

Long-term exclusion

The different challenges facing young people not in employment, education or training

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not in employment, education or training**

Foreword

One in ten young people in Sweden are neither in work nor studying. For some of these young people, this situation is temporary, while for others it takes up a long period of their youth and risks leading to continued exclusion from society. The objective of Swedish youth policy is for all young people to have decent living conditions, the power to shape their lives and influence over developments in society. Young people becoming established in the world of work is crucial to achieving this aim.

To increase the number of young people entering the workplace and reduce the risk of their remaining out of work and not in education or training for a long period of time, we need to know which young people are at risk of neither working nor studying in the long term. The Swedish Government has highlighted the need to raise awareness of the heterogeneity of the group of young people not in employment nor in education or training (NEET) in order to design interventions to increase their employment. This report uses register data to describe the process of joining the workforce experienced by 70,000 young people who are NEET. This enables different sub-groups of young people at risk of long-term exclusion from work and study to be identified.

Just under a quarter of young people who are not in work or studying – just over 20,000 individuals – are long-term NEET. Suffering from mental illness or having a disability or illness that makes it harder to work are the greatest risk factors for a young person never having a job or studying. As many as two out of three NEET young people with mental illness never find a job and continue to be without work and not in education or training at the age of 29. The results show the importance of early preventive measures, especially for those young people with mental illness and for those with disabilities and illnesses that make working more difficult.

The current economic downturn has hit young people hard. Many young people have found it more difficult to complete upper secondary education or have become unemployed. All young people in this situation need support in order to find their feet in the world of work. The results in this report show that people who were NEET at a young age (16 to 19) and who found a job were once more out of work when the economy collapsed following the financial crisis. The majority then continue being unemployed and not in education or training until they are 29 years old. For this reason, it is important to prevent young people dropping out of school and to put preventive measures in place. Otherwise there is a risk that these young people will continue to face long-term exclusion from society.

The report has been produced at the Investigation Department by analyst Emma Neuman (project head) and Sara Fransson.

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Summary

One in ten young people in Sweden are neither in work nor studying at some time in their youth. For some of these young people, this situation is temporary, while for others it takes up a long period of their youth and risks leading to continued exclusion from society. If we are to be able to design interventions that reduce the proportion of young people not in work and not in education or training (NEET), we need to know which young people are at risk of being in the NEET group in the long term. This report uses register data to follow the processes in which young people become established in the labour market over time. It follows approximately 70,000 young people who were NEET in 2004 until they reach the age of 29.

The first part of the report describes the length of time different groups of young people spend in the NEET group and how many of them have found a job by the age of 29. The results for young people at the age of 29 show that:

- about six in ten are no longer in the NEET group
- just over three in ten are in work
- the highest proportion in work is seen for men with a Swedish background and the lowest proportion is for women with a foreign background
- the most common sectors in which the young people have found work are finance and business services, retail, and health and social care
- about two in ten have an insecure or weak position on the labour market
- about one in ten are mainly occupied by studying.

The results show that for the younger age cohort (aged 16–19 in 2004)

- one in two people have not worked and have not been in education or training for more than a decade
- on average, a person is NEET for six years up to the age of 29
- people with a Swedish background, mainly women, are not in work or education or training for the longest period of time
- the economic climate has an impact in the sense that one in four people who previously left the NEET group became NEET once more in the financial crisis
- two in three people with mental illness have not left the NEET group by the age of 29.

The results show that for the older age cohort (aged 20–24 in 2004)

- one in three people are not working or in education or training nine years later
- on average, a person is NEET for three years up to the age of 29
- young people with a foreign background remain in the NEET group the longest
- one in three people who had not completed upper secondary education remained in the NEET group at the age of 29 while this was the case for only one in ten with upper secondary education
- two out of three people with mental illness had not left the NEET group at the age of 29, which is considerably more than those without mental illness, where just over one in four remained in the NEET group.

The second part of the report describes how different background factors affect the probability of being in four different NEET sub-groups. The sub-groups partly denote how long a young person has been in the NEET group and how many times they have recurrently been in the NEET group up to the age of 29. These four sub-groups are: short-term NEET, medium-term NEET, long-term NEET and recurrent NEET. The three first groups are distinguished by the length of time a person spends in the NEET group. Those who are recurrent NEET spend the same amount of time in the NEET group as those who are medium-term NEET. The difference is that the recurrent NEET group do not leave the NEET group permanently and instead come into and out of it.

The results for short-term NEET show that

- about three in ten, 19,991 people are short-term NEET. They spend one or two years in the NEET group
- the probability of being short-term NEET is higher for people with a Swedish background than for people with a foreign background.

For medium-term NEET, the results show that

- just under four in ten, 26,874 people, are NEET for a medium-term period. They spend between two and eight years NEET (25 to 74 percent of the follow-up period) and then leave the NEET group
- the probability of being medium-term NEET is highest for women with a foreign background and lowest for men with a Swedish background
- those who have children are more often medium-term NEET.

The results for recurrent NEET show that

- about one in ten, 5,268 people, are recurrent NEET
- for women, the factors that have the highest impact in terms of being recurrent NEET are having children and receiving the benefit activity compensation (aktivitetsersättning).

For long-term NEET, the results show that

- just over one in four, 20,012 people, are long-term NEET. They spend between five and eleven years NEET (75 percent or more of the follow-up period)
- men are long-term NEET to a somewhat higher extent than women
- the background factors that have the greatest impact on being long-term NEET are having a disability or an illness that reduces capacity to work and suffering from mental illness.

Introduction

The objective of Swedish youth policy is for all young people to have decent living conditions, the power to shape their lives and influence over developments in society. This objective is presented in the Government Bill on youth policy *Med fokus på unga* (With a focus on young people) (2013/14:191). The bill emphasises the importance of good conditions when growing up and the importance of youth for development and finding one's feet in the adult world.

The term “decent living conditions” incorporates young people being given opportunities to study and work. Finding a job is an important element in young people gaining independence and feeling part of society as a whole. The routes to achieving this may differ. For just over one in ten young people in Sweden, this path may involve being entirely outside the world of work and the world of education at some point.¹

Since 2007, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society (MUCF) has been working with Statistics Sweden and the Swedish Public Employment Service to produce a measurement that describes and monitors the group of young people that are not in work or in education or training (NEET). The proportion of NEET has remained relatively unchanged in recent years, despite a fall in youth unemployment and what seems to be an improvement in young people's opportunities to enter the labour market (MUCF 2017a).

In 2018, MUCF and 61 other Swedish government agencies signed a joint Letter of Intent to work together to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Government has asserted that Sweden is to be a leader in implementing the Agenda (Government Decision 2018). This report concerns several of the SDGs in the 2030 Agenda, especially SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, which has reducing the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training as one of its targets.

In order to reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training, we need knowledge about the different circumstances of people in the NEET group. The Government takes the view that it is important to shed light on the heterogeneity of the NEET group so as to be able to put policy measures and interventions in place to increase the employment rate of this group of young people (SOU 2017:9; SOU 2013:74). One important element is identifying and surveying which young people risk remaining in this group over a long period of time. This means it is necessary to monitor the processes by which young people become established in the labour market over time.

Of the just over 160,000 young people in Sweden who were not working or studying in a particular year, some are in this situation for a limited time. These include, for example, young people who take a gap year after upper secondary school and are likely to have a short path to finding a job or studying further. MUCF has previously found that a relatively large proportion of young people who are not working or studying are likely to be travelling, working abroad or studying abroad without receiving funding from the Swedish Board of Student Finance (CSN) (MUCF 2017b).

In other words, not all NEET are marginalised or in need of interventions, and for many individuals this is a transitional phase of life (MUCF 2017a; Plenty et al 2018). Nevertheless, there are young people who are NEET for a longer period of their lives and for them the problem scenario is often a complex one. If these young people are to leave the NEET group, collaboration between several different actors in society will be needed. Being long-term NEET is costly both for the individual and for society in general. It can also increase the risk of continued exclusion. Research has shown that long periods outside the job market can lead to considerably worse opportunities for people to enter work and also a greater risk of ill-health (Olofsson 2018; Nordström Skans 2004).

¹ In 2018, the proportion of young people who were NEET aged 16–29 was 8.5 percent. See <https://www.mucf.se/uvas-statistik> for statistics on NEET for 2007 to 2018.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the heterogeneity of the NEET group. Following the process of people in the NEET group becoming established in the labour market over time enables us to identify which young people leave the NEET group and which young people remain NEET for a long period and thus run a high risk of long-term exclusion from society.

The first part of the report examines how long different groups of young people spend in the life situation NEET. The second part of the report analyses how different background factors affect the risk of being in four different categories of NEET: short-term, medium-term, recurrent and long-term. These categories have been created based on previous research and the classification is derived from the number of periods that a person is in the NEET group and the length of the consecutive period/periods in which the person is NEET as a life situation. This classification makes it possible to distinguish between young people who are not working or studying for a short period of time (short-term) from young people in this life situation for a longer period (medium-term, recurrent and long-term). This also makes it possible to identify those individuals who, following a longer period in the NEET group, then leave it for study and work (medium-term). Finally, it provides information about the background factors that increase the risk of having a weak link to the labour market, in the sense that a person is working or studying in one year but in the NEET group in a different year (recurrent).

It is important to bear in mind that the people in the short-term NEET group may be out of work for a period of time (one to two years) that in other contexts would be long enough for them to be described as long-term unemployed. The Swedish Public Employment Authority (2017) terms young people under the age of 25 who have been unemployed for more than six months as long-term unemployed. For those over 25 this threshold is a year.

Material and methodology

MUCF's measurement of young people not in employment, education or training is produced each year jointly with Statistics Sweden.² The measurement is unique in that it is based on register data for the entire Swedish population and is calculated based on data for all young people aged 16 to 29 in the Swedish population register. A person is classified as NEET if they are aged 16 to 29 and for a complete calendar year 1) have not had an income above one price base amount (SEK 47,300 in 2020) and 2) have not received student funding, been registered in education or studied Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) for more than 60 hours.

To produce statistics on NEET, a number of basic variables from Statistics Sweden's register database LISA (longitudinal integration database for sickness insurance and labour market studies) are used. The register data used in this report covers everyone aged 16 to 29 in the Swedish population register in the years 2004 to 2017. It is also possible to follow the same individual over time and thus to follow individuals' process of becoming established in the labour market up to the age of 29. This report uses this register data to follow young people not in work and not in education or training over time and monitor their entering and leaving the NEET group.

² Summaries and publication of statistics on young people who are not in work, education or training are produced with a time delay of about 1.5 years. This is because statistics on income and education are compiled with a time lag. For a description and a discussion of different definitions of youth unemployment and young people not in work, education or training, see e.g. Olofsson and Wikström (2018).



This study only includes the young people who were in the NEET group in 2004. Given the data available, this is the delimitation that produces the longest follow-up period for individuals who belonged to the NEET group at any time. Starting the follow-up in 2004 is also appropriate as the economy was in a relatively normal state in that year.³

The report is further delimited to following two different age groups over time:

- All individuals aged 16–19 (born in 1985–1988) who were in the NEET group in 2004 are followed until they reach the age of 29 (followed for ten to thirteen years).
- All individuals aged 20–24 (born in 1980–1984) who were in the NEET group in 2004 are followed until they reach the age of 29 (followed for five to nine years).

