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**THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON DISABILITIES AND  
EMPLOYMENT OF SPECIAL POPULATIONS  
THE ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

## **Young Adults in Israel Who Are Neither Working Nor Studying: Integration into Employment – Resources, Barriers and Needs**

Denise Naon ♦ Paula Kahan-Strawczynski ♦ Liat Vazan-Sikron  
Yael Hadar ♦ Viacheslav Konstantinov

This study was funded by  
the Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation  
as well as the Gandy Foundation



**RESEARCH REPORT**

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Amitai, G.; Raanan, R.; Kahan-Strawczynski, P. and Rivkin, D. 2011. Background paper for JDC-Ashalim "Transition into Adulthood among Populations at Risk: Needs and Interventions" (Hebrew).

Kahan-Strawczynski, P.; Vazan-Sikron, L.; Naon, D.; Hadar, Y. and Konstantinov, V. (Forthcoming). *Young Adults Working in Israel with up to 12 Years of Schooling: Integration into Employment – Resources, Barriers and Needs* (Hebrew).

Kahan-Strawczynski, P. and Yurovich L. (with G. Hoffman). 2009. *School-to-Work Transition and Employment Programs for Youth and Young Adults at Risk in the U.S. and Other OECD Countries: Review of the Literature*. RR-521-09 (Hebrew).

Naon, D.; Hadar, Y.; Kahan-Strawczynski, P.; Vazan-Sikron, L. and Konstantinov, V. (Forthcoming). *Young Adults with Disabilities in Israel: Integration into Employment – Resources, Barriers and Needs* (Hebrew).

Naon, D.; King, J. and Wolde-Tsadick, A. 2006. *Populations Not Fully Participating in the Labor Market: Extent, Characteristics and Programs to Promote their Employment and Occupational Mobility*. RR-490-06 (Hebrew).

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# Executive Summary

## 1. Introduction

Interest in the transition into adult life and the labor market for young people is increasing throughout the world in the wake of multiple changes in the labor market. Some of these changes stem from the reduced opportunities for all young adults following the world economic crisis. Others stem from changes in the structure of the labor market following the technological revolution, posing particular difficulties for young adults, especially those who do not have higher education. At the same time, there is growing recognition that not enough has been done to assist young people with this complex transition. As in the rest of the world, interest in young adults has been growing in Israel too, in the past decade. Government ministries have begun to prioritize this population and develop special programs for it. While the economic crisis has not affected Israel severely over time, substantial changes in the structure of the economy due to the growing strength of hi-tech industries have had a great impact on less educated young adults. However, until now no comprehensive information has been gathered about the needs of this population in general and, specifically, about the transition into the labor market.

In light of this, Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute conducted a comprehensive survey of young adults ages 23-26 with particular difficulties integrating into the labor market focusing on three groups:

1. Young adults who are neither working nor studying in a post-secondary framework and who do not intend to start such studies in the coming year
2. Young adults with disabilities
3. Young adults who are working and who have 12 years of schooling or less.

Each population is the focus of a separate full report and an integrative summary document has already been published.

This report focuses on young adults who are neither working nor studying. It examines the resources available to them, the barriers impeding their entry into employment, their work experience, the assistance they have received from various systems, and their need for further assistance. Its goal is to increase awareness of the needs of these young adults and serve as the basis for planning policy and programs to ease the transition into adult life.

The reports about the other two study populations will be available on the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute website [www.jdc.org.il/brookdale](http://www.jdc.org.il/brookdale).

The study findings are based on a national survey that was implemented in two phases. In the first phase we carried out a brief interview (using a screening questionnaire) of a national sample of the population 23-26 (some 5,450 respondents). This sample was weighted to represent the overall population of young adults 23-26 which number some 450,000 (CBS, 2009). We used this survey to identify and interview a sample of the three populations on which this study focuses (some 1,200 respondents) including some 400 with disabilities identified by a special set of

