



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

RESEARCH REPORT

Young Adults Working in Israel with up to 12 Years of Schooling: Integration into Employment – Resources, Barriers and Needs

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

This study was funded mainly with the assistance of the Mandell L. and Madeleine H. Berman Foundation as well as assistance from the Gandyr Foundation

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

Interest in the transition into adult life and the labor market for young adults 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 who do not have higher education. At the same time, there is growing recognition that not enough has been done to support young people in 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 the first-ever comprehensive study of the populations with particular difficulties integrating and advancing in the labor market. The study was intended to increase awareness of their needs and serve as the basis for planning policy and programs to ease the transition into adult life.

The study focused on three groups of young adults aged 23-26:

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.

The findings for each group are published in three separate reports. This report presents findings from a study that provided comprehensive, up-to-date information about young adults with up to 12 years of schooling who did not pursue post-secondary education, did not register for post-secondary education (academic or non-academic), and were not about to start such studies in the year following the study, and who were working at least 10 hours a week in jobs that were neither casual nor temporary (hereinafter, working young adults).

The reports about the other two study populations are available on the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute website: www.jdc.org.il/brookdale.

The data for all three populations were collected concurrently. Altogether 1,198 young adults aged 23-26 were interviewed, approximately 700 of whom were working. The respondents were

identified through a screening questionnaire. To be representative of all three populations, the sample was weighted according to four parameters: Sector (Jewish/Arab); Socioeconomic cluster of locality (as classified by the Central Bureau of Statistics – CBS); Years of education; and Size of locality.

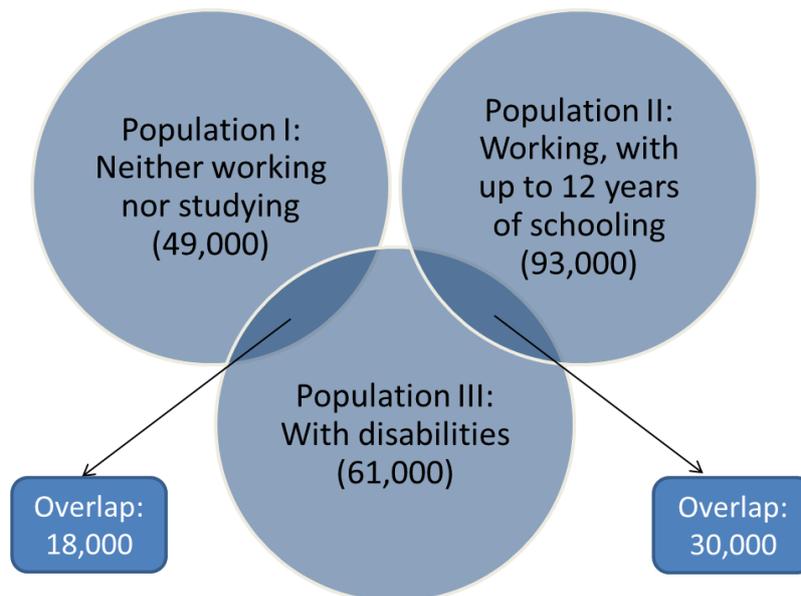
According to the 2009 CBS Labor Force Survey, at time of publication, there were 448,900 young adults aged 23-26 in Israel. The following is the weighted estimate of the size of the populations in 2008:

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 – 48,900 (11% of the age cohort).
2. Young adults who are working and who have 12 years of schooling or less – 92,840 (21% of the age cohort)
3. Young adults with disabilities – 60,880 (14% of the age cohort).¹

Figure I presents the size of each of the 3 populations and the overlap among them.

For the purpose of analysis, a young adult with a diagnosed disability who is working is included in the current report as well as in the report on young adults with disabilities.

Figure I: Size of the Study Populations and Overlap among them according to the Labor Force Survey



¹ This group includes young adults with physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disabilities and those who do not have physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disabilities, but do have learning disabilities and/or a concentration/attention disorder.

The report addresses the following questions:

1. What is the size of this group and what are its main characteristics?
2. What are the barriers to employment and what resources do these young adults have to advance them and ensure job stability?
3. What are the characteristics of their work, according to measures for the type of work and chances of advancement?
4. Do they wish, or are they interested in continuing their studies in the future?
5. To what extent have the various systems helped the young adults to integrate into employment and how, in their opinion, can they be better assisted with employment and further education?
6. Is there a subgroup that needs particular attention and what are the characteristics of its members?