We chose not to include those who were older than 24 in 2004 due to this producing far too short a follow-up period.

Using this approach makes it possible to establish how many of those who were NEET in 2004 remained in the NEET group during the follow-up years and how many found some form of employment. It is also possible to identify which sub-groups risk staying in the NEET group for several years and thus illuminate the heterogeneity within the group of young people not in work or in education or training.

The results of this report are described for a number of different sub-groups. As outlined above, there is a division into a younger and an older age cohort based on the person's age in 2004. The younger cohort are 16–19 and the older cohort 20–24. Additionally, sub-groups were studied based on legal sex (female

³ The National Institute of Economic Research (NIER) Economic Tendency Indicator was close to 100 in 2004, i.e. the economy was in a neutral state. See <https://www.konj.se/english/publications/economic-tendency-survey.html> for an overview of the Barometer Indicator over time.



or male) and foreign or Swedish background. Foreign background refers to people born abroad or born in Sweden with two parents born abroad. Swedish background refers to people born in Sweden with at least one parent born in Sweden. Finally divisions were made into sub-groups based on whether people have or have not completed upper secondary education and whether or not they have a mental illness.

The report terms people who have been diagnosed with a psychiatric illness and/or have been medicated for psychiatric problems as individuals with mental illness. Data on mental illness and medication is obtained from the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare's patient register. This definition of mental illness does not include those individuals who experience mental illness in the form of mental problems where the requirements for a psychiatric diagnosis are not met. Similarly, nor are we able to identify those individuals who have not been in contact with the healthcare service for their psychiatric problems. The National Board of Health and Welfare (2013) estimates that the proportion of people in the population suffering from mental illness, including mental problems, as being between 20 and 40 percent. Furthermore, they find that the proportion with mental illness serious enough to require treatment is between 5 and 10 percent.

We additionally studied how a number of other background factors affect the probability of belonging to the four NEET sub-groups:

- Receiving compensation for a disability or illness that reduces capacity to work
- Having children
- Activity unknown
- Living in an area with socioeconomic challenges
- Having a mental illness



**How long are
young people
NEET for?**

This chapter provides a picture of how long young people remain without work and not in education or training. Those who were NEET in 2004 are followed over time and the proportion leaving the NEET group is reported for different sub-groups based on sex, foreign or Swedish background, age, complete or incomplete upper secondary education and young people who have or do not have a mental illness. Finally, we report on how many of those who were NEET in 2004 are established in the labour market at the age of 29 and the sectors in which they work.

Following those who were NEET in 2004 over time

In 2004, 73,824 people aged 16–24 were in the NEET group. This equates to just under 8 percent of the total population in Sweden of that age. There were about the same number of young women and young men in the NEET group. About one in three had a foreign background, which is considerably more than in the population of that age in total (15 percent). Of the people who were NEET in 2004, about 90 percent (66,665 people) could be followed up in register data until they reached the age of 29.

Both the number and the proportion of NEET increase with age. In the younger age cohort, 15,560 individuals were NEET, equivalent to 3 percent of all of that age. In the older age cohort, approximately one in ten, 58,264 people were in the NEET group.

Table 2.1 Number and proportion NEET by age, sex and Swedish or foreign background, 2004.

	Age 16–19	Age 20–24
Total no. young people in age group	451,899	522,312
NEET		
No. (%)	15,560 (3.1)	58,264 (11.2)
No. (%) young women, foreign background	2,572 (7.4)	10,209 (20.6)
No. (%) young women, Swedish background	4,576 (2.5)	19,089 (9.3)
No. (%) young men, foreign background	2,696 (7.4)	9,723 (20.2)
No. (%) young men Swedish background	5,681 (2.9)	19,186 (8.8)

Note: No data on country of birth was available for 20 girls and 15 boys aged 16–19. No data on country of birth was available for 32 girls and 25 boys aged 20–24.

One in two 16–19 year-olds who were NEET in 2004 remain NEET for more than over a decade

Figure 2.1 shows how high a proportion of young people aged 16–19 who belonged to the NEET group in 2004 remained in this life situation until the age of 29.⁴ The figure shows four different groups: women with a foreign background, women with a Swedish background, men with a foreign background and men with a Swedish background.

The proportion remaining NEET is similar for all four groups. In the first years – 2004–2007 – the proportion falls to approximately 40 percent. This means that almost six out of ten of those who were NEET in 2004 leave the group for work or education in the first three years. In 2008, 2009 and 2010, the proportion increases again and around half remain in the NEET group in 2010. After 2010, no more leave the NEET group and the proportion remains constant at about 50 percent. Thus one in two of those aged between 16 and 19 who were NEET in 2004 are still NEET 13 years later.

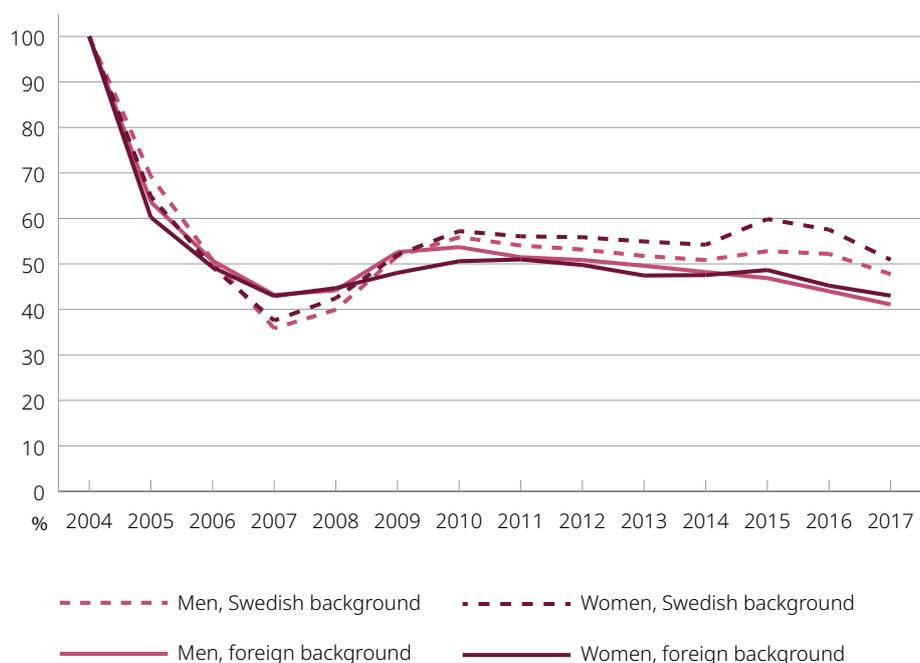


Figure 2.1 Proportion of young people who were NEET in 2004 who remain in the NEET group, aged 16–19, 2005–2017. By sex and foreign or Swedish background. %.

Note: 2015 to 2017 includes fewer individuals as those who had reached the age of 29 could no longer be followed.

⁴ This means that we are not taking into account the fact that people may leave the situation for other reasons, such as death or moving abroad. If the proportion leaving the group for reasons other than for study or work differs between the groups, this may affect the results. A report by the Swedish Research Council for Health and Working Life (Forte) (2020) makes a similar analysis which takes into account people leaving the NEET group for reasons other than work or study. In general, their results match ours.

Women with a Swedish background in the younger age cohort are NEET for the longest period of time

Young people with a Swedish background, mainly women, remain in the NEET group for a somewhat longer time than others. On average, a woman with a Swedish background is NEET for just over six years of the total 11 years over which the individuals were followed. However, it should be pointed out that in general the differences between the different sub-groups are small. The dark red line in the diagram shows that the proportion for women with a Swedish background is higher than for other groups after 2010.⁵ Just under six out of ten women with a Swedish background remained in the NEET group in this period. For people with a foreign background, about one in two people remained in the NEET group and slightly more for men with a Swedish background.

The financial crisis led to many people in the younger age cohort returning to the NEET group

MUCF has previously presented a summary of how the financial crisis and the subsequent economic downturn affected young people who left the NEET group in 2004 to 2007 for study or work (MUCF 2020). Figure 2.1, shown again in this report, is used as the basis for that analysis. The figure shows that it was the young people who were not in work or education or training at a young age (16–19) whose process of joining the labour market was negatively affected by the economic downturn in 2008 to 2010. In 2007, approximately two-thirds of the young people in this younger age group who were NEET in 2004 were in some form of education or study. It was mainly young people with a Swedish background who had managed to move on to work or study.

When the economy picked up in 2010, almost one in four of the young people who had managed to leave the NEET group were once more not in work or education or training. After the downturn, the majority of these young people did not manage to get back into work or study. Instead this life situation continued until the age of 29. Just over half of all of those who were NEET when they were 16–19 in 2004 were still NEET at the age of 29. This is despite many of them being in some form of employment in 2005–2007.

However, the crisis had limited impact on those who were NEET when they were 20–24

Young people who found themselves NEET at the age of 20–24 do not show the same sensitivity to fluctuations in the economy compared with the younger age cohort. Just over one in three who were NEET in this age group were still NEET at the age of 29. However, as shown by figure 2.2, there was a relatively little impact from the economic downturn in 2008 to 2010 for the older age

⁵ The differences are statistically significant at a 95% level for all years apart from 2017 where there was no difference between women and men with a Swedish background.

cohort compared with the younger cohort. During the recession, the proportion that remained in the NEET group did not decrease for the older cohort. After 2010, however, the proportion that remained in the NEET group continued to fall.

The fact that it was mainly the younger age cohort who were affected by the financial crisis matches the results presented in the analysis conducted by Theme Group Youth of those who were NEET for two consecutive years during the financial crisis (Theme Group Youth 2011). Regarding the impact of the economic downturn on being NEET for only one particular year however, it is the case that young people in the older cohort are the most sensitive to fluctuations in the economy (Forte 2020). As a rule, the proportion who are NEET in the age group 20–25 varies by around 10 percent, but this increased by a few percentage points in conjunction with the financial crisis (Ibid.).

In general, more people in the older age cohort than in the younger cohort leave the NEET group. After nine years, two out of three of the 20–24 year-olds had started working or studying while the equivalent proportion for the 16–19 year-olds is about half. This is in line with previous studies which showed that young people in the younger cohort remain NEET for longer (Theme Group Youth 2014).

