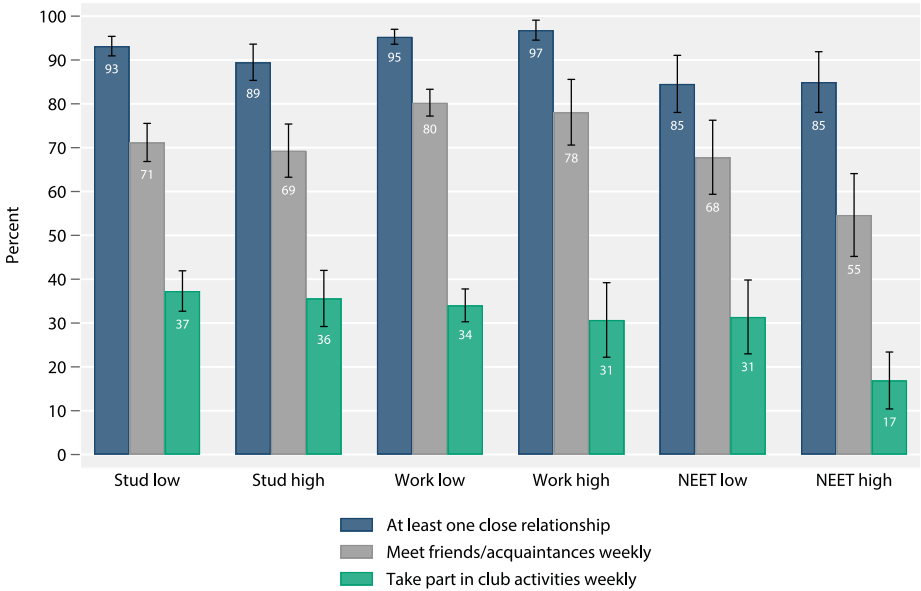
9. Böhnke & Link, 2017; Mood & Jonsson, 2016

10. Johansson, Flygare & Hellfeldt, 2017; Véronneau & Vitaro, 2007

11. Granovetter, 1995 [1974]; Ioannides & Datcher Loury, 2004

The third column for each activity-vulnerability category shows participation in some form of club or association on a weekly basis (e.g., sports, music, theatre), and even here there are differences observed, but it is mainly between NEET with high vulnerability and the other groups. A lower proportion of NEET with high vulnerability (17 percent) participate in club activities, while the proportion of low-vulnerable NEET (31 percent) who participate is comparable to other groups. There is therefore a risk that NEET with high vulnerability have limited opportunities to further develop social relationships because, besides being neither in work nor in studies, they meet friends on a less regular basis and participate in club or association activities to a lesser extent than other young people.

Figure 7.6. At least one close relationship and social activities during leisure time. Proportion according to activity-vulnerability categories (n = 2,512)



## Summary

- Financial difficulties are more common in groups with high vulnerability, and especially common among NEET with high vulnerability, where more than three out of five indicate that they have had difficulty making ends meet in the last six months.
- Among NEET, it is less common to have a cash margin: just over half of NEET can access 1,000 SEK by the next day, compared with four out of five young adults in other groups. Only three out of ten NEET can access 15,000 SEK within a week, compared with just over half of the young adults in other groups.
- Young people in situations of high vulnerability experience financial obstacles to participate in social activities with friends to a greater extent. While a very small percentage of students and workers indicate that they often experience such financial obstacles, nearly a quarter of NEET report such problems.
- Four out of five respondents in YES! still live at home with their parents, and this is more common among NEET than among others. Students (especially those with low vulnerability) live alone to a greater extent, while this is least common among NEET and among workers with high vulnerability.
- Among NEET, it is less common than for other young people to have a close relationship (friends or romantic partner), and fewer NEET with high vulnerability meet friends or acquaintances on a weekly basis in their free time or participate in club or association activities.







# Introduction

Mental wellbeing is central to individuals' quality of life and is also an important resource for dealing with labour market challenges.<sup>1</sup> Poor mental wellbeing among adolescents and young adults in Sweden has increased in recent decades, especially among women.<sup>2</sup> Although young adulthood is a relatively healthy period in life, mental health is a major source of ill-health.<sup>3</sup> Previous studies have shown that NEET and unemployed young adults have on average poorer mental health than others.<sup>4</sup> Young people with poorer health are at greater risk of being unemployed, but unemployment also increases the risk of mental health problems.<sup>5</sup> Most previous Swedish research on associations between mental health and labour market-related outcomes uses administrative data and defines ill-health based on prescribed medication<sup>6</sup> or welfare payments related to health problems.<sup>7</sup> These measures capture only the most serious psychological ill-health and only individuals who have chosen to seek help and have the resources to do so. It is also common to distinguish only NEET or unemployed individuals from other young adults, although there may be differences in mental wellbeing between those who work and those who study, and between young people with different degrees of vulnerability within a given activity type.

