



Pre-test report

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The present report is based on the Guidelines for focus groups within the "PreseNEETi se" project, which were based on one of the basic project objectives, namely

»/.../ preparation of a methodology for identifying the basic characteristics and needs of the NEET population together with researchers from the UM, which will give ZRSZ a tool for early intervention. «

The report contains an analysis of data collected during pre-tests with young people from the NEET population. Pre-tests were conducted in five focus groups, namely in Maribor (25/08/2022) and Celje (21/07/2022 and 26/08/2022), and the analysis also includes online questionnaires, which are a key part of the testing process

1. Initial methodological findings

The implementation of the testing was based on a legitimate and adequately adapted scientific research method, yet it was challenging in the context of this population. First, it turned out that *proper coordination of all relevant participants was almost impossible*. The main problems in the focus group organization phase were related to (1) coordinating the schedules of all participants, (2) their incentives, and (3) seriousness about confirmed participation. For example, we can cite the focus group in Maribor (25/08/2022), which was postponed twice due to insufficient participation, despite the fact that the participants confirmed it.

At the methodological level, it was also shown that there are *substantial limitations on the language and communication level* for members of this population. The problem of extremely limited, unclear, and non-eloquent expression appears as a constant in all focus groups. With some exceptions, representatives of this population expressed their opinion based on long and in-depth questions from the moderator, additional explanations, hints, and other forms of verbal assistance. Their answers were usually expressed either with a short *yes* or *no* or without the substantive depth necessary to analyze the complexity of the views of the participants in the focus group. Some also avoided severe participation in the discussion, which is a fundamental prerequisite for a successful focus group, either because of language barriers or because of the social anxiety they are dealing with. The mentioned problems did not only cause problems in the data collection phase but also in the analysis phase.

The method of using an online survey also proved to be an inappropriate method of data collection. Of the 32 collected pre-test questionnaires, only 26 were suitable for analysis. Those that were not filled out in full, or those that the moderator and the assistant reasonably judged needed to be excluded, were excluded. As an example, we can cite the questionnaire filled out by one of the participants. To



fill out the questionnaire, she needed the help of an assistant and the focus group moderator to interpret the questions, she answered despite not understanding either the questions or the answers, and it took her about 45 minutes to solve it, although the survey can be solved in 15 minutes

Based on the above, we can conclude that *the focus group is a less suitable method for this type of research on the NEET population. Undoubtedly, methods such as an in-depth interview or other methods with an individual orientation are more suitable.*

2. Quantitative results

This section of the report is based on the analysis of valid questionnaires executed within pre-test phase of the project.

2.1 Preliminary analyses of missing values

Before analysing the data, we checked the proportion of missing data in the self-assessment of skills, online activities and job search scales. We find that in none of the variables considered does the proportion of missing values exceed 32%, which is why we included the variables in further analysis, though respondents with a missing value were excluded. However, on closer inspection, we found that the proportion of missing values is slightly higher for some variables.

Table 1 shows the variables related to job search activities. For two variables, we find that the proportion of missing values is the highest at 17.9%; these are the variables 'Filled a job application' and 'Had a job interview'. In Table 2, variables relating to unemployment avoidance are presented. Variables "Accept lower paid job" (32.1%) and "Accept a job from afar" (25%) had the largest proportion of missing values. Furthermore, in Table 3 the highest proportion of missing values was 21.4% and was identified on two variables "Told family, friends that I'm searching for a job" and "Asked people I know if they know someone with job related information". Scale of self-assessed skills is presented in Table 4. We found that most missing values (MV) are found within this scale; 3 variables had a missing value proportion of 32.1%, 1 variable had a MV of 25%; 5 variables had a MV of 21.4% and 5 variables had a MV of 17.9%. Variables assessing online activities included four variables with missing values ranging from 17.9% to 32.1%. Lastly, larger proportions of missing values were found on all three variables assessing online skills (> 17.9%).

Two important methodological issues related to missing values (MV) should be addressed. First, there is the possibility that missing values could be a consequence of not understanding statements and/or



questions. More specifically, the "I do not know/ don't want to answer" response was measured as a single response, so we cannot be sure whether the missing data were due to 1) the respondent not wanting to answer the question or 2) the respondent not understanding the question. In addition, the higher percentage of MV in the online skills scale may be a result of the lack of mentioned skills. This is consistent with previous studies showing that NEETs lack ICT and online skills. Similarly, self-assessed skills could be explained, as some studies show that NEETs lack soft skills, etc.

Table 1

Variables relating to job seeking activities.

	N	M	SD	Missing values	
				n	%
Seeking job opportunities on the Internet or newspaper	24	3,33	1,465	4	14,3
Sent my CV to potential employers	24	2,79	1,532	4	14,3
Filled a job application	23	2,17	1,435	5	17,9
Had a job interview	23	2,00	1,000	5	17,9
Talked with family/friends about job opportunities	25	3,16	1,313	3	10,7
Contacted job agencies	24	2,42	1,283	4	14,3
Informally tried to acquaint an employer	25	5,36	19,532	3	10,7
Got "inside" job information through informal connections	24	1,67	0,868	4	14,3
Talked with previous employers/co-workers about job opportunities	24	1,67	0,702	4	14,3

Note. N = 28.

Table 2

Variables relating to unemployment avoidance.

	N	M	SD	Missing values	
				n	%
Accept a job which demands new skills and knowledge	23	3,91	1,125	5	17,9
Accept lower paid job	19	3,05	1,311	9	32,1
Accept a temporary job	23	3,96	0,767	5	17,9
Accept a job from afar	21	3,05	1,396	7	25,0
Start your own business	24	3,08	1,501	4	14,3
Work as a volunteer	23	2,57	1,590	5	17,9

Note. N = 28.



Table 3

Job seeking activities related to social capital.

	N	M	SD	Missing values	
				n	%
Prepared a detailed list of all people who could help with job seeking	23	1,70	1,363	5	17,9
Told family, friends that I'm searching for a job	22	3,45	1,654	6	21,4
Asked people I know if they know someone with job related information	22	3,50	1,711	6	21,4

Note. N = 28.

Table 4

Variables relating self-assessed skills.

	N	M	SD	Missing values	
				n	%
<i>Mastering one's own core area of expertise</i>	19	4,05	1,393	9	32,1
<i>Ability to perform in public</i>	19	2,79	1,512	9	32,1
<i>The ability to effectively convey information in a conversation</i>	22	3,68	1,492	6	21,4
<i>Ability to write business letters</i>	22	3,77	1,445	6	21,4
<i>Ability to write/prepare expert reports</i>	22	3,64	1,620	6	21,4
<i>Ability to work in groups</i>	23	4,30	1,428	5	17,9
<i>Ability to manage conflict situations</i>	22	3,82	1,868	6	21,4
<i>Leadership ability or coordination of activities</i>	21	4,14	1,652	7	25,0
<i>Negotiation skills</i>	19	3,53	1,611	9	32,1
<i>Mastery of basic tasks using computer</i>	23	4,57	1,619	5	17,9
<i>Mastering the Slovenian language</i>	24	4,67	1,659	4	14,3
<i>Mastering the English language</i>	25	3,96	1,670	3	10,7
<i>Mastering the German language</i>	25	2,44	1,660	3	10,7
<i>Mastering the other foreign language</i>	24	2,58	1,501	4	14,3
<i>Mastering basic mathematical operations</i>	24	3,46	1,444	4	14,3
<i>Ability of quick reading and comprehension</i>	24	4,50	1,216	4	14,3
<i>Ability to think analytically</i>	23	4,04	1,846	5	17,9
<i>Strategic planning ability</i>	23	3,78	1,783	5	17,9
<i>Ability to quickly acquire new knowledge</i>	24	4,67	1,308	4	14,3
<i>The ability to create new ideas and solutions</i>	24	4,17	1,341	4	14,3
<i>Ability to manage stress</i>	24	3,50	1,668	4	14,3
<i>Ability to maintain a positive attitude towards work</i>	25	4,36	1,350	3	10,7
<i>Ability to effectively prepare a job application</i>	23	4,04	1,296	5	17,9



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<i>Ability to present yourself positively in an interview</i>	22	3,73	1,316	6	21,4
<i>Ability to fill out forms</i>	23	4,57	0,992	5	17,9

Note. N = 28.

Table 5

Variables relating to online activities.

	N	M	SD	Missing values	
				n	%
<i>I watch movies</i>	25	2,64	1,777	3	10,7
<i>I watch or upload videos (e.g. YouTube)</i>	25	2,12	1,641	3	10,7
<i>I play games</i>	24	1,42	1,792	4	14,3
<i>I read newspapers or magazines</i>	25	1,40	1,581	3	10,7
<i>I do things related to finding a job</i>	24	2,75	1,511	4	14,3
<i>I do things related to my own education</i>	22	2,45	2,041	6	21,4
<i>I perform (any) income generating activity</i>	19	2,05	2,321	9	32,1
<i>I spend time on social networking sites</i>	24	2,25	1,917	4	14,3
<i>I make online purchases</i>	23	1,74	1,657	5	17,9
<i>I post my own opinions/opinions on social networks, forums or blogs</i>	23	0,43	1,343	5	17,9

Note. N = 28.

Table 6

Variables relating to self-assessed online skills.

	N	M	SD	Missing values	
				n	%
<i>I filter a large number of hits very quickly</i>	23	2,70	1,460	5	17,9
<i>I assess whether online content is authentic and trustworthy</i>	23	2,87	1,014	5	17,9
<i>I understand the challenges associated with digital prints</i>	21	2,90	1,221	7	25,0
<i>I work simultaneously with others on the same file using cloud services</i>	21	2,29	1,309	7	25,0
<i>I create websites or blogs using dedicated web services</i>	22	1,45	1,101	6	21,4

Note. N = 28.

2.2 Pre-test questionnaire results

2.2.1 Sociodemographic characteristics

Figure 1 shows the percentage distribution of the sample by gender. We note that most NEET young people participating in the research and project are female (82.1%). The average age of the participants is 25.54 years (SD = 3.24) (results are not shown in a table). Age was divided into two age groups, 18 to 24 years and 25 to 29 years (Figure 2). Consistent with previous literature, we found that the majority of NEET young people were between 25 and 29 years old (67.9%).

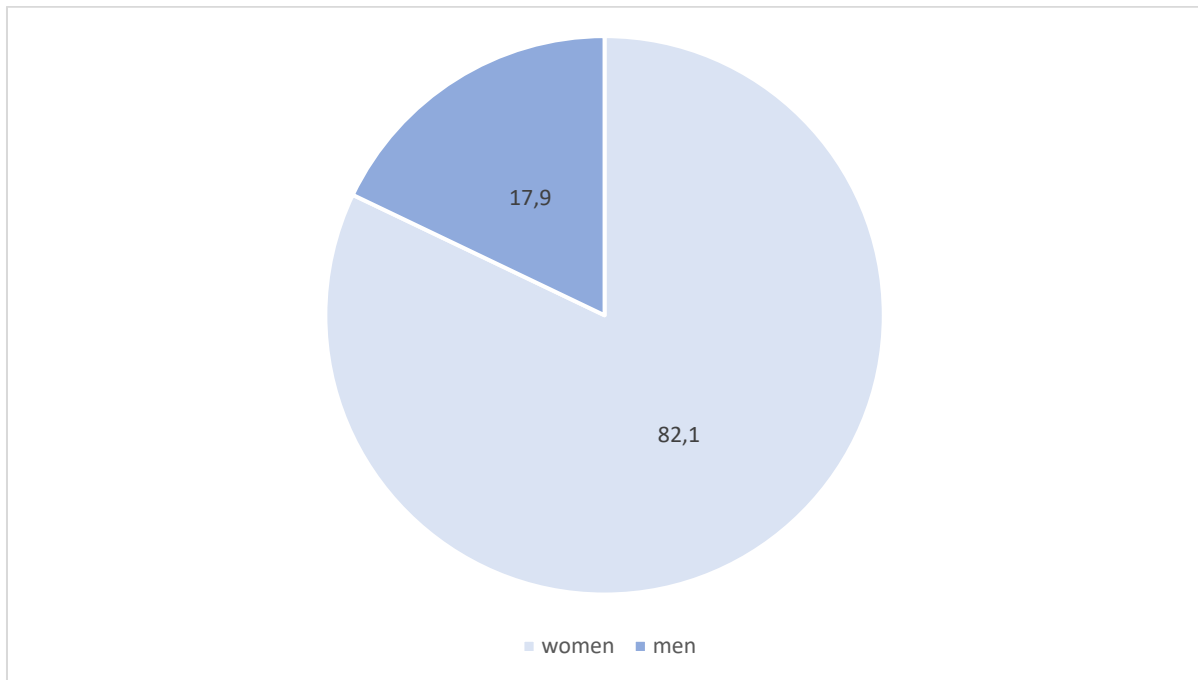


Figure 1. Sample composition by gender (%).

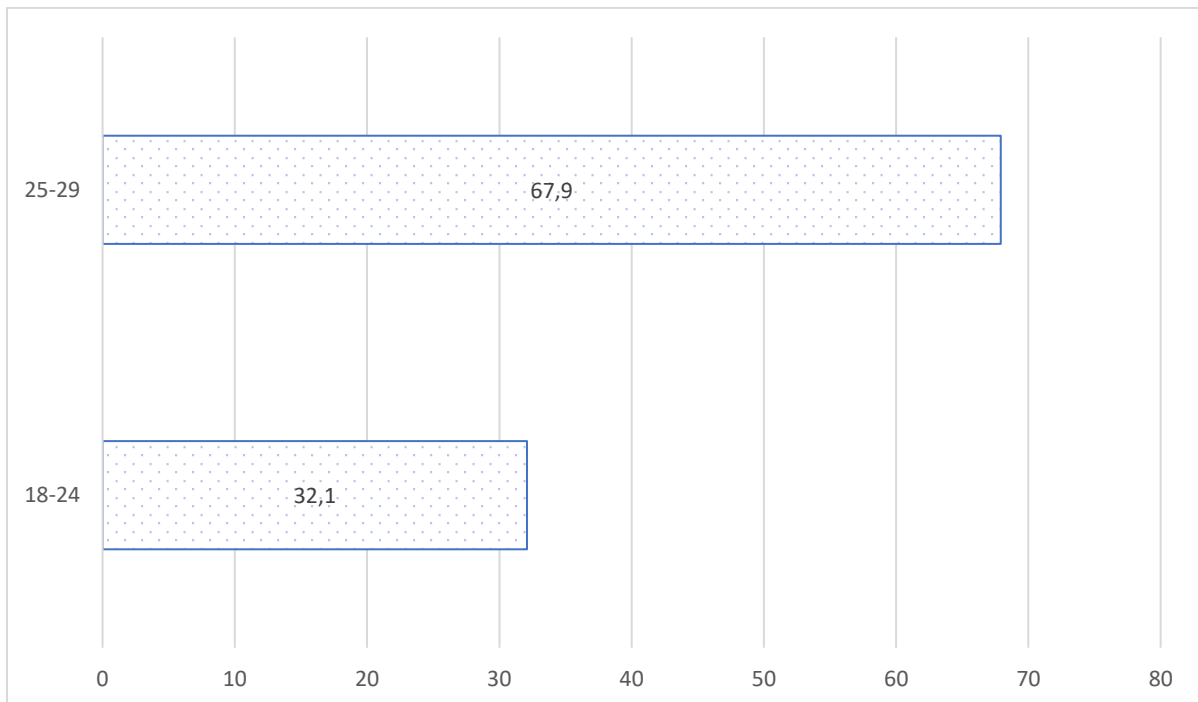


Figure 2. Sample composition by age group (%).

Because previous studies have shown that a young person's immigrant background plays an important role in their membership in the NEET group, we also examined the ethnic identity of the participants (Figure 3). We find that the sample is relatively evenly distributed when it comes to whether they perceive themselves as Slovenes (53.6%) or report another ethnic identity (46.4%). We also examined



which ethnic identity participants identify with (Figure 4). Most of them said they were Bosnians (25%), followed by Roma (10.7%), Albanians (7.1%), and the fewest said they were Serbs (3.6%).