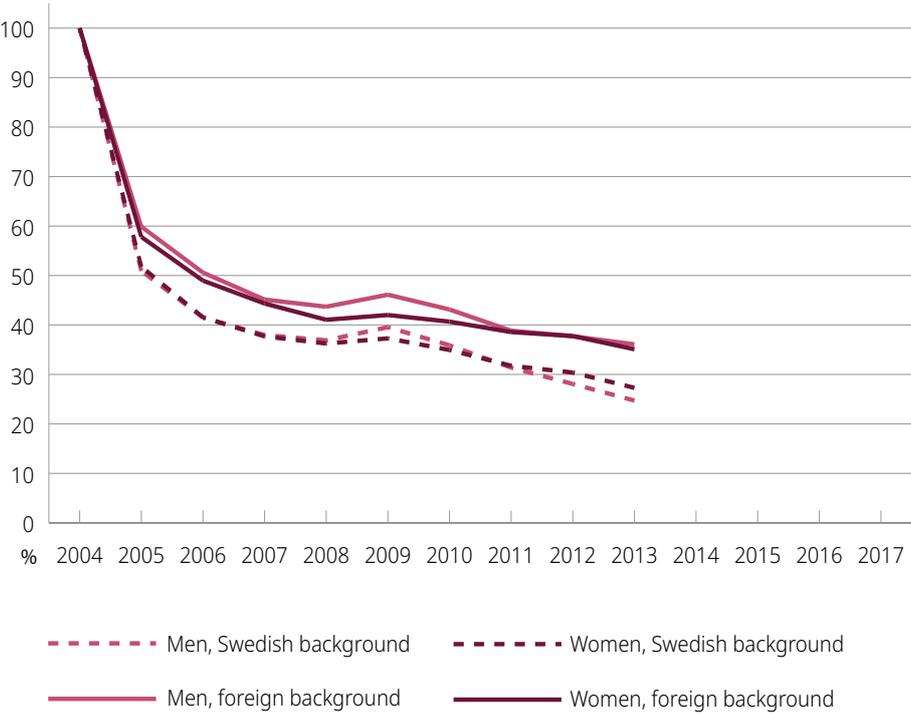


Figure 2.2 Proportion of young people who were NEET in 2004 who remain in the NEET group, aged 20–24, 2005–2017. By sex and foreign or Swedish background. %.

Note: 2015 to 2017 includes fewer individuals as those who had reached the age of 29 could no longer be followed.

Young people with a foreign background in the older age cohort remain in the NEET group for a longer period

In the older age cohort, it is somewhat more common for young people with a foreign background to find themselves not in work and not studying for a longer period compared with young people with a Swedish background. On average, a person with a Swedish background in this age cohort is in the NEET group for three out of six possible follow-up years and a person with a foreign background finds themselves in this group for a period of about three months longer. This differs from the 16–19 age cohort where instead it is young people with a Swedish background, mainly women, who are in the NEET group for the longest period of time.

One in three people who did not complete upper secondary education remain in the NEET group

Figure 2.3 shows the proportion who were NEET in 2004 who left the group for study or work divided by whether, in 2004, they had or had not completed upper secondary education. It emerges that a considerably lower proportion of those with incomplete upper secondary education leave the NEET group. After one year, just under 60 percent of those without upper secondary education are still NEET while the equivalent proportion for those with upper secondary education is just over 40 percent. The gap between those who have and do not have upper secondary education remains over time. After nine years, just over one in ten people who completed upper secondary education remain in the NEET group. The proportion is almost three times that of those who did not complete upper secondary education – about one in three.

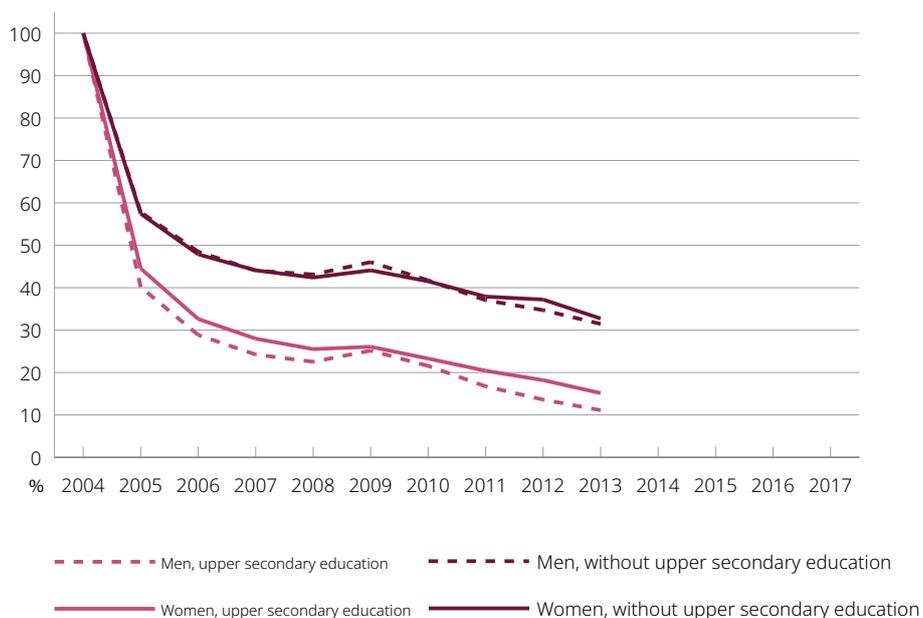


Figure 2.3 Proportion of young people who were NEET in 2004 who remain in the NEET group, aged 20–24, 2005–2017. By sex and completion of upper secondary education. %.

Note: 2015 to 2017 includes fewer individuals as those who had reached the age of 29 could no longer be followed.

Two out of three people with mental illness do not leave the NEET group

Many people with mental illness did not leave the NEET group in the nine to thirteen years that we followed them. In the younger age cohort, just over 70 percent of those with mental illness never left the NEET group. The equivalent figure for those who do not have mental illness is just under 50 percent. The pattern is similar in the older cohort. The gap between those with mental illness and those without mental illness is even greater among the older cohort, however. Of those with mental illness in the older cohort, it is mainly men who do not leave the NEET group.

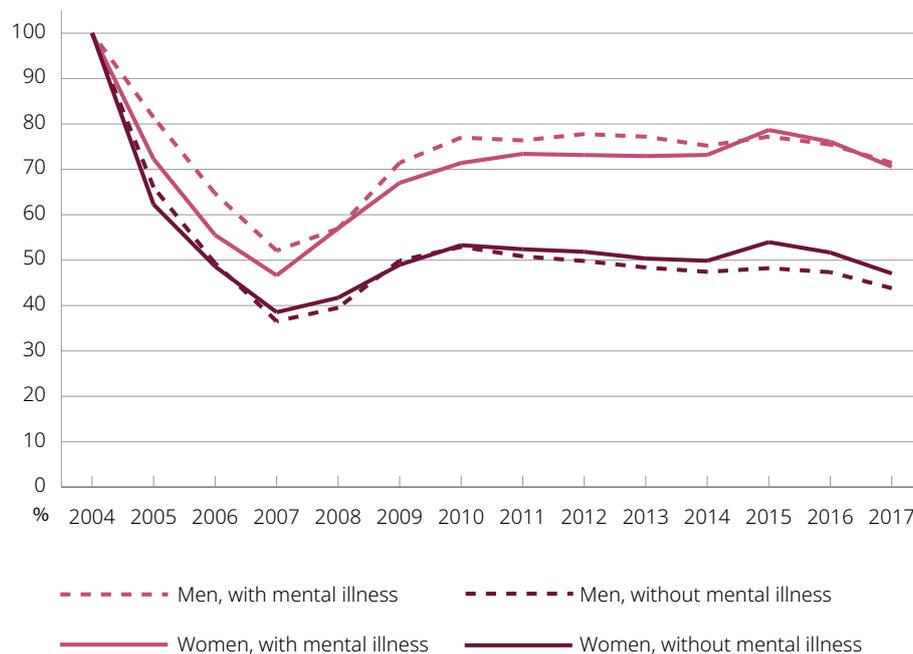


Figure 2.4 Proportion of 16–18 year-olds who were NEET in 2004 who remain in the NEET group in 2005 to 2017. By sex and mental illness. %.

Note: 2015 to 2017 includes fewer individuals as those who had reached the age of 29 could no longer be followed.

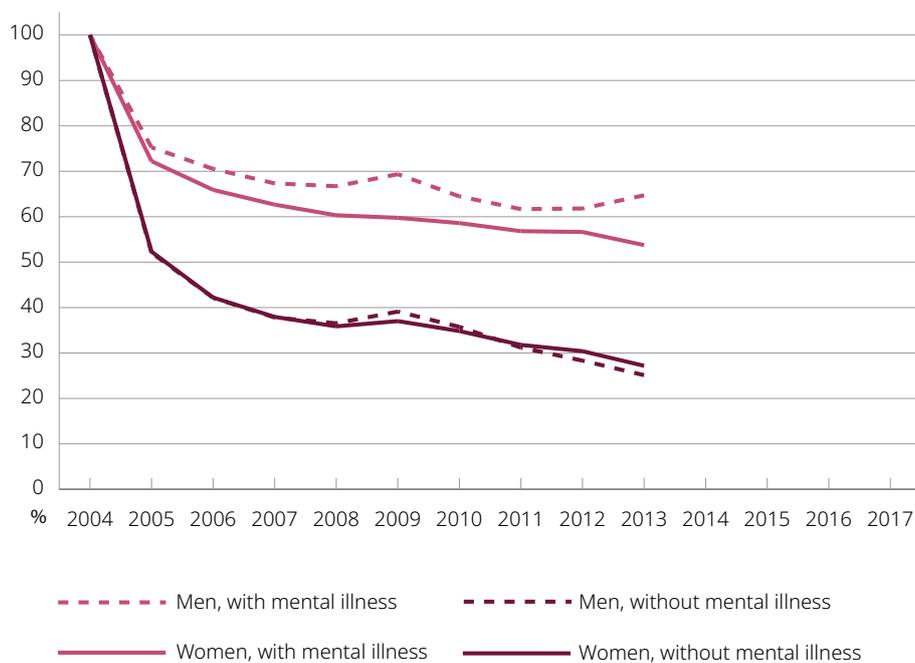


Figure 2.5 Proportion of 20–24 year-olds who were NEET in 2004 who remain in the NEET group in 2005 to 2017. By sex and mental illness. %.

Note: 2015 to 2017 includes fewer individuals as those who had reached the age of 29 could no longer be followed.

One in three NEET are established in the labour market by the age of 29

Of those who were NEET in 2004, 66,665 people can be followed up until the age of 29. At the age of 29, just under a third, 19,887 people, are established in the labour market. To be established, the person must be employed, have an income that exceeds a certain annually adjusted level, not have been unemployed at any time in the year, and not have been studying (Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ), 2016). The proportion who are established is highest for men with a Swedish background, at 35 percent, and lowest for women with a foreign background, at 22 percent. For men with a foreign background and women with a Swedish background, the proportion who are established in the labour market goes up to 28 percent. This result is in line with the earlier studies that showed differences in the level of establishment between different groups of young people (see e.g. MUCF 2019b).

Additionally, there are people who have left NEET for work, but who do not have sufficiently high incomes or have had periods of unemployment during the year and therefore are not counted in the group who are established.⁶ About one in five, 12,005 people, have an insecure or weak position on the labour market.

It further emerges that about one in ten of the people who were in the NEET group in 2004 were studying at the age of 29. 2,629 people were studying at a higher education institution or at university and 3,821 people were engaged in other kinds of education or training.

⁶ A more exhaustive description of definitions for established and weak and insecure position on the labour market respectively is provided by the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) (2016).

Establishment in the labour market for those who have attended folk high school

Starting to study at folk high school can be valuable and constitute a turning point in life for those in the NEET group. For example, folk high school is highlighted as being important for people with a diagnosis of high-functioning autism as it constitutes a socially safe environment and offers access to the support functions that individuals in this group need (MUCF 2018). Among those who were aged 16–19 and NEET in 2004, just over one in twelve moved on to study at folk high school. When these people reach the age of 29, one in four are established in the labour market and a further third have a weak or insecure position on the labour market. This means that the proportion who are working among those who have entered folk high school is the same as for the NEET group as a whole. However, more of the young people who attended folk high school have an insecure position on the labour market. Studying at folk high school can constitute an important part of the establishment process. At the same time, people who apply to folk high schools may be individuals who are extra vulnerable and therefore find a strong position on the labour market more difficult to achieve.

