



# NEET Youth and Young Adults in Israel: Characteristics, Needs and Policies

**Paula Kahan-Strawczynski**

Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute

The Engelberg Center for Children and Youth

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## 1. Introduction

Interest in the transition to adulthood of young people in general, and in particular those at risk, has been increasing throughout the world in the last two decades. At the same time, there is growing recognition that not enough has been done to assist them in this complex transition. NEETs (not in education, employment or training) may be considered one of the groups of young people at risk. However, NEETs are a heterogeneous group in terms of the causes and duration of their disengagement, their social and educational backgrounds and their prior work experience. In some cases, the disengagement period may be an “in-between” phase, usually from choice. In others cases, it appears to be a long-term and even chronic situation, due either to external conditions or to difficulties to engage and higher levels of exclusion.<sup>1</sup> This group of NEETs, which is also identified as “sustained” NEETs,<sup>2</sup> require special attention and comprehensive approaches to address their unique needs.

There may also be short- and long-term implications for NEETs. Young people who are not currently participating in education, employing or training are more likely than their peers to have low levels of skills, to remain unemployed in the future, to work in part-time (rather than full-time) jobs and to earn less.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, many of them may be characterized by drug and alcohol misuse, poor health, parenting at a young age and/or criminal involvement.<sup>4</sup> Research also highlights negative psychological effects, including depression, lack of a sense of control over their lives, and dissatisfaction with life in general.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, they can have an inter-generational effect that acts as an impediment to social mobility.<sup>6</sup>

As mentioned, external conditions play a role in long-term disengagement. For example, structural changes in the economy have changed the nature of the youth labor market, reducing the number of entry-level jobs and increasing employers' demand for higher skills. These changes have imposed particular difficulties for young adults with a low level of formal education and poor skills,<sup>7</sup> including those who spend time as NEETs.

This paper presents current data on NEETs in Israel aged 15 to 29, with emphasis on the characteristics and needs of those aged 23-26, based on a national survey. In addition, the paper identifies the main current aid policies aimed at facilitating their re-integration in education, training or work, and policies for preventing dropout among those aged under 18, who are at risk of early school leaving. Finally, the paper suggests further programmatic directions.

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1 Cherry HL Tam, Diego Busiol and Tak Yan Lee, 2016.

2 Thomas Spielhofer et al., 2009.

3 Andrew Sum et al., 2003:20.

4 Bob Cole et al., 2002; Sue Maguire and Jo Thompson, 2007.

5 John Bynner and Samantha Parsons, 2002.

6 Cabinet Office, 2011:55.

7 Cynthia Miller and Kristin E. Porter, 2007.

## 2. Current Situation of NEET Youth and Young Adults in Israel

### 2.1 Social Background

Israel has a population of about 8.5 million people, who belong to different ethnic groups. At the end of 2015, there were 1,867,040 citizens aged 15-29, who made up 22.1% of the total population - 73.8% were Jewish and 26.2% Arab (including a majority of Muslim and a minority of Christians and Druze). Eleven percent of the citizens at this age were immigrants and 10% were ultra-Orthodox Jews.<sup>8</sup>

Israel has a developed economy with an annual per capita GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of \$37,500 - lower than the OECD average (\$42,094) but similar to New Zealand, Italy, Spain and South Korea.<sup>9</sup> While in terms of per capita GDP, Israel is ranked in the middle of the OECD countries, in terms of poverty it has the highest rate (19.6%) - close to the US, Mexico, Turkey and Chile (OECD average: 11.5%).<sup>10</sup> Poverty rates are highest among the Arab and ultra-Orthodox minority groups. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data, 43% of Arab young adults aged 18-24 live in families below the poverty line in comparison with 15% of their Jewish peers. The poverty rate for the ultra-Orthodox young adults (18-24) is 50%.<sup>11</sup> Both of these populations tend to have larger families, and, as will be described in further detail below, they have poor educational outcomes and low employment rates.

A unique characteristic of Israeli society, which is relevant to the transition to adulthood, is the fact that the great majority of Jewish 18-year-olds are conscripted into mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), for a period of two or three years (women and men, respectively). In 2014, 73% of men and 58% of women ages 20-24 were serving or had served in military service.<sup>12</sup> Those who for any reason are not enlisted into military service, have the option of volunteering for civilian national service. For many of these young adults, military (or civilian national) service offers the opportunity of powerful experiences, in which they may assume considerable responsibility, which contribute to the development of emotional and instrumental competences.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, military service may serve for some as a platform for acquiring an occupation/profession that could serve them subsequently in civilian life. On the other hand, the military or national service delays the process of exploring career and vocation options<sup>14</sup> and entry into tertiary education and the labor market.

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8 Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2016.

9 OECD, 2013.

10 OECD stat, 2013.

11 Special analysis from the CBS 2014 Household Expenditure Survey, in Paula Kahan-Strawczynski, Sharon Amiel and Viacheslav Konstantinov, 2016.

12 Special analysis from the CBS 2014 Social Survey, in Paula Kahan-Strawczynski, Sharon Amiel and Viacheslav Konstantinov, 2016.

