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## THE NEET YOUTH PROGRAM IN THE SUBCARPATHIAN VOIVODESHIP IN THE LIGHT OF NEW RESEARCH

This article focuses on unemployed persons who qualify as part of the so-called NEET category (Not in Employment, Education, or Training). These are individuals who are simultaneously not employed, are not receiving education in an education system, and not partaking in additional training courses. NEET status may refer to a person of any age who fulfills the above-noted conditions, but frequently, in research as well as labor market analyses, it is associated with young people. The aim of this article is to present the results of pilot studies conducted on young people who have been classified as being in the NEET category. The article is an introduction to comparative studies that will be conducted in Finland and Poland. As part of the pilot conducted in Poland, the attitudes of the unemployed towards the labor market and education were examined. The material collected allowed for statistical analysis using descriptive statistics. Dependency analyses were also performed. Apart from the technical aspects (the pilot program confirmed the usefulness of the tool and the procedures applied), the study provided an array of information on NEET. The article also uses existing sources, including, above all, statistics kept by Statistics Poland, as well as documents from labor market entities.

**Keywords:** Unemployed youth, employment services, labor market, NEET.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The NEET acronym (*Not in Employment, Education, or Training*) pertains to individuals, who are simultaneously not employed, are not receiving education in an education system, as well as not partaking in additional training courses. NEET status may refer to a person of any age who fulfills the above-noted conditions; however, frequently in research as well as labor market analyses, it is associated with young people<sup>3</sup>. In addition, such a combination and research, as well as studies concerning individuals with NEET status, generally referring to young people, has caught on in Poland; while at the same time both at the level of analyses of European Union Member States and in Poland, depending

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<sup>3</sup> See: (Liszka, Walawender, 2018; Szcześniak, Rondón, 2011).

on the author or institution, various age groups as well as time intervals for remaining outside the labor market and education, have been adopted.

In 2010, before the European Commission, the Employment Committee (EMCO), as well as the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) agreed upon the definition and methodology of a standardized indicator for measuring the size of the NEET population among the member states. This indicator defined a NEET individual as young, aged 15–24, who was also not participating in an education or training process. The NEET rate has been established as the share of those individuals who are not engaged in employment, education or training in the total population of young people in a given territorial area collectively (Mirończuk, 2014).

Rudimentary research on the NEET phenomenon in EU countries has been carried out by the Eurostat Labor Force Survey (EU LFS). Since 1992, data from Poland, under the name “Economic Activity of the Population” (BAEL), has been obtained from research conducted by Statistics Poland (GUS) (Center for Statistical Research and Education, 2015).

For both LFS data (for Poland) and Eurostat (for the EU), different age ranges have been adopted in relation to NEET young people. The category of “young people” is also ambiguous. It is often used interchangeably with the concepts of “youth”, “younger generation”, and recently, more and more often analyses include “young adults” (Grotowska-Leder, 2018). When it comes to Poland, before 2014, numerous divisions were used in individual indicators of Statistics Poland or in government studies (Cf. Fic, 2015; Saczyńska-Sokół, Łojko, 2016; Nagel, 2013; Pańkow, 2012).

Although the 15–29 age range has been adopted by the European Commission in documents of the European Social Fund (ESF) program, in Poland, where the obtained data make it possible, in accepting the above range, generally the analyses of NEET young people focuses primarily on individuals from 18 to 29 years of age.

Apart from a specified age, researchers and authors of labor market policies also regularly adopt a specific period of time in which a given person has not worked, been educated or trained to qualify as NEET. This is justified as otherwise the respondent would obtain NEET status on the day of the survey, which could even be the first day after completion of work, education or training.

In Poland, a four-week period is usually adopted according to Eurostat and the ILO, yet there are some exceptions to this rule. For instance, in the study entitled “Support for young people in the Masovian labor market”, a minimum period of 6 months within the last 12 months was adopted (Marczak, Turek, Wojtczuk-Turek, 2015). Adopting such a rigorous period of unemployment or education activity carries the risk of qualifying only individuals who are most distant from the labor market and education, or even socially excluded, to the NEET group.