In which sectors are young people who have ceased being NEET employed?

Young people aged 16–24 work to a considerably higher extent than adults in retail and in the hotel and restaurant industry (Engdahl & Forslund 2016). These are usually described as important entry points for young people when finding their feet in the world of work (Ibid). Here, the young people who were in the NEET group and then left it are described based on the industry in which they were working at the age of 29. Several of these young people are in the phase of becoming established in the labour market. At the same time, they are all older than the younger age cohort of young people who are over-represented in retail and the hotel and restaurant industry. It is thus not certain that those who have been in and have left the NEET group at the age of 29 are working in typical youth sectors.

Table 2.2 shows the sectors in which those who were in the NEET group are working at the age of 29.⁷ The most common sectors for women are health and social care, finance and business services and education. Among men, the most common sectors are finance and business services, retail, and manufacturing and mining, energy and the environment. In the finance and business services sector, it is common to work as a salesperson, caretaker, in security and in recruitment. The sector is broad and includes everything from marketing services and financial and legal consultancy to property management.

⁷The division into sectors is based on the SNI code for the individual's main workplace. The division follows that set out in Engdahl and Forslund (2016).

The pattern is similar for those who are established and those with a weak or insecure position in the labour market. It is worth noting that a higher proportion of those with a weak or insecure position work in the hotel and restaurant sector (10 percent) compared with those who are established (6 percent). This indicates that jobs in the hotel and restaurant sector more often produce insecure employment and income. It may also be the case that working in the hotel and restaurant sector acts as an entry point for young people who have been NEET when they first start to find a footing on the labour market.

	Women			Men		
	All	Established	Weak or insecure position	All	Established	Weak or insecure position
Health and social care	21	22	19	5	5	5
Finance and business services	20	20	20	20	19	22
Education	16	15	17	4	4	5
Retail	11	12	10	16	17	14
Transport	7	7	7	10	10	10
Hotel and restaurant sector	7	6	9	7	6	10
Personal and cultural services	6	5	9	5	4	7
Manufacturing and mining, energy and the environment	6	7	4	14	16	11
Public sector	2	3	1	3	3	1
Information and communication	2	2	2	5	5	4
Construction	1	1	1	9	9	8
Farming, forestry and fishing	1	1	1	2	2	3

Table 2.2 Sectors in which young people who have left the NEET group are working at the age of 29. By level of establishment and sex. %.

During the financial crisis, 1,352 people re-entered the younger age cohort of the NEET group. In numerical terms, there were more people in the older age cohort who once more became NEET in the financial crisis, 5,264 people. A third of those who had worked and had then once more entered the NEET group in 2008, 2009 or 2010 worked in finance and business services. Besides this industry, it was almost equally as common to have left employment in the transport, hotel and restaurant or education sectors. Just over one in ten became NEET after having worked in one of these three sectors.

Four groups of young people who are not in work nor in education



This chapter divides the young people who were in the NEET group in 2004 into four different sub-groups based on how long they spend NEET, and how many times they are NEET until they reach the age of 29. The four sub-groups are: short-term NEET, medium-term NEET, recurrent NEET and long-term NEET. Details are also provided on how different background factors affect the probability of being in the four different NEET sub-groups. This account is based on the results of regression analysis and these statistical links are also illustrated in five portraits of fictional young people..

A classification within the NEET group

Both Swedish and international statistics on young people who are not in work or studying encounter challenges in describing the variations in the group in an easily comprehensible way. In recent years, research has highlighted the importance of dividing all young people not in education or studying into clearer sub-groups based on how long they are in this situation in their lives (Forte 2020; Contini et al. 2019; Plenty et al. 2018). Therefore different classifications have recently been developed within this parameter.

Table 3.1 Classification of those who were NEET in 2004 into four sub-groups

	Definition of sub-group
Short-term NEET	The person has been NEET at some point. Their time in the NEET group is less than 25 percent of the follow-up period.
Medium-term NEET	The person is in the NEET group for a consecutive period. Their time in the NEET group is between 25 percent and 74 percent of the follow-up period.
Recurrent NEET	The person is in the NEET group for two or more periods and leaves it for work or study in between. Their time in the NEET group is between 25 percent and 74 percent of the follow-up period.
Long-term NEET	The person is in the NEET group for one or more periods. Their time in the NEET group is 75 percent or more of the follow-up period.

Note: The follow-up period is 10–13 years for the younger age cohort and 5–9 years for the older age cohort.

Based on previous research, in this chapter we have divided all the young people who were not working or studying in 2004 into four different sub-groups. The sub-groups were defined based on how long and how often the young people were in the NEET group and are summarised in table 3.1. The classification is based on the division applied to NEET in Italy by Contini et al. (2019), but Plenty et al. also use a similar classification system in a report on the employment and living conditions of young people in Sweden. Forte (the Swedish Research Council for Health and Working Life) (2020) also make a division between 25 year-olds who were NEET for 1–2 years and 3–5 years respectively in a five-year period. It is important to point out that the results of these earlier studies are not fully comparable with the results in this report. In the Forte study (2020), the focus is on people under the age of 25 and the study distinguishes between consistent and distinct periods NEET.

Short-term NEET:

This category contains the young people who were not in work, education or training in 2004 and who were NEET for less than 25 percent of the follow-up period in their respective age category. For young people who were NEET when they were aged 16–19, this means that they were in this life situation for a maximum of two years, in other words to 2005 at the latest. For young people who were NEET aged 20–24, this means that they did not work or study for a maximum of a year. After having been NEET for one or two years, these young people then commenced working or studying and are no longer in the NEET group.

Medium-term NEET:

This category contains the young people who were not working or studying in 2004 and who were NEET for 25–74 percent of the follow-up period. For young people who were NEET when they were 16–19, this means that they were NEET for a consecutive period of between three and eight years. For young people who were NEET when they were 20–24, this means that they were NEET for a consecutive period of two to four years.

Recurrent NEET:

This category contains the young people who were not working or studying in 2004 and who have left and then re-entered the NEET group. These young people have been in the NEET group for at least two different periods. In total, these individuals have not been working or in education or training for 25–74 percent of the follow-up period. This means that they are NEET in certain years but employed or in education or training in one or more years. The group spent the same amount of time in the NEET group as people who are medium-term NEET. The difference is that the recurrent NEET group do not leave the NEET group permanently but move in and out of it.

Long-term NEET:

This group contains the young people who were not working or studying in 2004 and were in the NEET group for 75 percent or more of the follow-up period. For young people who were NEET when they were 16–19, this means that they did not work or study for a total of nine to eleven years. For young people who were NEET when they were 20–24, this means that they did not work or study for a total of five to six years.

How big are the four sub-groups?

The young people who were NEET in 2004 have been categorised into the four NEET sub-groups based on their employment in 2004–2017. Figure 3.1 shows how high a proportion of the people who were in the NEET group in 2004 belong to the four different categories: short-term, medium-term, recurrent and long-term.

Approximately three out of ten young people are short-term NEET. In numerical terms, this is equivalent to 19,991 people. They were not in work and not in education or training only in 2004 or in 2004 and 2005. It is more common for young people in the older age cohort to be in the NEET group for a short period of time than for young people in the younger age cohort. Just under one in four young people who were NEET when they were 16–19 are short-term NEET. The equivalent figure for those aged 20–24 is just under one in three.

The largest group (just under 40 percent) are those who were in this life situation in the medium term. Numerically, this is equivalent to 26,874 young people who were not working or studying in 2004. In this group, the number of years for which a young person is NEET varies. On average, medium-term NEET are in the NEET group for six years if they are in the younger age cohort and three years if they are in the older age cohort.

About one in ten young people who were not in work or in education or training in 2004 have been in the NEET group recurrently, but have had one or more shorter periods in which they were in some form of employment.⁸ 5,268 people are in this group. It is more common to be recurrent NEET in the younger age group than in the older age group. This may partly be because we follow the younger people for a longer period of time.

Just over one in four young people who were not in work or in education or training in 2004 are long-term NEET. In numerical terms, 20,012 people are long-term NEET. It is equally common to be long-term NEET in both age cohorts.

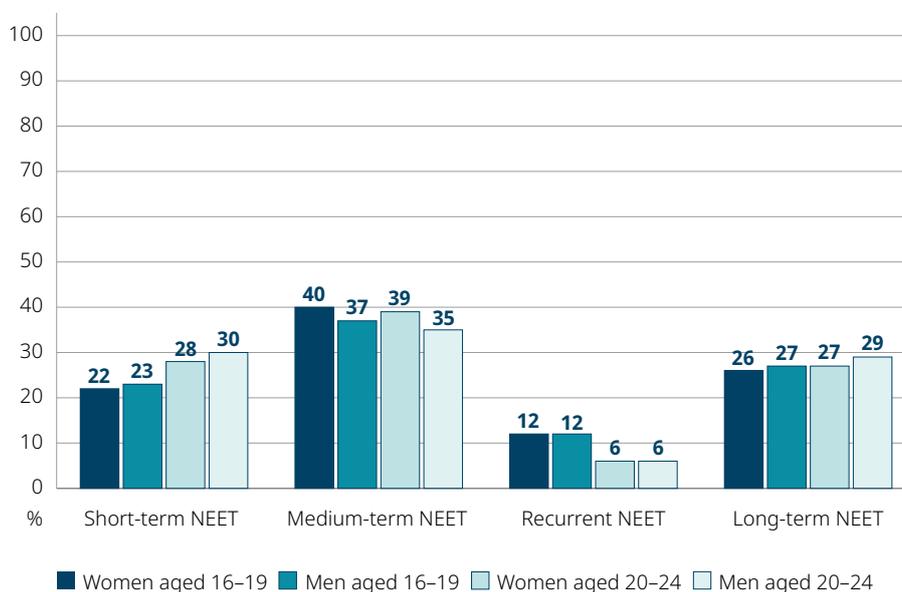


Figure 3.1 Proportion of young people in different NEET sub-groups. By sex and age. %.

⁸The data used is annual and is based on an individual’s employment in the month of November. It is possible that individuals enter and leave work and study during the year. Were data to be analysed for individuals’ employment each month, it is likely that more people would have been categorised as recurrent NEET instead of medium-term NEET.

In general there are minor differences between the sexes in terms of which group of NEET the people belong to. It is more common for people with a foreign background in the older age cohort to spend a medium length of time in the NEET group while people with a Swedish background in this age cohort are short-term NEET to a greater extent. In the younger age cohort it is more common for people with a Swedish background to be long-term NEET than people with a foreign background.

To more clearly distinguish between the background factors affecting which of the four categories a person belongs to, in the next chapter we present the results of regression analysis in which several background factors can be analysed simultaneously. This enables differences between the individuals who remain in the NEET group for different lengths of time to be identified.

Which factors affect whether young people find themselves in one group or another?