13 Ofra Mayselless, and Miriam Scharf, 2003:7; and Ofra Mayselless, 1993:34.

14 Ofra Mayselless, and Miriam Scharf, 2003.

Another growing feature of the transition to adulthood among many Israeli young people is the tendency in the last two decades to take an extended trip, mostly to the Far East or South America, upon completion of military or national service.<sup>15</sup> These trips usually last anything from a couple of months to one year and constitute a transitional phase of elective disengagement from employment and education. It has been estimated that 40,000 young Israelis take these trips annually.<sup>16</sup> Most of them return to Israel at the end of their journey and go on with their lives in a normative fashion.

## 2.2 Education

School attendance in Israel is mandatory and free from age 3 to 18. The school attendance rate in Israel is relatively high. In 2015, 8.5% of 17-year-olds were not registered in any education setting (Figure 1).<sup>17</sup> Over the years, the non-attendance percentage has been higher in the Arab school system than the Hebrew-speaking system. In both sectors, the percentage of those not attending school is higher among the boys than among the girls.

In the past, leaving school altogether was the main cause for concern among policymakers. Recently, however, attention has also been paid to what has been termed “hidden dropouts,” characterized as students who are physically present in the classroom, but do not function scholastically, disengage from the existing school activities, and feel alienated from class and from school.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, the advancement of low-achieving students who experience school adjustment difficulties has been one of the most important goals of the education system in Israel in the past decade.<sup>19</sup>

**Figure 1: Rate of 17-Year-Olds Not Registered in any Educational Framework, by Sector, 2002-2015**



Source: Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2002 to 2016

15 Shmuel Shulman, Sidney J. Blatt and Sophie Walsh, 2006:231.

16 Yasmin Gil, 2010.

17 Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2002 to 2016.

18 Dalia Ben Rabi et al., 2014:2.

19 Miriam Cohen-Navot et al., 2009:14.

As a result of policy and programs developed to achieve this goal,<sup>20</sup> over the years there has been a decline in the dropout rate in secondary schools in Israel. Between 2002 and 2015, there was a considerable decline in the percentage of 17-year-olds not attending in Arabic-speaking schools, from 24.4% to 11.9% (Figure 1). Although the gap between the Arabic and Hebrew-speaking schools has decreased over the time, there is still a significant difference.

In 2014, the upper-secondary graduation rate in Israel (including general education and vocational programs) was 90%, which is higher than the OECD average (85%) and close to Australia, Canada and Germany.<sup>21</sup>

According to available data for 2014, 41% of the 15-19 year-old students in Israel enrolled in upper secondary education schools were in a technological/vocational track, similar to the OECD average for this age group (40%).<sup>22</sup> The percentage has remained more or less constant over the years. For historical reasons vocational education and training (VET) in Israel suffers from organizational fragmentation. The vast majority of the students (92%) go to general schools that offer a variety of technological/vocational subjects, at different levels, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. Eight percent study in vocational schools, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Only 7% of all students in VET (in general or vocational schools), study in settings, which incorporate work experience.<sup>23</sup> The fragmentation makes it less likely that employers will see the programs as "their programs" and hinders employer's engagement.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the image of VET is negative and many parents avoid sending their children to such programs. This is especially true for the vocational schools under supervision of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the high percentage of students who complete 12 years of schooling, it should be noted that in 2015, a much lower percentage of 17-year-olds received full matriculation certificates: 58.8% (62.4% of Jews and 48.4% of Arabs). An even smaller percentage - 48.8%, received matriculation certificates that meet university admission criteria (52.5% of the Jews and 37.5% of the Arabs).<sup>26</sup> In addition, according to data from the Manpower Training and Development Bureau of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, some 64% of all vocational school graduates are entitled to a vocational certificate and a diploma.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the data indicate that a considerable percentage of students who finish general or vocational secondary school do not achieve a matriculation certificate or a vocational certificate that will help them integrate into further education or employment.

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20 A full description of policies and programs will be presented in section 4.

21 OECD 2016 Education at Glance, 2016:56.

22 OECD 2016 Education at Glance, 2016:294.

23 Asaf Vaininger, 2016.

24 Musset, Pauline, Malgorzata Kuczera and Simon Field, 2014:49.

25 Musset, Pauline, Malgorzata Kuczera and Simon Field, 2014:5.

26 Special analysis of CBS file on population (2014) and Matriculation exams file of Ministry of Education, 2014/15.

27 Ministry of Economy website, access October, 10, 2016, in Judith King et al., 2017.

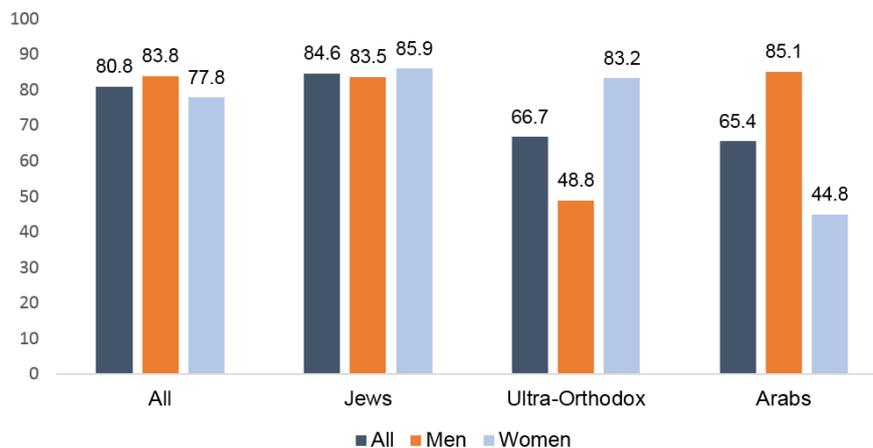
### 2.3 Participation of Young Adults in the Labor Market