In this chapter we investigate to what extent poor mental wellbeing is observed when using self-reported information on multiple dimensions of mental wellbeing. We study the extent to which young people with different activities and different degrees of vulnerability differ in regard to feeling depressed, self-esteem, somatic symptoms, what they worry and feel stressed about, their sense of control over the future, as well as expectations of the future.

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1. OECD, 2012

2. Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2014; National Board of Health and Welfare, 2013

3. Engdahl & Forslund, 2016; World Health Organisation, 2015

4. Rodwell et al., 2017; Sellström et al., 2011

5. Egan et al., 2015; Vancea & Utzet, 2017

6. E.g., Brännlund et al., 2017

7. E.g., Engdahl & Forslund, 2016

## Emotional and somatic symptoms

We asked the respondents how often they feel depressed, about their self-esteem and physical symptoms. Those who *did not* agree that they have many good qualities, have much to be proud of, or like themselves, were categorised as having low self-esteem. Respondents also reported how often they experience headaches, stomach aches and difficulties sleeping. Having more than one physical (somatic) symptom on a weekly basis can be a sign of high psychological stress,<sup>8</sup> and we use this categorisation to identify young people with somatic symptoms indicative of stress.

A higher proportion of NEET than young people in other activity types indicate that they often feel depressed, and the same pattern was observed for low self-esteem and somatic symptoms. Figure 8.1 shows that, in accordance with previous research<sup>9</sup>, poorer mental wellbeing was more common among women than men. However, for both men and women, NEET reported more problems than young people with other activity types. The differences in prevalence between NEET and other young adults who feel depressed and experience somatic symptoms was greater for women than for men. About a third of female NEET often feel depressed, have low self-esteem, or experience co-occurring somatic symptoms on a weekly basis, compared with 13-24 percent of other women (depending on symptoms). For men, the biggest difference between NEET and young adults in other activity types was in low self-esteem.

When we use the more detailed activity-vulnerability categories, which not only distinguish between the type of activity but also the degree of vulnerability, we also see systematic differences in mental wellbeing (Figure 8.2). Among students, workers and NEET, a higher proportion of those with high vulnerability feel depressed, have low self-esteem and co-occurring somatic symptoms than others. NEET with high vulnerability have a significantly higher risk than other young adults to often feel depressed and to have poor self-esteem, but in the case of somatic symptoms, their risk is only marginally higher than workers and students with high vulnerability.

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8. Alfvén et al., 2008

9. Public Health Agency of Sweden, 2014; National Board of Health and Welfare, 2013

Figure 8.1. Proportion of men and women who often feel depressed (n = 2,511), have low self-esteem (n = 2,514) and experience more than one somatic symptom on a weekly basis. Proportion according to activity type (n = 2,514)

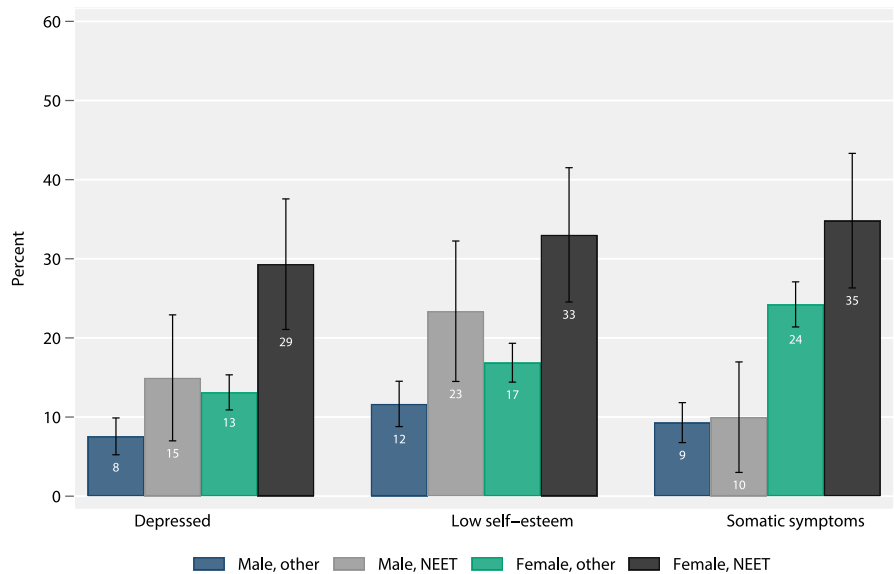
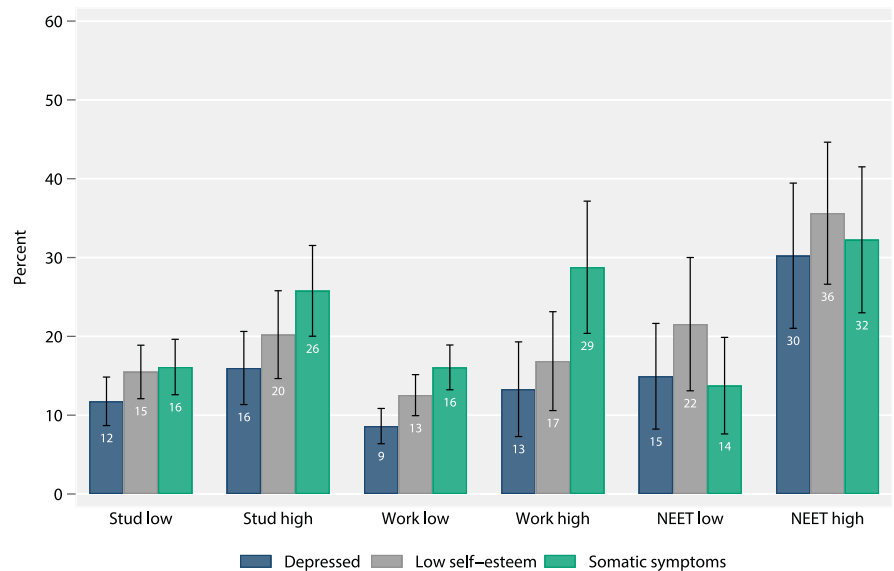