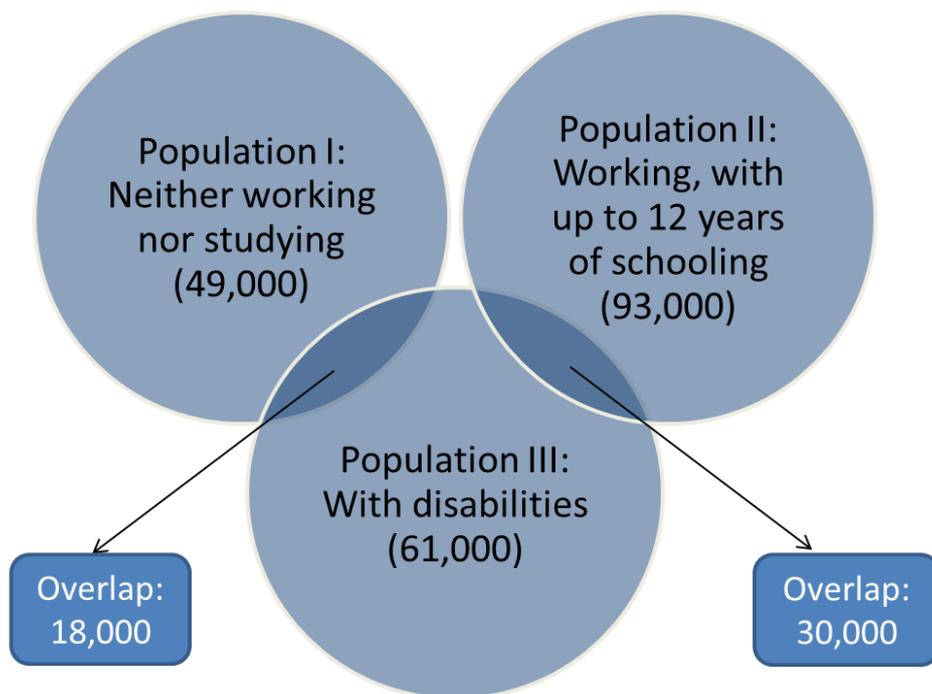
screening questions. Around 400 young people are neither working nor studying and they are the focus of the current report.

Below we present the estimated size of each group in the total population of young adults 23-26.

1. Young people who are not working or pursuing post-secondary studies – 49,000 or 11% of the age group
2. Young people who are working and have 12 years of education or less – 93,000 or 21% of the age group
3. Young people with disabilities – 61,000 or 14% of the age group.

There is of course a partial overlap between the 3 populations as can be seen in Figure I. Thus, some portion of the young adults not employed and not studying are also included in the population with disabilities.

**Figure I: The Groups of Young Adults 23-26 Included in the Study and the Overlap among Them**



This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How big is this group and what are its main characteristics?
2. What are the barriers to employment and what resources do these young adults have?
3. Why in their view are they neither working nor studying?
4. Are they interested in working and what are their employment and/or study plans for the near future?
5. To what extent have they accessed services designed to assist in integrating into employment and how, in their opinion, can they be better assisted to integrate into employment and to continue with their studies?
6. Is there a subgroup that needs particular attention and what are its characteristics?

As noted, the CBS Labor Force Survey estimated the total number of young adults aged 23-26 neither working nor studying to be 49,000 – 11% of the total age cohort. The percentage is higher, among those without a matriculation certificate and among those living in localities with a low socioeconomic ranking.

In analyzing the study findings, we divided the young adults neither working nor studying into three main groups according to the challenges they face:

- ◆ Young adults without disabilities
- ◆ Young adults with physical/sensory/intellectual/mental disabilities (hereinafter, Group A)<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ Young adults with no physical/sensory/intellectual/mental disabilities, but who did have learning disabilities and/or concentration and attention deficit disorders (hereinafter, Group B).<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the information was analyzed by sector (distinguishing between men and women in each sector) and some of data were also analyzed by education: a distinction was made between those with low education (with a partial matriculation certificate or no matriculation certificate at all) and those with a higher level of education (with a matriculation certificate or post-secondary certificate).

## 2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

We begin by describing the basic socio-demographic characteristic of the young adults not working and not studying.

**Sector:** 45% were Arab

**Gender:** 56% were women

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<sup>1</sup> In some of the analyses, the distinction is made between those in Group A with physical/sensory/intellectual disabilities and those with mental disabilities.

<sup>2</sup> A special effort was made to identify these individuals during the interviews in 3 ways: Respondents' reports of professional diagnosis; Reports that the respondent was educated in a special education school or special education/therapeutic class; A series of questions to identify learning difficulties.

### **Family status:**

- ◆ 32% were married; the percentage married was higher among women than men (46% vs. 15%, respectively) and higher among Arabs (41% vs. 25%, respectively).
- ◆ About a quarter of the young adults (26%) had children: 38% were mothers and 11% fathers.