As noted above, most of the youth in Israel up to age 18 are enrolled in the education system and after that age, the majority of Jewish (and Druze) young adults serve in the IDF. Most of the ultra-Orthodox young adults do not enlist in the IDF, but the majority of them attend their own study frameworks, after the age of 18. Therefore the age most relevant for data about young adults entering the job market in Israel is 23-24 and over.

At the end of 2016, the unemployment rate in Israel was 4.4% of the labor force, which is lower than the OECD average of 6.2%; the labor force participation rate for ages 15-64 was 72.2, compared to OECD average of 71.3.<sup>28</sup>

Among young adults aged 25-29, the unemployment rate was 6.7% (Jews: 6.8% and Arabs: 6.3%) and the participation rate in the labor force was 80.8%. As shown in Figure 2, Arabs and ultra-Orthodox have a low participation rate in the labor force: 65.4% and 66.7% respectively, compared to 84.6% of the Jews in this age group. Rates are especially low among Arab women (44.8%) and ultra-Orthodox men (48.8%).<sup>29</sup>

**Figure 2: Rate of Participation in the Labor Force among Young Adults Age 25-29, by Sector and Gender, 2015**



Source: Special analysis of the CBS 2014 Labor Force Survey, 2015

### 2.4 The NEET Group

Given the above data regarding the high school enrollment rate and low unemployment rate, Israel enjoys relatively low rates of NEETs. Among those aged 15-29 the rate is 14.1%, similar to the OECD average (14.6%) and similar to the US and Finland.<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that since 2012, Israel has included young adults during their compulsory military service as part of the Israeli labor force.<sup>31</sup>

28 OECD Statistics, 2016.

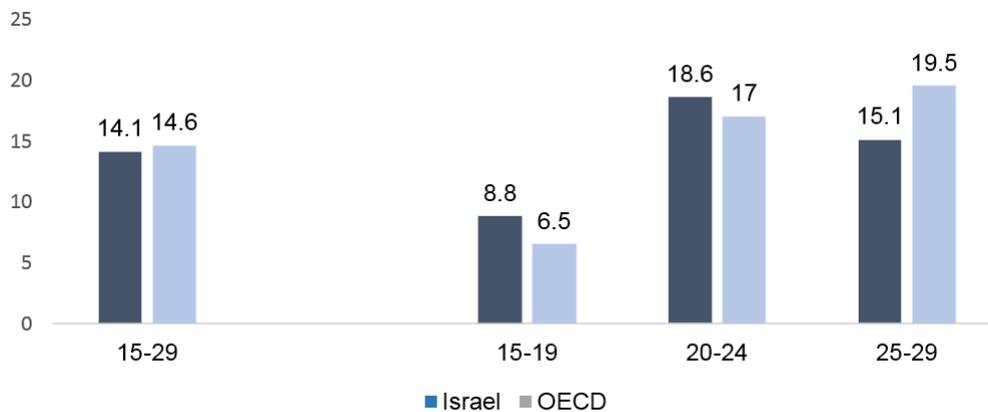
29 Special analysis of the CBS 2014 Labor Force Survey, 2015.

30 OECD Data, 2016.

31 Young adults doing civilian national service were already considered part of the labor force before 2012.

According to available data in 2015<sup>32</sup> the rate of NEET young adults in Israel is lower than the OECD average at ages 25-29, while in the 15-19 and 20-24 age cohorts, the rates in Israel are slightly higher than the OECD average (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Rates of NEETs in Israel and the OECD average, by age, 2015**



Source: OECD data, 2015

### 3. Characteristics and Needs of NEET Young Adults in Israel

In 2010, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) conducted a comprehensive national survey of diverse groups of young adults aged 23-26 who had particular difficulties integrating into the labor market.<sup>33</sup> One such group comprised young adults who were neither working nor studying in a post-secondary framework and who did not intend to start such studies in the coming year (hereinafter NEET young adults). The estimated size of this group in the total population of young adults aged 23-26 was 49,000 or 11% of the age group. The study goal was to increase awareness of the needs of NEET young adults in Israel, to identify subgroups that are more vulnerable, and to serve as the basis for planning policies and programs to support them. The national survey was implemented in two phases. In the first phase, a brief interview (using a screening questionnaire) was carried out with a national sample of the population aged 23-26 (some 5,450 respondents). This sample was weighted to represent the overall population of young adults 23-26. This screening was used to identify and interview a sample of the three populations on which the whole study focused (some 1,200 respondents). Around 400 young people were NEET.

The data were analyzed by Arab and Jewish sectors (distinguishing between men and women in each sector). Some of the data were also analyzed by level of education and by disabilities. Only a few outstanding differences between those groups will be presented in this paper.

<sup>32</sup> OECD Data, 2016.

