

Zhiqiang Feng, Dawn Everington, Kevin Ralston, Chris Dibben, Gillian Raab & Elspeth Graham, "[Consequences and risk factors of young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#)" [SLS Project 2013_005]

Research Summary

The proportion of 16-19 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) is a key measure which feeds into the Scottish Government's 'Opportunities for All' policy. The research project sought to explore the phenomena of NEETs, and to understand both the causes and the consequences of being NEET. The Scottish Longitudinal Study was used, looking at individuals aged 16-19 years at each census point between 1991 and 2011. The results showed a 'scarring effect' of having been NEET in terms of health and socioeconomic outcomes. This effect persisted even for those NEET individuals who later engaged in employment and education. Various individual, family, education and area-level factors were found to predict becoming NEET. The findings have been used to inform various Scottish Government briefings, policies, measures and work with Local Authorities.

Underpinning Research

The researchers used the Scottish Longitudinal Study to study cohorts aged 16-19 years at the 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses. In this way risk factors of becoming NEET at 2001 or 2011 could be explored. Ten and 20 year outcomes could also be examined for those who were aged 16-19 years at 2001 and 1991.

One key strength of the SLS is that it can be linked to wider administrative data such as vital events (e.g., birth, death), hospital discharges, and prescribing data. In addition, the SLS has been linked to school census and education data which include information on free school meals, exclusions, absences and educational attainment. Such data are invaluable in exploring NEET outcomes and risk factors.

Key findings

Young people aged 16-19yrs who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) were found to have significantly poorer socioeconomic and health outcomes than their non-NEET peers.

Compared to non-NEET peers, NEET individuals were more than twice as likely to be unemployed at the end of a 10 year period, and showed much higher risk of poor long-term health.

Those NEETs who were also NEET 10 years later were at even greater risk of poorer outcomes, suggesting a cumulative effect of being NEET. Gaining employment or re-entering education 10 years later lessened the effect of being NEET, but a 'scarring effect' on outcomes was still observed.

Risk factors for becoming NEET included school absences and exclusions, teenage pregnancy, living in a rented or workless household and living in an area with high NEET rates.

A number of socioeconomic and health outcomes were examined for young people who were NEET. They included economic activity, occupation, limiting long-term illness, hospital admission following an A&E visit, hospital admission following an A&E visit due to self-harm, depression and anxiety, and drug misuse.

Those who were NEET in 2001 or in 1991 consistently demonstrated significantly poorer labour market outcomes 10 and 20 years later. For example, those who were NEET at 2001 were more than twice as likely as their non-NEET peers to be unemployed or economically inactive 10 years later.

A higher risk of poor long-term health outcomes was associated with being NEET. The risk for the NEET groups was 1.6-2.5

times that for non-NEETs, varying with different physical health outcomes.

There was evidence of a cumulative effect of being out of employment or education on later life chances. Those who were NEET at both the 1991 and 2001 censuses were the most disadvantaged.

Young people who had moved from being NEET into employment or education 10 years later still showed a scarring effect of their earlier status, indicating the long-lasting detrimental effect of NEET experiences.

Various key risk factors were identified for becoming NEET. These included: educational attainment, absences and exclusions from school; teenage pregnancy; living in a renting or workless household; and local area NEET rates.

Impact

Throughout the project, the research team presented their work to groups at the Scottish Government as well as at conferences, seminars and invited talks. The Scottish Government has gone on to use the research findings in several important ways.

The findings have been used in the development of the Participation Measure, the official data source for the Scottish Government National Performance Indicator around NEETs, and so in turn feed into ongoing development of the 'Opportunities for All' programme. The results have also influenced the Community Jobs Fund which seeks to provide job opportunities to young people.

Further Information

SLS Project 2013_005: "Risk factors and consequences of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)"
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Final Project Report: [Consequences, risk factors, and geography of young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#) (2015), Scottish Government

Research Brief: [Consequences and risk factors of young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#), CALLS Hub Research Brief 3 (2016)

[Full list of outputs available via the project page link above](#)

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The Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analysis team of the Scottish Government has also used the findings in its work with Local Authorities, highlighting the factors that are important for young people at risk of becoming NEET. The findings have been fed to other Government departments including health, housing, and justice in particular. The project findings have also been used in briefings for Ministers, including First Minister's Questions.