**Residence:** 57% of the young people lived in localities with a low socioeconomic ranking (clusters 1-4 out of 10).

**Disability:** Over a third of the young adults (37%) had disabilities: 26% were in Group A and 11% in Group B.

## **3. Resources and Barriers to Employment**

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

### **3.1 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>3</sup> This definition includes natural attributes (age, gender and health status) and acquired abilities (schooling and further education). In this section, we examine the acquired abilities of the young adults who were neither working nor studying.

#### **Education:**

- ◆ 56% of all the young adults had low levels of education: 23% did not have a high school certificate; 33% 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.
- ◆ An examination based on the responses of the young adults to the screening questionnaire (5,450 respondents) revealed that 20% of all young adults without a matriculation certificate were neither working nor studying, compared with 7% of those with a matriculation certificate (with or without a post-secondary education).
- ◆ Young adults with low levels of education are likely to experience greater difficulties integrating into employment. In addition, a significant percentage of them were Arabs:
  - 54% were Arab
  - 52% were women; 30% were Arab women and 22% Jewish women
  - 48% of them had disabilities; 35% were in Group A and 13% were in Group B.

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<sup>3</sup> OECD. 2010. *The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*. OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforum/33703702.pdf> (Accessed: August, 2012).

### ***Vocational training and certificates:***

- ◆ 23% had a vocational certificate. The certificates were earned in at least one of the following ways: 5% had a vocational certificate from high school; 7% had taken a course in the army; 13% were taking courses at the time of the survey (but not at a post-secondary level) or had completed a vocational training course after completing high school or military service.
- ◆ It is important to note that those without post-secondary education do not have higher rates of vocational training.
- ◆ As noted the army served for some as a platform to acquire a profession that could serve them in civilian life as well. In all, 20% of the Jewish respondents who did military service were able, while in the military, to study a profession that could be practiced in civilian life (professions for which they were specially trained and that are recognized as professions in the civilian labor market and 32% if we include driving or professions connected with logistical or clerical work).
  - The group with the least human capital is that without a matriculation certificate or vocational certificate and who reported that they had no profession. Altogether, they accounted for 45% of all the young adults who were neither working nor studying. Of these: The percentage with minimum human capital was higher among Arabs (56%) than Jews (36%).
  - It was also higher among those with disabilities (Group A 62% and Group B 47%) than among those with no disabilities, 37%.

***Knowledge of languages:*** Language skills play an important role in integration into the labor market. English proficiency was examined for all the respondents as was Hebrew proficiency of the Arab respondents. An index was built that included: understand a simple conversation; carry out a conversation; understand instructions for use of equipment; or write a simple letter. The Hebrew index also included "being able to present myself in Hebrew in a job interview." The same index was used for English and Hebrew. The findings reveal that:

- ◆ 38% of all the respondents did not have sufficient command of English in any of these skills.
- ◆ 22% of the Arab respondents did not have sufficient command of in any of these skills in Hebrew.

***Computer skills:*** We examined the respondents' ability to use e-mail and standard Office programs (Word, Excel and PowerPoint). We built an index to examine the percentage of young adults who had little or no ability to use any of the computer programs. According to the measure, 27% did not have adequate computer skills.

As with the earlier measures, Arabs respondents and those with disabilities displayed lower levels of proficiency.

### 3.2 Family Constraints

Young mothers face the additional constraint of having young children. Thirty-eight percent of the women who were neither working nor studying were mothers. Fifty-eight percent of them reported that the need to care for their small children was a barrier to going out to work.

### 3.3 Work Experience

Prior work experience is another important advantage for integration into employment. We reviewed the work history of the respondents in order to calculate a measure of proximity to or distance from the labor market.

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

### 3.4 Employability

Employability refers to the range of abilities that help a person find and maintain a job beyond their vocational training and education. These abilities are often referred to as soft skills. The respondents were asked about their difficulties on a scale of 13 items (see footnote):<sup>4</sup>

- ◆ About half of the respondents reported difficulties.
- ◆ 21% reported difficulty with three or more of the items – the percentage rose to 40% among the disabled in Group A.

### 3.5 Previous Adjustment Problems

Problems adjusting to educational or military frameworks can be predictors of subsequent difficulties integrating into employment or educational frameworks.