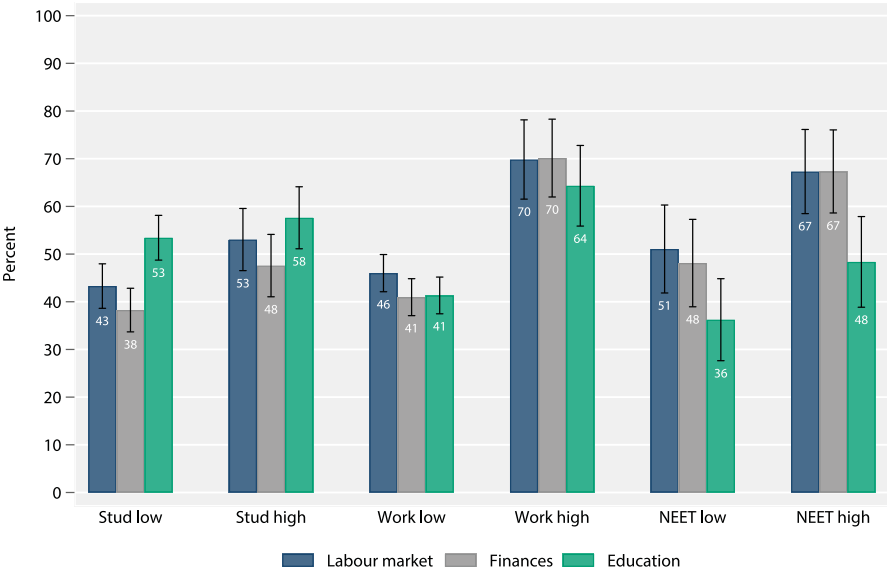
Figure 8.2. Proportion who often feel depressed (n = 2,511), have low self-esteem (n = 2,514) and experience co-occurring somatic symptoms on a weekly basis (n = 2,514), according to activity-vulnerability categories



## What do young people worry about?

Participants indicated how often they worried or felt stressed about different things, including succeeding on the labour market, their personal finances, and getting good grades or a good education. Figure 8.3 shows the proportion in the different activity-vulnerability categories that *often* or *very often* worry. Here we see that higher proportions of young people in situations of high vulnerability worry about their chances of succeeding on the labour market, their finances, and getting a good education, than young people with low vulnerability in the corresponding activity. It is worth noting that a similar proportion of working and NEET youth with high vulnerability were worried about succeeding on labour market and their personal finances. Additionally, worrying about one's employment or career and finances is very common among these two groups: 67–70 percent of these young people indicate that they worry *often* or *very often*. NEET with low vulnerability worry about succeeding on the labour market and personal finances to almost the same extent as studying and working young adults with low vulnerability. Fewer NEET with high vulnerability are worried about getting a good education than other young people, which may reflect the tendency of NEET to aspire to employment rather than further studies.