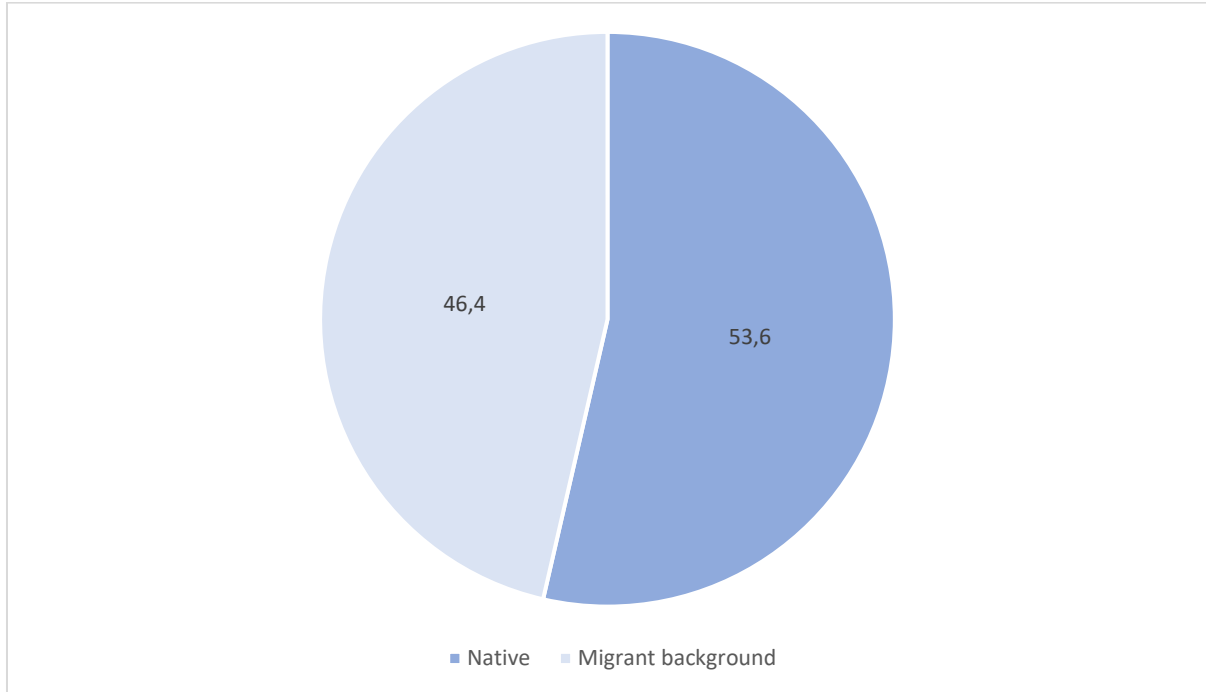


Figure 3. Sample composition based on nationality (%).

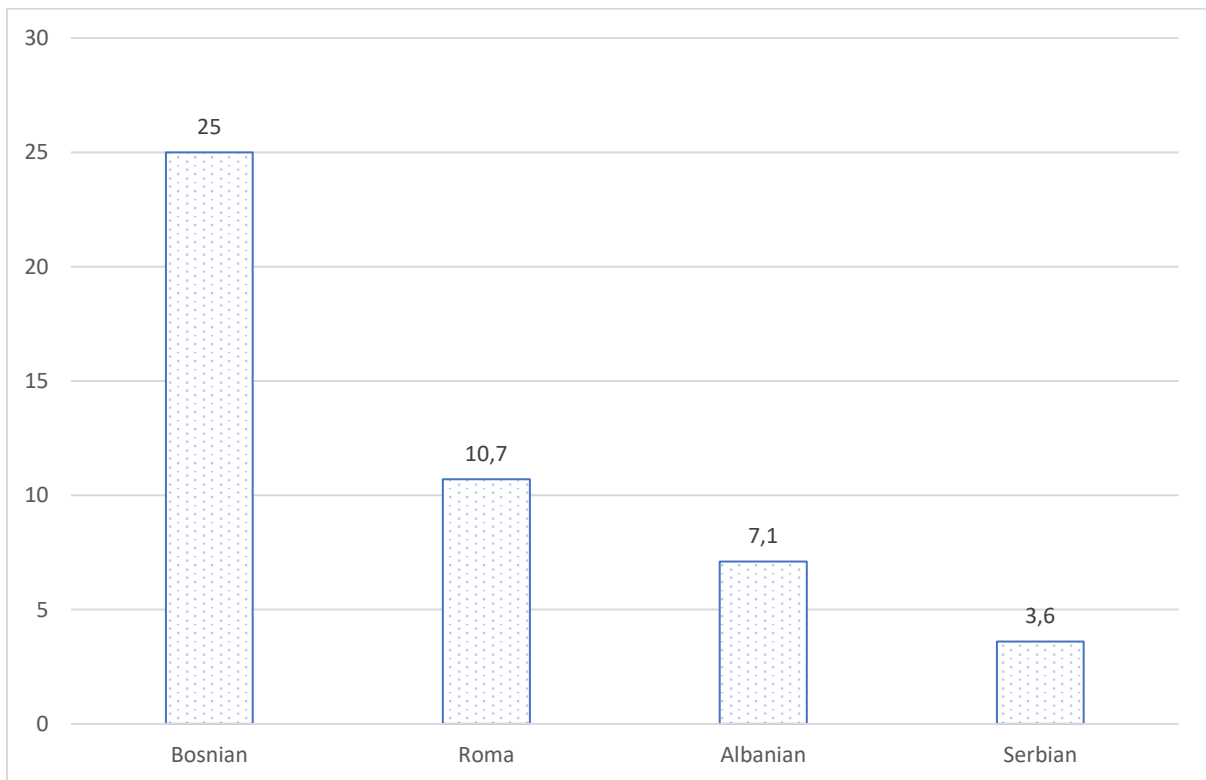


Figure 4. Reported nationalities (%).



Figure 5 shows the environment from which participants come. Most participants come from an urban environment (50%), followed by participants who come from a more rural environment (25%). We also examined their housing situation (Figure 6) and found that the majority of young NEETs (50%) live in an apartment or house purchased by their parents, followed by those who live in a rented apartment (25%). 3.6% live with parents/friends.

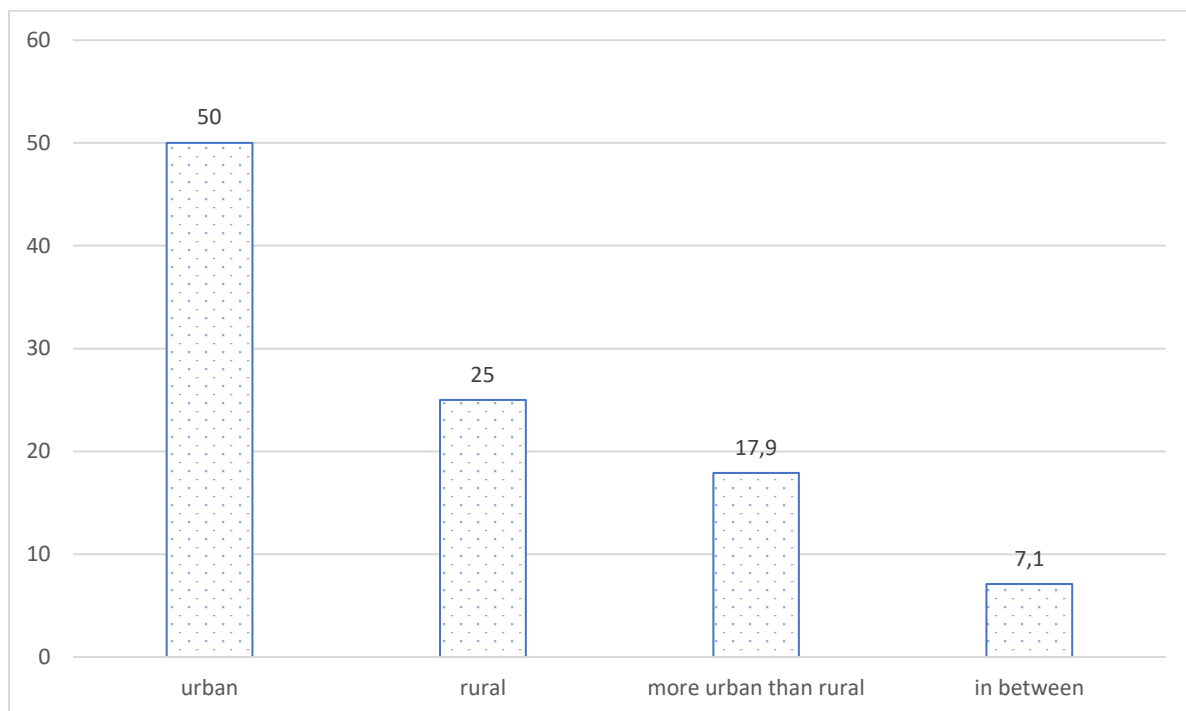


Figure 5. Type of area of living (%).

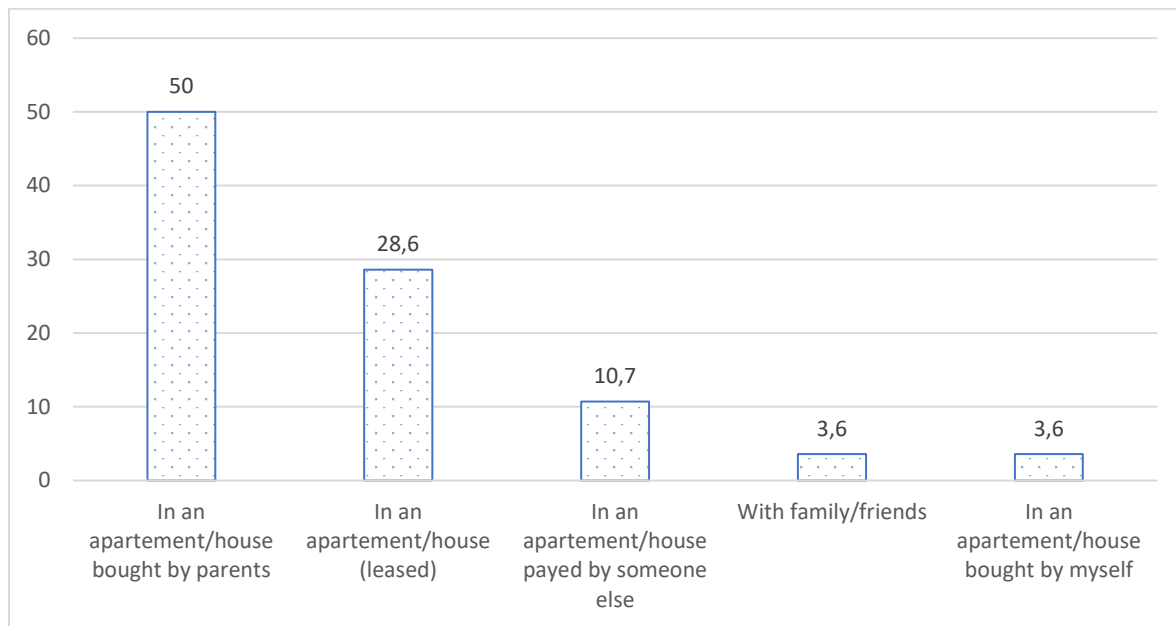


Figure 6. Residential settlement (%).

2.2.2 Socioeconomic characteristics

We further examined the socioeconomic background of the respondents. Figure 7 shows that most respondents have a bachelor's degree (32.1%), followed by completed secondary education; 28.6% have completed technical school and 14.3% have completed high school. Looking at the educational level of the parents (Figure 8), it can be seen that the majority of parents have completed elementary school and specialised (technical) secondary school.

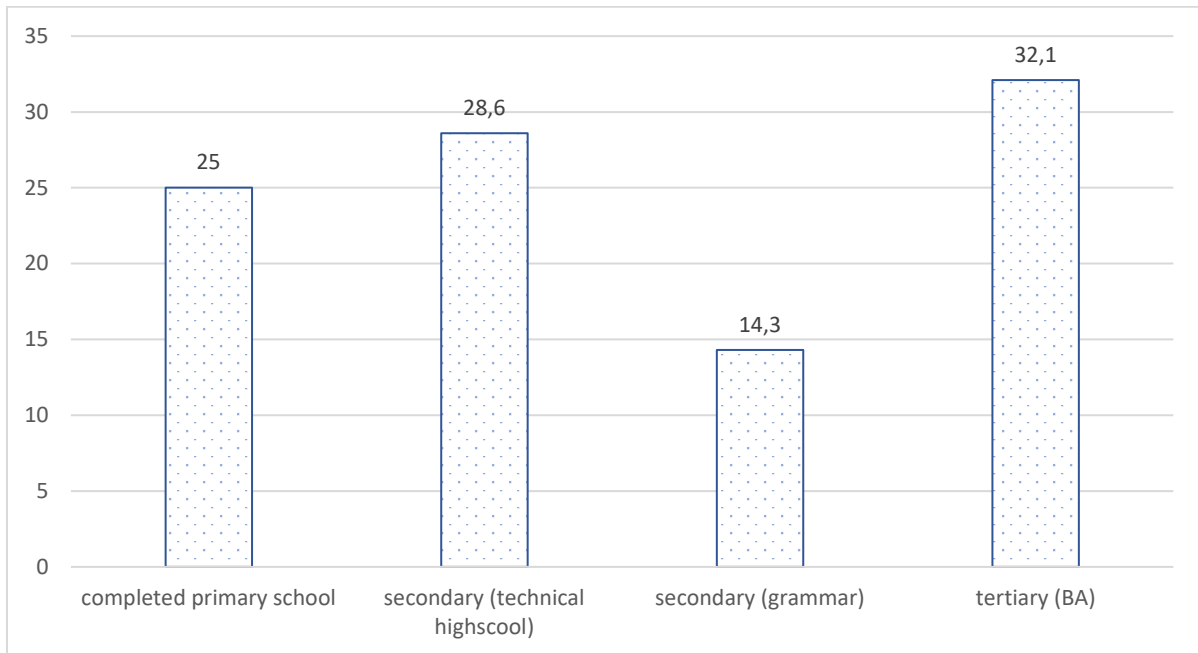


Figure 7. Respondent's educational attainment (%).

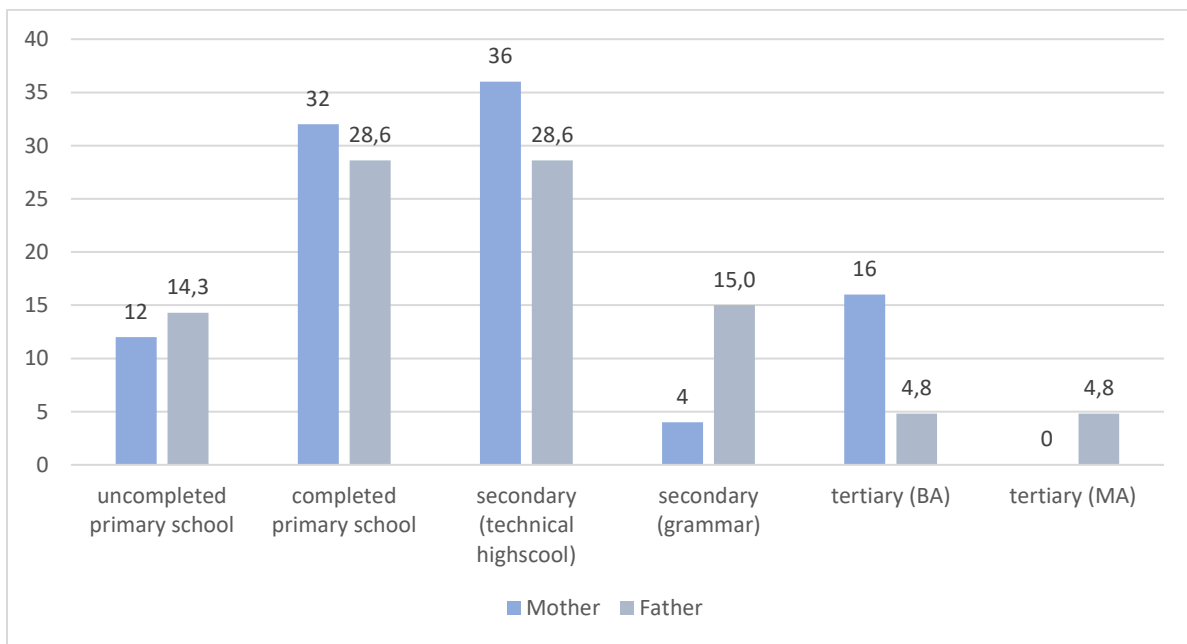


Figure 8. Parental educational attainment (%).