- ◆ 32% of the respondents reported difficulties with their studies in school, difficulty concentrating, or a lack of interest. Twenty-one percent, particularly the young men (37% vs. 10% of the women), reported that they had been suspended from school.
- ◆ Among the young Jewish adults who had done military or national service (73%), 18% reported adjustment difficulties e.g., not getting along with the commanders or finding it hard to obey the rules of a military framework.

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

## 4. Motivation to Find Work

The extent of those neither employed nor studying who are looking for work is a key indicator of their motivation. The majority (57%) were looking for work; however a significant group was not (43%). We began by examining the difficulties that the respondents encounter.

### 4.1 Difficulties

The respondents looking for work were asked to relate to the difficulties they faced at two levels. The first related to their overall view of the barriers. The second related more specifically to their job search skills. The major difficulties that were reported included:

- ◆ Lack of job opportunities in their region or transportation problems (30%)
- ◆ No work in their field (22%)
- ◆ The availability of only low paying jobs (18%)
- ◆ Lack of adequate skills (training, experience or language) for the job (21%).

The respondents were asked about five types of difficulty in performing various job-search related skills (e.g., completing forms, preparing a resume, using social networks to find work).

- ◆ 44% noted at least one difficulty: 18% – one type of difficulty; 11% – two types; 15% – three or more.
- ◆ Higher percentages of disabled young adults in Group A cited three or more types of difficulty (27%, vs. 13% of those without disabilities).

### 4.2 Reasons for Not Looking for Work

All the respondents who were not looking for work were asked to indicate the main reason:

- ◆ Responsibilities at home – 61% of the young women, and 74% among Arab women
- ◆ Health problems or difficulty with physical/mental functioning (16%). This reason was given almost exclusively by disabled respondents in Group A.

### 4.3 A Broader Definition of Interest in Finding Work

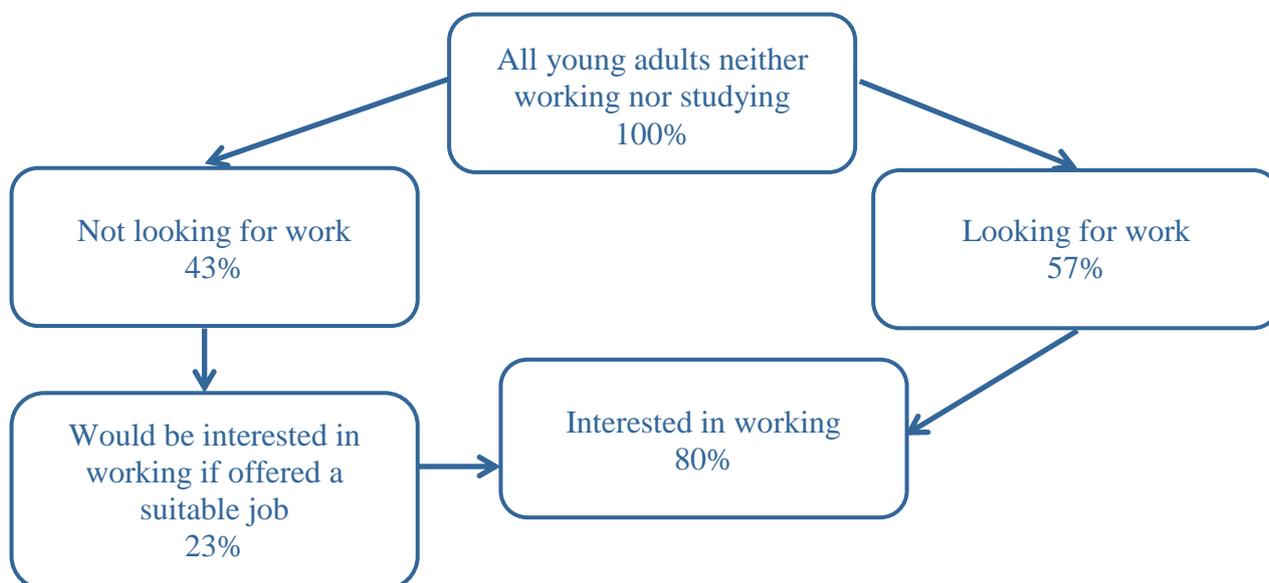
The study sought to identify those areas in which young adults who wanted to work needed assistance. We built an "interested in working" variable that included two groups: all those looking for work; and all those who were not looking but would be willing to start working immediately if they were offered a suitable job. According to this definition, 80% of the young adults were in fact interested in working (see Figure II).