Figure 8.3. Proportion that often or very often worry about succeeding on the labour market (n = 2,514), personal finances (n = 2,514), and getting a good education or grade (n = 2,514), according to activity-vulnerability categories



# Control over one’s future

Having a sense of control over one’s life and opportunities is important for motivation and quality of life.<sup>10</sup> Previous studies have shown that a strong sense of control is less common among NEET.<sup>11</sup> The majority of respondents *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they could influence their future and realise their plans, but the proportion was lower among NEET (86 percent *agreed* or *strongly agreed* that they could influence their future, 70 percent realise their plans) compared with young people with other activity types (94 and 85 percent, respectively).

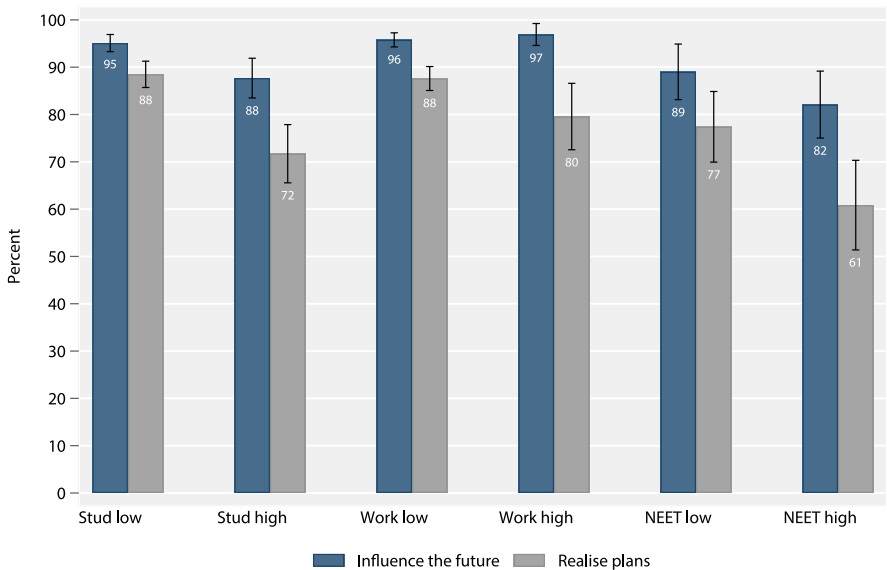
In Figure 8.4, we see that NEET with high vulnerability were least certain that they could influence their future and realise their plans, compared to other groups. Pessimism in both respects was also high among students with high vulnerability, as fewer of these students than students with low vulnerability perceived that they could influence their

10. Bandura, 2006; Rotter, 1966

11. Ng-Knight & Schoon, 2017

future or that they could realise their plans. Among young workers, there was no difference between those with high and low vulnerability in terms of influencing one’s future, but fewer workers with high vulnerability believed they could realise their plans.

Figure 8.4. Proportion that agree or strongly agree that they can influence their future (n = 2,513) or realise their plans (n = 2,507), according to activity-vulnerability categories



## Optimism and expectations for the future

We asked respondents if they think they will be doing well in the future and how they think various aspects of their lives will look when they are 30 years old (i.e., in ten years). Figure 8.5 shows that NEET with high vulnerability were significantly more pessimistic than all other activity-vulnerability categories: 16 percent believe that they will not do well in the future, compared with 3 percent among NEET with low vulnerability. Students with high vulnerability also had a very high

degree of pessimism compared to students with low vulnerability, while the difference between workers with high and low vulnerability was not particularly large.

In regard to how respondents expect different specific aspects of life to look in the future, Figure 8.6 shows the distribution according to the activity-vulnerability categories. It is striking that almost everyone (99–100 percent among students and workers, 96–98 percent among NEET) expect that they will have a job when they are 30 years old. Expectations are lower for the other outcomes, and fewer NEET with high vulnerability expect to have a university degree, to marry or to have children than NEET with low vulnerability and young adults with other activity types. It seems reasonable that fewer NEET with high vulnerability expect to have a university degree in the future, but it is surprising that the group differences are also so large for expectations related to social relationships (getting married and having children).

Although a higher proportion of women expect to get married and to have children in future, the pattern of differences in expectations between the different activity-vulnerability categories are observed among both men and women (not shown). In addition, a larger proportion of workers expect to have children and be married when they are 30 years old than students and NEET. This result is observed regardless of the degree of vulnerability. Although this finding might indicate that some of those working already have children, it may also indicate that individuals with this activity type may want to enter typically “adult” roles earlier than young people with other activity types.