It has already been shown that there are differences between different groups of young people, for example based on age and Swedish or foreign background, in terms of which of the NEET sub-groups they belong to. To more clearly identify which factors affect which sub-group, a different person is in, we have drawn on previous studies and research.⁹ In the first instance, these are reports addressing which factors at individual level affect the risk of being long-term NEET. However, the literature that looks at how different factors affect the risk of being NEET does not always distinguish between those who are NEET for a short or a long period of time. To identify which factors affect whether a person finds themselves in the respective sub-category defined above, both factors that have been shown to affect the risk of being in the NEET group and factors that affect the risk of being long-term NEET have been included.

The importance of background factors varies by sex and background

In general, there are relatively small differences between the proportion of women and men who are in the NEET group. After 2000, however, men make up a somewhat larger proportion of the NEET group, which could be explained by women studying at post-upper secondary level to a higher extent (Forte 2020). At the same time, the proportion of NEET is higher among women born abroad aged 25–29 compared with other groups (MUCF 2017a).

Young people with a foreign background generally find it harder to become established in the labour market than young people with a Swedish background (Engdahl & Forslund 2016). A number of studies have shown that young people with a foreign background are over-represented in the NEET group. This can be linked to a number of factors that make it harder for those born abroad to enter the labour market, such as educational background, experience of working life, language skills and physical and mental health (MUCF 2019a). Previous studies have also shown that young people with a foreign background are in the NEET group for a longer time than young people with a Swedish background (Theme Group Youth 2014, Forte 2020).

⁹We do not claim to cover this literature in its entirety. For an overview of scientific studies identifying the risk factors for becoming NEET, see Forte (2020).

The significance of background factors varies by the person's sex, background and sometimes both these factors at once. In order to study the combined effect of different background factors on how long a person is in the NEET group, we therefore conduct an analysis divided into four separate groups: women with a foreign background, women with a Swedish background, men with a foreign background and men with a Swedish background.

The risk of being NEET increases with age

The Forte study (2020) shows what the proportion who are NEET in different age groups in Sweden has looked like over time. Among 16–19 year-olds, just under 5 percent are NEET, irrespective of the economic climate. It is mainly when young people leave upper secondary education after the age of 19 that the proportion of NEET doubles to around 10 percent. There is currently little knowledge about how the risk of being long-term NEET differs due to age. The descriptive results presented in section two of this report indicate, however, that there are more people in the younger age cohort who are long-term NEET.

Disability and illness an obstacle to work and study

People who have worse opportunities to work are NEET to a higher extent. One group that often encounters obstacles to working is young people with one or more disabilities. According to the definition used by the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, a disability means a limitation to a person's physical, mental or intellectual capacity.

MUCF (2017) finds that young people with disabilities run a higher risk of remaining outside both work and study. In line with this, the Agency for Participation (2016) finds that people with a disability that involves a reduced capacity to work have poorer labour market and educational outcomes in comparison with the rest of the population. In a study by Forte (2020), the authors find that among NEET aged 20–25, almost one in three has a disability (defined as reduced capacity to work). This is considerably higher than among all young people in the same age group, where the proportion is five percent (Forte 2020). The study also shows that young people with a disability remain in the NEET group for a significantly longer period of time.

An additional group that run a higher risk of being NEET are people with mental illness. Theme Group Youth (2017) find that among young people aged 20–29, there are three times as many in the NEET group who have received psychiatric care than among young people of that age in the population as a whole. The report also highlights that it is important to take into account the fact that mental illness can both be a risk factor for ending up in the NEET group and a consequence of being without work or education or training. Based on the Theme Group's results, it is not possible to state whether there is a causal link between mental illness and risk of being NEET and we can only point out that the two covary.

In a report, Plenty et al. (2018) find that people in the NEET group state to a greater extent that they have problems with mental illness – measured as feeling depressed, having low self-esteem or experiencing somatic problems – than other young people. They also show that there are differences within the NEET group. Those NEET with high vulnerability – those with a poor link to the labour market – have poorer mental wellbeing in particular. Furthermore, the differences that their report finds between those in the NEET group and other young people are greater for women than for men.

This report uses two measurements to identify disability, illness and mental illness. Firstly we have a parameter that identifies reduced capacity to work due to illness or disability. We measure this by looking at those who have received activity compensation (benefits for those with a reduced capacity for work) during the year. We do not distinguish between those individuals who have received this benefit for the whole year or only for a few months. We choose to describe this as compensation for illness or disability. It is important to point out that this parameter identifies a sub-group of those with an illness or disability and that there will be people with an illness or disability who are not receiving activity compensation who will thus be excluded.

The second parameter we use identifies mental illness in the form of a psychiatric condition. Statistics from the National Board of Health and Welfare enable us to identify people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness, syndrome or behavioural disorder.¹⁰ This data also includes information on whether a person has been prescribed medication for a mental illness, mental syndrome or behavioural disorder. This means that we do not include mental problems – such as depression, problems sleeping or anxiety – as the requirements for a psychiatric diagnosis are not met. It is therefore likely that there are more people in the NEET group with mental illness but who are not included in the group that we have deemed to have mental illness in this report.

We have chosen to include two different parameters linked to disabilities, illness and mental illness, because our data shows that these two parameters include different people. A person who has an illness or disability that makes it more difficult for them to work is not always included in the group of people with mental illness. 70 percent of those receiving activity compensation have psychiatric diagnoses, but the category also includes those who have illnesses of the nervous system such as cerebral palsy, and congenital malformations (Swedish National Insurance Agency, Försäkringskassan 2017).

Having children affects whether women are in the NEET group

In the space of one year, approximately 1,500 people under the age of 20 will become parents and they find it difficult to complete education and support a family (MUCF 2017a). However, it appears that becoming a parent affects young women and young men differently. Several studies have shown that it is more common for women with children than for men with children to be in the NEET group. In a study conducted by the Theme Group Youth (2014), the authors find that just under one in three women aged 16–25 in the NEET group has children and the equivalent proportion for women who are employed is about five percent. The report shows that equivalent proportions for men are about two percent in both groups. The authors show, however, that parenthood reduces the risk of being NEET for a long period (five years) for women, but has no effect on men. Thus it may be the case that parenthood increases the risk of young women finding themselves in the NEET group while the NEET group contains more women with children who find employment.¹¹

¹⁰ This is diagnoses F00–F99 in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-10). These include harmful use of alcohol or drugs. For a more extensive description, see <https://www.socialstyrelsen.se/utveckla-verksamhet/e-halsa/klassificering-och-koder/icd-10/>

¹¹ In the analysis we include a variable for whether a person has children. Swedish register data cannot measure the existence of children for young people with certainty as information on the number of children is provided for the household in which the person is entered on the population register. We combine several different pieces of data in the registers but still risk missing young people who are still living at home with a parent/parents, have their own children and are not receiving parental allowance.

Living in an area with socioeconomic challenges

There is extensive research literature studying how a person's opportunities on the labour market, health and education results are affected by living in areas with socioeconomic challenges (areas with high unemployment, low employment, where many people are receiving benefits and where young people's school results are poor).¹² In this literature it is difficult to determine what is cause and what is effect. On the one hand, it may be the case that a person becomes unemployed and then has to live somewhere rents are low, which tends to be in residential areas with socioeconomic challenges. On the other hand, it may be the case that a person grows up in an area where many people are unemployed and the contacts that are important for finding work are hard to establish. In this case, it is the poorer conditions in the area for finding work that increase the risk of being unemployed. Irrespective of the causal link, it is clear that the proportion of NEET differs in different parts of Sweden. Young people living in areas with socioeconomic challenges are over-represented in the NEET group (Delmos 2019; MUCF 2017a, Theme Group Youth 2014).

In this report, a residential area is classified as an area with socioeconomic challenges if it is included in the areas that in 2004 had a local development agreement with the Government, known as LUA areas (local development areas). There are 38 such areas in Sweden and the majority of them are among the most socially disadvantaged in terms of the living conditions of young people (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs 2008). These areas may be found in municipalities where there are more or fewer NEET than in the country as a whole. To avoid the area instead merely identifying the municipality in which a person lives, we compare the areas within municipalities. This means that the results must be interpreted as examining how the probability of belonging to a certain NEET group is affected by a young person living in an area with socioeconomic challenges in the municipality compared with living in an area that does not have socioeconomic challenges in the same municipality.

Activity unknown

Approximately one in three people in the NEET group cannot be traced in any register for activities and/or benefits – e.g. municipal or government measures, care of children or sickness and activity compensation – and these are then classed as activity unknown (Theme Group Youth 2017). Earlier studies have shown that this group is relatively well-off in terms of resources compared with other people in the NEET group but that the group also contains those who are marginalised and do not have any contact with government agencies (Ibid). It is possible that this may indicate that they are voluntarily or temporarily in the NEET group but there are no studies that explore in more detail whether this group remains in the NEET group for the long term.

Significant factors that are not included

Our analysis does not include whether people completed their qualifications at the end of upper secondary school or their level of education. Not having gained qualifications at upper secondary school is an important explanation for people finding it more difficult to find a job and ending up in the NEET group (MUCF 2017a). However, it is difficult to include school leaving qualifications in a study of the risk of being long-term NEET. Partly the level of education varies with age, and partly it is possible that young people will supplement their upper secondary education in the period over which we are following them, making it difficult to take qualifications into account.

¹² For a recent review of this research field, see Ramboll (2020) who were commissioned to produce an overview by the Delegation against segregation (Delmos).



Previous research points out that a number of factors regarding the conditions in which a young person grows up and their family situation affect whether they are NEET in later life.¹³ Young people with parents with a low level of education and who have had low incomes or received income support are over-represented in the NEET group. Crime and poverty are also risk factors (MUCF 2017s). We do not include these factors in this study.

Two ways of shedding light on the results

Statistical analysis that shows risk factors

Regression analysis is used to study which background factors affect whether a person is in one of the four groups. This means that we test covariation between the different background factors and being in the NEET group. It is important to point out that the comparison group is the people who are in any of the other NEET sub-groups. This means that risk factors for being in the NEET group as a whole will not be risk factors for being in all sub-groups. For example, mental illness increases the risk of becoming NEET but this should mainly be linked to being long-term NEET and not affect whether people are in the other NEET sub-groups to as great an extent.

¹³ See for example MUCF (2019) for an overview.



The regressions are conducted for four separate groups: women with a foreign background, women with a Swedish background, men with a foreign background and men with a Swedish background. A more detailed description of the regression analysis and its results is provided in the appendix on methodology

Portraits of young people who are NEET

Personal portraits are another way of illustrating the factors that distinguish between the people belonging to the four different groups of NEET. This method means that the statistical results for what increases or decreases the probability of being in the four groups are summarised in five personal portraits of young people. See the appendix on methodology for a more detailed description of the method.

It is important to bear in mind that the five fictional examples of young people who are NEET are *fictional*. These are not real people. Their stories have been developed by MUCF as descriptive type examples of how risk factors in combination and individually affect how long the young people remain in this life situation. This knowledge also makes it easier to identify the young people who need more long-term support to enter work or education and the young people who are closer to some form of employment and may be in need of different types of intervention.

Short-term NEET

Daniel is travelling round the world and working for a year after completing upper secondary school

Daniel is 19 and has recently completed upper secondary school with pass grades in all subjects.

He grew up in stable circumstances with his parents in an area of detached homes whose residents are known as some of the “better off” in the municipality.

Daniel and his friends started saving money and taking part-time jobs while still at school so that they could take a gap year travelling in Asia after finishing school. Daniel is enjoying being able to have a year out before starting higher education.