We examined the characteristics that impact on the interest in working by a bivariate and a multivariate analysis using the logistic regression model. The factors we examined included personal characteristics (gender and parenthood, population group, education level, disabilities) as well as the receipt of some form of income maintenance support (disability and benefits as a substitute for work).

Both analyses revealed the same patterns:

- ◆ Fathers were more interested in working than men without children. Mothers were less interested in working than women without children.
- ◆ There was no difference between Arabs and the Jews.
- ◆ Those with a post-secondary certificate/college degree were more interested 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 concentration disorder were more interested in working than those with a physical/sensory/intellectual disability.
- ◆ Those not receiving a benefit were more interested in working than those receiving a benefit in place of work.

**Figure II: Interest in Work among Young Adults neither Working nor Studying**



#### 4.4 Main Activities of those Not Working:

Consistent with what we saw above about the main reasons for not *looking* for work, the two main activities among those not working were either taking care of children or a health problem. Another group was participating in short term courses.

The main activities reported were:

- ◆ Taking care of the home/children (35%)
- ◆ Participating in short term courses (16%)
- ◆ Taking care of health problems (16%)

In addition, 7% were in a transition period (e.g. moving house, returning from a trip abroad or getting ready to start work). 24% reported that they were doing nothing.

## 5. Need for Assistance and Utilization of Existing Sources in Finding Employment

Forty-two percent of the respondents who were *interested in working* reported that they needed assistance. They account for 36% of all the respondents. The most common forms of assistance cited:

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

*Utilization of sources of assistance:* There are various services that can play role in assisting young adults. In general, it was found that respondents had made only minimal use of the various services<sup>5</sup>:

- ◆ 6% reported contact with a social worker
- ◆ 14% were registered at the general employment service
- ◆ 5% had been in contact with a specialized employment center
- ◆ 9% of all the young adults – 19% of the Jews who did military or national service – reported that they had been in contact with the Ministry of Defense office that offers guidance to discharged soldiers.
- ◆ Altogether, 26% of all the young adults had been in contact with at least one of the above services.

*Job readiness workshops:* Only 6% reported that they had participated in such workshops. Among those who had not participated, a relatively small percentage (31%) reported that they were familiar with, or had heard of, such workshops. Most of those familiar were Jews with a matriculation certificate or higher level of education.

*Interest in post-secondary studies or vocational training:* The respondents were asked if they were interested in post-secondary studies or vocational training during the coming year. The question was asked of all the young adults. It is particularly pertinent among those with low previous education (i.e., those without a college degree, post-secondary certificate or vocational

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<sup>5</sup> Because of a data collection problem, the rate of non-response for these questions was 30% - 6% among the men and 50% among the women.

certificate), who account for 65% of all young adults who are neither working nor studying. Among this group, 36% were interested in studying in some sort of framework in the coming year. Of these, half (54%) were interested in a vocational course, 27% in university or college, and a further 19% in other frameworks – completion of matriculation exams, preparatory programs for post-secondary academic education or preparation for psychometric exams (for university admission). Sixty-nine percent of those interested in studying reported that they needed assistance to achieve this goal – of these, 43% needed guidance and counseling and 45% needed financial assistance.

## 6. Financial Status

The study examined the respondents' source of income in the absence of earnings from employment.

### *Source of income:*

The most common sources of income were:

- ◆ **Benefits:** 23% of the respondents were receiving income support benefits that serve as a substitute for work (e.g., income support/supplement, other National Insurance Institute benefits, unemployment benefits, disability pension, and work injury benefit).
- ◆ **Family or spouse's wages:** 26% of the respondents were receiving regular financial support from members of their family. For 20%, this was their main source of income. Seventeen percent reported income from their spouse, which was, for the vast majority of them, their main source of income.
- ◆ Over a third of the respondents (35%) had no regular income. Presumably they depend on their parents to provide for all their needs (though not in the form of financial support) or they may also do temporary work.
- ◆ Total net income: 60% reported a monthly income of up to NIS 3,000. Most of these were single individuals.

**Subjective assessment of financial status:** 30% of all the young adults reported that they managed to cover their basic household expenses "to a great extent" and 32% "managed somewhat." However, 28% reported that were not managing very well and 10% reported that they were completely unable to cover their basic expenses.