Figure 8.5. Proportion who do not think they will be doing well in the future ( $n = 2,510$ ), according to activity-vulnerability categories

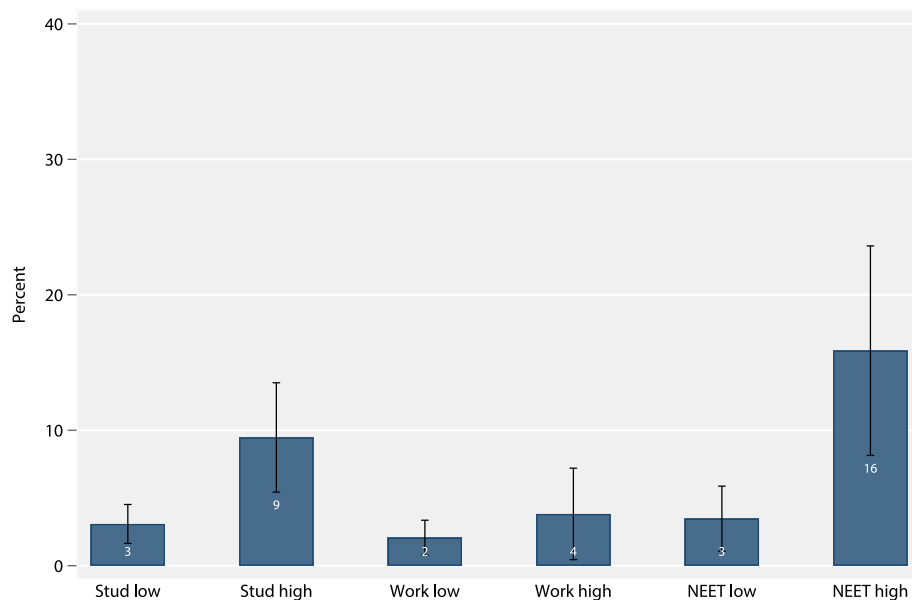
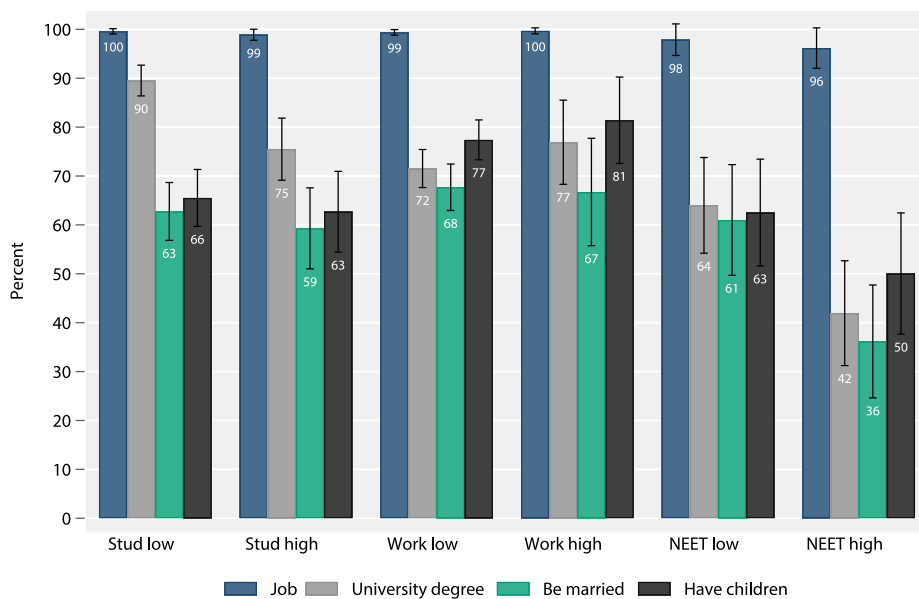


Figure 8.6. Proportion who believe that they will have a job at 30 years of age ( $n = 2,417$ ), a university degree ( $n = 2,091$ ), be married ( $n = 1,603$ ) or have children ( $n = 1,636$ ), according to activity-vulnerability categories



## Summary

- There are systematic differences in many dimensions of mental wellbeing among young people with different labour market activities and different degrees of vulnerability.
- NEET with high vulnerability have poorer mental wellbeing than other young people, including NEET with low vulnerability.
- Students and workers with high vulnerability have poorer mental wellbeing than other students and workers.
- Although the majority of young people do not have frequent emotional symptoms, approximately one third of NEET with high vulnerability often feel depressed.
- The large majority of young people believe they will be doing well in the future, but young people in high vulnerable situations express a much greater degree of concern and pessimism for their future.