In addition, we were interested in the material situation of the respondents' household (Figure 9). Respondents were asked about various ownerships of their household (Figure 9). All respondents reported that they owned a washing machine and a dishwasher. 65.4% own a car, 50% own air conditioning, 40.7% reported that they own a bicycle, and that they have internet access. 60.4% indicated that they own a house or an apartment.

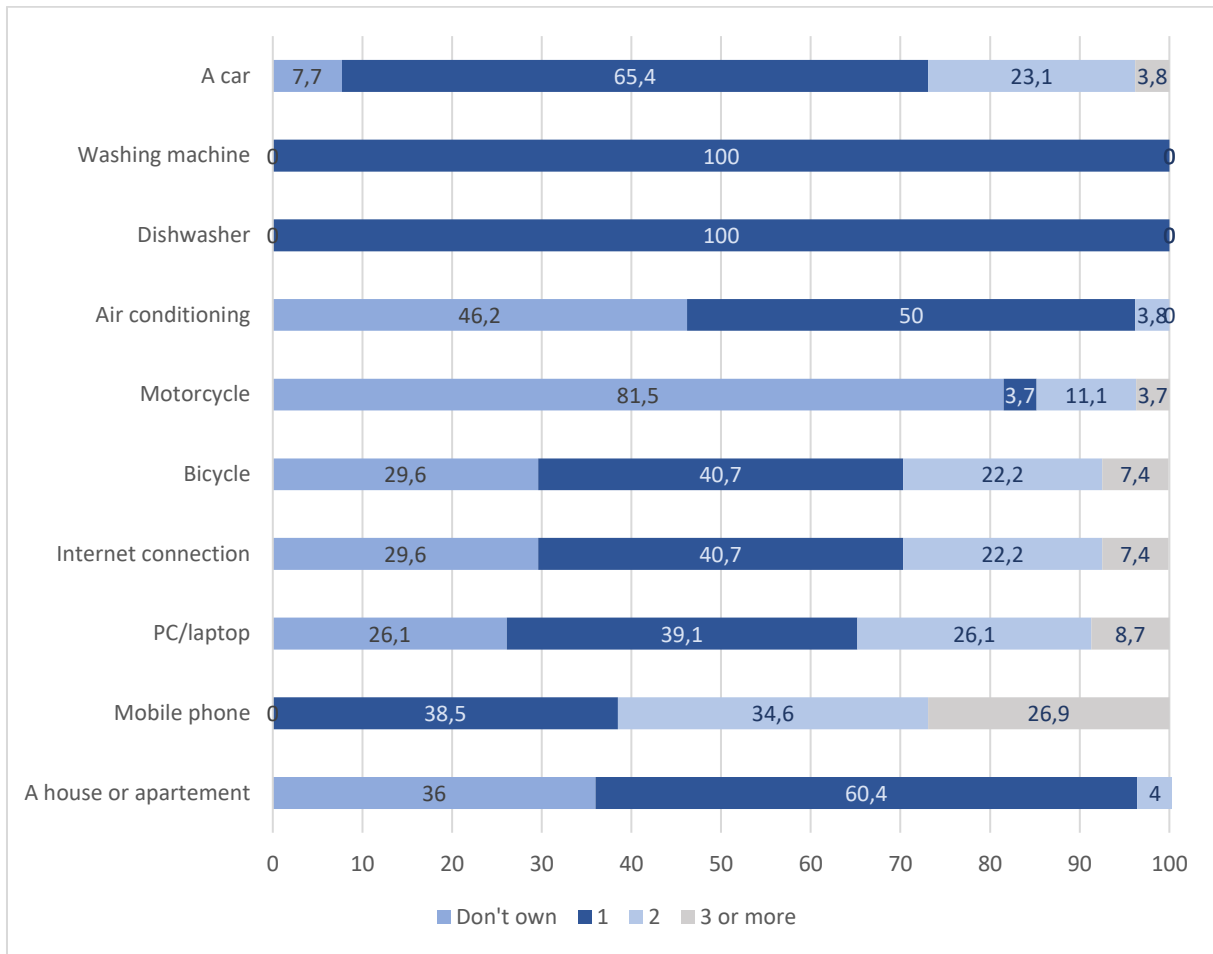


Figure 9. Household ownerships (%).

Respondents were also asked to rate their economic situation (Figure 10). 34% indicated that they have enough for basic needs, but not enough for expensive things. 30.4% indicated that the economic situation of their household is good (they can afford more expensive things, etc.). Only 4.3% said they do not have enough for bills, indicating economic hardship, and another 13% said they can pay bills but cannot afford clothes.

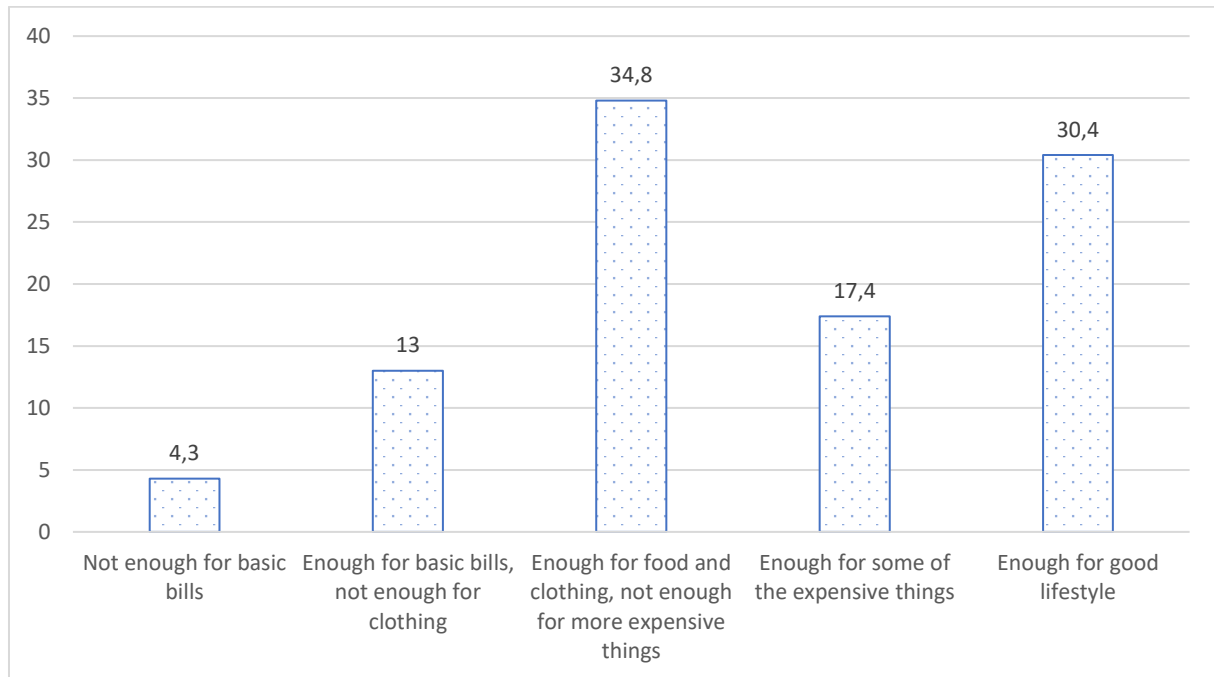


Figure 10. The self-assessed economic situation of their household (%).

2.2.3 Psycho-social characteristics

We found that more than half NEETs (57.1%) have a good relationship with their family, while only a minority (10.7%) said that their relationship with family is not good and that they fight often.

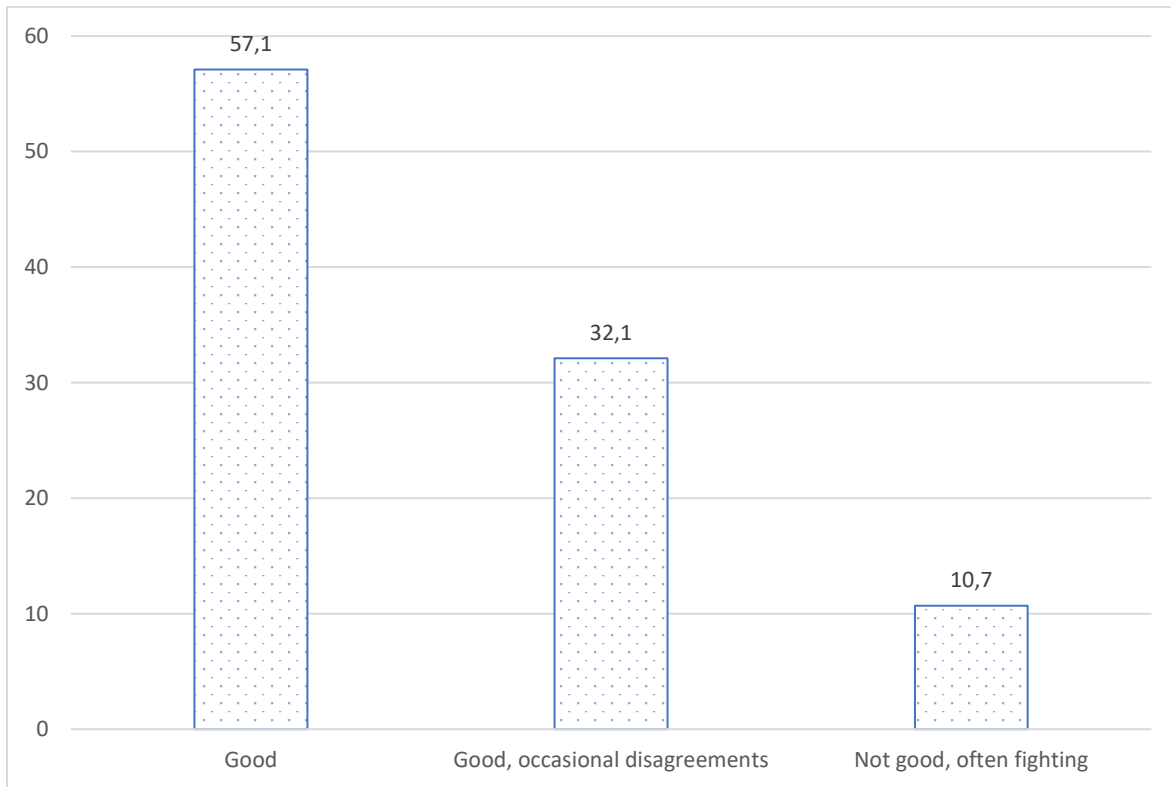


Figure 11. Reported quality of relationship with the family (%).

Figure 12 NEET shows the future aspirations of young people in relation to their romantic relationships. The vast majority of respondents reported that they see themselves being married and having a family in the future (65.4%). 3.8% indicated that they want to be married without children, and 19.2% indicated that they want to be in a relationship (not necessarily married) with children. Only 3.8% indicated that they consider themselves single and childless in the future.

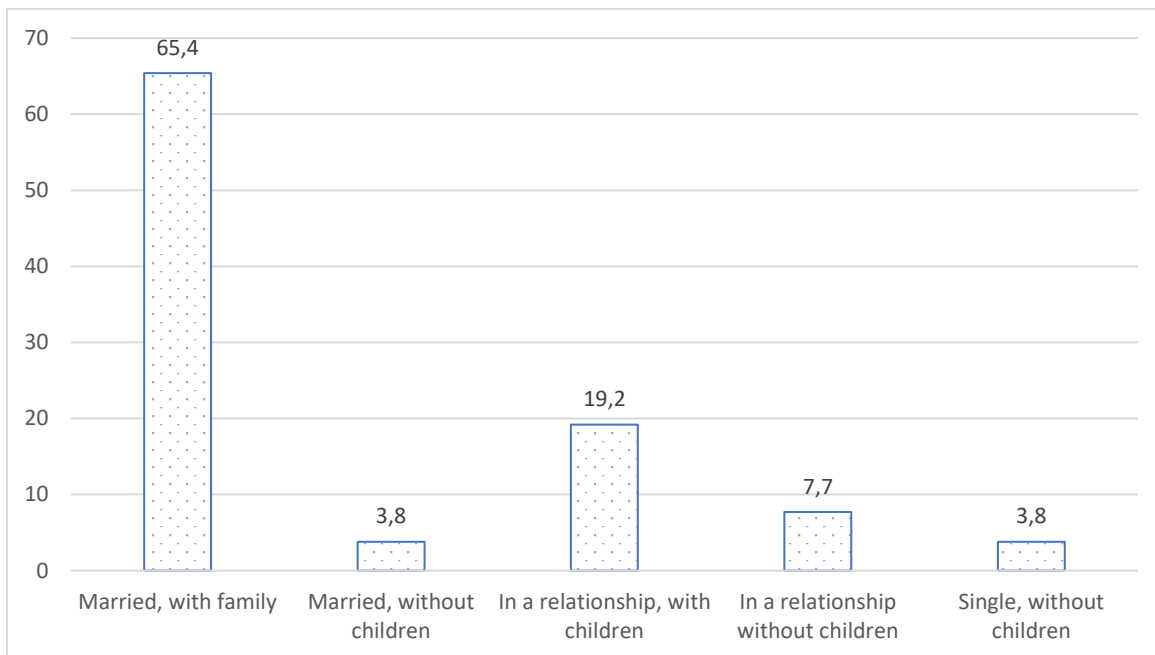


Figure 12. Future aspirations in terms of romantic relationships (%).

Figure 13 shows the current relationship status. 32.1% are single, 25% are married, 21.4% live with their partner (not married), and 17.9% indicated that they have a partner with whom they don't live.

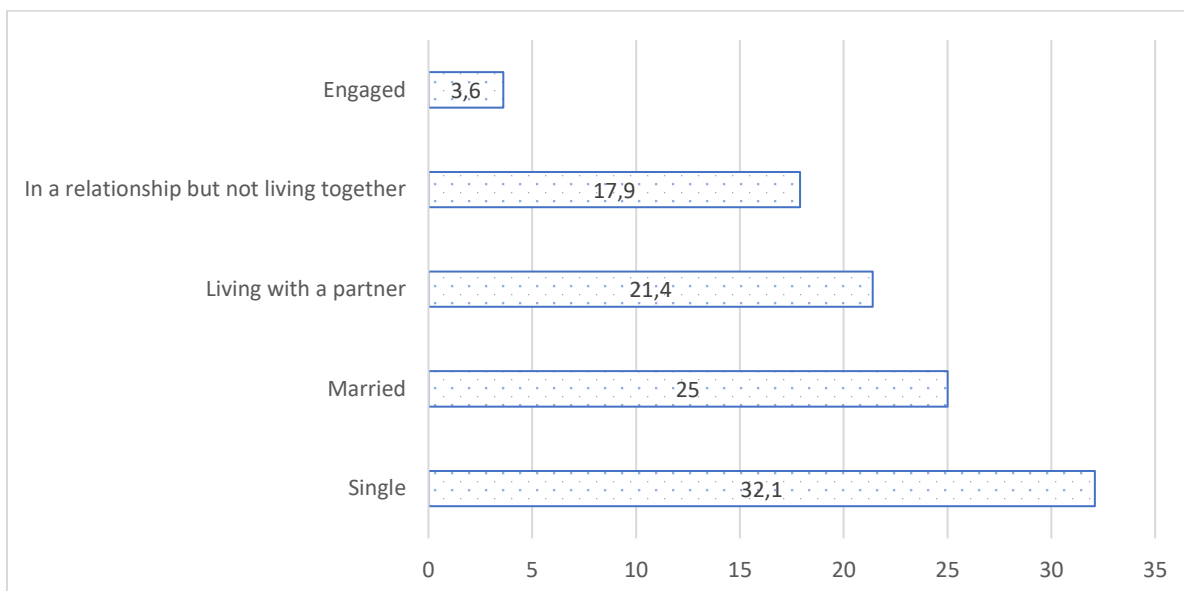


Figure 13. Respondent's relationship status (%).