Eurostat, within the framework of databases with statistical information, divides individuals from the NEET group into the following subgroups according to their job search activity:

- Unemployed individuals who are actively seeking employment – unemployed,
- Unemployed individuals, who are not actively seeking employment – inactive.

In Poland, with the exception of the aforementioned BAEL Statistics Poland research, which does not strictly concern itself with NEET young people, or even people aged 15 and over, there is no institution conducting regular or in-depth research of NEET young people at the national or regional level.

As for the value of the NEET indicator, according to the estimates of Statistics Poland as well as Eurostat, for the 25–29 age group for Poland, it does not differ much from the value for the European Union (in 2019 it was 17.7% for Poland and 16.6% for the EU-28 – Chart 1). Conversely, the value of the NEET index for the 18–24 age group for Poland is slightly lower than for the European Union (it was 11.1% for Poland and 13.2% for the EU-28 – Chart 1). In turn, there is a difference between the value of the indicator in the 15–17 age group for Poland and for the European Union (available data indicate that in 2016 it was 0.5% for Poland and 2.8% for the EU-28). Some researchers indicate that the migration background, which is not a common phenomenon in Poland, has a relatively strong impact (Pańkow, 2012; Szkutnik, Wąsowicz, 2016). Literature broaching the problems of the labor market in Nordic countries (Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark) has indicated that the majority of young people terminating their education and training are men from immigrant backgrounds (Oloffson and Wadensjö, 2012 after Szkutnik, Wąsowicz, 2016). It has also been stated, that the lower the percentage of immigrants undertaking education and training in a given country, the lower the percentage of young people prematurely leaving the education and training system (Szkutnik, Wąsowicz, 2017).

Furthermore, compulsory education is in force in Poland for people up to 18 years of age, and this is respected to a large extent; meaning that relatively rarely is gainful employment undertaken before crossing this threshold and significant source of income (Pańkow, 2012). Polish jurisprudence also does not allow the registration of unemployed individuals under the age of 18 in public employment offices, and the lawful employment of such persons itself is permitted only as a form of apprenticeship, i.e. as part of the vocational education process. Considering the above, it is often accepted that expanding the 15–17 category for NEET young persons seems to be of little analytical use (Pańkow, 2012).

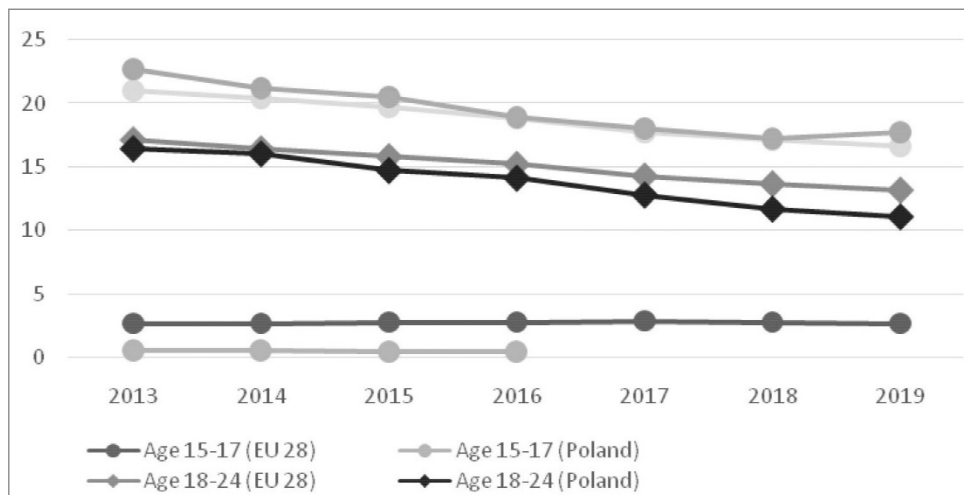


Chart 1. Young people not in employment or in education and training ranked by age (NEET rates: EU-28 and Poland)

Source: Personal study based on Eurostat data (edat\_ifse\_20).