## 7. Young Adults at Increased Risk of Remaining out of Work

We attempted to identify a subgroup of young adults characterized by increased risk of remaining out of work for a long time. This subgroup included young adults who had never worked or had not worked in the two years prior to the survey, and had also not studied during this time. In other words, they were far removed from the labor market. The subgroup accounted for 39% (or 19,000 out of 48,900) of young adults aged 23-26 who were neither working nor studying. We refer to this as the "high risk group."

We examined the connection between the likelihood of belonging to the high risk group and various characteristics: demographic, education, and existence of disability. The analysis was conducted firstly using a bivariate analysis and then a multivariate analysis.

The bivariate analysis revealed that the percentage of young adults in the risk group was higher among:

- ◆ Mothers vs. women without children and men (fathers and men without children)
- ◆ Arabs vs Jews
- ◆ Young adults without a post-secondary certificate or college 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 concentration disorder and those with no disability.

The findings of the multivariate analysis reveal the same pattern as the bivariate analysis. The explained variance of the model is 19%.

## **8. Summary and Programmatic Directions**

This report focuses on the population of young adults who were neither working nor studying in a post-secondary framework as part of a broader study of the 23-26-year age cohort. It examined their characteristics, the resources, the barriers and the assistance they feel they need for integration into employment.

The findings reveal that of young adults who are neither working nor studying in a post-secondary framework and who do not intend to start such studies in the coming year:

- ◆ 45% were Arabs
- ◆ 56% were women.
- ◆ 37% had disabilities – 26% were in Group A and 11% in Group B.
- ◆ A large proportion had low levels of education: 23% had not completed high school. For 33% the high school completion certificate was the highest level of education reached (with no full or partial matriculation).
- ◆ Only 23% had a vocational certificate.
- ◆ The majority of the young adults had not been in contact with any service related to the transition to employment.
- ◆ About 40% had never worked or had not worked in the past two years and represent the group with the highest risk of long term employment problems. Those with physical disabilities and those with lower education had a higher probability of being in this group.

- ◆ Despite all the barriers they faced, 80% were interested in working – this includes those who were looking for work (57%) as well as those who were not looking but were willing to start work if they were offered a suitable job (23%).
- ◆ Some 42% of those interested in working reported that they needed assistance to integrate into employment.
- ◆ In addition, 36% of those with low educational resources (no college degree, post-secondary certificate or vocational certificate) were interested in studying in the coming year. About half of them wanted to take a vocational training course.

These findings suggest several programmatic directions:

**1. Development of post-secondary professional study tracks that match the demands of the labor market:** Among the young adults with no post-secondary/academic certificates (85% of the total study population), 44% reported that they had a profession (either with formal or informal training) and of these 24% reported that they had a vocational certificate. The fact that these young adults were not working even though they had a profession raises questions about the demand for their professions and/or the quality of the training they have. This reflects the need to provide training opportunities in professions in-demand by the labor market and to encourage their participation in these programs.

**2. Encouragement of post-secondary studies:** The findings reveal a relatively low percentage of young adults with post-secondary certificates (15%). It was also found that a post-secondary certificate enhances interest in working and reduces the probability that they will belong to the high risk group. Hence there is a need to find ways to make post-secondary studies accessible and encourage participation, for example by helping them to complete the matriculation exams and take academic preparatory programs.

**3. Increasing accessibility to work readiness programs:** Given the small percentage of respondents who had participated in – or were even aware of –work readiness programs, there is clearly a need to increase awareness and expand availability. In this regard the special needs of young adults with disabilities need to be addressed.

**4. Fulfilling the potential of military and national service as a platform for preparation for employment, with an emphasis on at-risk populations:** Military and national service can play an important role for integration into adult life. This was reflected in the findings about the nature of the military service of many of the respondents. The opportunities provided in the Army/national service could be further strengthened, particularly for populations at risk.

**5. Providing guidance and counseling about employment and studies:** A significant percentage reported the need for guidance and counseling in integrating into employment. Furthermore, among those with low educational resources, 36% reported that they were interested in studying, particularly vocational courses, and 69% reported that they needed assistance in order to do so (mainly guidance, counseling and financial support). There is a need to strengthen the accessibility of these services during high school, at the end of military/national service, and at the completion of vocational and academic training.

***6. Paying special attention to groups that are at risk of neither working nor studying:*** A large percentage of those at high risk of remaining without work are Arabs and young adults with disabilities. Among the young adults at risk of long-term employment problems, there is a need for more comprehensive approaches to addressing their unique needs.