2.2.4 Education and employment

Most respondents (64.3%) last participated in formal education more than three years ago, and, interestingly, we found that 40.7% said they never participated in informal education (Figure 14).

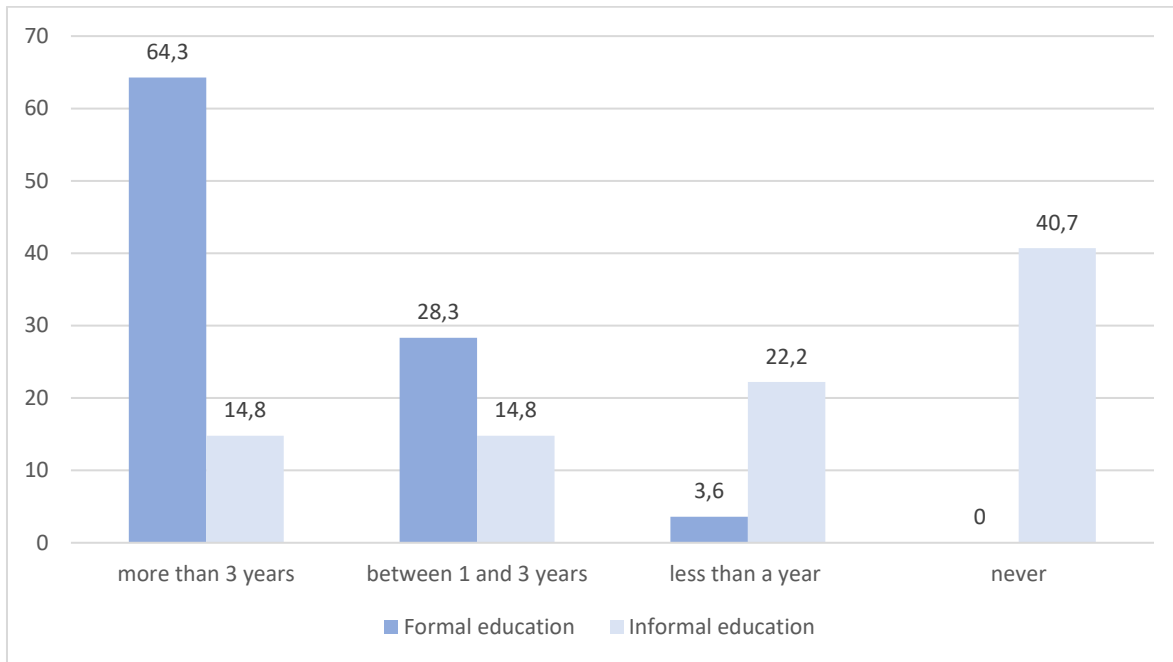


Figure 14. Formal and informal educational participation (%).

Those who said they have participated in informal education, were asked to tell which informal education they participated in (Figure 15). 10.8% mentioned language courses, 7.1% said they participated in PUM-O programme.

2.2.4.1 Informal education

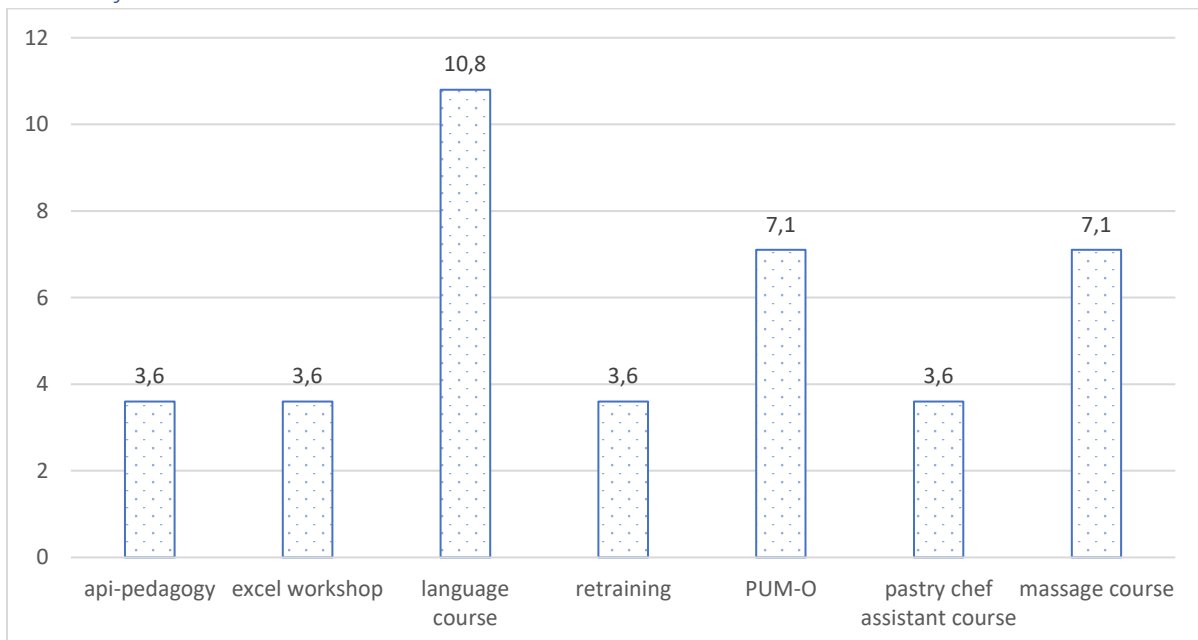


Figure 15. Reported informal education (participation in courses etc.) (%).

Respondents were further asked how many informal courses, activities etc. they attended (Figure 16). Most of them 25% reported two activities, followed by three activities (16.7%).

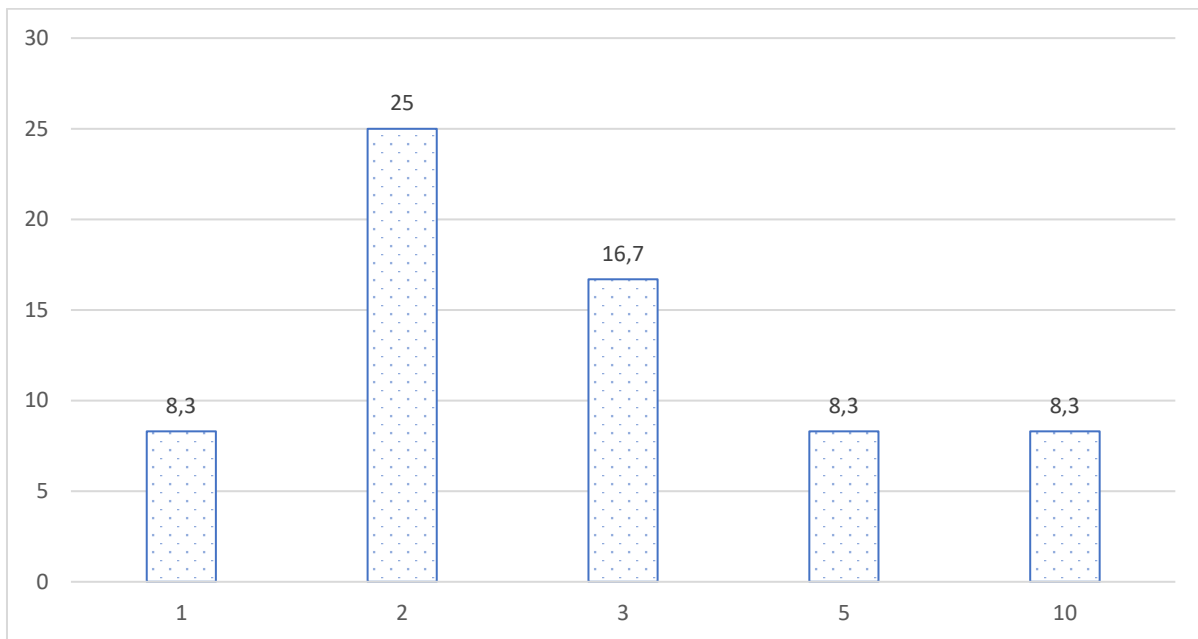


Figure 16. The number of informal activities respondents participated in (%).

2.2.4.2 Employment

In terms of last employment, we found that 39.3% of NEETs were last employed less than a year ago, 32% said they were never employed. The minority (8%) are unemployed for three years or more (Figure 17).

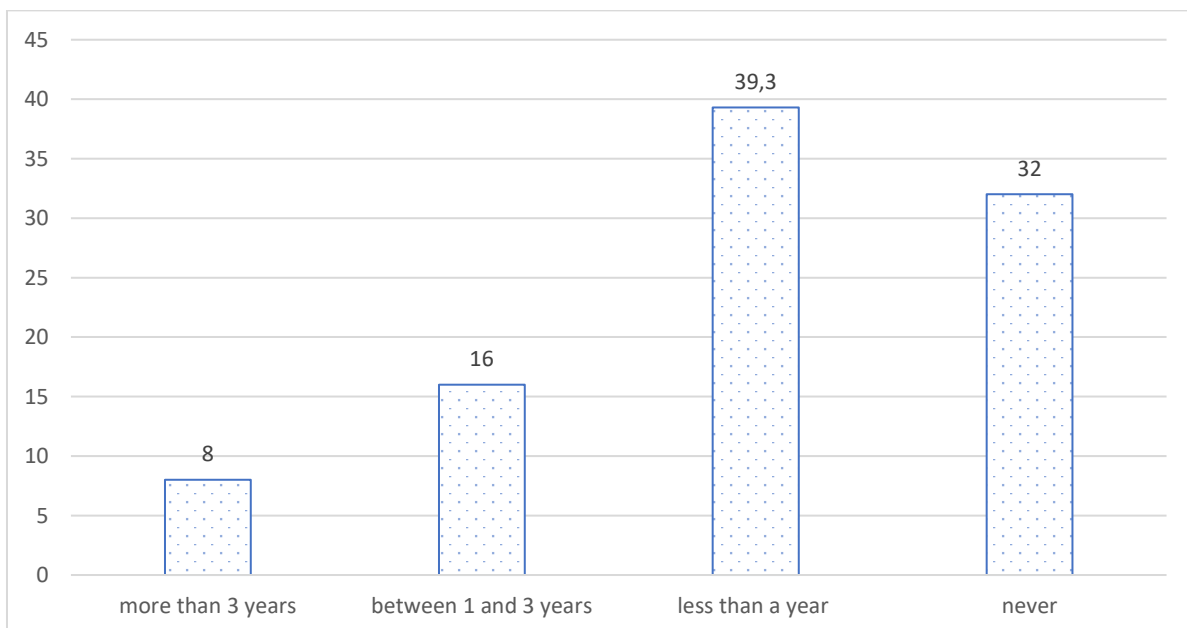


Figure 17. Respondent's last employment (%).

Figure 18 presented the type of employment the NEETs were in. We found that 62.5% were employed for full time with fixed term, followed by 12.5% of those with part time employment with indefinite duration. 7.8% said they were employed as students through students' services.

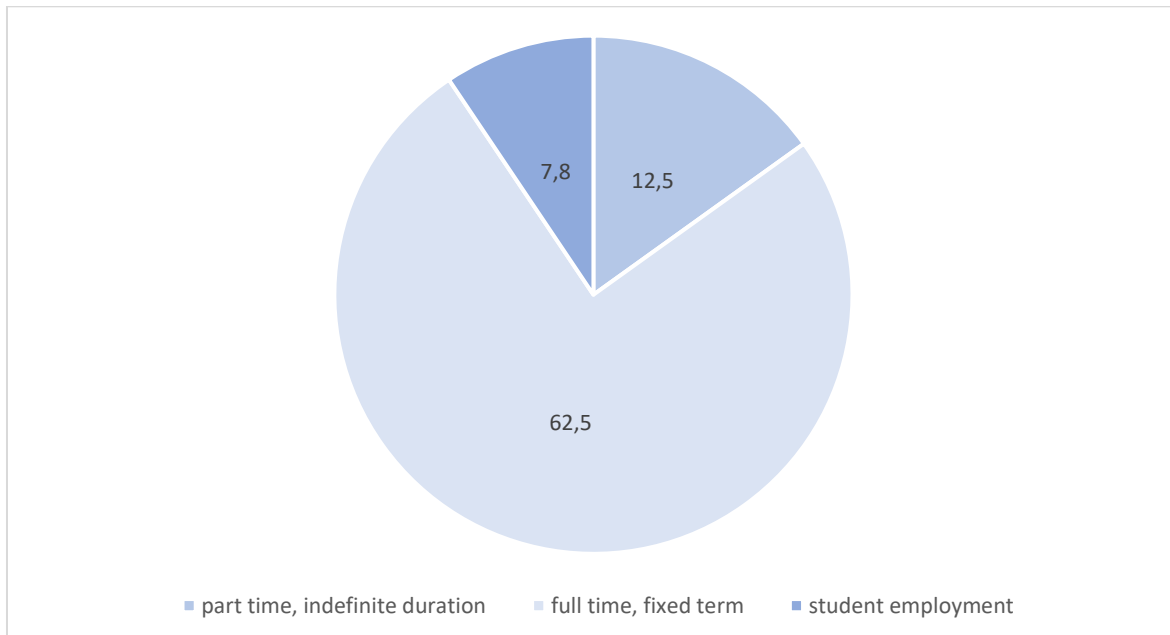


Figure 18. Type of employment (%).

50% of NEETs reported that they do not receive financial compensation and aids due to their unemployment, while 36.4% reported that they do (Figure 19). Financial aid ranged from €400 to €900. Those receiving such financial assistance were also asked whether they considered the assistance to be an obstacle to their job search (results not shown in a table or figure). 25% disagreed, while 12.5% agreed that such aid reduced their desire to find employment.

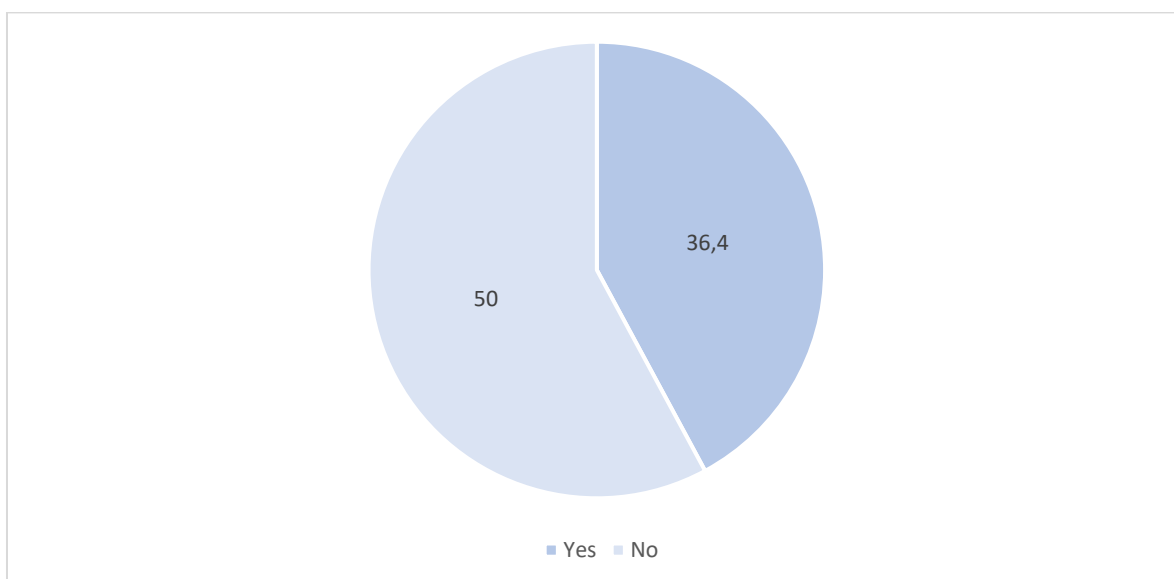


Figure 19. Recipience of financial aid due to respondent's unemployment (%).

Figure 20 NEET's participation in grey economy is shown. The majority of respondents (71.5%) said they were not involved in the informal economy, while 20% said they were. Of those who participate, 8% have an income of up to €100 and between €250 and €500. Only 4% said that their average income due to their participation in the grey economy is between €500 and €1000.