## **2. RESULTS OF THE NEET PILOT STUDY IN THE SUBCARPATHIAN VOIVODESHIP**

### **2.1. Methodological assumptions of the research and characteristics of the research sample**

In 2019, labor market experts from Poland and Finland created a research team to carry out comparative research. The subject of the study was the category of NEET young people in both Poland and Finland. On account of the epidemiological situation (COVID-19), the implementation of the project was postponed and put aside. However, despite the difficulties, the Polish team managed to conduct a pilot study aimed at verifying the correctness of the questionnaire and analytical procedures. In addition to purely technical indicators, the pilot project yielded an array of information that enriches the somewhat modest knowledge about the NEET category in Poland.

The primary goal of the pilot project was to obtain extensive knowledge about the sources of professional inactivity of NEET youth and to identify barriers and difficulties in starting their profession. It was imperative to identify the aspirations and thoughts of young people in relation to their own situation in the labor market for the future, and their expectations related to employment. One of the objectives of the study was also to learn about activity in the non-professional sphere of life. The main issues included the following questions:

- Which of the socio-demographic characteristics (a person's sex, level of education, professional activity of parents/guardians) of the NEET respondents distinguish the respondents' attitudes towards employment?
- What are the needs and expectations of people from the NEET group in terms of professional and education activation (in the form of in-school and out-of-school learning)?
- What are the beliefs and attitudes of people from the NEET group on education, employment and a career?
- What are, in the opinion of the respondents, the main obstacles to achieving a specific goal in one's professional and personal life?

In order to achieve the assumed research goal and discover answers to the above-mentioned research problems, both primary and secondary sources of information were used. At the outset, an analysis was carried out of sources found, such as existing research reports, publications, and official statistics. In order to obtain information from primary sources, empirical research was carried out. Their subject was individuals belonging to the NEET population. The research covered a selected group of young people Subcarpathian Voivodeship in the NEET category. Due to the fact that the research was a pilot study, it was decided to limit the size of the studied sample to a minimum, i.e. one that would enable statistical analysis (but without the possibility of extrapolating the results to the entire population). Therefore, the sample size was assumed to be  $n = 60$ . The audit survey technique was used. Most of the questionnaire included close ended questions. It also included selected scales of attitudes.

Sixty individuals participated in the study, of which women constituted the vast majority (73%). The average age of the respondents was slightly over 24 (24.3). The youngest person in the study group was 18 years old, while the oldest 29 years old. Half of the respondents were 25 years of age or younger, while half were older. Individuals exactly 25 years of age appear most often in the study group – there were 14 of them. Most of the respondents'

marital status identified as single. They constituted  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the surveyed group (78%). Half of the respondents had a high school education, while every fourth respondent had graduated from higher education. People with a basic middle school education accounted for 14% of the surveyed group, while 10% had vocational education.