In June once Daniel had finished his exams, he continued working in a casual job in the restaurant where he worked for much of his time in upper secondary school. Because he is still able to live at home and does not have to pay any rent, he saves most of his pay for travelling. In January it's time to head off! On Daniel's 20th birthday the plane takes off to India. His return ticket back to Sweden is booked for December.

Because Daniel is out of the country for a year, this means that in the Swedish registers he is categorised as not working or studying. He is therefore categorised as NEET as he is 20 years old. However, Daniel is only away for this year. The following year, once he has returned to Sweden again, he applies for university and also starts studying. Because he is in the NEET group for only one year and does not return to the NEET group several times before the age of 29, he belongs to the short-term NEET sub-group.

Which young people are short-term NEET?

As described above, many young people are in the NEET group temporarily. Those who are short-term NEET are those who have been NEET at some point and where their time NEET makes up less than 25 percent of the follow-up period. The results for how different background factors affect the probability of being short-term NEET are summed up in the portrait of Daniel and in table 3.2.

Table 3.2 shows whether different background factors increase or reduce the probability of being short-term NEET. A plus (+) means that the background factor increases the probability of being short-term NEET instead of being in one of the other three NEET groups. A minus (-) means that the background factor reduces this probability. The results show that

- for people with a Swedish background, a person who is older when they enter the NEET group is more likely to be in the NEET group in the short term. The opposite correlation is found for people with a foreign background
- those receiving activity compensation for a disability or illness are less likely to be short-term NEET.
- people with mental illness are short-term NEET to a lesser extent
- men with a foreign background who have children have a higher probability of being short-term NEET. While being a mother reduces the probability of being short-term NEET for women.
- those living in an area with socioeconomic challenges are less likely to be short-term NEET.
- people whose activity is unknown are less likely to be short-term NEET.

We have also calculated the probability of being short-term NEET for the different groups (women with a foreign background, women with a Swedish background, men with a foreign background, men with a Swedish background). The probability of being short-term NEET is highest for men with a Swedish background at 31 percent. It is somewhat lower for women with a Swedish background at 29 percent. It is lowest for people with a foreign background at about 23 percent.

Table 3.2 Background factors affecting whether a young person is short-term NEET

Background factor	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Age	-	+	-	+
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	-	-	-	-
Has a mental illness	-	-	-	-
Has children	-	-	+	
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	-	-	-	-
Activity unknown	-	-	-	-
Probability of being short-term NEET	23	29	23	31

Note: An empty space in the table means that the background factor is not statistically significant at a 95 percent level.

Medium-term NEET

Yasmin came to Sweden as a child and after a period of parental leave has started studying part-time

Yasmin is 28 and came to Sweden with her family at the age of 9. Immediately after completing her upper secondary school qualifications, Yasmin moved in with her partner who supported them both. A year after finishing school, Yasmin became a mother. She has since had two more children and has therefore been on parental leave at the guaranteed level full-time. Yasmin has not actively sought work or studied during the time she has been on parental leave.

A year ago, Yasmin chose to study part-time (50%) at Komvux (municipal adult education) and continued to be on 50% parental leave. For this reason, after many years in the NEET group, she has been able to leave that life situation. After her studies at Komvux, Yasmin wants to find a job or start vocational education. Because Yasmin has succeeded in moving on to study, she is no longer in the NEET group but has previously been in it for several years. In other words, Yasmin has been in the NEET group for a longer consecutive period but has managed to leave it without returning to it before the age of 29. Therefore she is categorised as *medium-term NEET*.

Which young people are medium-term NEET?

The people who are medium-term NEET are in the NEET group for a continuous period. The time they spend in the NEET group is between 25 and 74 percent of the follow-up period. The results for how different background factors affect the probability of spending a medium length of time in the NEET group are described in the portrait of Yasmin and in table 3.3.

The results for how the different background factors affect the probability of being medium-term NEET show that

- for people with a foreign background, a person who is older when they enter the NEET group is more likely to be in the NEET group for a medium period. The opposite correlation is found for people with a Swedish background.
- people receiving activity compensation for a disability or illness are in the medium-term NEET sub-group to a lesser extent.
- people with a mental illness have a lower probability of being in the NEET group in the medium term, with the exception being men with a Swedish background.
- those who have children are more likely to be in the NEET group in the medium term, with the exception being men with a foreign background.
- men with a foreign background living in an area with socioeconomic challenges have a higher probability of being medium-term NEET.
- people whose activity is unknown are medium-term NEET to a higher extent with the exception being men with a Swedish background.

The probability of being medium-term NEET is highest for women with a foreign background, at 44 percent. For men with a foreign background it is slightly lower at 42 percent. For women with a Swedish background it is 36 percent and it is lowest for men with a Swedish background at 32 percent.

Table 3.3 Background factors affecting whether a young person is medium-term NEET

Background factor	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Age	+	-	+	-
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	-	-	-	-
Has a mental illness	-	-	-	
Has children	+	+		+
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges				+
Activity unknown	+	+	+	
Probability of being medium-term NEET	44	36	42	32

Note: An empty space in the table means that the background factor is not statistically significant at a 95 percent level.

Recurrent NEET

Anna is struggling to support herself and her children on zero hours contracts

Anna is 23 and became pregnant in the third year of upper secondary school. She has struggled with her well-being since her early teens. There are periods when Anna is depressed, sleeps badly and is very anxious and she has recurrent severe migraines.

Anna is a single parent and has been given priority access to apartment via social services because she has a child. Anna hopes that by working and supporting herself, she will eventually be able to take over the tenancy and create a stable base for herself and her child. But there are periods when Anna finds it tough to make a living. When she feels well, she works as a care assistant and is employed on zero hours contracts in care of the elderly. However, she is restricted to working during the day and when her employer is able to offer her hours because she finds it difficult to find childcare in the evenings and overnight. Anna is worried about her finances and her ability to support her child as she does not have a permanent job and this also affects her wellbeing. All this creates an unstable situation for Anna.

Because Anna is on a zero hours contract, in some years she may earn enough not to be categorised as NEET. But in those periods when Anna is not doing well, she receives activity compensation from Försäkringskassan instead and is then included in the NEET group. Anna is thus categorised as NEET for some years, for example, when there is no work available such as in economic downturns or when she is receiving activity compensation, But in some years Anna earns over the income threshold for NEET and is therefore not in the NEET group. Because Anna is in the NEET group for several consecutive years but not for a consistent period of time, she is categorised in the sub-group *recurrent NEET*.

Which young people are recurrent NEET?

Those who are recurrent NEET are in the NEET group for two or more periods, leaving it for work or studies in between. Their time in the NEET group amounts to between 25 and 74 percent of the follow-up period. The results for how different background factors affect the probability of being recurrently in the NEET group are summed up in the portrait of Anna and in table 3.4.

The probability of being recurrently NEET is around 7 percent irrespective of sex and background. The results for how the background factors affect the probability of being recurrent NEET show that

- a person who becomes NEET at an early age is more likely to be recurrently NEET compared with a person who is older when they enter the NEET group.
- women receiving activity compensation for a disability or illness are in the recurrent NEET sub-group to a higher extent. Men with a Swedish background receiving such compensation are instead less likely to be recurrent NEET.
- men with a Swedish background with mental illness have a higher probability of being recurrent NEET.
- women with children are more likely to be recurrently in the NEET group.
- people with a foreign background who live in areas with socioeconomic challenges have a higher probability of being recurrent NEET.
- people whose activity is unknown with a Swedish background are recurrent NEET to a higher extent.

The factors with the greatest impact on being recurrent NEET when we compare all factors for all groups are having children and receiving activity compensation among women.

Table 3.4 Background factors affecting whether a young person is medium-term NEET

Background factor	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Age	-	-	-	-
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	+	+		-
Has a mental illness				+
Has children	+	+		
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges			+	+
Activity unknown		+		+
Probability of being medium-term NEET	8	7	7	7

Note: An empty space in the table means that the background factor is not statistically significant at a 95 percent level.

Long-term NEET

Johanna has complex comorbidities, is socially isolated and has always been in the NEET group

Johanna is 29 and has been in the NEET group since the age of 16. She dropped out of upper secondary education as she could not cope with normal school attendance.

Johanna's income is the activity compensation benefit she receives from Försäkringskassan. Over the years she has been in frequent contact with psychiatric services for recurrent depression. Last year she was diagnosed with bipolar syndrome and social phobia. All this in combination has made it difficult for Johanna to forge social relationships and find suitable employment. Johanna often ends up isolating herself in her apartment and playing computer games.

Johanna has met people who work at Försäkringskassan, for the Public Employment Authority, in the healthcare sector and at different local government offices on several occasions. These contacts and the various interventions and programmes that she has attended have not led to lasting work or to her completing her upper secondary studies. Johanna is fed up with having to tell new people about her situation over and over again and with the way that these conversations never lead anywhere.

In total, Johanna has been NEET throughout the follow-up period and this means that she is categorised as *long-term NEET*.

Which young people are long-term NEET?

People who are long-term NEET are NEET for one or more periods. The time spent in the NEET group amounts to 75 percent or more of the follow-up period. The results for how different background factors affect the probability of being long-term NEET are described through the portrait of Johanna and Josef and in table 3.5.

The probability of being long-term NEET is highest for men and amounts to just over 28 percent. For women with a Swedish background, it is slightly lower at just under 27 percent. The probability of being long-term NEET is lowest for women with a foreign background at 25 percent. The results for how the different background factors affect the probability of being long-term NEET show that

- the older a person is when they become NEET, the more likely it is that they will be long-term NEET
- people receiving activity compensation for a disability or illness are more likely to be long-term NEET
- people with a mental illness are more likely to be long-term NEET.
- those with children are less likely to be long-term NEET.
- those who live in an area with socioeconomic challenges are more likely to be long-term NEET with the exception of men with a Swedish background
- people whose activity is unknown are long-term NEET to a greater extent but men with a Swedish background whose activity is unknown are less likely to be long-term NEET.

The background factors with the greatest impact on whether a person is long-term NEET are having a disability or illness that leads to reduced capacity to work and having a mental illness. This applies to all groups.

Table 3.5 Background factors affecting whether a young person is long-term NEET

Background factor	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Age	+	+	+	+
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	+	+	+	+
Has a mental illness	+	+	+	+
Has children	-	-	-	-
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	+	+	+	
Activity unknown	+	+	+	-
Probability of being medium-term NEET	25	27	28	29

Note: An empty space in the table means that the background factor is not statistically significant at a 95 percent level.