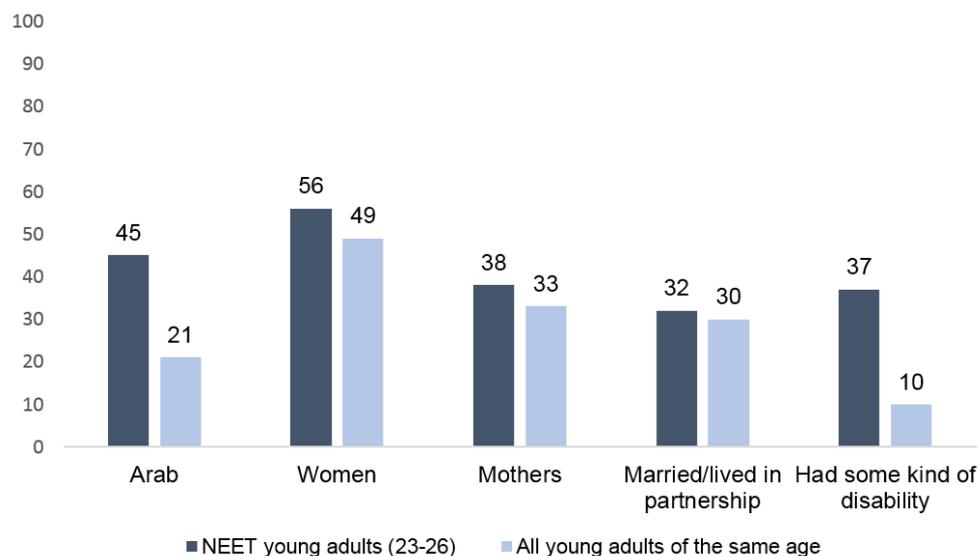
<sup>33</sup> Denise Naon et al., 2014.

### 3.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics and Main Activities of NEETs

The group of NEET young adults is not homogenous and comprises individuals from different backgrounds and with different experiences. Compared to all young adults of the same age in Israel, a greater percentage of those in the survey were Arab (21% vs. 45%, respectively); women (49% vs. 56% respectively); and had some kind of disability (10% vs. 37% respectively) - see Figure 4. Twenty-six percent had a physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disability and 11% had learning disabilities and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Altogether, 32% of those in the survey were married or lived in partnership - the percentage was higher among women (46% vs. 15% among men). Twenty-six percent were parents (38% of the women vs. 11% of the men). The percentage of married NEETs was higher among Arabs (41% vs. 25% Jews). A high rate (57%) of the young adults in the survey lived in localities with a low socioeconomic ranking (clusters 1-4 out of 10).

**Figure 4: Selected Characteristics of NEET Young Adults (23-26) Compared with all Young Adults of the Same Age in Israel (%)**



Sources: MJB National Survey, 2010; CBS Labor Force Survey, 2008; CBS Social Survey, 2007

With regard to their main activity at the time of the survey, the findings reveal that 24% had no specific occupation, while the remainder were taking care of the home/children (35%), participating in short-term courses (not in training courses) (16%) and/or taking care of health problems (16%). In addition, 7% were in a transition period (e.g., moving house or locality, returning from a long journey abroad, or getting ready to start work).

### 3.2 Financial Status

In the absence of earnings from employment, the most common sources of income were:

- > Benefits offered to those not working (e.g., income support/supplement, other National Insurance Institute benefits, unemployment benefits, disability pension, and work injury benefit): 23%.
- > Family financial support or spouse's wages: 26%.
- > Over a third of the respondents (35%) had no regular income. Presumably, they depended on their parents to provide for all their needs (though not in the form of financial support) or did temporary work, but did not report they were working.

### 3.3 Resources and Barriers to Employment or Education

To obtain a fuller understanding of the factors contributing to non-employment or non-education among NEET young adults, we examined the resources available to them and the barriers along the path to employment or studies, including human capital (education, vocational certificates, and computer and language skills), family constraints, work experience, employability, and previous problems of adjustment to frameworks.

#### A. Human Capital

Human capital is defined as "the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being."<sup>34</sup> This definition includes natural attributes (age, gender and health status) and acquired abilities (schooling and further education).

##### *Level of Education*

- > 56% of the NEET young adults had low levels of education: 23% did not have a high school certificate; 33% had completed high school but without matriculation. On the other hand, 29% had a matriculation certificate and 15% had a post-secondary certificate or college degree.
- > The rate of young adults with low levels of education was higher among Arabs, women, and individuals with some sort of physical/sensory/intellectual/mental disability, or learning disabilities, including ADHD.

##### *Having a Profession, and Vocational Training*

- > 48% of the NEETs reported having a profession, with or without a vocational certificate.
- > 23% had a vocational certificate (achieved in a general or vocational school or in a post-secondary setting).

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34 OECD 2010.

45% of all the NEET young adults were identified as having the poorest human capital, that is, without a matriculation certificate or vocational certificate and who reported that they had no profession. This percentage was higher among Arabs (56%) than Jews (36%) and among young adults with disabilities.