We have studied a nationally representative sample of Swedish young adults 19–20 years of age, at a time when most had completed compulsory school about half a year prior to the study. We can summarise our main results as follows:

## Youth labour market activities are heterogeneous and fluid

The first purpose of the report was to describe the activity status of young people based on their own reports, and the picture that appears is heterogeneous. A large group of 23 percent of respondents, work close to full time (30 hours a week or more). This group represents just under half of those with working as their primary activity. About 18 percent of respondents study at university or college. Almost everybody in this group studies full-time, but approximately one-fifth have completed a lower percentage of credit points than expected. Overall, therefore, only 38 percent have what could be described as a “traditional” situation consisting of either full-time work (23 percent) or successful full-time university or university college education (15 percent).

At the other end of the distribution are young people who are NEET, a group of 14 percent of respondents. Breaking NEET down into subgroups, we see that 7 percent are job seekers, just over 2 percent are in a job and development programme and just over 4 percent have no or another activity than working, studying, or job-seeking. In addition, among those who are still studying in upper secondary school (12 percent), there is a relatively large group at substantial risk of experiencing labour market-related problems in the future.

Our results show that heterogeneity exists not only in the variation between individuals – many young people have had different activity types within a relatively brief period and many are engaged in multiple activities at the same time. Among those who work, including those with permanent employment, there are many individuals looking for other work, which reinforces the image of the early 20s as a transition and largely fluid period.

## We need a broader perspective on labour market-related problems

Studies of young people’s problems on the labour market, have traditionally focused on youth unemployment, or young people who

are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET). One of the purposes of this report was to broaden this perspective and identify a wider range of vulnerable positions among young adults in employment or education. Among NEET, there are individuals whose situation does not signal any major problems, and among those who are working or studying there are individuals with a more problematic situation. In order to better capture this variation, we use a two-dimensional model, in which we distinguish between three primary activity types (work, studies, and NEET) and also whether one is in a vulnerable situation or not. Based on our definitions, we classify 14 percent of workers, 33 percent of students, and 48 percent of NEET youth as particularly vulnerable.

### Young adults in vulnerable situations have a worse standard of living in many aspects

The third aim of the report was to investigate whether living conditions and mental wellbeing differ between young people with different activity types and degree of vulnerability, and the results clearly show that there are such differences. Compared to others, NEET young adults have significantly worse finances, poorer social relationships, as well as poorer emotional wellbeing and self-esteem. They worry more about finances and succeeding on the labour market, have a lower sense of control over their future, and are more pessimistic about their future - not only in relation to education and the labour market, but also in regard to building a family. The fact that NEET youth have poorer living conditions than others is an expected result, but it is remarkable that these differences are so large and consistently observed across all the standard living indicators we examined.

An important message from this report, however, is that a narrow focus on NEET leads us to overlook many young people with labour market-related problems. We show that those who are working or studying in situations of high vulnerability have a standard of living that differs significantly from others who are working or studying, and in many respects these young adults have a life situation similar to that of NEET young adults. In addition, we show that living conditions and mental wellbeing among NEET young adults are particularly problematic for those with high vulnerability.

It is likely that for many young adults, changing activity types and having various temporary jobs are relatively unproblematic aspects

of mobility that are natural parts of post-school transitions in the beginning of adulthood. However, it is also clear that large groups of young people face difficulties in the labour market and in education, and even at this young age, we can see that these more vulnerable young people face challenges not only in work or studies, but also in personal finances, social relations and mental wellbeing.

### We need to know more about the mechanisms underlying young adults' labour market activities and vulnerability

In this report we have focused on the respondents' situation when they are 19–20 years of age, and we have not addressed the processes underlying the situation they have at this time point. However, in line with previous studies, we find that young people with poorer school performance in compulsory and upper secondary school are over-represented among those in vulnerable situations. Particular attention should be paid to the fact that a sizeable group (13 percent) of young people who have not completed upper secondary education, are likely to be in vulnerable positions (61 percent compared with the 26 percent average). On the other hand, it is also important to remember that many respondents with weak school performance have a relatively secure situation: Of young people with incomplete grades from upper secondary school, there are, for example, as many as 40 percent who are working with low vulnerability.

YES! has followed respondents since they attended grade 8, which means that we have good opportunities to study the mechanisms that lead to different labour market outcomes, and this is something we will do in future studies. We will also follow respondents' progress according to administrative registers through annual updates, which will enable analyses of persistence in vulnerable positions throughout early adulthood.



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# Data, procedure and sample

Data come from the YES! Study, from the project CILS4EU.<sup>1</sup> Although YES! is a longitudinal study in four countries, this report is based solely on Swedish data from wave four. The sample we examined were all young adults who had participated in wave 1 and/or wave 2 during secondary school. Statistics Sweden (SCB) was responsible for the selection process and data collection. The original sample selection for the first wave (2010-2011) was performed in three stages: (1) Schools were randomly selected across Sweden across four stratum of schools with different proportions of students with an immigrant background, oversampling schools with a high proportion of immigrant background students to enable studies of integration. A school's probability of being sampled was proportional to the size of the school. (2) Two classes were randomly drawn from within each school, and (3) All students in these classes were invited to participate in the survey. Schools and school classes for children with special needs were not included in the selection framework.<sup>2</sup> In wave 2, the target sample was the same as for wave 1, but students who had joined the class during the past school year were also invited to participate.<sup>3</sup> These additional students are excluded from analyses presented in this report.