In our analysis of the findings, we divided the population into young adults without disabilities, young adults with physical/sensory/intellectual/mental disabilities (hereinafter, Group A) and young adults with no physical/sensory/intellectual/mental disabilities, but who did have a learning disability and/or Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) (hereinafter, Group B).² The information was analyzed by sector and gender. Some of the data were also analyzed by education, with a distinction made between those with partial matriculation or no matriculation certificate at all and those with full matriculation. The young adults were also examined by age: those aged 23-24 vs. those aged 25-26. Some of the information was relevant only to wage earners, who constituted 82% of the young adults in the survey, and is therefore presented for them only: Sections 2, 3 and 6, below, relate to all working young adults – wage earners and self-employed. Sections 4 and 5 relate only to the wage earners.

2. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Sector: 42% were Arabs. Among the Arabs, the great majority were men (97%).

Gender: 20% of the working young adults were women

Family status:

- ◆ 24% were married. The percentage of married young adults in the Arab sector was double the percentage in the Jewish sector (35% vs. 17%, respectively).
- ◆ 14% of the young adults were parents. The percentage of Arab parents was almost double that of Jewish parents (19% vs. 10%, respectively). Nineteen percent of the women were mothers.

Residence: 50% of the young people lived in localities with a low socioeconomic level (clusters 1-4 out of 10).

² A special effort was made to identify these individuals during the interviews in 3 ways: 1. Respondent's reports of professional diagnosis; 2. Reports that the respondent was educated in a special education school or special education/therapeutic class; 3. A series of questions to identify learning difficulties.

Immigrants: 16% were immigrants.

Disability: 32% had disabilities: 16% were in Group A and 16% in Group B.

3. Resources and Barriers to Occupational Mobility

The survey examined various aspects that could constitute resources or barriers to integration into the labor market and occupational mobility. We looked at characteristics in the area of human capital (education, profession, and computer and language skills), family constraints, the respondents' perceived health status, and previous problems of adjustment to frameworks and employability skills.

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. This definition includes natural attributes (age, gender and health status) and acquired abilities (schooling and further education) that can be translated into well-being."³ In this section, we present the learned abilities that could serve young adults as a resource for promotion on the hierarchy scale at their current place of work or enable them to move to better jobs.

Education

- ◆ 24% had less than 12 years of education.
- ◆ 41% had 12 years of education but had only partial or no matriculation certificate
- ◆ 35% had full matriculation certificate.

Profession

Having a profession is an important resource for employment and further promotion in the workplace.

- ◆ 32% had acquired a profession in some formal manner (in the army, high school or a vocational course).⁴ Only 2% were taking a vocational course at the time of interview.
- ◆ A larger group (64%) reported that they had some form of profession, but it is difficult to know how to interpret their reports.

Preparation for Working Life

Employment preparation workshops are one of the resources for imparting skills and tools for integration into work. They are provided through targeted programs by various government ministries and centers for young adults throughout the countries. Only 6% of the respondents had

³ 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).

⁴ Either they had earned a vocational certificate from high school or a certificate of completion of a vocational course or they had learned a profession during their military service that could serve them in civilian life (excluding driving, logistics and clerical work).

ever participated in a preparatory workshop in any framework (such as school, special education school or the army).

Knowledge of Languages

All the working young adults were asked about their command of English. They were asked to note their ability to understand a simple conversation; speak; understand instructions for use of equipment; or write a simple letter. A summary measure was built to assess their ability (good/very good) to perform at least three of these four tasks. According to the measure, 44% had a good/very good command of English, but there was a considerable difference between the sectors. The percentage of Jewish respondents who reported a good/very good command of English was three times higher than that of the Arabs (62% vs. 19%, respectively).

The Arab respondents were also asked about their command of Hebrew. The measure included, in addition to the four tasks included in the command of English, the statement: "I am capable of presenting myself in Hebrew in a job interview." Eighty-one percent of the Arab respondents reported good ability in all five areas.

Computer Skills

A computer is a basic tool for many jobs and consequently the lack of computer skills is a barrier to integration and promotion in many areas of work and places of work. We examined the respondents' ability to use e-mail and standard Office programs (Word and Excel). According to a summary measure examining the percentage of working young adults with good or very good ability in at least two of the above programs, 63% were computer literate.

Differences by Sector and Gender in Regard to Human Capital

- ◆ The young Arab adults had lower human capital than the Jews in all measures examined.
- ◆ The women had a higher human capital than the men in the measures for education, computer skills and command of English.