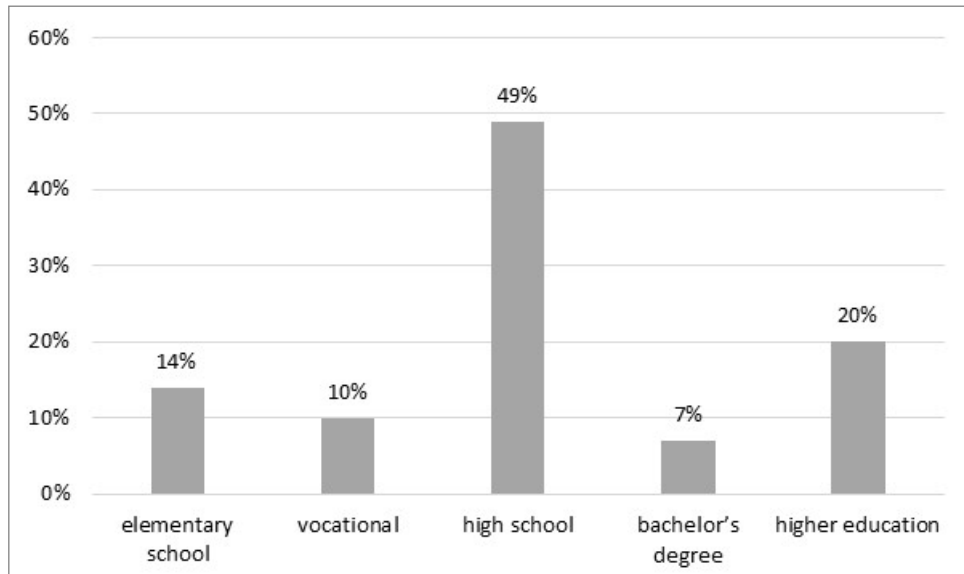


Chart 2. Education level of the surveyed respondents

Source: Personal study.

At the time of the survey, slightly less than half of the respondents (45%) resided in rural areas. Every fifth respondent lived in a large city with over 100,000 residents. The remaining respondents were residents of small and medium-sized towns. One of the surveyed individuals had a moderate degree of disability, while two individuals had a slight degree of disability.

Among the respondents, only one in five (17%) had never been employed. Nearly one-third of the respondents (30%) were individuals having professional experience longer than three years. Every fifth respondent (20%) had professional experience shorter than six months, while a similar percentage (22%) were individuals with six to twelve months of professional experience. The least numerous category were individuals with one to three years of professional experience (12%).

Most of the respondents had been out of work for less than a year (67%). Long-term unemployed individuals, i.e. those who had been without work for more than a year, constituted one third of the surveyed group (33%).

For most of the respondents, their primary source of income was the gainful employment of other members of their immediate family (62%); less frequently, were unemployment benefits or other forms of financial benefits provided by the government (12%) as well as odd jobs done "under the table" (10%).

## 2.2. Attitudes of the surveyed respondents toward employment and education

The vast majority of the respondents declared their willingness to seek employment (86%). Only 14% of the respondents are seeking employment. Those who are seeking employment, do it with a strong commitment. When asked to assess their level of commitment on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to a very low level of commitment, and 5 – a very high level of commitment, the respondents most often assessed their commitment to seeking employment very highly (5 points). Such an assessment was acknowledged by 39% of the respondents. The average assessment for commitment in seeking employment is 3.9. Only 7% assessed their commitment at 1 point. The coefficient of variation at a level of 30.6% indicates that the respondents' assessment of seeking employment is quite varied.

The respondents most often sought employment by checking job offers on the internet (75%) and thanks to information received from family and friends (47%). Relatively rarely, the respondents sought government assistance (17%). The lack of appropriate professional qualifications (13 respondents) and the lack of job offers in the immediate vicinity (7 respondents) were the reasons most often indicated for not seeking employment.

The following factors which most disrupted seeking employment were most often mentioned by the respondents: lack of training or professional experience (47%), lack of appropriate qualifications for which there is a market demand (37%), financially unattractive employment offers (very low earnings) (28 %), as well as the lack of job offers in their learned profession (23%).<sup>4</sup>

The attitude of the respondents toward education is interesting. In order to study this issue, respondents were asked to rate a number of statements relating to education on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to "I completely disagree" and 5, "I completely agree".

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of opinions on education

	Average	Me	Mo	N <sub>Mo</sub>	Odch.std	V <sub>z</sub>
I have completed my education and see no need for further education	2.75	3	3	21	1.14	41.61
I see a need for further formal education and training	3.87	4	5	22	1.19	30.66
I am motivated to learn	3.65	4	4	19	1.19	32.62
I am a person who feels confident when learning	3.54	4	4	25	1.21	34.10
I see adult learning as an important opportunity	4.05	4	5	28	1.10	27.06
I encourage others to learn	3.27	3	3	19	1.30	39.80

Source: Personal study.

