

Consequences and risk factors of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Zhiqiang Feng, Dawn Everington, Kevin Ralston, Chris Dibben, Gillian Raab (University of Edinburgh)
& Elspeth Graham (University of St Andrews)
SLS project 2013_005

Summary

In this project we explore consequences and risk factors of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) over the past two decades. The project uses the Scottish Longitudinal Study (SLS) which links anonymised individual records from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses and a wide range of data from administrative sources. We find that being NEET is associated with adverse socioeconomic and health outcomes over the following 20-years. Individual, family, school and area-level factors are found to predict the likelihood of being NEET.

Background

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, which is the Scottish Government's commitment to an offer of a place in learning or training for every 16-19 year old, with a specific focus on young people not in education, employment or training. It brings together a range of existing national and local policies and strategies, including More Choices More Chances and 16+ Learning Choices.

It is important to conduct research into the phenomena of NEETs, and to understand the causes and consequences of being NEET. A NEET individual is defined as one who is aged 16 to 19, and either unemployed, or economically inactive due to looking after family, permanently sick or other reasons.

Design

We use the Scottish Longitudinal Study (SLS) which has data linked from the 1991 to the 2011 Censuses. Thus we are able to look at different cohorts: those that were of age 16-19 at each of the three censuses. We have data before the age of 16-19 at the 2001 and 2011 censuses, so we can examine the risk factors of being NEET for these two cohorts. We can also examine 20 and 10 year outcomes for two cohorts: those that were of age 16-19 at the 1991 and 2001 censuses respectively. Thus we can repeat analyses on

different cohorts and compare results between cohorts.

One unique feature of the SLS is that it links to a wide range of 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 data which include information on free school meals, exclusions, absences and educational attainment.

Findings

Outcomes - the 'scarring effect'

A number of socioeconomic and health outcomes have been examined for young people who were NEET. They include economic activity, occupations, 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 and those who were NEET in 1991 consistently demonstrated significantly poorer labour market and health outcomes 10 and 20 years later.

For example, for those aged 16-19 years in 2001, there is a 'scarring effect' in economic activity: in comparison with their non-NEET peers, NEET young people were more than 2 times more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive 10 years later.

NEET experiences are associated with a higher risk of poor health in the long-term. The risk for the NEET group is 1.6 – 2.5 times that for the non-NEET group, varying with different physical health outcomes.

Young people who were NEET in 1991 and remained economically inactive in 2001 consistently demonstrated significantly poorer outcomes in 2011 than those who were non-NEET in 1991 and economically active in 2001 and those who were engaged in employment or education in either 1991 or 2001. This suggests that there is a cumulative effect of being out of employment or education on later life chances and this group is the most disadvantaged that need continuing support.

Young people who changed from NEET status in 1991 to employment or education in 2001 have lower risks of poor life outcomes compared with those who were consistently in disadvantaged positions. However, the negative effect of NEET status in 1991 was not fully discounted by the later engagement in employment or education, indicating the long-lasting detrimental effect of NEET experiences.

Risk Factors

In general, the important risk factors are the same for both genders and for the two cohorts analysed - those observed as NEET or non-NEET at ages 16-19 in 2001 and 2011.

School factors such as educational attainment, time absent from school, number of exclusions are important as well. For females, teenage pregnancy is also an important factor.

Household factors are also important. For example, living in a renting household and living in a workless household increase the risk of becoming NEET.

Local NEET rate is an important factor for both cohorts and genders, with the risk of NEET increasing with local NEET rate.

Conclusions

The findings from this research provide new evidence of the long-term scarring effect of being NEET and will aid the identification of young people most at risk of becoming NEET. This research will help inform policies aimed at allowing the Scottish Government to achieve its objectives around supporting young people into post-16 education, training and employment.

LINKS & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Full version of research report and research findings:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/10/2258>

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/10/6731>

Further project information from SLS-DSU:

http://sls.lscs.ac.uk/projects/view/2013_005/

Further information about Census & Administrative data Longitudinal Studies Hub

www.calls.ac.uk

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