3.2 Employability Skills

Employability skills include a range of abilities that help an individual to integrate into employment or succeed on the job – i.e., relevant skills for working. A lack of these skills or difficulty with them is a barrier to employment and promotion in the workplace. The respondents were asked about their difficulties in thirteen items relating to employability skills.⁵ Sixty-two percent of the

⁵ 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 reviews 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.

respondents reported no difficulty. Twenty-seven percent reported one or more difficulty. Eleven percent reported difficulty with three or more of the items.

3.3 Previous Adjustment Problems

Problems adjusting to previous frameworks, such as school or the IDF, could be predictors of adjustment difficulties in general, including at places of work. Moreover, it is possible that the difficulties the working young adults experienced at school affected their wish to continue to further their education.

- ◆ 39% of the respondents reported difficulties with their studies, difficulty concentrating, or a lack of interest during their school days.
- ◆ 28% reported that they had been suspended from school at least once.

Seventy-seven percent of the Jewish young adults had done military service. Fourteen percent of them reported that they had found it difficult to obey the rules of a military framework, or that they had not gotten along with their commanders, or that they had found it hard to adjust to the place where they served.

4. Patterns of Work among the Wage Earners

Eighty-two percent of the young working adults were wage earners, 12% were self-employed or subcontractors and 5% worked in family businesses. This section starts with the employment history of the young wage earners and then examines the characteristics of their current jobs. It also examines how they assess their jobs, and, to this end, it examines their sense of job security and satisfaction.

4.1 Employment History of the Wage Earners

We examined the patterns of work among the young adults over the two years prior to the interviews. Despite the young age of the respondents, we wished to examine continuity of employment and job retention and to obtain an indication as to whether they were in stable or temporary employment.

During the two years prior to the interviews, 90% of the respondents were employed all or most of the time. This finding indicates stable integration and job retention. The respondents were asked, inter alia, how many places they had worked in for at least one month during those two years. Forty-four percent had worked only in their current position, while the remaining 56% had had at least one other job.

4.2 Characteristics of the Current Job of the Wage Earners

This section will discuss the characteristics of the current jobs of the wage-earning young adults: occupation, full/part-time employment, source of wages, social and fringe benefits, sense of employment security in their current position and job satisfaction.

Occupation

- ◆ 33% worked as skilled labor in industry.
- ◆ 37% worked in sales and services.
- ◆ 9% worked as unskilled labor.
- ◆ 10% were doing clerical work.
- ◆ 11% were working in liberal, technical or administrative jobs.

Full/Part-Time Positions

- ◆ 90% of the wage earners were in full-time positions, evidently because most of them were men. The key reasons for working part time were the inability of the young adults to find full-time jobs and the inability of the employers to offer them more hours (this reason was given by 40% of the respondents working part time).
- ◆ The average number of weekly hours was 46. Nevertheless, 61% of the respondents reported that they worked more than 45 hours a week.
 - 42% worked 45-54 hours a week.
 - 19% worked more than 55 hours a week.

Source of Wages

Eighty-six percent were paid directly by their place of work/employer (i.e., were considered to be employed at the place they were working); 8% were paid by a contractor/manpower company – a relatively high percentage in comparison to 5% of all young adults aged 23-26 in Israel who are employed by a contractor/manpower company.

Social Benefits

Low percentages reported that they received the social benefits *required by law*:

- ◆ 79% reported paid sick leave.
- ◆ 62% reported annual vacation pay.
- ◆ 62% reported pension plans.

These findings may indicate that employers take advantage of the young adults' ignorance of the law,⁶ but it may also be that the reports were based on the respondents' lack of understanding of the components of their wages, or that they had accepted jobs that were not official recorded without being aware of the importance of being awarded social benefits.

- ◆ Among the young adults with disabilities and those without matriculation certificates, an even lower percentage reported they were receiving social benefits.

⁶ In this context, note that the study was conducted in 2009-2010, before the Increased Enforcement of the Labor Laws Law came into effect in mid-2012. If the survey were repeated at the present time, it might produce different reports as to the social benefits.

Improved Conditions at Work

Wage earners who had been working for more than 6 months were asked about improved conditions that could indicate promotion at work:

- ◆ 51% reported a wage increase.
- ◆ 34% reported they had been promoted to a better job.
- ◆ 30% reported an increase in the number of weekly hours.

Sixty-two percent of the wage earners reported at least one of the above.

Courses and In-service Training

Twenty-five percent of the young wage earners reported their current employer had provided a course or in-service training as part of the training for their job. Higher percentages were reported among the young adults who had a full matriculation certificate than those who did not have one (34% vs. 20%, respectively).