The above-mentioned respondents assessed their perception of adult learning as an important possibility (the average score was 4.1); their perception of the need for further formal studies and training was slightly lower (average score 3.9). The assertion that the respondent had completed their education at a satisfactory level and there was no need for

<sup>4</sup> The respondents were allowed to provide more than one answer.

further education (2.8) received the lowest score. This affirmation did not gain acceptance from all of the respondents, and is also characterized by the greatest variation in assessment ( $V_z = 41.61\%$ ).

Almost three quarters of the respondents (71%) declared their willingness to begin the process of education or training in the near future. Almost every third respondent (29%) did not declare such a willingness.

Individuals who wanted to take up education or training most often intended to engage in training and courses to improve their professional qualifications (53%), undertake supplementary master's degree courses (higher education institution, university) (13%), or intended to enroll in an evening/extramural classes for adults (high school) (10%).

In turn, people who did not want to undertake education activity were mainly motivated by a lack of finances (18%), satisfaction with their education level (17%) and a lack of motivation (10%).

In order to complete education and/or develop competences, the respondents would above all need finances to be able to invest in their education (63%), to gain experience through apprenticeships internships organized by employers (28%), and career counseling (23%). For 18% of the respondents, a wider offer of specialist training would also be key.

The respondents were also asked to describe on a scale from 1 to 5, their own state of mind concerning the situation of being unemployed, where 1 corresponds to a very bad state of mind and 5 – a very good state of mind.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the assessment of state of mind while unemployed

	Average	Me	Mo	N <sub>Mo</sub>	Odch.std	V <sub>z</sub>
Defining of state of mind in a situation of being unemployed	2.3	2	3	22	1.0	43.0

Source: Personal study.

The average assessment of state of mind in a situation of being unemployed is 2.3 points. Most often, state of mind was rated at 3 points – this was indicated by 22 individuals (37%). Half of the respondents rate their state of mind at 2 points or less, while half rate it higher. The coefficient of variation indicates quite a large differentiation in the assessment of the state of mind in the studied group of respondents (43%).

The type of hobby most frequently cited by respondents was sports (43%). Fashion, cosmetics, appearance and hairdressing are the favorite hobbies of every third respondent (32%). The hobbies next in line are: reading books (22%), fine arts (painting, singing, dancing, music, and handicrafts) (22%), as well as cooking, healthy eating, global cuisine (22%).

The respondents primarily spend their free time on: meeting with friends (e.g. parties, discos, etc.) (50%), being active on social networks (48%), playing sports (48%) and listening to music (48%).

When evaluating relationships with one's colleagues and friends on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 corresponds to very bad relationships and 5 to very good relationships, it should be noted that these relationships are at least good.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the assessment of relationships with one's colleagues and friends

	Average	Me	Mo	N <sub>Mo</sub>	Standard deviation	V <sub>z</sub>
Assessment of relationships with one's colleagues and friends	4.2	4	5	26	0.9	21.1

Source: Personal study.

The average assessment for relationships with one's colleagues and friends is 4.2 points. Relationships were most often rated at 5 points – this was indicated by 26 people (44%). Half of those surveyed about their relationships with colleagues and friends rate them 4 points or less, while less than half rate them higher. The coefficient of variation indicates that the assessment of one's relationships with colleagues and friends in the studied group of respondents is not very differentiated (21.1%).

If a potential employer asked the respondent about their competences, the respondents would most often mention: honesty, loyalty (72%), diligence, reliability, stubbornness (53%), a fast learner, an ability to adapt to new working conditions (52%) and resistance to stress (43%).

The respondents, when it came to their weaknesses in the role of an employee, indicated: lack of professional experience or apprenticeship (45%), unfamiliarity with foreign languages (30%), as well as a lack of "connections" and contacts (25%).