The goal of the study was to increase awareness of the needs of young adults and to serve as the basis for planning policies and programs to assist their transition into adult life. It was accompanied by a steering committee that included representatives of government ministries and relevant nonprofit organizations. The main findings have been presented in various forums and have contributed to efforts to expand opportunities for young adults.

A number of programmatic efforts have been made on which future efforts can build. These include the network of young adult centers; the employment centers for the Arab and Haredi populations, special programs for young adults graduated out of the social service system, and expanded initiatives for the disabled.

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. The Study	3
2.1 Study Goal and Study Questions	3
2.2 Study Population and Data Collection Method	4
2.3 Data Analysis Method	5
3. Literature Review	6
3.1 Barriers to Integration into Employment Facing Young Adults	7
3.2 Preparing Young Israeli Adults to Enter the Workforce	11
4. Socio-Demographic Characteristics	12
4.1 Percentage of 23-26-Year-Olds neither Working nor Studying, by Population Group	13
4.2 Socio-Demographic Characteristics, by Existence of Disability	14
5. Probability of Employment, by Various Characteristics	15
5.1 Multivariate Analysis: Probability of Working	17
6. Potential Resources and Barriers to Employment	18
6.1 Human Capital	19
6.2 Health Status: Self-Assessment	23
6.3 Family Constraints: Young Children	24
6.4 Work Experience	24
6.5 Employability	26
6.6 Difficulties in Integrating and Adapting to Frameworks	27
6.7 Risk Behaviors	29
7. Employment Characteristics, Young Adults who had Worked in the Previous Two Years	30
8. Motivation to Find Work	31
8.1 Job Search	31
8.2 Not Looking for Work	36
8.3 Broad Definition of Interest in Working	37
8.4 Contact with Services	41
9. Financial Status	41
9.1 Sources of Income	42
9.2 Monthly Income	42
9.3 Subjective Assessment of Financial Status	43
10. Preparation for Integration into Employment and Interest in Studying	44
10.1 Participation in Employment-Preparation Workshops	45
10.2 Interest in Studying in the Coming Year	45
11. Need for Assistance	46
11.1 Assistance to Integrate into Employment	46
11.2 Assistance to Integrate into Studies	46

12. Characteristics of Subgroups Requiring Special Attention	47
12.1 Young Adults at Increased Risk of Remaining out of Work	48
12.2 Young Adults with Low Levels of Education	50
13. Conclusion, Discussion and Programmatic Directions	51
13.1 Creating Post-Secondary and Vocational Study Tracks that Meet the Demands of the Labor Market	51
13.2 Encouraging Post-Secondary/Academic Studies	52
13.3 Preparation for Employment	53
13.4 Guidance and Advice for Employment and Studies	53
13.5 Special Attention for Groups at Conspicuous Risk of Neither Working nor Studying	55
Bibliography	57
Appendix I: Screening Process	63
Appendix II: Young Adults, by Sector and Gender (Tables)	64

## List of Tables

### Chapter 2. The Study

Table 1: The Sample and Responsiveness Rate, by Sector	5
--	---

### Chapter 4: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 2: Socio-Demographic Characteristics, by Existence of Disability	15
--	----

### Chapter 5. Probability of Employment, by Various Characteristics

Table 3a: Percentage of Those Working vs. Those Not Working, by Various Characteristics	16
---	----

Table 3b: Logistic Regression – Probability of Working among Young Adults Aged 23-26 with up to 12 Years of Education	18
---	----

### Chapter 6: Potential Resources and Barriers to Employment

Table 4: Profession and Professional Qualification, by Existence of Disability	21
--	----

Table 5: Human Capital Resources of Employment – Language and Computer Skills – by Existence of Disability	21
--	----

Table 6: Resources for Employment – Self-Assessed Health Status, by Existence of Disability	24
---	----

Table 7: Resources for Employment – Employment History, by Existence of Disability	25
--	----

Table 8: Resources for Employment – Distribution of Some Employability Difficulties, by Existence of Disability	26
---	----

Table 9: Barriers to Employment – Difficulties and Non-Normative Behavior during Time in School, by Existence of Disability	27
---	----