Sense of Job Security

The wage earners were asked if they were afraid of losing their jobs in the coming year.

- ◆ 10% reported that they had a great or very great fear of losing their jobs.

The young wage earners were also asked to estimate their chances of finding a new position if they lost their present job.

- ◆ 72% felt there was a good or very good chance of finding a new job.
- ◆ Among the respondents who were afraid of losing their job, only 58% felt that way.

Job Satisfaction

- ◆ Seventy-six percent reported that in general they were satisfied to a great or very great extent with their job. The remainder were somewhat satisfied (20%) or not at all satisfied (4%).
- ◆ When we examined specific aspects of job satisfaction, we found that between 80% and 90% reported satisfaction with interest in their work, with their ability to use their skills and knowledge, and with the attitude of their superiors and colleagues. Sixty-eight percent reported satisfaction with their wages and their chances of promotion.
- ◆ Thirty-one percent reported that they were interested in changing their job and 15% had looked for another job in the 4 weeks prior to the interview.

4.3 Differences among Wage Earners according to Sector

Occupation

The Jewish respondents were employed more in sales and services, the Arabs in skilled labor in industry.

Satisfaction

- ◆ The Arab respondents expressed less general satisfaction with their jobs than the Jewish respondents.
- ◆ However, a higher percentage of Arabs than Jews reported satisfaction with the chance of promotion at work (80% vs. 59%, respectively) and their ability to use their knowledge and skills (94% vs. 84%, respectively).

Other Characteristics of the Quality of the Jobs

- ◆ In most of the measures, the Arab respondents reported lower quality of work than the Jews:
 - Social benefits, such as pension plans (51% vs. 70%, respectively)
 - Participation in professional courses at work (12% vs. 34%, respectively)
 - Greater fear of losing their jobs (39% vs. 27%, respectively) and a fear that they had less chance of finding another job if they lost the present one.

5. Financial Status of the Wage Earners

We examined indicators of the financial status of the wage earners: Gross hourly wage in relation to the minimum wage and the subjective sense of their ability to cover their basic household expenses.

Gross Hourly Wage

- ◆ The average gross hourly wage was 1.3 times the minimum wage (NIS 26.84 per hour vs. NIS 20.70 at the time of interview). Importantly, 25% of the wage earners were earning less than the minimum gross hourly wage.

Ability to Cover Basic Expenses

- ◆ 22% reported that they could hardly manage, or could not manage at all, to cover their basic household expenses.
- ◆ Women reported lower hourly pay than men and more of the women reported difficulty covering their basic expenses. The gap between the sexes was even greater in the Arab population.

6. Interest in Studying and the Need for Assistance Integrating into Studies

We examined the respondents' interest in continuing their studies and training. The findings show that there is great interest in further study.

- ◆ Forty-seven percent of all the working young adults reported interest in studying or taking a vocational training course in the coming year.
- ◆ Sixty-eight percent of all the working young adults had *no vocational qualification or certification*. Forty-two percent of them were interested in studying – of these:
 - 56% were interested in a vocational course.

- 25% were interested in going to college or university.
- 15% were interested in completing their matriculation.
- ◆ 54% of those with no vocational qualification/certification who were interested in studying gave a positive answer when asked if they needed assistance integrating into studies:
 - 41% need instrumental assistance, such as financial support.
 - 19% need to study at convenient times – need to take their working hours into account.
 - 24% needed counseling and guidance about studies.

7. Characteristics of a Group Needing Special Attention

In the data analysis, we identified a subgroup of working young adults in need of special attention due to the sense of instability in their jobs and/or lack of job satisfaction. This group included young adults who worked part time through lack of choice, because they could not find full-time work or a second job (to make up the hours), or because their employer was unable to increase their hours; and young adults for whom at least 2 of the following apply (regardless of the number of weekly hours):

- ◆ "Not at all satisfied" or "only slightly satisfied" with their work (24%)
- ◆ Want to change jobs (31%)
- ◆ Great or very great fear that they will lose their jobs in the coming year (10%).

According to the measure that we built, the group in need of special attention comprises 23% of the *wage earners*.

The bivariate analysis revealed that the *working young adults in this group* included a *higher* percentage of mothers (relative to women without children), Arabs (relative to Jews – but not a statistically significant difference), young adults with any disability, especially a mental disability, (relative to those without disabilities), those with no matriculation certificate (relative to those with a full certificate), individuals without a profession or vocational certificate (relative to those with one – but not a statistically significant difference) and those with three or more difficulties regarding employability skills (relative to those with one or two difficulties or none at all).