The respondents were also asked to refer to and rate on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means "definitely no," and 5 means "definitely yes," to a number of statements relating to the so-called level of social trust.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the assessment of the level of social trust

	Average	Me	Mo	N <sub>Mo</sub>	Odch.std	V <sub>z</sub>
I am able to influence my life	3.83	4	4	34	0.78	20.47
It is easy for me to get support	3.53	4	3.4	23	0.89	25.24
I trust other people	3.40	3	3.4	22	0.89	26.08
Most people are trustworthy	2.88	3	3	25	0.94	32.62
Most people are honest	2.85	3	3	27	0.86	30.18
I trust officials (from institutions supporting young people, County Employment Office, etc.)	2.85	3	3	24	1.02	35.87
I trust my parents/guardians	4.27	5	5	32	1.04	24.36
I trust my friends/colleagues	3.98	4	5	22	1.02	25.52

Source: Personal study

The respondents had the highest trust in their parents and guardians (average 4.27). Trust in friends and colleagues was rated slightly lower (3.98). However, the lowest scores were given to trust in officials (2.85) and the statement that "most people are honest" also (2.85).



### 2.3. Dependency Analyses

The results of the research were also used for dependency analyses. This analysis included a numerical and percentage breakdown as well as the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal Wallis ANOVA test, Pearson chi-squared test of independence, and Spearman's rank correlation coefficient analysis, allowing assessment of whether the relationship or differences between the selected features are statistically significant. The significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$  was adopted for the research. It is assumed that: when  $p < 0.05$  there is a statistically significant relationship (marked with \*);  $p < 0.01$ , there is a highly significant relationship (\*\*);  $p < 0.001$ , there is a very high statistically significant relationship (\*\*\*)).

Whether variables considered as independent, e.g. a person's sex, age, marital status, education level, place of residence, as well as whether the respondent was dependent on one's family or was being raised by a single parent had any impact on their professional activity in the labor market, were verified. As the studied features were quantitative and qualitative, the Mann-Whitney U Test was used for the study (in the case when the qualitative trait had two categories: a person's sex, being raised by a single parent, being dependent on one's parents) and the Kruskal-Wallis ANOWVA test in the case when the qualitative characteristic had more than two categories (marital status, education level, place of residence).

The conducted analyses show that being raised by a single parent, as well as whether the respondent is dependent on their parents, are not related to professional activity in the labor market. The results of the remaining research are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test as well as the Kruskala-Wallis ANOWVA test

	Sex	Marital status	Education level	Place of residence
	p			
Level of commitment to seeking employment	0.0053**	0.0054**	0.0270*	
I am motivated to learn	0.0054**	0.0218*	0.0448*	
I encourage others to learn			0.0188*	
I am able to influence my life				0.0492*
I trust my friends/colleagues			0.0329*	
I am optimistic about the future	0.0006***	0.0195*		
I feel wanted	0.0304*			

Source: Personal study.

The conducted research indicates that a person's sex has an impact on the level of commitment in seeking employment  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0053$ ), their motivation to learn  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0054$ ), their feeling of optimism about the future  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0006$ ) and the feeling of being wanted  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0304$ ). In all of the examined aspects, women rated individual areas higher: they have a stronger level of commitment in seeking employment (4.22), are more motivated to learn (3.91), are more optimistic about the future (3.84) and feel more wanted (3.82).