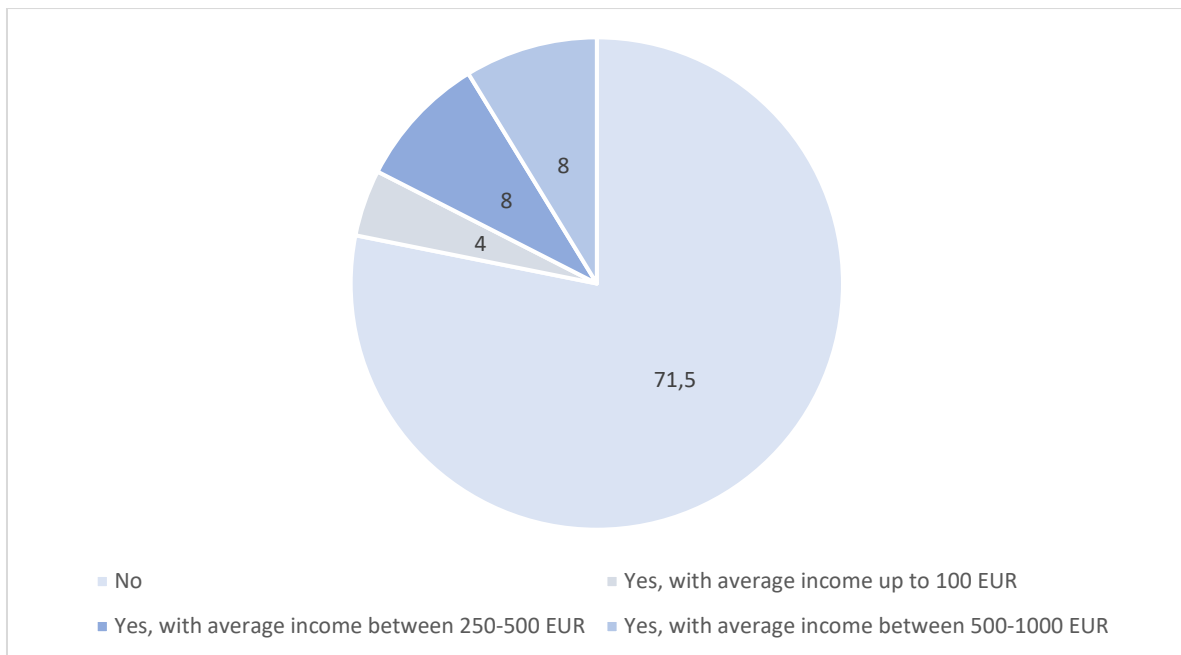


Figure 20. involvement in the grey (informal) economy (%).

In addition, 42.9% of NEETs reported that they had not received any job opportunities in the past six months, while 40% reported that they had (Figure 21). We also wanted to know if there were any formal barriers to their entering the workforce (Figure 22). 57.1% reported no barriers, while 27.3% said the opposite. Among formal barriers, work permit, criminal record, and residency were mentioned (result not presented).

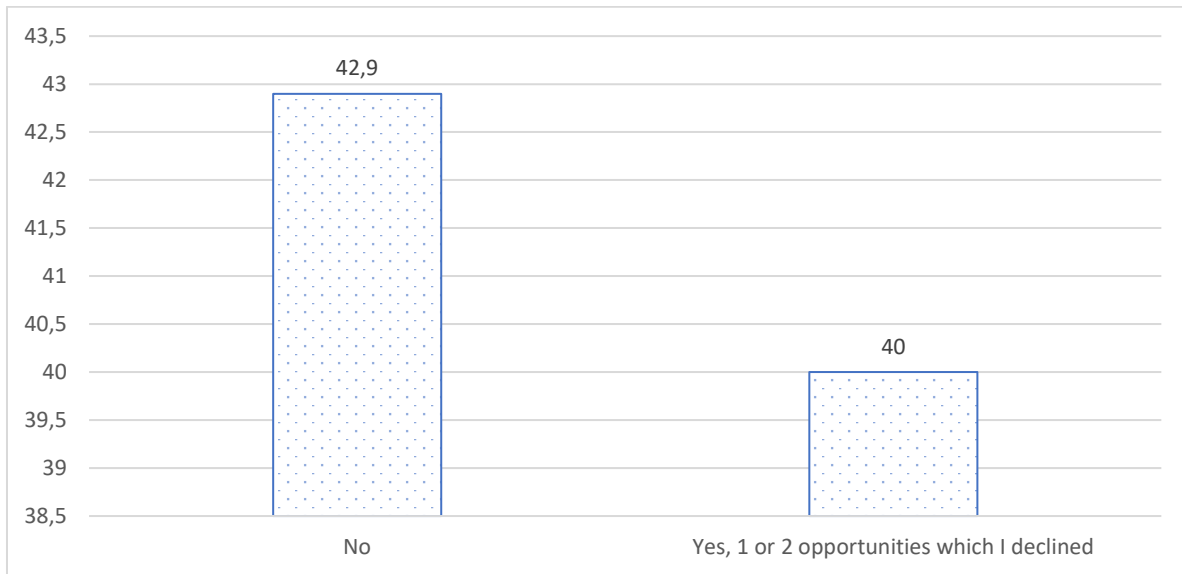


Figure 21. Job opportunities in the last six months (%).

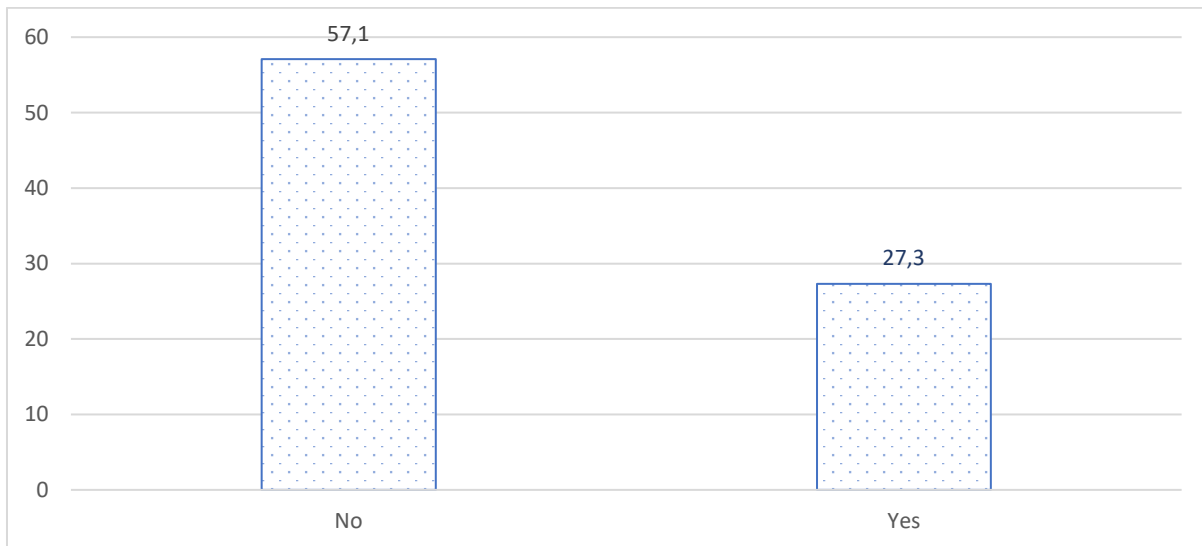


Figure 22. A possible barrier to entering the labour market (%).

2.2.5 Job-seeking opportunities and attitudes

Regarding job search opportunities and attitudes (Figure 23), it appears that NEETs more often try to find employment through Internet or newspaper advertisements, sending resumes, and contacting employment agencies. On the other hand, they are less likely to use more informal ways to contact potential employers, such as trying to meet an employer informally or getting inside information about jobs.

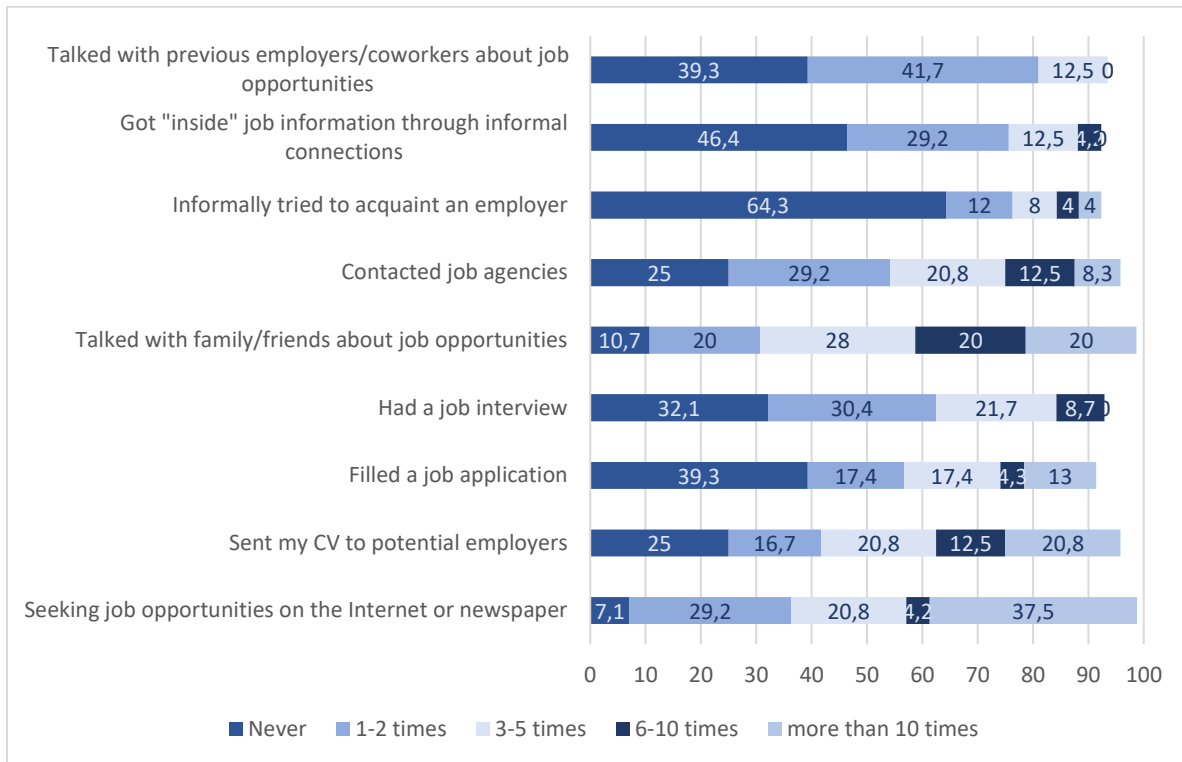


Figure 23. Job-seeking activities in the last six months (%).

On a 5 – point Likert scale, respondents rated what they did when searching for a job (Figure 24). They mostly agreed with the statement relating to asking people about knowing someone with a job-related information ($M = 3.50, SD = 1.70$), followed by talking to family and friends about their job search ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.65$).



Figure 24. Job-seeking activities, relating to social capital (M).

In a similar fashion, respondents rated what they would be prepared to do to avoid unemployment (Figure 25). They mostly agreed they would accept a temporary job ($M = 3.96, SD = 0.77$) and job which demands new knowledge and skills ($M = 3.91, SD = 1.13$). They mostly disagreed to work as a volunteer ($M = 2.57, SD = 1.59$).

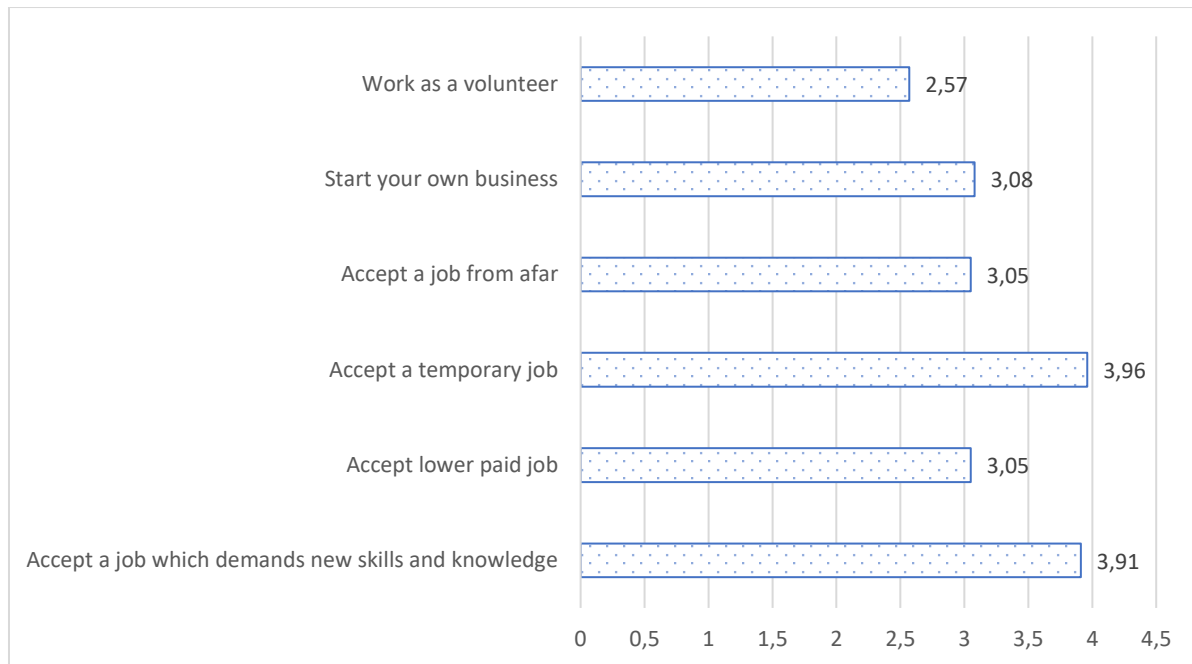


Figure 25. Avoidance of unemployment (M).

2.2.6 Self-assessed skills

Skills rated as good included the ability to fill out forms, effectively prepare a job application, maintain a positive attitude towards work, creating new ideas and solutions, quickly acquiring new knowledge, thinking analytically, quick reading and comprehension, mastering Slovenian language and basic computer tasks, leadership skills, and mastery of one's professional knowledge (Figure 26). Mastery of foreign language, German language and public speaking were rated as poor.

However, we would like to point out that the scale of self-assessed skills contained a larger proportion of missing values. For example, 32.1% of missing values were found in the items: mastery of one's core area of expertise, ability to perform in public, and negotiation skills. The full report of missing values on the self-assessed skills scale can be found in Table 4.