At wave 1, 76 percent of the invited schools and 99 percent of the invited school classes participated. The participation rate at the individual level was 86 percent, and non-participation was mainly due to school absence (less than one percent declined participation). Some of those who were absent in wave 1 were present in wave 2, and so the proportion of the target sample that participated in either waves 1 or 2 represented a response rate of 90 percent. A total of 5,029 students from 129 different schools and 251 school classes participated at wave 1. If including those who were absent at wave 1, but participated at wave 2, a total of 5,448 students participated.<sup>4</sup>

At wave 4, respondents from the target sample were contacted by letter, and also via e-mail when possible, at about 19 years of age between December 2015 and March 2016. Nearly all participants completed the survey online (94 percent) while a minority (6 percent)

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1. Kalter et al., 2013

2. CILS4EU, 2016a

3. CILS4EU, 2016b

4. CILS4EU, 2016a; 2016b

completed a paper version that they received and returned via post. A total of 2,524 individuals participated in wave 4, resulting in a response rate of 46 percent. In Table A1, we summarise response rates in waves 1, 2 and 4.

*Table A1. The study sample in YES! Participation at the school-level, class-level and individual-level distributed over stratum*

Stratum	School		Class		Individual		
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 4
1. <10 %	68	100	100	-	86	83	46
2. 10–29 %	81	95	100	-	87	80	45
3. 30–59 %	77	100	99	-	87	80	50
4. >59 %	77	100	97	-	85	72	45
Total	77	99	99	-	86	79	46

## Do the respondents differ from the non-respondents?

Surveys always have non-participation, and there is a risk that the respondent sample are no longer representative of the population from which the target sample has been drawn. YES! has the advantage that the first two waves of data collection took place in schools, and thus had very small non-response and attrition rates. In addition, respondents consented to linking their survey responses to administrative register data on for example, their education and employment. In wave 4 of the study, high attrition was observed (54 percent). However, because we have unusually detailed information from previous surveys and also register data for non-respondents, we can get a good understanding of how non-respondents at wave 4 differ from respondents.

Table A2 presents the results of a linear regression model predicting attrition. The values in the table (coefficients) show how a certain factor affects the likelihood of non-participation, and “ref.” indicates the reference group, i.e., the group with which the comparison is

made. The values within the parenthesis indicate the standard error, which is a measure used to determine the statistical certainty of the difference in probability. Asterisks indicate the degree of statistical certainty, and all coefficients having at least one asterisk are statistically significant according to common practice (three asterisks reflect the highest degree of certainty). If a coefficient does not have any asterisk, it does not necessarily mean that no differences exist, rather that the differences are too small in the current sample to conclude with certainty that there is a difference or not in the broader population.

We can confirm that – as is often the case – women were more likely to participate than men, and that young people with university educated parents were more likely to participate than those whose parents have lower education. Women had a 13 percent higher probability of participation, which is a substantial difference given the total response rate of 46 percent. Somewhat surprisingly, there were no large differences between young people with an immigrant background and others, in regards to immigrant generation or region of origin. We also see that those with complete grades from compulsory school and thus qualifications for upper secondary school are more likely to participate than those who have incomplete grades (a difference of 9 percentage points). In addition, those who often felt depressed in grade 8 have a slightly lower probability of participating than those who did not often feel depressed. The conclusion of this analysis is that the analysis sample is somewhat positively selected, which means that we may underestimate the size of the groups that are NEET or have high vulnerability. However, our analyses of how NEET and vulnerability relate to other factors are only biased only by non-response if the NEET and more vulnerable youth that do not participate differ systematically from the NEET and more vulnerable who did participate.