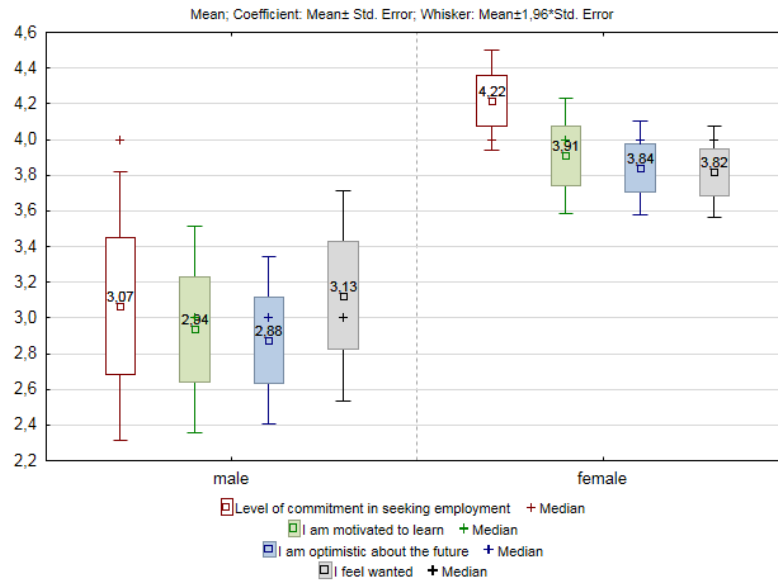


Chart 3. A person's Sex and the average assessment of the level of commitment in seeking employment, motivation to study, a feeling of optimism and the feeling of being wanted

Source: Personal study.

Another variable differentiating the results is the marital status of the respondents. The conducted research shows that marital status was related to the level of commitment in seeking employment  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0054$ ), motivation to learn  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0208$ ) and a feeling of optimism  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0195$ ). The highest level of commitment in seeking employment is married women (4.58), and the lowest is unmarried men (3.08). The most motivated to learn are unmarried women (3.94), yet married women show only slightly less commitment (3.92). Unmarried men are the least motivated to learn (3.0). Similarly, married women are the most optimistic about the future (4.0), while unmarried men are the least optimistic (3.08).

Another variable that differentiates the results is education level. Education level was related to the level of commitment in seeking employment  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0270$ ), motivation to learn  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0448$ ), encouraging others to learn  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0188$ ) and having trust in one's friends and colleagues  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0329$ ). The strongest level of commitment in seeking employment was found in individuals with a high school education (4.28), while the least had an elementary or middle school education (2.17). Respondents with higher education (4.08) are the most motivated to study, while the least motivated respondents had an elementary or middle school education (2.38). In this case, one can advance the assertion that the higher the education, the greater the motivation to study. Most often, individuals with higher education (4.08) encourage others to learn, while individuals with an elementary or middle school education (2.00) encourage learning the least. People with a bachelor's degree (4.5) have the greatest trust in their colleagues and friends, while those with a vocational education trust them the least (3.0).

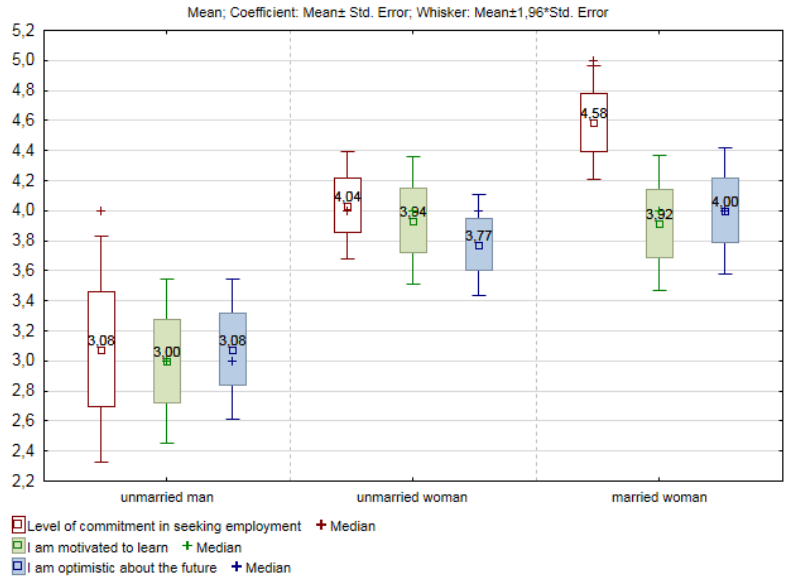


Chart 4. Marital status and average assessment: level of commitment in seeking employment, motivated to study, as well as being optimistic

Source: Personal study.