#### *Knowledge of languages*

Language skills play an important role in integration into the labor market. Twenty-two percent of the Arab respondents did not have sufficient command of Hebrew (understanding, writing and conversation). Twenty-seven percent of all respondents did not have adequate computer skills to use e-mail and standard Office programs. Arabs respondents and those with disabilities displayed lower levels of proficiency.

### **B. Family Situation**

Thirty-eight percent of the women were mothers. Most of them (58%) reported that the need to care for their young children was a barrier to going out to work or study.

### **C. Work Experience**

Prior work experience is another important advantage for re-integration into employment.

- > About half of the NEETs (51%) had little or no work experience: 26% had never worked; 13% had worked, but not for at least two years before the survey; and 12% had worked for a short time during the two years prior to the survey.
- > The other half (49%) had worked for about half or most of the time during the two years prior to the survey.

### **D. Employability**

Employability refers to the range of abilities beyond their vocational training and education that help a person find and maintain a job. The respondents were asked about their difficulties on a scale of 13 items.<sup>35</sup> One fifth of the young adults reported difficulty with three or more of the items.

### **E. Previous Adjustment Problems**

Negative experience of school, high truancy rates, dropout and low academic achievements, as well as problems adjusting to military service can be predictors of later difficulties integrating into work or education. According to the findings:

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35 The 13 items are as follows: Working independently according to written or spoken instructions in a language that you understand; organizing the required time to do a job and completing it; working in a team with other people; coming to work every day; arriving at work on time; being responsible for other people; following instructions given by your superior; accepting criticism from your superior; acknowledging mistakes you have made; taking responsibility for the equipment you use in your work; finishing a task you have been assigned; retaining the same job over time; coping with problems or unexpected changes. In: WHO, 1999.

- > A third of the NEETs (32%) reported difficulties with academic attainment, difficulty concentrating, or perceived school as boring. One-fifth (21%) reported that they had been suspended from school, particularly the men (37% vs. 10% of the women).
- > Among the Jewish young adults who had been in military or national service (73% of the Jewish respondents), 18% reported adjustment difficulties - e.g., not getting along with the commanders or finding it hard to obey the rules of a military framework.

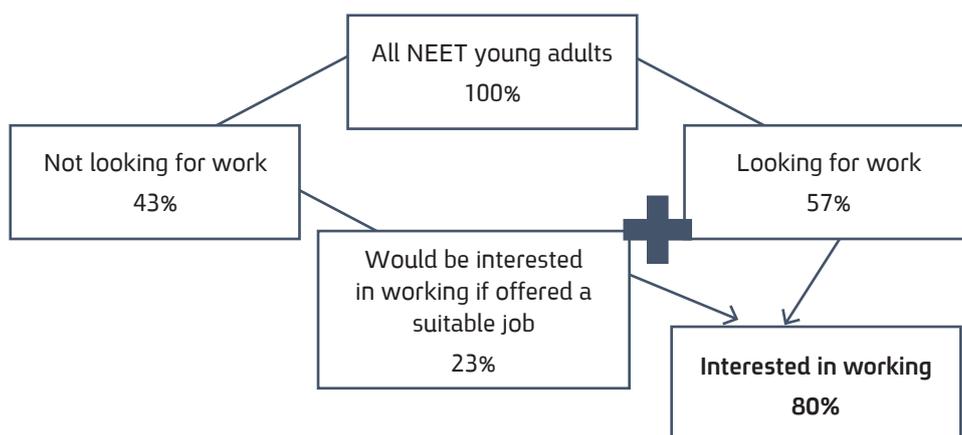
### 3.4 Interest in Working or Studying in the Short Term

Recognizing that NEET young adults are a heterogeneous group, we endeavored to identify subgroups. We checked NEETs who were more likely than others to change their status as NEETs: those who were interested in working and/or were interested in re-engaging in education or training during the coming year.

The extent to which the NEETs are looking for work may represent a key indicator of their motivation to work. More than half of the NEET young adults (57%) were looking for work. However, a significant group was not looking for work (43%).

Knowing that some of the NEET young adults might have given up looking for work even though they were interested in working, we broadened the definition of "interested in working." The broader definition included all young adults looking for work, as well as those who would be willing to start work immediately if they were offered a suitable job, even if they were not actually looking for work. According to this definition, 80% of the young adults were in fact interested in working (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Interest in Working among NEET Young Adults**



A multivariate analysis using the logistic regression model (variance: 13%) revealed some groups of NEET who were more interested in working than others:

- > Fathers rather than men without children. On the other hand, mothers were less interested in working than women without children.
- > Those with a post-secondary certificate/academic degree, than those without such certificates/degrees (whether or not they had a full matriculation certificate).

- > Those without any disability, those with a mental disability and those with a learning disability and/or ADHD than those with a physical/sensory/intellectual disability.
- > Those not receiving a benefit than those receiving a benefit in place of work.

In addition, 41% of the NEET young adults were interested in studying in post-secondary studies or vocational training during the coming year. More than half (54%) were interested in a vocational course, 30% in university or college, and a further 16% in other educational programs - for completion of matriculation exams, preparatory programs for higher education or preparation for psychometric exams (for university admission).