*Table A2. Predictors for participation in YES !, wave 4. Linear regression model*

Background characteristic	Coefficient
<i>Sex</i>	
Male	Ref.
Female	.13 (.01)***
<i>Parental education</i>	
Less than university	Ref.
University (at least one parent)	.04 (.02)**
<i>Foreign background</i>	
Parents born i Sweden	Ref.
Second generation	-.00 (.04)
First generation	-.02 (.03)
<i>Origin</i>	
Sweden	Ref.
NWS-Europe	.01 (.03)
Eastern Europe	.05 (.04)
MENA	.05 (.04)
Africa, sub-Sahara	-.08 (0.6)
Asia	.07 (.04)
Other	.00 (.04)
<i>Grade poing average (10 point units)</i>	.01 (.00)***
<i>Complete grades</i>	
Incomplete grades	Ref.
Complete grades	.09 (.02)***
<i>Often feel depressed in grade 8</i>	-.03 (.01)***

Note: Standard errors in parentheses; MENA - *Middle East and North Africa* region.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

We also investigated selectivity in the analysis by using administrative register data to compare the proportions of individuals working, studying, and NEET among our respondents with the proportions

observed when using the entire original sample. In Table A3 we see that although we have a positive selection in terms of e.g., previous school results and parental education, the proportions in different activity types among respondents do not substantially differ from the proportions observed for the original full sample. The largest difference is that there are “too many” among respondents studying at university or university college. The proportion of job seekers or NEET is somewhat lower among respondents than among the original full sample, but the differences are not substantial. Overall, we can conclude that there is a slightly positive selection due to attrition, but it is unlikely to substantially affect the key results.

*Table A3. Activity type according to administrative register data*

	Respondents n = 2,523 %	Original full sample n = 5,448 %
<i>Registered income 2015</i>		
None	18	18
Marginal (< 22,250 SEK)	25	22
Moderate (> 22,250, <140,000 SEK)	50	50
Established (> 140,000 SEK)	7	11
<i>Registered education 2015</i>		
Not in education registers	57	64
Upper secondary school	13	13
University	19	13
Other education types	12	10
<i>Registered job seeker 2015</i>		
Not registered as a job seeker	82	79
Registered as a job seeker	18	21
<i>NEET 2015</i>		
Working or studying	88	86
NEET	12	14

# Operationalisation of activity types

**Activity type** is operationalised according to the respondent's response on their "main activity right now", what we call primary activity. This results in the following groups: Students, workers, job seekers, other activity, or no activity.

**NEET** is defined as individuals without work or study and is operationalised through the primary activity status. However, those who are primarily job seekers but indicate that they are working or studying as a secondary activity are classified as vulnerable workers and students, respectively.

*Tabell A4. Operationalisation of vulnerability within activity types*

Activity type	High vulnerability
Studying	<p>Studying at university or university college, but according to administrative registers (1a) are not registered in any course, or (1b) have taken less than 62.5 percentage of credit points, or</p> <p>Studying at upper secondary school, but according to administrative registers (2a) have not reached the third grade by autumn 2015 or (2b) have repeated a year within the same programme or (2c) have repeated the first year because they lacked qualifications for upper secondary school, or</p> <p>(3) Studying at municipal adult education or folk high school but according to administrative registers lack an upper secondary school qualification.</p> <p>(4) Indicate that they are primarily job-seeking but report studying as a secondary activity.</p>
Working	<p>(1) not permanently employed, (2) work less than 21 hours in the week, and (3) do not participate in any education, as well as (4a) either looking for other/more work or (4b) have been NEET for at least three months in the past six months.</p> <p>(5) Indicate that they are primarily job-seeking but report working as secondary activity.</p>
NEET	<p>Job seekers: (1a) have had a three-month period without work or study, and (1b) have not had a three-month period with work or study in the previous six months.</p> <p>Non-job seekers: nominate an activity or reason for inactivity that (2a) cannot be classified as being close to the labour market, or (2b) indicates involuntarily being without work or study.</p>

## References in the appendix

CILS4EU (2016a). *Children of immigrants longitudinal survey in four European countries. Technical Report. Wave 1– 2010/2011, v1.2.0.* Mannheim: Mannheim University.

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## Research report 2018/3

What are young adults at 19–20 years of age doing? What do their living conditions look like, how do they like their situation and how do they perceive their future?

This report presents the results of a survey where a large and national representative sample of Swedish young adults have reported on their situation. A broad range of young people are described; youth who are working, youth who are studying, youth who are job-seeking and youth who are doing something completely different. A picture of young adults who are highly active and committed to their labour market-related activities and future is revealed. The majority of those in employment enjoy their jobs, and regardless of employment, most young people are optimistic about their future.

Thanks to the broad sample, the report also identifies a large minority of young adults who are in a potentially vulnerable situation. These individuals have poorer living conditions and mental wellbeing in many respects. These are groups with weak connections to the labour market or who only make small progress in their studies, a situation that impedes both their quality of life here and now, as well as future success in the labour market. The authors therefore emphasise that it is more relevant to identify different types of vulnerability in terms of labour market-related problems rather than focusing only on youth who are unemployed or Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET).

This report is relevant to anyone who cares about young adults' wellbeing and entry into the labour market.

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