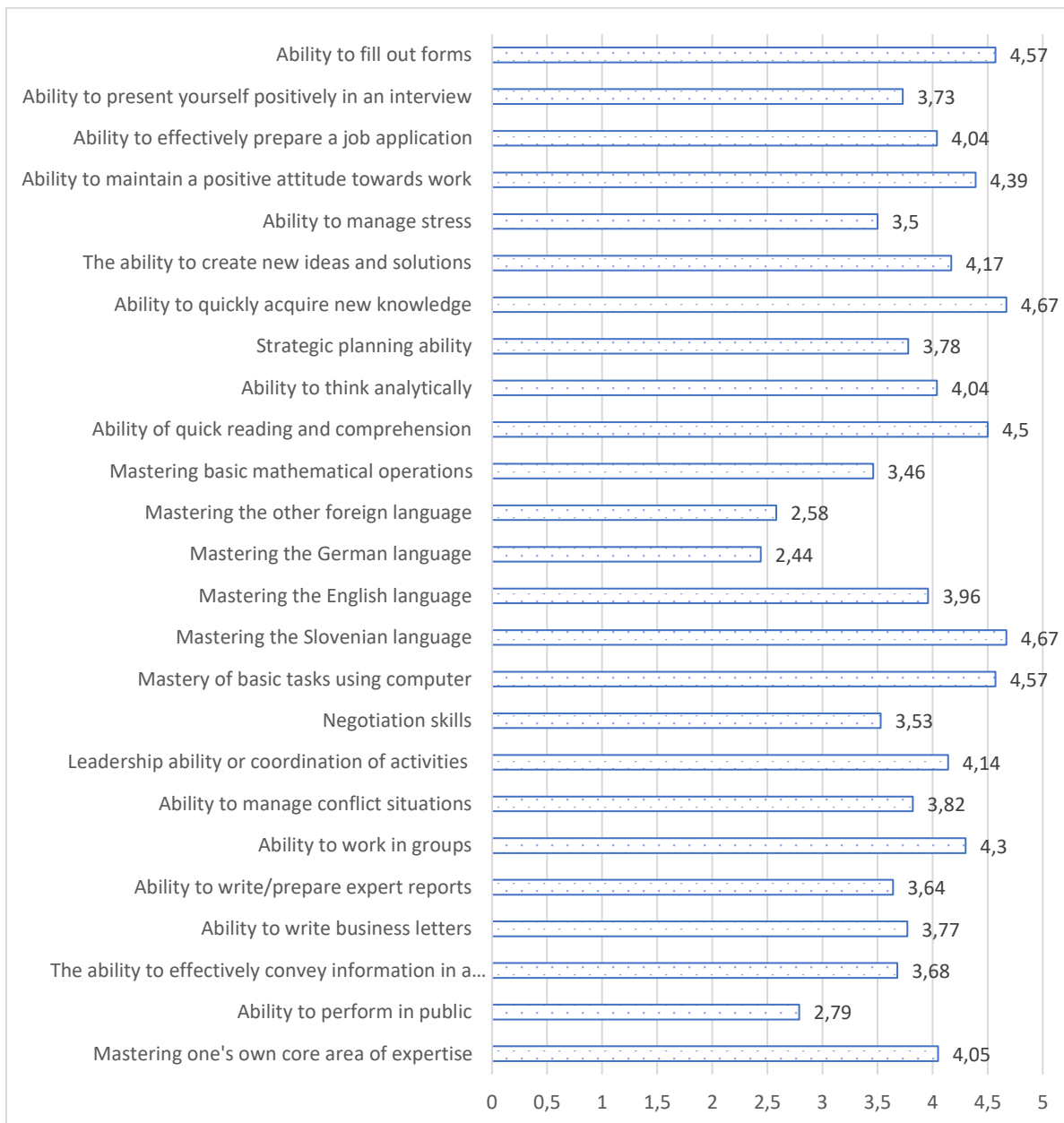


Figure 26. Self-assessed skills (*M*).

We found that NEETs spent 15 minutes to 30 minutes watching or uploading videos, performing income generating activities and spending time on social media (Figure 27). They spent less time (around 15 minutes) for reading newspapers and playing games. They reported that they spent most of their time online for finding a job, watching movies and educating themselves.

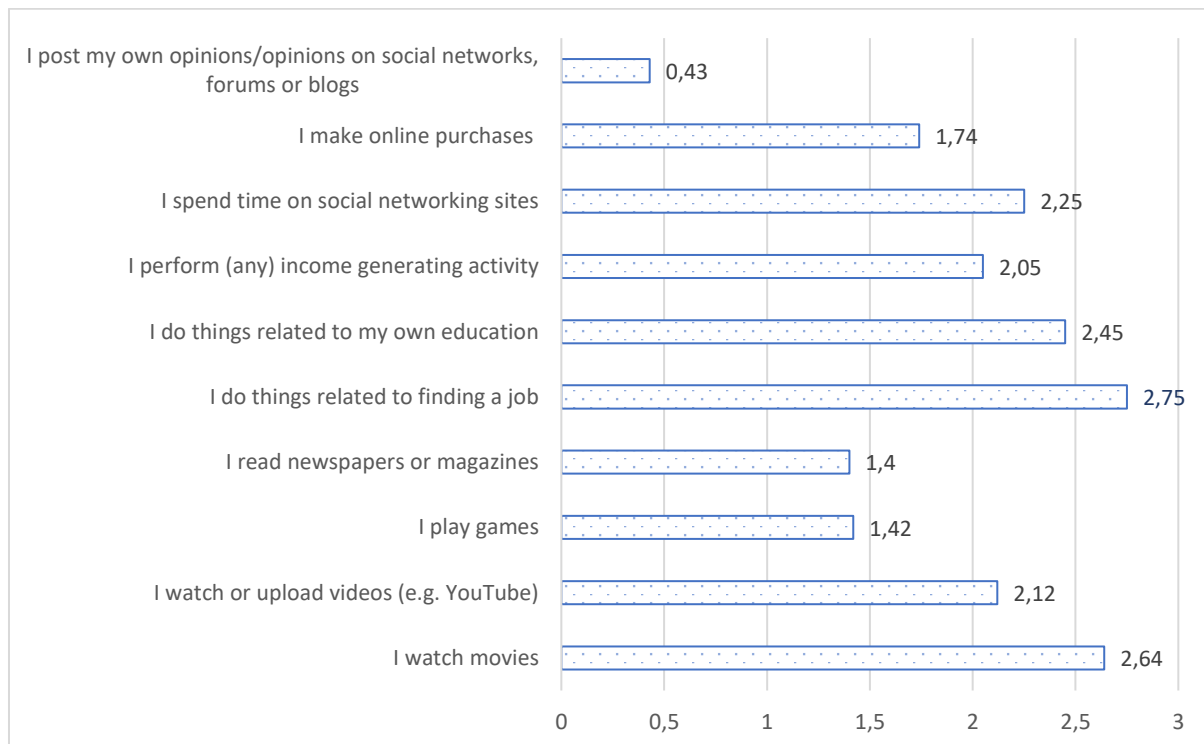


Figure 27. Internet activities on PC or mobile phone (*M*).

Note. 0 = never, 1 = up to 15 minutes, 2 = 15-30 minutes, 3 = 30 minutes to 1 hour 4 = 1-2 hours, 5 = 2-3 hours, 6 = more than 3 hours.

Regarding self-assessed online skills (Figure 28), NEETs were less familiar with creating websites or blogs using dedicated web services ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 1.10$) and collaborating with others using cloud services ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.31$). We would like to point out that the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). Since the scores for all observed items were below 3 (a neutral value), this indicates that NEET rated all online skills as fairly poor. In addition, the self-assessed online skills scale also contained a larger proportion of missing values, which also indicates a possible lack of knowledge (see Table 6).

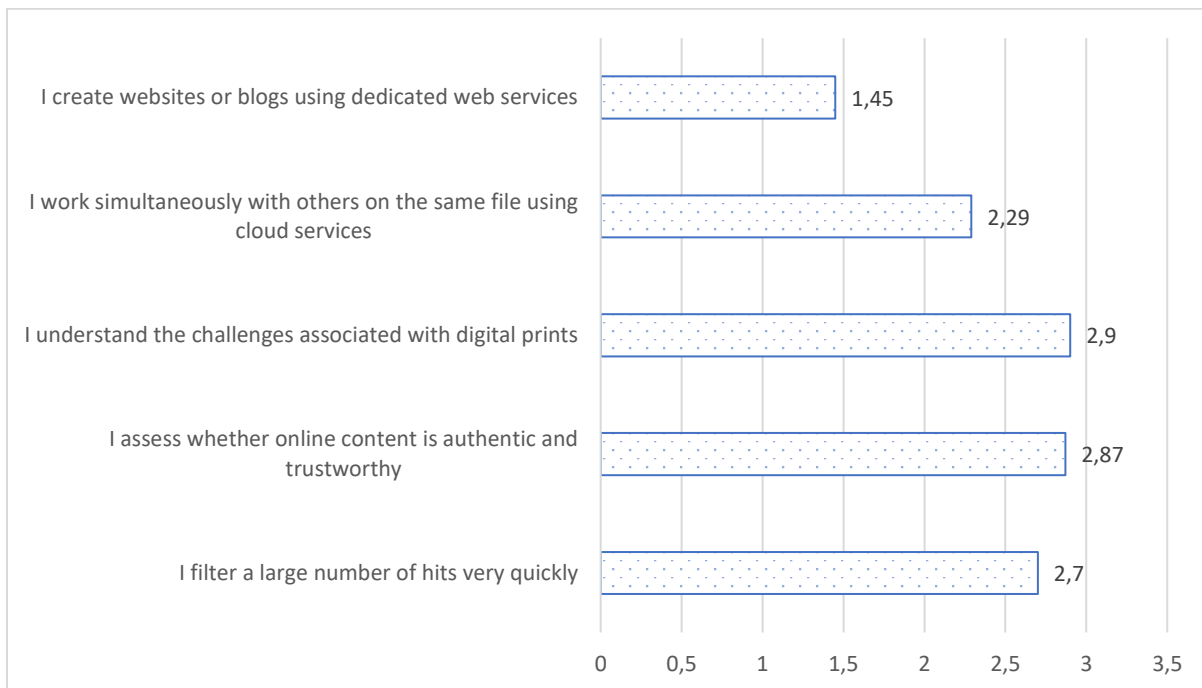


Figure 28. Self-assessed internet skills (M).

2.2.7 Health

We asked respondents how satisfied they were with their health. Respondents gave their answers on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) poor to (5) excellent. The mean score was 3.32 (SD = 1.28), indicating that NEETs considered their health to be good (results not shown in a table). Figure 29 shows the reported chronic illnesses. We found that the majority of respondents did not suffer from any type of chronic disease (60.7%), while 8.3% reported having such diseases that greatly affected their daily lives.

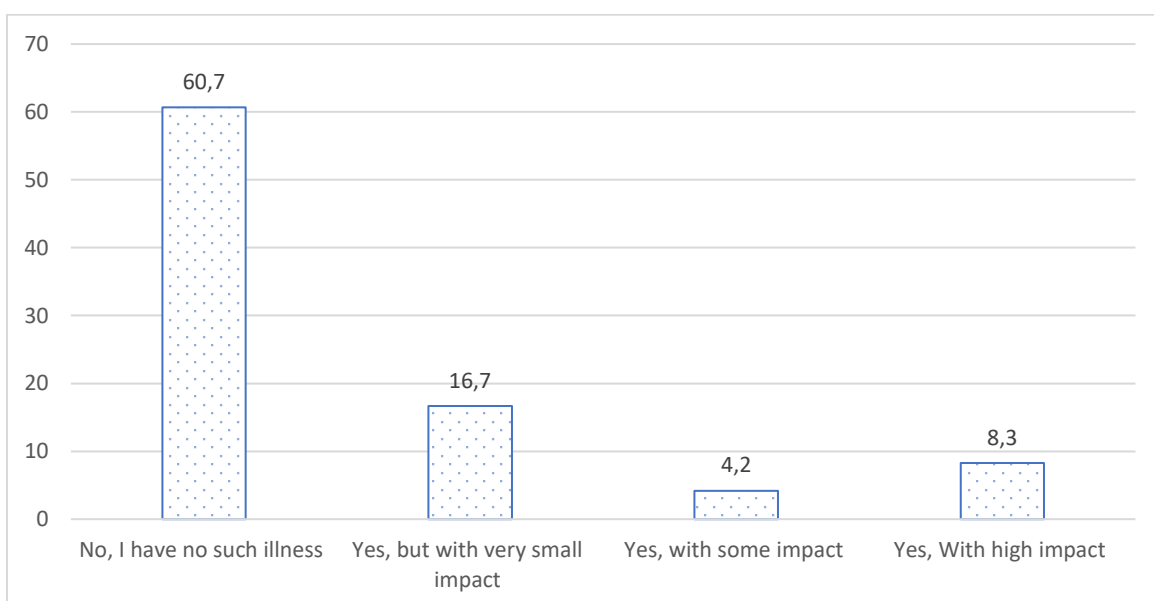


Figure 29. Reported chronic illnesses (%).

2.2.8 Aspirations and attitudes

In addition to NEETs want, we were also interested in how satisfied they are with their lives in general. Respondents indicated their answers on a 10-point scale ranging from (0) completely dissatisfied to (10) completely satisfied. The mean score was 5.84 (SD = 2.88), indicating that they tend to be satisfied with their lives. In addition to life satisfaction, future aspirations were also examined. Respondents were asked how they view their future (0 = worse than the present; 10 = much better than the present). The mean score was 6.72 (SD = 2.35), indicating that they were optimistic about the future.

Figure 30 shows aspirations and attitudes regarding future employment. NEETs expressed high agreement with the importance of employment; in particular, they agreed that they would be bored without a job and that a job meant more to them than just an income. They also emphasised that they were unfamiliar with the forms of institutional support available to help them find a job. This statement also contained a higher percentage of missing values (21.4%).

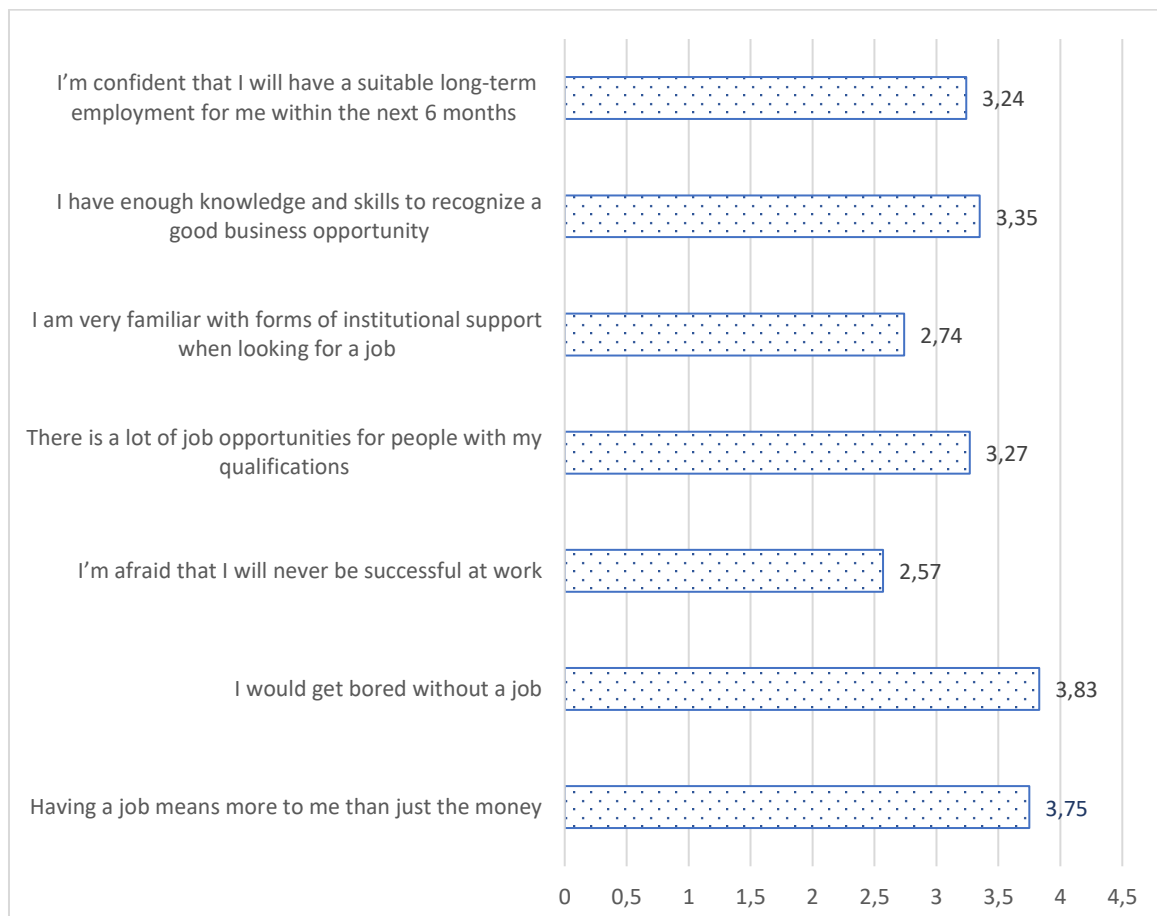
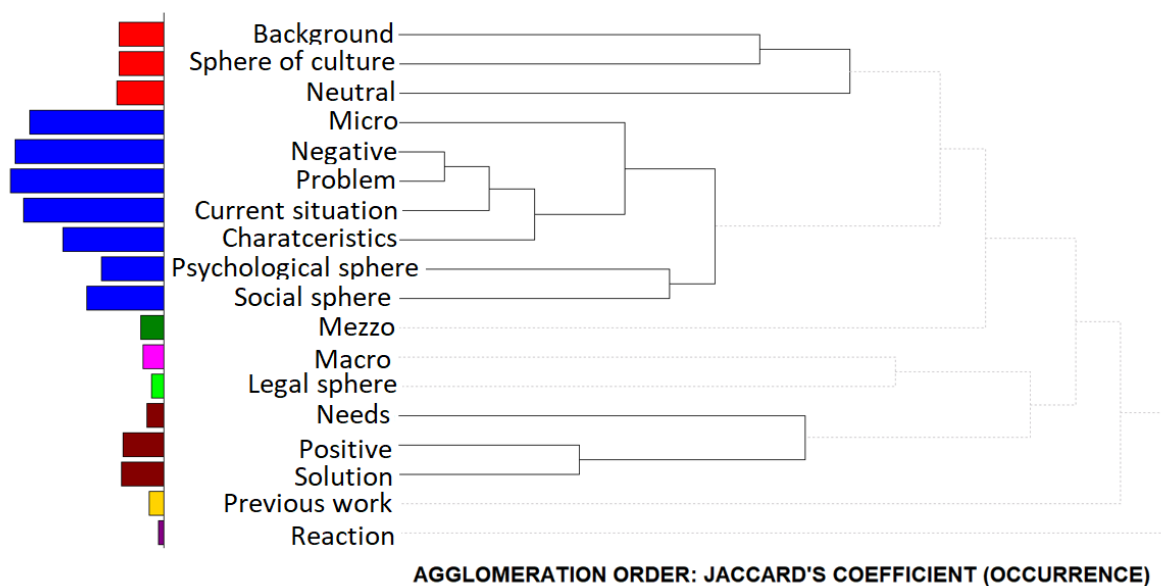


Figure 30. Self-assessed future aspirations and attitudes regarding employment (*M*).