8. Summary and Programmatic Directions

The literature reveals that a real examination of the employment status of working young adults with low education is not a matter of short-term "here and now," but rather depends on their ability to continue to leverage themselves in the long-term, with regard to their ability to earn more in the future and their ability to consolidate their position in a stable job with social benefits.

The findings reveal several programmatic directions to be considered when developing policy:

Encouraging study and making it accessible in a way that will help the young adults to advance to a better job: Only 35% of the working young adults have a full matriculation certificate. The rest of them have 12 years schooling or less (with or without a partial matriculation certificate). Only 32% have acquired a profession in any formal setting. In light of the low education of these adults, it is worth considering:

- ◆ Encouraging them through incentives to acquire a profession – the respondents reported the need for financial assistance, guidance and counseling and for studies to be available at convenient times of day so that they can combine work and study.
- ◆ Encouraging them to complete their education – this is most worthwhile for those with partial matriculation certificates as they have already demonstrated some ability to contend with matriculation exams
- ◆ Developing courses suitable for young adults with learning disabilities – 16% of the respondents in this study have been diagnosed with learning disabilities. Furthermore, considerable percentages of those with low education (less than matriculation) had experienced difficulty studying and adjusting to the school framework. This demonstrates the need not only to encourage them to complete their education and acquire a profession, but also to offer them courses that are adjusted to meet their difficulties.
- ◆ Note that 47% of all the working young adults and 42% among those with no vocational qualification or certification reported interest in studying.

Acquiring or improving the necessary skills to perform the work as well as possible: This applies to knowledge of computers and English and increasing the employability and work skills required (teamwork, coping with the routine of the working day, effective performance).

Increasing awareness of the working young adults of their rights and the social benefits to which they are entitled by law: The reports by the wage earners indicate that a smaller percentage than expected, receive the social benefits to which they are entitled by law and about a fourth of them are paid less than the minimum wage. These findings bring up the importance of providing these young adults with information about their rights as workers and the social benefits that they should receive according to law.

Giving special attention to groups with salient barriers to job promotion, a sense of instability at work and/or dissatisfaction with work, particularly Arabs and young adults in Group A.

Importantly, there are currently several initiatives to upgrade employment for special populations, but these are not exclusively for young people. For example, the vocational training division of the Employment Service provides vouchers to pay for vocational courses for clients of the service. Unskilled laborers are also entitled to these courses. The courses are provided in the evening to enable people with daytime jobs to participate. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Services provides funding for vocational courses in the Taasukale-Revaha (Employment to Empowerment) program as part of the service package.

The following table shows the main subgroups and areas where there were clear barriers to employment advancement or a sense of instability in work and/or lack of job satisfaction.

Clear Barriers to Employment Advancement, Sense of Instability and/or Lack of Job Satisfaction among Young Working Adults, by Population Group

	Men	Arabs	Low Education	Women	Disabilities (Group A)	Disabilities (Group B)	Mothers
Low education	√	√					
No vocational certification	√	√					
No in-service training (among wage earners)		√	√				
Not computer literate	√	√	√		√		
No knowledge of languages	√	√	√				
Less contact with services		√		√			
Difficulties related to employability skills (3 or more)					√	√	
Lack of job security (fear of losing their job)		√	√		√		
Interested in changing their job					√		
Fear of finding a new job (if they lose their current job)		√			√		
Lack of job satisfaction		√		√ (married)	√		√
Lack of job continuity				√			
Lack of social benefits as required by law		√	√		√	√	
Earning less than minimum wage				√			
Difficulty covering basic expenses		√		√			

The main findings have been presented in various forums and should contribute to the process of setting policy and developing programs to improve the status of young adults in the labor market.

This study was funded mainly with the assistance of the Mandell L. and Madeleine Berman Foundation as well assistance from the Gandyr Foundation.

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We thank the members of the steering committee for working with us and contributing their professional experience and knowledge. The committee include representatives from the Ministry of Education – the Special Education Department; from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Services: the Division for Adolescents, Young Adults and Correctional Services; the Welfare and Rehabilitation Services Department; Personal and Community Services Division; the Division for Persons with Developmental Disabilities; and the Division for Research, Planning and Training; from the Ministry of Health – the Mental Health Department; from the Division for Service Development at the National Insurance Institute: the Fund for the Development of Services and Children and Youth at Risk; the Fund for Demonstration Projects; the Fund for Development of Services for People with Disabilities; the Employment Service; the Gandy Foundation, JDC-Ashalim and JDC-TEVET, as well as the Behavioral Science Division in the Personnel Division of the IDF.

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