Josef has gained a new start in life after some difficult years

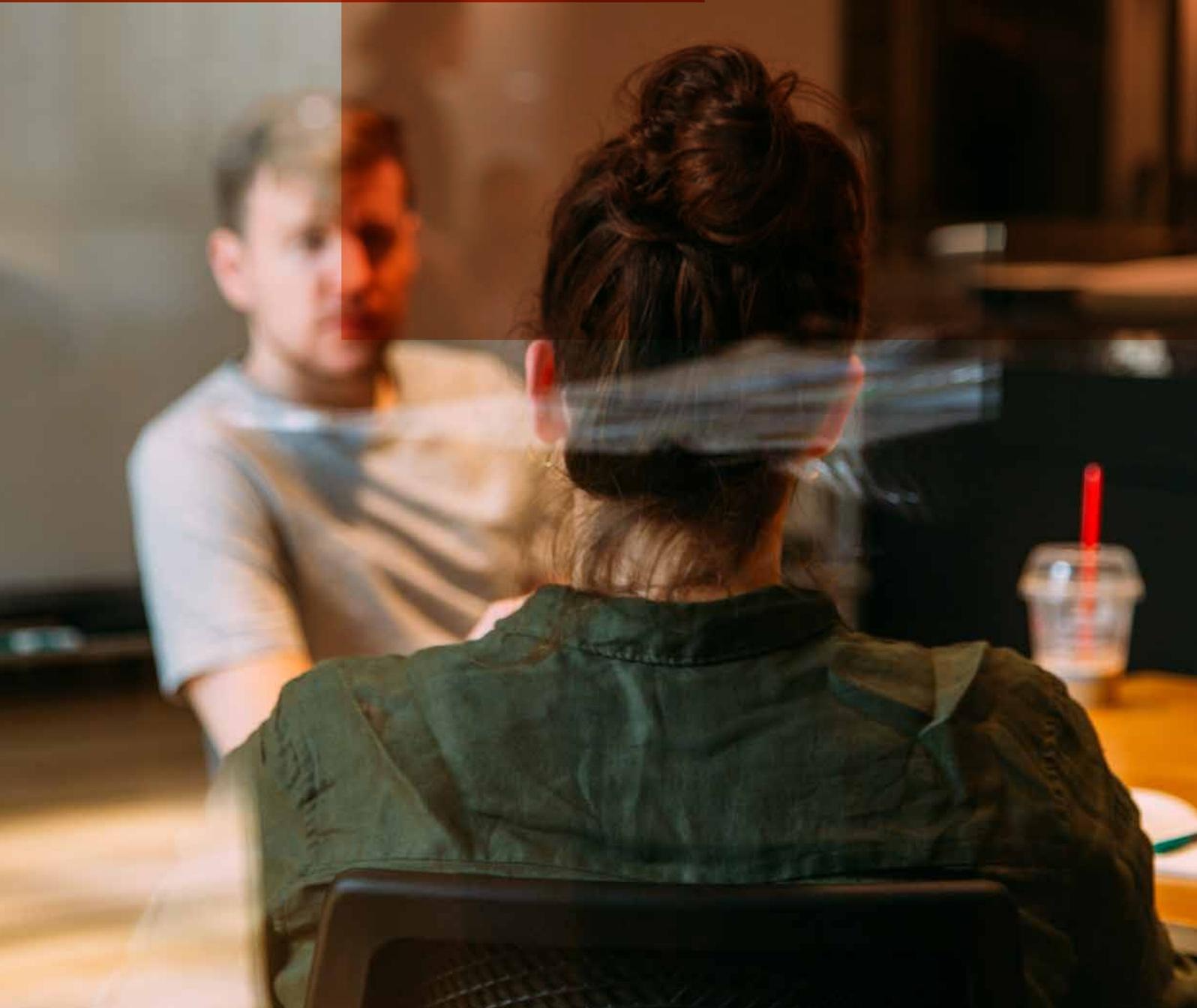
Josef is 28 and has just moved from the municipality where he grew up to gain a new start in life. The residential area in which he used to live has major socioeconomic challenges, with high unemployment and many young people who did not complete upper secondary education. Josef is now part of the Public Employment Authority's job and development guarantee, and dreams of training to become a youth worker at a folk high school in his new municipality. Josef has it tough financially and his main income is the activity compensation benefit he receives from Försäkringskassan. Josef has taken a big step towards leaving his NEET situation. But the road to get here has been paved with poor schooling and dependency problems.

Different teachers often told Josef that he was troublesome and he had recurrent contact with social services during his childhood. Many of the adults around Josef did not work and instead lived on income support for long periods. Early in life Josef made friends with the wrong crowd with a large amount of alcohol and drug abuse.

Working or studying was not on the map for Josef until a year ago when he was taken up as an emergency under the Care of Substance Abusers (Special Provisions) Act (LVM). Josef's relatives called social services about his destructive life. He was then placed in a treatment home far from his home municipality to remove him from his friends, who are still excluded from society. After a tough period of coming to terms with his problems, Josef has decided that he wants to turn his life around and do something good with it instead of continuing as before. He is on the way to doing so but has not yet started studying or working. Like Johanna, Josef has been in the NEET group throughout the follow-up period and this means he is categorised as *long-term NEET*.



Discussion and conclusions



This report follows 70,000 young people who were NEET in 2004 until they are 29. The report sheds light on how long different groups of young people are in the NEET group and how different background factors affect the probability of belonging to four different NEET sub-groups. These four sub-groups are: short-term NEET, medium-term NEET, recurrent NEET and long-term NEET. The largest group are those who are NEET for the medium term before then leaving the group for work or study. About as many young people belong to the most vulnerable NEET group (long-term NEET) and the least vulnerable group (short-term NEET). The smallest group in numerical terms is recurrent NEET. Young people who are recurrently in the NEET group spend the same amount of time in the NEET group as the medium-term NEET group. The young people who are recurrently NEET are more vulnerable, however, because they do not stop being NEET but leave the situation and then enter it again.

The 2030 Agenda contains a target of reducing the proportion of NEET. This concluding discussion is based on the aim that initiatives must be designed to reduce the proportion of young people not in work or in education and training.

Young people with mental illness, disabilities and illnesses run the highest risk of being long-term NEET

Just under one in four young people – just over 20,000 individuals – monitored in this report belong to the long-term NEET group. Having mental illness or disabilities and illness that make work more difficult as a young person are the greatest risk factors for never leaving the NEET group in one's youth. This applies irrespective of sex and background. This heterogenous group of young people is also a group where there is little knowledge of how different interventions can help them to leave the NEET group (Forte 2020). There is therefore a great need to more clearly identify how interventions can help young people suffering from mental illness or disabilities or illness that makes working more difficult not to end up in the NEET group and to leave this situation for study or work.

MUCF (2019a) highlights the importance of several actors working together to address individuals who are in the NEET situation and who have complex problems. This may involve collaboration between different municipal offices, and between the municipality and other actors. (such as government agencies, the region, employers and civil society). Furthermore MUCF (2015) shows that a lack of knowledge about mental illness can limit opportunities for young people with mental illness to get and keep a job. There is therefore a need to improve knowledge on mental illness among employers and decision makers.

Start out from the individual's circumstances and needs

Merely identifying the risk factors for being long-term NEET is not sufficient. Consideration must also be paid to how these vary for different groups. Support and initiatives to tackle long-term exclusion among young people must therefore start out from every young person's specific conditions and needs.

Women with a Swedish background in the younger age cohort spend a longer time NEET compared with other groups. One probable explanation is that young women have mental illness to a greater extent and that they have a higher incidence of self-reported mental problems (Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2013). Additionally, there are women in the NEET group who are mainly at risk of poor mental health (Plenty et al. 2018). Light is shed on this in the portraits of Anna and Johanna, both of whom have different forms of mental illness that make work and study more difficult.

There is also a lower proportion of people with a foreign background in the older age cohort compared with those with a Swedish background who leave the NEET group. For people with a foreign background it is more common to grow up in an area with socioeconomic challenges. Living in an area with socioeconomic challenges means that young people run a higher risk of being long-term NEET and never leaving the NEET group for work and study. The portrait of Josef describes how growing up in an area with socioeconomic challenges makes it difficult to leave the NEET group. One explanation may be that young people who have grown up in areas with socioeconomic challenges complete upper secondary education to a lesser extent. Another explanation may be the lack of adult role models in their surroundings who have gained an education and are in work, as well as difficulties building up the network of contacts that is important to young people finding a job.

Young people who come in and out of the NEET group risk long-term exclusion

There are gender differences in terms of which factors affect whether the people are medium-term or recurrently NEET. Women have a higher risk of belonging to both these groups if they have children. What differs between women who are medium-term NEET and recurrent NEET are that the latter additionally have illnesses or disabilities that make work more difficult to a greater extent. Women who belong to these two different NEET groups – as illustrated in the portraits of Anna and Yasmin – partly have similar needs and partly have different needs for intervention and support for entering work or study.

The fact that women who have illnesses or disabilities that make work more difficult run a higher risk of being recurrently NEET shows the specific vulnerability of this group. These are young women who are likely to have a weak position in the labour market with insecure employment, and difficulties combining work with family and poor health. It is more common for young women to become stuck in part-time or insecure employment and to leave the workplace (MUCF 2017a). Improving these young women's opportunities to obtain a permanent job and a stable income is important both for the young people themselves but also for their children who otherwise risk being doubly hit by their parents' poor health and exclusion. In the light of the prevailing econom-

ic climate, we can expect that at the moment this group is finding it more difficult to find opportunities of earning a living and instead risk being permanently NEET.

However, young people who are temporarily NEET can also find it difficult to enter the job market

Approximately half of the young people in the NEET group start working or studying within two years. Young people who are NEET in the short term do not have the same problems and needs for interventions as the other NEET groups. As illustrated in the portrait of Daniel, this temporary period NEET will not affect his future opportunities in the labour market.

However, it is important to point out that among the young people who were NEET only one in three are established on the labour market at the age of 29. Thus there are also short-term NEET who have a weak connection to the labour market. They are no longer in the NEET group but continue to have low and instable incomes. This is in line with the research that shows that unemployment at an early age leads to poorer labour market outcomes later in life (Nordström Skans 2004).

Early and preventive initiatives necessary for those who are NEET at a young age

There are groups of young people who find it difficult to find work irrespective of the economic climate. Young people who have not completed upper secondary education, young people with a foreign background and young people with disabilities are groups that are particularly vulnerable in this context (Engdahl & Forslund 2016). Such differences are also found in this report; the gap in the proportion that leave the NEET group is greatest between young people who have and have not completed upper secondary education and for young people who do and do not have mental illness.

At the same time, this report shows that young people who have left the NEET group are affected by the economy. One in four people who found themselves NEET as early as age 16–19 and who left the group for work or study returned to the NEET group in the economic downturn of 2008 to 2010. Many of them then continued to be out of work and not studying or in training throughout their youth. These people who find themselves not studying or working at an early age are few in number, but are another group that is particularly vulnerable. Furthermore, young people who have become NEET at an early age tend not to be engaged in as many interventions as young people who are older and also greater in number (Theme Group Youth 2011).

Currently, where the economic situation has deteriorated in the short term, many young people have become unemployed and young people's opportunities to obtain a complete upper secondary education have deteriorated, these conclusions are highly relevant. The results show the importance of preventing students dropping out and of the need for early intervention. The results also show the need for additional interventions for young people in the younger age cohort in an economic downturn. Otherwise there is a risk that young people will continue to face long-term exclusion.

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Appendix: Methodology

Statistical method

In chapter two, the proportion of young people remaining in the NEET group was calculated for different sub-groups. Differences between groups described in running text are statistically significant at a 95 percent level.

In chapter three, we estimated separate linear regression models for women with a foreign background, women with a Swedish background, men with a foreign background and men with a Swedish background. Thus we allow the impact of all included background factors (independent variables) to vary for the different groups. These models are estimated for four different outcome variables and measure the probability of being in one of the four respective NEET sub-groups. What is measured here is how respective background factors affect the probability of being in one NEET sub-group compared with being in any of the other three sub-groups.