Table 10:	Barriers to Employment – Difficulties experienced by Young Jewish Adults during Military/National Service, by Existence of Disability	29
Table 11:	Potential Barriers to Employment and/or Studies	30
<b>Chapter 7: Employment Characteristics, Young Adults who had Worked in the Previous Two Years</b>		
Table 12:	Employment History of Individuals who had Worked in the Two Years Preceding the Interview, by Existence of Disability	31
<b>Chapter 8: Motivation to Find Work</b>		
Table 13:	Difficulties with Job-Search Skills among Young Adults Looking for Work, by Existence of Disability	34
Table 14:	Job-Search Avenues Used by Individuals Looking for Work	35
Table 15:	Difficulties Finding Work among those Looking for Work	35
Table 16:	The Main Reason for not Looking for Work and the Willingness to Work among Individuals not Looking for Work, by Existence of Disability	36
Table 17a:	Young Adults "Interested in Working": Bivariate Correlations	38
Table 17b:	Young Adults "Interested in Working": Logistic Regression Multivariate Analysis	39
Table 18:	Expected Salaries of Young Adults "Interested in Working," by Existence of Disability	40
<b>Chapter 9: Financial Status</b>		
Table 19:	Sources of Income, by Existence of Disability and Family Status	42
Table 20:	Monthly Income of the Young Adults and their Spouses, by Family Status	43
Table 21:	Coverage of Basic Expenses, by Family Status	43
<b>Chapter 12: Characteristics of Subgroups Requiring Special Attention</b>		
Table 22:	Probability of Falling into the At-Risk Group – Bivariate Connections	49
Table 23:	Results of Logistic Regression for Probability of Falling into the at-Risk Group of Prolonged Non-Employment among the Young Adults	49
<b>Chapter 13: Conclusion, Discussion and Programmatic Directions</b>		
Table 24:	Barriers to Integration into the Labor Market, by Population Group	56
<b>List of Tables in Appendix II</b>		
Table II-1:	Socio-Demographic Characteristics	64
Table II-2:	Human Capital Employment Resources	65
Table II-3:	Little or No Knowledge of English, Hebrew and Computers	66
Table II-4:	Employment History	66

Table II-5:	Difficulties during Studies and Non-Normative Behavior in School	67
Table II-6:	Military/National Service among Jewish Young Adults, by Gender	67
Table II-7:	Risk Factors and Risk Behaviors as well as Treatment by Social Services	68
Table II-8:	Employment History, by Various Characteristics	69
Table II-9:	Current Main Occupation	70
Table II-10:	Difficulty with Job-Search Skills among Those Not Working but Looking for Work	71
Table II-11:	Job-Search Avenues among Individuals Not Working but Looking for Work	72
Table II-12:	Willingness to Work and Main Barriers to Seeking Employment among Individuals Neither Working nor Looking for Work	73
Table II-13:	Expected Salary for (Fulltime) Work among Young Adults who are Not Working but are Looking for Work or Willing to Work	74
Table II-14:	Sources of Income of the Young Adults and their Spouses, by Gender and Sector	75
Table II-15:	Monthly Income of the Young Adults and their Spouses	75
Table II-16:	Coverage of Basic Expenses	76
Table II-17:	Interest in Future Studies among all the Young Adults	76
Table II-18:	Interest in Studies in the Coming Year among Young Adults Lacking a Degree and/or Post-Secondary or Professional Certificate	77
Table II-19:	Needs for Assistance to Integrate into Work among Young Adults Looking for Work or Willing to Work	78
Table II-20:	Needs for Assistance to Integrate into Studies among Young Adults neither Working nor Studying, who Intend to Continue Studying and have no College Degree or Certificate	79

## List of Figures

### Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1	Population of Young Adults aged 23-26 included in the Study and the Overlap among Them	2
----------	--	---

### Chapter 4: Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Figure 2:	23-26-Year-Olds neither Working nor Studying, out of the Total Age Cohort	12
Figure 3:	The Young Adults, by Existence of Disabilities	13
Figure 4:	Percentage of Young Adults neither Working nor Studying among the Total 23-26 Age Cohort, by Socio-Demographic Characteristics	14

**Chapter 6: Potential Resources and Barriers to Employment**

Figure 5: Distribution of Level of Education 19

Figure 6: Employment History 25

Figure 7: Military/National Service 28

**Chapter 8: Motivation to Find Work**

Figure 8: Young Adults Interested in Working 37

**Chapter 11: Need for Assistance**

Figure 9: Extent of Interest and Needs for Assistance to Integrate into Studies (among Young Adults Lacking a Degree or Post-Secondary or Professional Certificate) and into Employment (among Young Adults Interested in Working) 47

**List of Figures in Appendices (I and II)**

Figure I-1: Screening Process 63