*The vast majority of all the NEET young adults were interested in working and/or studying: 85%.*

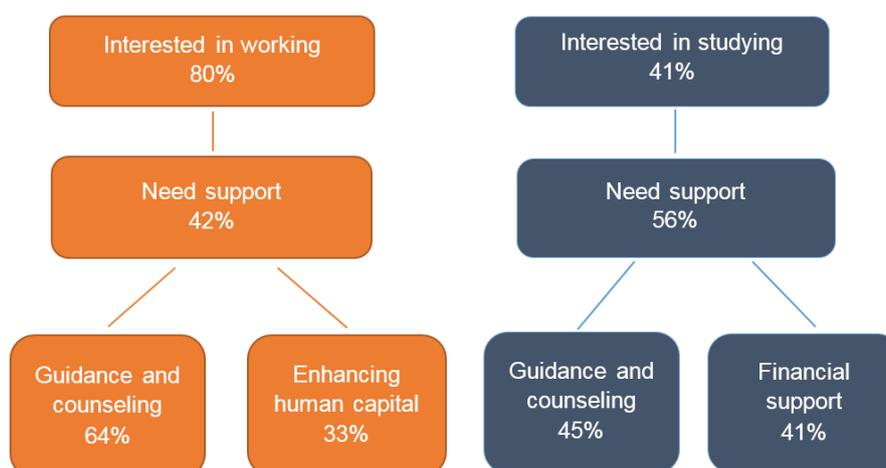
### 3.5 Need for Further Support

Altogether, 26% of all the NEET young adults had been in contact with at least one support service for young adults. The study sought to identify what kind of further support these young adults needed to re-engage in employment, education or training (see Figure 6). Forty-two percent of those interested in working reported that they needed support. The most common forms of support cited were:

- > Professional counseling and guidance (64%).
- > Enhancing human capital, e.g., acquiring skills such as basic computer or English skills, vocational training, completion of matriculation, or higher education (33%).
- > Childcare arrangements (13%).
- > Need for work that would take personal limitations (health, cultural or religious) into account (11%).

Among those NEET young adults who were interested in studying in the coming year (41%), 56% percent reported that they needed further support to achieve this goal - of these, 45% needed guidance and counseling and 41% needed financial assistance (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Extent of Interest and Needs for Help Integrating into Studies or Work**



### 3.6 Young Adults at Increased Risk of Long-Term Disengagement

Many NEET young adults only spend a short time in this situation, before starting a course, job or training. However, others need more help in order to avoid an extended - and potentially damaging - period outside work and education.

We attempted to identify a subgroup of long-term NEET young adults who are at increased risk of remaining disengaged for a long period or even remaining out of the labor market altogether. This subgroup included young adults, who had never worked or had not worked in the two years prior to the survey, and had not studied (or served in the military/national service) during this time either. In other words, they were relatively more detached from the world of work and education than other NEETs in the survey. *The subgroup accounted for 39% (or 19,000 out of 48,900) of NEET young adults aged 23-26. We refer to this as the "high-risk group."*

A multivariate analysis using the logistic regression model - (variance: 19%) revealed which subgroups were more likely to belong to the high-risk group:

- > Mothers vs. women without children and men (fathers and men without children)
- > Arabs vs. Jews.
- > Young adults without a post-secondary certificate or academic degree, vs. young adults with such qualifications.
- > Young adults with a physical/sensory/intellectual disability vs. those with a mental disability, those with a learning disability and/or ADHD and those with no disability.

## 4. Aid Policies and Services for NEET Youth and Young Adult in Israel

Israel does not have a formal policy aimed specifically and exclusively at youth and young adults defined as NEETs. However, there is great concern for this group, in addition to other groups suffering from social exclusion. Numerous programs have been designed to provide support. The following initiatives and programs are the most prominent.

### 4.1 Interventions to Prevent Young People from Becoming NEET

#### A. Programs for High School Students

There are a number of programs to encourage high school students to remain in school and overcome barriers to participation:

- > In recent years, secondary schools have assumed the role of identifying and supporting students who are "hidden dropouts" and may be at risk of leaving school. They run various scholastic assistance programs along with programs to improve the school climate and strengthen interpersonal relations between the students and teachers in order to increase the students' sense of belonging.

- > Alongside these programs, there are many targeted supports for the more disadvantaged students, who are at high risk of dropping out or those who have already left general or vocational secondary schools and have been placed in alternative education settings. Some of these programs are implemented via the Division for Children and Youth at Risk at the Ministry of Education:
  - Tracks for underachieving students, which aim to reduce scholastic gaps and prevent dropout. The students are placed in smaller classes, within general secondary schools.
  - Attendance officers employed under the Compulsory Education Law, who endeavor to ensure that students of all ages attend school regularly and prevent overt and hidden dropout.
  - Programs of the Service for Advancement of Youth at Risk, which implements remedial educational services for youth aged 14-18 who have dropped out of general or vocational secondary schools. Each student is provided with therapeutic-educational services that include a personal counselor, remedial education and vocational training. Instruction is provided in small groups and individually.
  - Educational-rehabilitation-therapy schools - Miftanim - that are run in partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, for youth aged 14-18 who have dropped out of general or vocational secondary schools. These schools combine education, preparation for working life, and therapy (group and individual).