3 Qualitative results

In order to analyze the perceptions regarding the relevant areas, the first step in the analysis of the collected narratives was based on a cluster analysis of the collected codes (see Figure 1).

Figure 31: Cluster analysis of the collected codes related to perceptions



The chart shows that from the point of view of perceptions, there are three basic clusters related to perceptions:

- 1.) The cluster of *NEUTRAL PERCEPTIONS* (colored red), which, in order of agglomeration, also includes the individual *Starting point and background* (social, cultural, economic, psychological, and other elements that played a key role in creating the conditions for the realization of the NEET status) and the *Cultural sphere* (elements related to the cultural sphere). Based on the agglomeration arrangement of the mentioned elements, we can make a general statement that the starting points and personal background, and cultural elements are perceived by the participants neutrally, which means that they cannot be understood either as something excessively positive or excessively negative, but as part of their general normality.
- 2.) *NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS* cluster (colored blue) to which are linked *Problems* (with which the participants face), *Current situation*, which basically consists of elements that are related to

the current NEET status and are understood as problematic, *Characteristics*, where the individual characteristics of the participants belong, and everything is firmly based on the *Micro* level, i.e., on the sphere of institutions and organizations (*Mezzo*) or the state (*Macro*), but on the level of the individual. Interestingly, the sub-cluster of the *Psychological* and *Social spheres* appears here, which places these two levels in the area that the participants perceive as problematic. This data further confirms our findings related to methodological limitations. Given that all the mentioned elements in the agglomeration order are linked to negative perceptions, they can be understood as what represents the sphere of problems for the participants.

- 3.) *POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS* cluster (colored brown), which, in addition to these, also includes *Solutions* (elements that the participants understand as solutions to the current situation and other parts of the narratives that are understood as problematic) and *Needs* (components that are understood as prerequisites).

3.1 Perceptions of general problems with the current situation

In the next step, following the project goals, we focused the analysis on the problems of participants from the NEET population:

Figure 32: A sphere that the participants of the focus groups understand as problematic

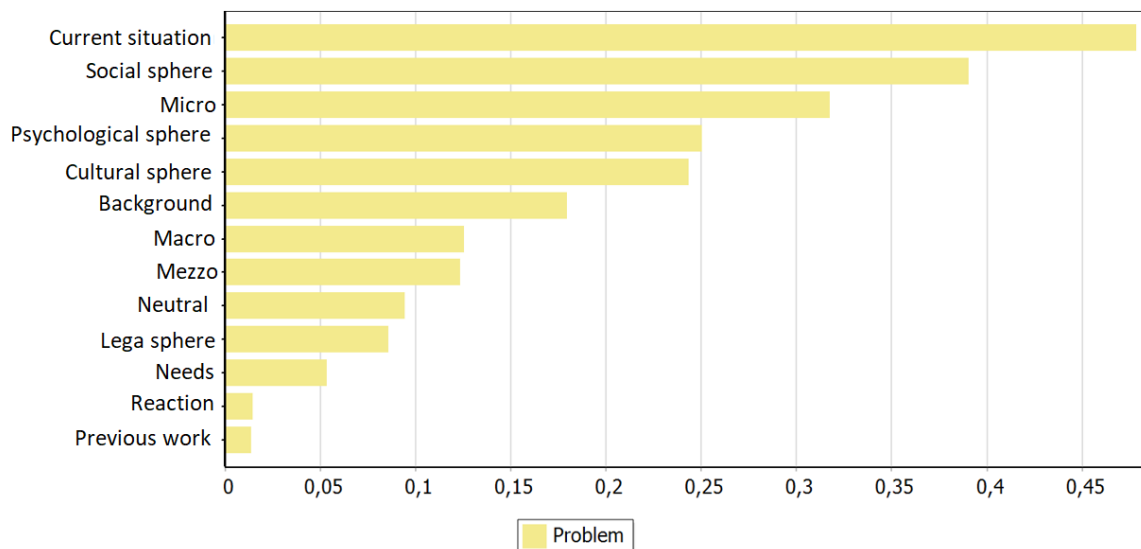


Figure 32 shows the distance of the sphere, which is understood as problematic in relation to other areas of life. The chart shows that the current situation is perceived as the most problematic, namely in the context of the social sphere and at the micro level. Descriptions of difficult current situations refer to narratives that cover all possible aspects of life situations, from socio-economic and



integration problems to psychological distress. These are usually part of a complex intertwining with problems in the social sphere and represent a serious problem for the individual, among whom social isolation prevails:

» The problem is the same because when I came (to Slovenia) in the corona, I had little communication with the Slovenian language, so I am lagging behind (in integration into the new socio-cultural environment)« (FG 21-1-6)

» Well, every day the same, what X (another participant in the focus group) says, you get up, I mean, /.../I'm also alone, I don't have children, I don't have anyone, but you clean, you clean every day. You say I could buy something; you go out, come back, and watch a series so that the day is delayed a little because you are alone there; you have no one.« (FG 21-1-9)

» Yes, but the negative consequence is that I just can't, I'm isolated at home, I have no one to communicate with. I would like to edit something myself, also...« (FG- 1-5)

Social isolation also has negative consequences for social integration, which is a particularly serious problem for those who come from other social and cultural backgrounds:

»I'm too closed; I was constantly down there among close people and communicating and everything. This way, if I succeed here, now I have that from (unintelligible). Everyone has their own (unintelligible), so you don't even have time to read the whole day and talk and hang out, but now you two, for me, it's just that, it's too much for me, I shut myself up, and then I changed (unintelligible) when I came from Bosnia, I came here, I was constantly at home.« (FG-1-6)

Social isolation has negative effects on the vast majority of participants and is also expressed in those who have never had such problems before:

» Yes, because I'm sitting at home (alone), and I have negative thoughts, and I can't (go anywhere). (FG1-1-5, speaks Albanian)

» What does that look like? What are negative thoughts?« (moderator)

» Yes. I finished college in Macedonia, and I feel incapable of doing anything here. It seems to me that I am not looking for any work. And that throws me even more into depression. It is also particularly negative that I have no one to talk to, no one to confide in.« (FG1-1-5)



Socialna izolacija običajno vključuje tudi ekonomsko prikrajšanost. Kljub temu, da je velika večina udeležencev prejela neko obliko socialnega transferja in da so povedali, da to sicer zagotavlja golo preživetje, pa to ni edini aspekt ekonomske prikrajšanosti:

Social isolation usually also includes economic deprivation. Despite the fact that the vast majority of participants received some form of social transfer and they said that although it ensured bare survival, this is not the only aspect of economic deprivation:

» Without money, you can't do anything without money these days; you can't even go to the toilet.« (FG-25-1-8)

» Oh money, no, absolutely. Because you can't do anything without money, and also... you can afford more than now (when he/she only receives social support)« (FG-25-7)

For many participants, the economically weak position represents situations where additional reduction is impossible, so they themselves formulate specific strategies for dealing with economic deprivation. This usually includes a combination of (1) consumption reduction, (2) state social support, (3) flexible and casual work (often undeclared), and (4) informal support from family and friends:

»/.../ I currently receive social support, but every now and then, when I see that it's a little bit like that, I've been working since the little one is a little bigger. I leave my little girl at home; my husband works a little, but he also drives for Carglass irregularly from time to time no, so when they need him, they call him if necessary because no, they don't need a regular one, so yes. Once or twice a month, if I go somewhere to an inn to help those 10, that's fine, but it goes through. Acquaintances are essential, right? Acquaintances are very important here. This is really nice in the hospitality because for an irregular job, for everyday needs, you've got plenty of it. They give a job everywhere, and you get it right away, but when you like to work regularly, this is a problem.«(FG5,4)

» Me? From time to time, I go on a business to help with the catering when they start their business; if someone needs you for a wedding party, let's say we have a small lake on the other side of the hill when there are weddings parties, groups, I worked for example at Cvetje, and I made popcorn, but that's the best job ever.« (FG5, 4)

» In fact, she will be a mother at the moment; I am doing therapy. So I make so much for myself, so much so that I can basically survive. We'll say no because right now, I've had



fibromyalgia for nine years. I went to treatment and I cured fibromyalgia and now I'm writing a book about it because I want to help others because ...« (FG5,6)

A special problem in the current situation are also the institutions that the participants understand are officially called to help them. Since they have the most contact with the employment office, it is also understandable that they encounter the biggest problems there:

» Yes, let's say the last time I was without a job for a little over six months. But when I went, this counselor, she treated me like I was something less worth.« (FG-25-6)

»And how did you feel? (moderator)

»Well, terribly, and I was rude to her, she treated me this way and I treated her this way. That's the thing that really bothers me, if someone doesn't work longer than occasionally, they're so rude to you. (FG-25-6)

» You have the feeling that the employment office can help you or that they cannot help you. They can't because they don't want to or because they actually can't.« (moderator)

» They want to help me, but they send me to jobs outside from Maribor, but I told her that I don't have transport, but she keeps sending me these jobs anyway. They want me to screw something up again.« (FG-25-6)

The described problems are inextricably linked to the characteristics of the population representatives who participated in the focus groups. To make it easier to understand the complexity of the problem, we divided the participants into three groups, and as a common denominator we took into account the narratives related to the description of their socio-cultural and economic starting points, as well as other elements that influenced the fact that they found themselves in the NEET status:

- participants whose NEET status is linked to problems of the socio-cultural environment;
- participants whose NEET status is linked to psychophysical health;
- participants for whom NEET status is tied to a series of career and biographical decisions.

For participants whose NEET status is linked to a change in the socio-cultural environment, it is a series of characteristics that prevent a quick resolution of the problem:



» I came from Bosnia/.../ I am married and have two children. So far, I don't have a permanent (residence) here, but I will get a permanent one this year by looking for a (job) ...«
(FG 21-1-7)

»/.../ I am a citizen of Slovenia, but I do not know the language well.«(FG27-2-7)

» But I don't have real social assistance yet, because I don't have a permanent residence in Slovenia either, and this is related to that.« (FG 21-1-5)

A special subgroup in this category is young Roma, who, despite their relatively complete legal, linguistic and socio-cultural integration, still feel segregated.

» Because we can't get a job, of course ...«(FG 25-1-4, a young female member of the Roma community)

» Because they judge you, why, because if you have a file or something they immediately think yes, that's bad, we shouldn't take him. Or he will surely steal something, or something similar." (FG 25-1-6, young male member of the Roma community)

»X (anonymized FG 25-1-6) you wanted to comment on something ...«(moderator)

»Yes, about the job./.../ Yes, that's the problem, that I can find a job. (FG 25-1-6)

»Why is this a problem?« (moderator)

» Yes, because they don't look at you in the same light, if you're a little darker (of Roma origin), and so on.« (FG 25-1-6).

» Yes, I don't know, but maybe when they see the (Roma-sounding) name and surname, they think that perhaps it won't work, or maybe I will, I don't know, steal something. In that sense ..." (FG 25-1-2)

Experiences of segregation are not limited only to members of the Roma community. Among the collected narratives, there are also examples of segregation based on religious affiliation

»/.../ I was a NEET for ten years, X (moderator), in case you didn't know. I applied to the employment office. I lived ten years, here in Slovenia, and I had health problems, and I had children and similar problems, so I understand those girls who have children. And when I applied to the employment office, when I solved all my problems. When I took the children to kindergartens, school and so on, I applied to the employment office, I mean, I brought a



certified diploma, otherwise I am an English teacher and my counselor said, put your headscarf down, sign the contract, and do what you want. I was shocked, I come from Bosnia, the girls there are of 3 nationalities, 3 cultures, 3 traditions, 3 religions and everything is normal and now I come to one European country, one democratic country and I heard this at the employment office. I was shocked and I don't know how I managed to say it. Thanks for the advice, but that won't work. This is me, this is my identity and if they accept me, they will accept me, if not, me, I will not change for others.«(FG 26-1-2)

The second group is the group where NEET status is closely related to psychophysical problems. While physical problems are few and mainly related to spine and limb injuries, most problems are of a psychological nature. Most problems are related to depressive disorders:

»I admit, working hours are sometimes a problem for me, I think. I want to have something permanent, I don't like to jump, or when you have one day where you work 6 hours, and somewhere you work 12 hours and a half the other day or something. Therefore, since I have health problems, I have been struggling with depression for a very long time, since childhood. And that affects me, things like that, and it's easy to come to what comes.« (FG 21-2-4)

» Now I've come to a point in my life where I've actually lost even a little bit of that drive. And I was a little depressed, these are different consequences, worse relations with my wife. Reluctance, yes ...« (FG 26-1-7)

» I finished school, 3+2 years program... //, but I can't go to work. Of course not. I have a depressive disorder with episodes of schizophrenia. I was treated in Ormož for three months, and now I am on antidepressants. Who will take me (to work)?« (FG 21-1-10)

At this point, it is also necessary to mention the situation that unfolded after the end of one of the focus groups. Two hours after the focus group, the moderator received a call from one of the participants of the focus group, and in the call she told him that she could not participate in the activities of the project, as her parents did not allow her to do so. After a long conversation, she admitted to him that her parents depend on the income that she gets due to her poor health and that they are afraid that if she gets a job or another form of income, this could threaten the survival strategy of the family, which but at this point it is based on the social transfer of the participant

With the third group, the common denominator can be found in the relatively conscious decision to be NEET. The cases are different, but their common features can be observed in a relatively short stay



in the status of an employee or student, frequent, often radical changes in professional or employment fields, and unfinished educational careers:

»How did I become NEET. Basically, I've been working for like seven years now, half as a kindergarten teacher, and I'm also a high school graduate. This is because of the strong, I think I feel right about it, but unfortunately, as we have already mentioned, this situation has many connections. But I already took it as normal. And these various requalifications, are good for some but also for some not, not because everyone who does requalification is not a good kindergarten teacher either. Well, and then it hits you that after 7 years, or half of seven, you still don't have a job, no, because you still have a job for a certain period of time and it expires, you have maternity cover and it expires again. Well, now I'll be 30 and I'm thinking more and more that I would like to be my own boss, without opening a firm. I think that I have enough knowledge, although maybe not on paper, as I would say, no qualification, but I have competencies, I know what I am capable of. Now I'm just thinking more and more about where I would like to go.« (FG26-1-7)

» Yes, of course, I already worked for a year and a half in Gorenje before it was renovated again in High Sense, I worked there for a year and a half. This part was done by High Sense inside, they had half a half. I worked there concretely for a year and a half, then I left because I saw that I wanted to advance my profession a bit, I went to school as a health technician, I went on to ...« (FG 27-2-6)

"Yes, to take the time to look in the mirror, to really check if these are your things, the way you want to do them. If you can see yourself moving forward, because for me, for example, satisfaction is the most important, wherever I am, and if I don't see myself there, I don't think so. There are a lot of jobs and I've always looked at it that way, no. For a job, yes, I can always find a new job, for everything that I lose there, that is, from health to everything to mental health, not to mention mental health, I looked at production, but I also worked in the catering industry for 7 years, but later when I was in production, I saw unhappy people, let's say that in 1000 people at work, I don't know 100 are happy at work. And they say, I like come to work, everyone else doesn't. This is a horror." (FG5,5)

This group also expressed the most negative emotions in the focus groups, among which anger, disappointment, and rage predominate, and it is related to the labor market, as well as education and institutions that are supposed to help young people with NEET status:



» On the one hand, there were times when I also thought, now on the one hand, I also heard from the employer, why did you enroll in this school on the one hand? Why aren't you interested in another profession? My school, I think to myself, he shouldn't say something like that about my school, I think to myself, why now some kind of expert telling me that I'm not for this profession, but I studied it for five years. He broke me after the internship, he totally broke me on one side. I was like shit there, I came home like this, I crawled into bed and cried in tears, only to fall asleep at the end of the day.« (FG 21-2-6)

» Mostly. And I show them a work folder with mine, for example, all your achievements that you had in your life, you show them to the employer, he looks at that, says, I'll call you, the next day he already has his own person for the job. This sometimes makes me angry when I hear it.« (FG 21-2-6)

» Yes, they open the call for tenders, but they already have a chosen one.« (FG 21-2-3)

»They already choose somebody.« (FG 21-2-6)

»Or sometimes you don't even get an answer.« (FG 21-2-3)

» They do all this behind closed doors. They do all this behind closed doors, you can't call someone's employer and tell them how, or weigh them down every day. Then you think that some of us are really in such a situation, we need to get a job, because it's about bread, and it's about money, it's about family. But we can not be a burden for everyone, for example, for employers or shift managers, and on the one hand, we can't be, because it's half too much for them as well.« (FG 21-2-6)

3.2 Perceptions of specific problems of NEET status

In addition to general problems, the collected narratives also include a number of specific problems that are relevant for understanding the situation in which the participants found themselves.