We have chosen to use a linear probability model as other non-linear models do not enable us to take into account the municipality in which a person lives. The reason for this is that a problem arises in such models whereby all included variables can fully predict the probability of the outcome variable and this means that observations are automatically excluded. Including the municipality is important when studying the impact of living in an area with socioeconomic challenges. If the municipality variable is excluded, we risk identifying that areas with socioeconomic challenges are found to a greater or lesser extent in municipalities where it is more common to be NEET. We have therefore additionally estimated a logit model and calculated odds ratios and excluded the municipality variable (see table 5.3). As a whole, the results between this model and a linear regression model match.

The tables in chapter 3 set out the direction of the covariation estimated in the models. This is done for the point estimations that are statistically significant at a 95 percent level. The complete regression results are shown in table 5.2.

The number of people who can be followed in the registers decreases over time

The figures for those who leave the NEET group also include those who disappear from Statistics Sweden's registers due to death or moving abroad. The latter reason is considerably more common for the age group studied in the report. Individuals who vanish from Statistics Sweden's registers have not been excluded or studied separately. It is important to bear in mind that it is more common for people with a foreign background to disappear from the registers. This means that we risk under-estimating the length of time that this group is in the NEET group. In other words, if they had stayed in Sweden it is possible that they would have continued

to be NEET. If a move abroad means that a person actually finds a job in another country, it may, however, be reasonable to include those who move abroad in the category that leave the NEET group.

15,560 16–19 year-olds were NEET in 2004 and in 2014 we are still able to follow 13,990 of them. In total there are 451,899 individuals in the younger age cohort and 436,569 remain in 2014. This means that approximately 3 percent of the individuals have disappeared from our data, probably due to death or moving abroad. The proportion who disappear from the data is higher for those who are NEET, at 10 percent. Among 20–24 year-olds, there were 522,312 individuals in 2004 while 504,565 remain in 2009. 58,264 people were NEET in 2004 and we can follow 53,642 of them up to 2009. This means that the loss is 3 percent for the age cohort in total and somewhat higher, 8 percent, in the NEET group.

People also disappear from our data when they reach the age of 29. This means that the two age cohorts of young people who we follow consist of fewer and fewer people over time. This affects the results in the figures shown in chapter 2. Trends over time tend, however, to be similar despite the people included becoming younger.

Our data material includes people who commute across national borders, i.e. are entered in the population register in Sweden but work in a different country. We cannot identify them or take them into account in our analysis. We estimate that this involves 10,000–12,000 young people who are categorised in the statistics as not being in work or studying. However, it is probable that this mainly produces misleading results in analyses at regional level. It should not have had a major impact on results at national level.

Table 5.1 Definition of variables in the regressions

<i>Dependent variable</i>	<i>Description</i>
Short-term NEET	1 if person categorised as short-term NEET, 0 otherwise
Medium-term NEET	1 if person categorised as medium-term NEET, 0 otherwise
Recurrent NEET	1 if person categorised as recurrent NEET, 0 otherwise
Long-term NEET	1 if person categorised as long-term NEET, 0 otherwise
<i>Independent variables</i>	
Age	Person's age in years
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	1 if person receives activity compensation, 0 otherwise
Has a mental illness	1 if person has a mental illness (definition described in chapters 1 and 3), 0 otherwise
Has children	1 if person has a child or is receiving compensation for care of children, 0 otherwise
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	1 if person lives in an LUA area, 0 otherwise
Activity unknown	1 if person is recorded as activity unknown
Municipality	Indicator variables for respective municipality

Note: All independent variables were measured in 2004.

Table 5.2 Results from regressions of how background factors covary with probability of being in the four NEET groups

	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Short-term NEET				
Age	-0,0099* (0,0018)	0,0115* (0,0014)	-0,0178* (0,0017)	0,0079* (0,0014)
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	-0,2894* (0,0143)	-0,3765* (0,0075)	-0,2631* (0,0140)	-0,3590* (0,0078)
Has a mental illness	-0,0737* (0,0180)	-0,1340* (0,0094)	-0,1505* (0,0161)	-0,1825* (0,0094)
Has children	-0,1120* (0,0087)	-0,0672* (0,0071)	0,0926* (0,0168)	-0,0235 (0,0189)
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	-0,0521* (0,0102)	-0,0722* (0,0151)	-0,0339* (0,0104)	-0,0900* (0,0159)
Activity unknown	-0,1641* (0,0093)	-0,1050* (0,0073)	-0,1257* (0,0085)	-0,0523* (0,0068)
Medium-term NEET				
Age	0,0053* (0,0021)	-0,0034* (0,0016)	0,0090* (0,0020)	-0,0066* (0,0014)
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	-0,2064* (0,0173)	-0,1141* (0,0085)	-0,2249* (0,0166)	-0,1739* (0,0083)
Has a mental illness	-0,0889* (0,0218)	-0,0276* (0,0106)	-0,0485* (0,0190)	-0,0048 (0,0100)
Has children	0,0703* (0,0105)	0,1077* (0,0080)	-0,0110 (0,0199)	0,0450* (0,0201)
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	0,0172 (0,0124)	0,0059 (0,0170)	-0,0130 (0,0123)	0,0348* (0,0169)
Activity unknown	0,0359* (0,0112)	0,0343* (0,0082)	0,0322* (0,0101)	-0,0080 (0,0073)

	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Recurrent NEET				
Age	-0,0088* (0,0011)	-0,0110* (0,0008)	-0,0054* (0,0010)	-0,0109* (0,0008)
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	0,0321* (0,0093)	0,0347* (0,0046)	-0,0014 (0,0085)	-0,0137* (0,0047)
Has a mental illness	0,0077 (0,0117)	0,0105 (0,0058)	0,0108 (0,0097)	0,0199* (0,0056)
Has children	0,0786* (0,0056)	0,0434* (0,0043)	0,0158 (0,0102)	0,0183 (0,0113)
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	0,0081 (0,0066)	0,0129 (0,0092)	0,0130* (0,0063)	0,0286* (0,0095)
Activity unknown	0,0067 (0,0060)	0,0332* (0,0044)	0,0018 (0,0052)	0,0132* (0,0041)
Long-term NEET				
Age	0,0135* (0,0018)	0,0029* (0,0013)	0,0141* (0,0018)	0,0096* (0,0012)
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	0,4637* (0,0145)	0,4559* (0,0071)	0,4894* (0,0143)	0,5467* (0,0071)
Has a mental illness	0,1549* (0,0182)	0,1511* (0,0089)	0,1882* (0,0164)	0,1674* (0,0085)
Has children	-0,0369* (0,0088)	-0,0839* (0,0066)	-0,0975* (0,0172)	-0,0398* (0,0172)
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	0,0268* (0,0103)	0,0534* (0,0142)	0,0339* (0,0106)	0,0266 (0,0144)
Activity unknown	0,1215* (0,0094)	0,0375* (0,0068)	0,0917* (0,0087)	0,0471* (0,0062)
No. of observations	12 187	23 358	11 900	24 700

*Note: The table shows the results of 16 (four outcomes for four groups) separate regressions with a linear probability model. The table reports coefficients (standard error in parentheses). * indicates that the estimate is statistically significant at a 95 percent level. In addition to the reported variables, we controlled for the municipality in which the individual lives.*

Table 5.3 Odds ratios from logit models for how background factors covary with the probability of being in the four NEET groups

	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Short-term NEET				
Age	0,9419*	1,0760*	0,8965*	1,0477*
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	0,0070*	0,0029*	0,0128*	0,0148*
Has a mental illness	0,5319*	0,3324*	0,2103*	0,2136*
Has children	0,5137*	0,6251*	1,6162*	0,8038*
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	0,7575*	0,7969*	0,8267*	0,6581*
Activity unknown	0,3889*	0,6427*	0,4858*	0,8328*
Medium-term NEET				
Age	1,0231*	0,9817*	1,0423*	0,9684*
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	0,3791*	0,5877*	0,3157*	0,4039*
Has a mental illness	0,6726*	0,8809*	0,7781*	0,9818
Has children	1,3261*	1,6155*	0,9308	1,2489*
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	1,0842	0,995	0,9601	1,1716*
Activity unknown	1,1553*	1,1463*	1,1799*	0,9413

	Women		Men	
	Foreign background	Swedish background	Foreign background	Swedish background
Recurrent NEET				
Age	0,8688*	0,8498*	0,9155*	0,8539*
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	1,6445*	1,7589*	0,9785	0,8148*
Has a mental illness	1,1257	1,1297	1,1862	1,2618*
Has children	3,1123*	2,0783*	1,3107	1,3906*
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	1,1099	1,0882	1,1792	1,3550*
Activity unknown	1,0906	1,5273*	0,9614	1,0826
Long-term NEET				
Age	1,0801*	1,0109	1,0811*	1,0578*
Receiving compensation for disability or illness	8,2657*	8,8181*	9,8239*	13,1977*
Has a mental illness	2,2861*	2,2264*	2,7086*	2,6188*
Has children	0,8188*	0,6046*	0,5502*	0,8187
Lives in an area with socioeconomic challenges	1,1106	1,2740*	1,1942*	1,153
Activity unknown	1,9880*	1,2583*	1,6196*	1,3304*
No. of observations	12 187	23 358	11 900	24 700

*Note: The table shows the results of 16 (four outcomes for four groups) separate regressions of a logit model. The table shows odds ratios. * indicates that the estimate is statistically significant at a 95 percent level.*

Ideal type portraits

The report presents five portraits of fictional young people derived from the statistical results. Using ideal types to show typical phenomena is based on Max Weber's methodological argument that hypothetical constructions make the world easier to understand. Ideal types encapsulate the risk factors identified which characterise each sub-group compared with the other sub-groups. Usually ideal types form an analytical basis for testing similarities and deviations from the ideal type examples compared with empirical data. The ideal type cases however tend never to be found in reality (Weber 1977; Gerth & Mills 1991; Eliaeson 1982).

Unlike the traditional use of ideal types as an analytical instrument in which to place empirical results, the stories are instead shaped around the five fictional young people who are not in work or studying on the basis of the empirical results shown in the statistics. Thus the empirical results are refined as a teaching approach to make it easier to understand the different challenges and risk factors that the young people who are NEET encounter in reality based on the length of time they have been in this situation in life.

Weber has been criticised as creating ideal types focuses excessively on extreme phenomena. The use of ideal types thus misses how different explanatory mechanisms together create the empirical results (Cruz 2017). In order not to simplify or to exaggerate the ideal types of young people to such an extreme extent that they cease to be based in reality, it was decided that there would be five portraits – one person per sub-category, apart from in one sub-category where two portraits were created based on the results. This was done so as not to exclude important explanatory factors in line with the fact that young people in the category have different reasons to be in each sub-category, as is also shown by the results.

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The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society is a government agency where the living conditions of young people and the conditions of civil society are always in focus. The knowledge that grows with us is used by policymakers when they prioritise investments in the areas of youth policy and civil society. We disseminate our knowledge in meetings with people at national and European level. We also distribute central government grants that make it possible for organisations of all sizes to conduct their operations. Our international operations also provide young people with opportunities to volunteer, study or practice in other European countries.

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