## **B. Aid Strategies during and after Military Service**

The military framework, in which, as noted, most Jewish citizens of the country as well as members of other population groups are required to serve,<sup>36</sup> provides a platform to advance vulnerable young adults in education and employment. Enabling young people to complete their schooling and acquire a profession both during and after military service increases their chances after discharge of integrating into work or post-secondary academic or vocational studies.

- > Newly enlisted soldiers who have not completed 10 years of schooling are referred to the IDF Unit for the Advancement of Special Populations, which combines military service with completion of schooling and vocational training. Many of the training courses are also meant to serve them subsequently in civilian life.
- > The Ministry of Defense has a division specializing in vocational training, which works in tandem with the Fund for the Absorption of Discharged Soldiers. They offer around 12 courses - "a profession for life" - to discharged soldiers and individuals who have completed civilian National Service. The courses last for 3-12 months, with an average of 6 months. Part of the course takes place towards the end of their service and the remainder after completion of service. In order to limit dropout from the courses, particularly after discharge,

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<sup>36</sup> While military service is compulsory for all Jewish citizens of both sexes, there are exemptions on health, religious or other grounds.

participants who do not complete the course without justifiable cause, are required to pay the relative share of the cost of the course.<sup>37</sup>

## 4.2 Strategies for Helping Minority Groups Improve their Educational Achievements

- > In recent years, there have been increased efforts to strengthen the education systems in the Arab and ultra-Orthodox sector in order to improve high school students' achievements. These include increasing the number of school hours in schools with students from weak socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly in the Arab sector. Among the ultra-Orthodox population, efforts have been invested in bolstering core studies at the primary and secondary levels, particularly in math, English and Hebrew.<sup>38 39</sup>
- > There is a large-scale comprehensive national initiative to enhance the successful integration of Arab citizens into higher education and improve their retention rate and achievements. A five-year program, initiated by the Council for Higher Education provides support for all public higher education institutions and includes the following components: pre-academic preparatory programs, a preparatory program for students accepted to higher education, academic and social support for students during their studies, special scholarships for those in need, and assistance in transitioning to the labor market.<sup>40</sup>
- > A similar initiative to lure more ultra-Orthodox into universities and colleges, have been carried out in the last five year by the Council for Higher Education, with the aim of readying ultra-Orthodox for a place in Israel's labor market. An expanded program is now being planned for a second five-year period.

## 4.3 Strategies for Helping Young Adults Advance towards Employment

During 2012-2015, several important initiatives were developed to integrate populations with low participation rates into the labor market, including NEET young adults and among them, Arabs, ultra-Orthodox and young adults with disabilities.<sup>41</sup> Young adults continue to be one of the main target populations of these initiatives. In 2014, some 3,500 young adults received support in integrating into employment through a range of programs, compared to 3,000 in 2011.<sup>42</sup> Three of these major initiatives are:

- > A broad network of One-Stop Employment Centers for the Arab and ultra-Orthodox populations: By 2015, the Ministry of Economy had founded 21 employment centers for

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37 Judith King, 2017.

38 State of Israel, 2015.

39 For political reasons, these changes in the ultra-Orthodox education system are currently only being partially implemented.

40 Ayala Hendin and Dalia Ben Rabi, 2015.

41 For the full list of initiatives and details, see State of Israel, 2015.

42 State of Israel, 2015.

the Arab sector in cooperation with JDC-Israel Tevet<sup>43</sup> and the Prime Minister's Office. The centers serve as one-stop shops for the unemployed in the Arab sector, and provide employment consultation services, training, and guidance for completion of high school and higher education, preparation for the workplace, appropriate placement and ongoing employment guidance.<sup>44</sup> In addition, four special One-Stop Employment Centers have been established (as at 2015) for ultra-Orthodox young adults aged 22-28.<sup>45</sup>

- > A model for an apprenticeship program for young adults aged 18 and over - Starter: This is a nationwide training program for adults, developed jointly by Tevet and the Manpower Training and Development Bureau (at the Ministry of Labor and Social affairs) (MTDB) and has been implemented as a pilot since 2015. The model combining studies in a college and paid work for an employer, and acquiring skills under a mentor in the workplace (dual model). The first stage (1-1.5 months) includes only theoretical studies and the second (the rest of the time) includes three study days a week in the college and three workdays for the employer. The apprentices in the program are mostly young - 47% are between the ages of 18-30.<sup>46</sup>
- > A program for young adults with disabilities - Rampa (Ramp): The program provides placement and employment support services. The program is currently being implemented in the framework of existing services, such as Young Adult Centers (see below), and municipal employment centers.<sup>47</sup>

#### **4.4 Comprehensive Programs and Initiatives for Supporting Vulnerable Young Adults in their Transition to Adulthood**

For the last decade, some nonprofit organizations and foundations have been focusing especially on vulnerable young adults, including NEET young adults and those at risk of becoming NEET. These organizations carry out comprehensive programs with a variety of goals aimed at various target populations. They provide guidance and counseling to particular populations of young adults, such as those who had been in residential care for youth at risk, those recently discharged from military or national service, and those living in the periphery. They cover a range of relevant subjects for the transition to adult life, including how to manage a personal budget, career planning, and preparation for working life. In the vast majority of these programs, the organizations and foundations work in cooperation with government agencies.