Problems related to formal education most often include narratives about early school leaving and a general lack of interest in education. Such perceptions of education are usually based on learning difficulties, which are closely related to the unwillingness of participants to respect institutional forms of order, such as timetables and school rules. Negative perceptions of school also appear among those who have successfully completed it but who nevertheless fail to capitalize on it in the labor market. According to the participants, two problems are intertwined at this point: (1) the school curriculum covers content that is often irrelevant in the market (e.g., outdated, boutique, or useless), and (2) the school requires *knowledge*, while the labor market requires *experience*:



» School is just theory, and you learn some things there, but in practice, you should improve it, because if you don't achieve it in practice, there is one big shortcoming.« (FG5, 4)

The participants do recognize the practice as an excellent formal instrument for bringing education and companies closer together, but, according to them, companies often manage this instrument inadequately:

»And also when we were tested, but as for the jobs, I think it's easy to come to an interview. It's like you'll be a "one man army" there, you'll just be someone who by talking you think you will be the best in everything that is, it's not normal for me, I say to myself that nobody has all the skills, I mean, when you came through that door, you don't have all the skills. Still, it bothers me that nobody is ready to show anything anymore, only me, aha, but you only hear one question, how come you don't know that or how come you can make this? Show it to me, because I'm in practice. (FG5, 3)

It should also be emphasized that the participants are often aware that they themselves are inflexible and that they choose education or professional orientations and work according to the wrong key, i.e., not in accordance with the needs of the market, which would make it easier for them to find employment, but based on their wishes:

» We look for a job and choose a job according to our wishes and needs, but in reality, when you get there (in a company or at a workplace) you have to give yourself, basically, it's as if you prove yourself, not that you choose if you're going to work here, aren't you? No, that's why it's a problem ...« (FG5, 4)

In addition to discrimination due to inexperience and youth, discrimination based on gender status also occurs in some cases, with young women being particularly exposed:

» And there is a big lack of this, and I, as a young mother, I do not dare to go to an interview in the hospitality, because I have been asked many times this forbidden question: "When do you want to have children, do you have them yet?" I said: "I don't have any." "Well, when do you mean to have them?" I said: "I don't know, because, okay, I don't have a partner yet, so when will be." "Well, at least for the next two years, if you're thinking of working with us, but that's a NO.../.../ Yes, it's forbidden, it's a question of when it's possible, I mean when it's forbidden. This should not be asked, that is, you cannot condition me on when I will give birth." (FG5, 4)



The whole matter is further complicated by the lack of enthusiasm and will to work on the part of the participants, which, according to them, is a logical consequence of the difficult situation and impossible working conditions:

"That's logical, because in the hospitality industry there can't be 12 hours between shifts, normally if you work in the evening and you're in the morning shift, because you replace somebody, you know you're going on a shift, just don't sign up, okay cool, but this is my goodwill towards the company, what kind of goodwill from any company, wherever I was, blah, no, it's blah towards me, they would take away my incentive or award, because I was the one, maybe you poured the coffee, because I don't know, they need to save the money, I have no words. Then I don't have the will either, no, I don't ...« (FG5, 4)

The key role in the decision to join the labor market is played not only by external conditions but also by the individual perceptions of the participants. According to them, they are members of a new generation, one that is adapted to new forms of capitalism, because, unlike older generations, they know better what is worthwhile and what is not:

» What is the salary according to education, for example, ok, I'm not educated, I'm just doing something. My problem was the lack of knowledge, but otherwise, with a certain education, I wouldn't even half accept a certain salary class, if I tried I went to the school when it was very difficult for me.« (FG5, 4)

» I don't know, the last time I heard one example, for example they work in production and they have a norm. Why does he wait and slowly work the shift until it is 10 o'clock? with the reason that he would not exceed the norm, because it is not worth it to him, he gets 5 percent of the incentive for exceeding, by exceeded I mean several hours, but if they do not reach the norm, he gets €50 less. Is it worth it for him to work that much more? You know he'd rather hang out there until 10 o'clock to make the norm when he has to, it won't bother him for that 5% and he won't worry.« (FG5, 2)

» Now in this job, when I was now, the education was according to work, that is, as much as you did, and then you got paid, aaaa, which is otherwise great.« (FG5, 6)

» However, it is very, very competitive, and in a way you feel this pressure from certain people, when they may not appreciate this meritocratic attitude, but perhaps they value something else more. But I don't hold a grudge at all, I just said, okay, now that's the end, but now this NEET I know a lot, I mean really a lot, and a couple of people who have been here



for not only a year, but for a whole time. Well, sort of, because they adapt to this lower standard that you then get.« (FG5,6)

In their opinion, interpersonal relations at the workplace are among the key conditions. These are often even more important than the work itself:

»... in this style. Eh, I didn't do strictly what I thought I wouldn't do either, I probably did everything possible anyway, just like that, it doesn't even bother me that much. What bothers me more is the authoritarian, strict hierarchical system. So I try to avoid this and I much prefer this kind of voluntary work in the sense that you are not paid, maybe because of that, but that you still get some happiness from it. But it's true that not everyone can do this, you need to have some kind of stock, but if I didn't have a certain income, I probably wouldn't be able to exist in this way. (FG 5, 6)

They usually see the main problem in the system, which, according to them, is set up in such a way that the individual must submit, which not everyone can do:

» Financial definitely, that's why most people, as you said, many people don't have the NEET status, especially because of financial problems, because they know that if they quit their job, they will soon be in financial problems. I know a guy there in Hofer, I don't know, he's been begging for 4 years specifically, but he could say that he also have a NEET status, but he's actually still ...«(FG5, 6)

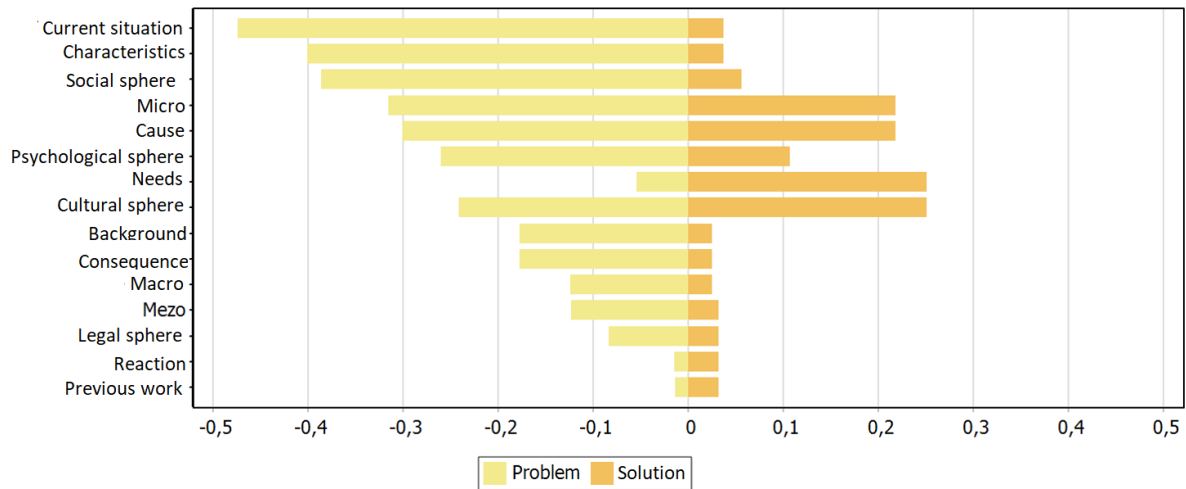
» The system is made like that, it's been like that for thousands of years, you can't change anything, just one individual, but if you want do what do you want, you can't do it your way.« (FG5, 4)

» Yes, you can do it on your own way, I just work so that we do our own thing, actually I just want to leave the system and basically do my own business there. No, I don't want a job, I want my own business, and it's been a long time since I've been clear about what I'm doing here.« (FG5, 5)

3.3 Suggested solutions

One of the basic project pillars in the focus groups is represented by narratives about solutions that are relevant or necessary for the participants. Since these narratives intertwine with narratives about problems, we analyzed them in connection with other aspects:

Figure 33: Relationship between perceived problems and solutions



The figure shows that attitudes regarding perceived problems and solutions in specific contexts are complex or composite. While the aforementioned areas, such as the perception of the current situation, are predominantly problematic for the participants, there are also areas in which solutions can be found. First of all, it should be emphasized that the participants see their own individual level as a source of problems, but also as a source of potential solutions:

»(alone) I come to the course, here, and I think that I am learning a language ...« (FG25-3)

» I was thinking I could (myself) organize some things that, for example, do not yet exist in Slovenia... (with a contract for an indefinite period) life goes on easier, for example, I could start a loan, I don't know, I will want to build a house and so on. And you have nothing, you can't even get credit, no, nothing. So now, if that doesn't happen, I'm going to do something, which will be, I don't know, construction, anything, hospitality.«(FG26-7)

» I'll say this, I'm actively looking for a job right now in the fields where I'm educated. On the other hand, I'm currently retraining anyway, so yes. I will say, however, that in the long term I think that this one will not work.(FG 5, 3)

» Yes, my job gives me some satisfaction, that I contributed something, that maybe I helped someone, right? That I improved, maybe even to say a little, clichéd, improving the world. As a kindergarten teacher you can do many things, but now I lack that??«(FG21-7)



The vast majority of participants are ready to work and have expressed their commitment also at levels such as volunteering and helping. However, they all expressed an exceptional need for better legislative information and legal assistance and support:

» No, I completely agree that it would be possible to educate us more legally here in this knowledge of these things as well, and our rights are precisely what we consider to be very disorderly relations, which I think is the case in Slovenia the situation is alarming. It's just that no one talks about it, but we at work, if we have an inspection, if we have what people report. I heard this from one person so the reports are like this, why isn't anyone looking at this? I mean, I'm going to say that, because I find it very interesting. If I go 5 km per hour over 50 per hour, I will get a traffic ticket, these are taxes that can be measured without the fact that you really committed a violation, but what can't be done there? I mean why, I don't understand why they don't have better control since we have the technology.« (FG5, 3)

For them, this kind of support not only means better information but a way of much-needed empowerment:

» When you know these things, I think then you know how to stand up for yourself, or you know where they can go and where they can't go, and if you say, I don't allow it, the employer won't, he will respect you. This is a problem because we allow it because we don't know and that's why it happens ...«(FG5, 4)

In addition to their own legal and legislative empowerment, the participants also defend the position that more inspections are needed, as this will gradually lead to fewer violations by employers:

» Okay, I, I will say something about the inspection, I agree with stricter control and everything, but something always works. Why not send someone in here undercover?«(FG5, 3)

In the last set of focus groups, the structure of the meeting envisaged probing the wishes and visions of the potential contribution of the PreseNEETi.se project. In this part, the participants wrote their wishes and suggestions for activities in the project on post-it notes. These proposals were presented in the group, and other participants could express their views on them in a group discussion.

Workshops on the topic of soft content dominate among the suggestions, but the following specific recommendations appeared explicitly and consistently in all focus groups:



- language workshops in which the participants would learn the appropriate use of the language;
- communication workshops in which participants would learn communication skills and constructive conflict resolution;
- entrepreneurial workshops in which participants would learn about the basic elements of entrepreneurship;
- social skills workshops, in which participants would learn the skills of emotional intelligence, establishing good relationships, dealing with their own difficulties and other content in the field of social skills

4 Conclusion with recommendations

The following recommendations for the design of activities in the PreseNEETi.se project are derived from the presented results and findings:

The use of focus groups and online tools was found to be ineffective for the majority of participants from the NEET population. Many members of this population have extremely limited language skills and low cultural capital, and expression is further complicated by social anxieties. This is the basis of the proposal to use individual research methods for research in this population (e.g., partially standardized or in-depth interviews).

The NEET population is not homogeneous in terms of individual backgrounds. Although this requires individualized consideration, there are some common denominators at the background level on which the following recommendations are based:

Feedback

Methodological level:

- 1.) For participants whose NEET status is linked to problems of the socio-cultural environment, it is necessary to (1) create a set of possibilities for socio-cultural integration (e.g., soft content related to integration) and (2) access to the legal-legislative counseling that will ensure their empowerment in the labor market

Micro level

- 2.) For participants whose NEET status is linked to psychophysical health, it is necessary to ensure (1) the preservation of existing social transfers, (2) create a set of soft content that will be complementary to official health and medical programs (e.g., soft content on the



topic of social interactions, emotions...) and (3) provide access to content that will enable the gradual and measured accumulation of experience for integration into the labor market (e.g., measured development of one's own entrepreneurial ideas in a controlled and safe environment.

- 3.) For participants whose NEET status is tied to a series of career and biographical decisions, it is necessary to (1) design a set of contents and activities that will enable, through their voluntary participation, the flexibility that participants want and need to navigate the labor market, (2) design a set of soft content that will alleviate their idiosyncrasy problems and facilitate social interactions (e.g., communication workshops) and (3) create opportunities for the realization of their own entrepreneurial ideas.

Mezzo level:

Work in institutions dealing with this population must be adapted in such a way as to ensure (1) information and (2) empowerment, taking into account the aforementioned limitations of members of the NEET population. Since these limitations mainly include social anxiety, low cultural capital, limited communication and language competencies, and psychological fragility, work in institutions would need to be adapted in such a way that formal procedures are carried out in a way that is adapted to the population, as this is the only way that they will program aimed at these individuals are effectively implemented.

Macro level:

At the national level, it would be necessary to:

- 1.) maintain or strengthen social transfers linked to young people whose NEET status results from health problems,
- 2.) accelerate and facilitate legal procedures to establish a situation in which young people whose NEET status is based on socio-cultural integration can more easily obtain conditions for employment or
- 3.) to support programs that, through the already mentioned soft content, have a complementary effect on already existing programs for young NEETs and



4.) to introduce slightly more specific inspection control, which would eliminate problems in the labor market in recruiting or maintaining employment for young people who are at risk of landing in NEET.