- > One of the most prominent initiatives is a network of Young Adult Centers, for young people aged 18-35, which offer a wide range of services, many geared toward further education, employment or training, such as guidance for higher education and career

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43 JDC-Israel-Tevet is a leading developer of employment services in Israel. Through partnerships with the government and local organizations, it develops programs to address the complex needs of Israeli minorities.

44 State of Israel, 2015.

45 State of Israel, 2015.

46 Judith King et al., 2017:62.

47 State of Israel, 2015.

choice; preparation for working life and professional training courses and workshops. The first center was established by JDC-Israel in the south of the country in 2005. Today there are 43 Centers throughout the country.

- > The National Program for Young Adults at Risk - YATED ("Stake") is a new initiative of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. It was developed in collaboration with 11 government ministries, third sector organizations, philanthropic agencies, and academia. In October 2016, the government passed a resolution to initiate the national program for young men and women aged 18-25 in risk situations, and allocated considerable resources for the purpose. Implementation of the program began in 2017. The national program has two primary objectives: to guarantee that young adults realize their full potential and to ensure that they can meaningfully contribute to Israeli society. It defines four areas for action, in which young men and women are liable to find themselves at risk:
  - Education, employment and skills;
  - Basic physical needs and protection;
  - Personal wellbeing;
  - Family and social belonging.

These life domains, which are based on OECD quality of life measures, may have a considerable impact on the social mobility of young adults, their sense of personal wellbeing and their quality of life. The program provides a comprehensive service package through professional support provided by personal advisers who help in preparing a personalized plan and meet with the young adult on an ongoing basis.

## 5. Further Programmatic Directions

As mentioned above, NEET young people are not a homogenous group and not all of them are at the same risk level. The reasons and circumstances that bring an individual to be NEET or to be at risk of being NEET will determine the most appropriate strategy and the intensity of intervention required in order to integrate him/her into employment or studies and to prevent disengagement in the future. It is necessary to make the following distinctions:

1. between young people who are at risk of becoming NEETs and those who are already NEET;
2. between short-term and long-term NEETs;
3. between NEETs who are temporarily disengaged or in transition, usually from choice (e.g., to look after children or on a prolonged stay abroad) and those who are chronically disengaged for a variety of reasons: personal circumstances (e.g., lack of human capital, personal adjustment difficulties) or external conditions, such as a high unemployment rate. Differences by gender must also be taken into account.

The programmatic options listed below suggest ways to increase the participation of Israeli NEET youth and young adults in education, training or work.

**Provide broader opportunities to complete matriculation or vocational certification** for those young adults who have not achieved this goal on completing high school at age 18: For the very low skilled, it is necessary to find programs that address remedial educational needs and at the same time impart specific job skills in order to promote participant engagement and retention.

**Provide information, counseling about work and studies:** A significant percentage of NEETs who participated in the MJB national survey reported the need for guidance and counseling to help them integrate into work or education. This kind of support aims to give young people a better understanding of the options available and an assessment of their aspirations in order to help them make suitable career decisions. Quality counseling may play a crucial role in preventing future disengagement. In high school, guidance may help students to understand the long-term implications of deciding to drop out of school. In addition, knowledge of available financial support is necessary for some NEETs. Therefore, there is a need to increase access to information and counseling services during high school, toward the end of military/national service, and on completion of post-secondary vocational and academic studies. Furthermore, continuing guidance to the NEETs when they are already integrated into an employment or learning setting may promote motivation and strengthen retention.

**Strengthen coordination among key players in developing training courses:** In order to expand opportunities for NEETs significantly, greater coordination and collaboration are required among all parties involved in developing training courses. This will require greater involvement of the business sector and industry in the early planning stage, in order to provide young adults with opportunities to achieve the skills and qualifications that employers need in high-demand professions in the labor market.

**Expand opportunities to gain work experience:** Many of the NEETs interviewed the MJB national survey were interested in entering the labor market but lacked the necessary skills and experience. Vocational training models, based on a dual system that combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills, may provide them with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with working life. Short-term work placements, internships, apprenticeships and job shadowing may ease their integration into work. In order for this recommendation to be successfully implemented, it is necessary to encourage employers to participate in such programs and to provide incentives for them. This also involves creating mechanisms to support the employers so that they know how to work appropriately with such young adults in order for both employer and participant to reap the greatest rewards from such programs.

**Expand work-readiness programs:** Besides work experience, some young adults and adolescents who are neither working nor studying (and those at risk of future disengagement), also lack the "soft skills" or "transferable skills", required to succeed in most working or learning framework. In addition to formal qualifications and specific skills, employers highly

value candidates with these skills. It is therefore recommended that young adults develop transferable skills, such as communication and social skills, problem solving, decision-making etc., as well as personal skills, which include self-regulation, resilience, self-efficacy, etc. Work-readiness programs may function as capability-building programs, which offer opportunities for building these skills, especially for long-term NEET young adults.

**Special attention to the more disadvantaged and vulnerable NEETs who are at risk of long-term disengagement:** According to the results of the MJB national survey, a large percentage of the young adults at high risk of remaining disengaged for a long time are Arabs and individuals with disabilities. A more intensive and comprehensive support system is needed to address the more acute needs of these two subgroups. Individualized support may be one of the key components of work with these more vulnerable groups.

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