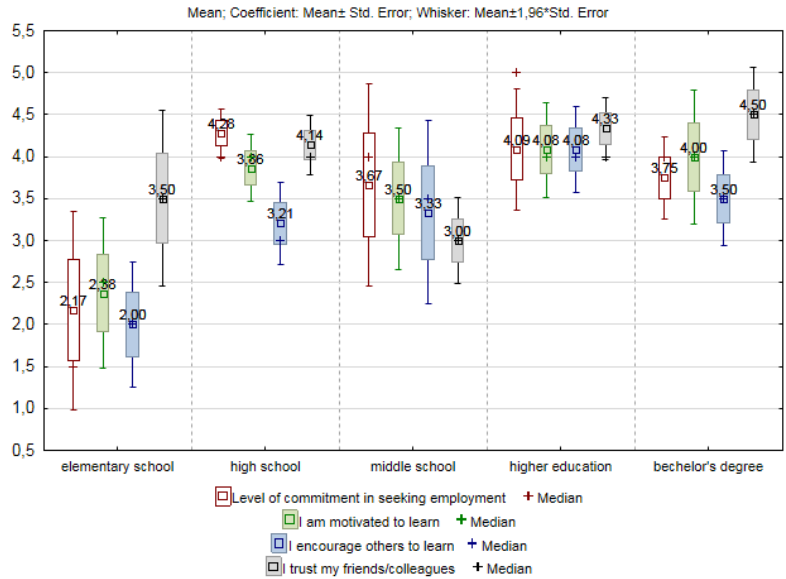


Chart 5. Education level and average assessment of the level of commitment in seeking employment, motivation to learn, encouraging others to study, and trust in colleagues and friends

Source: Personal study.

The place of residence was related to how the respondents assessed the possibility of influencing their lives,  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0492$ ). The larger the place one lives, the greater the feeling of being able to influence one's life. This impact is assessed the highest by individuals living in large cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants (4.45).

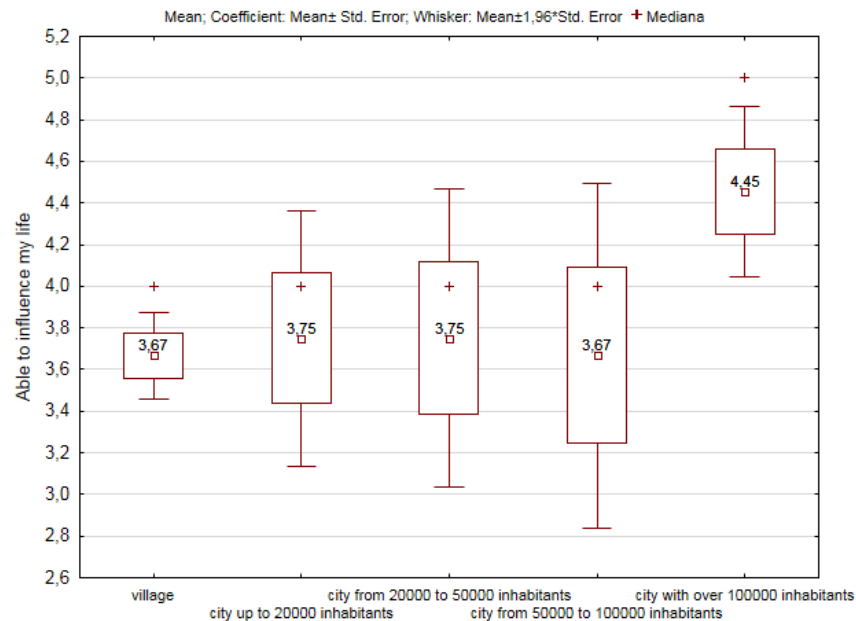


Chart 6. Place of residence and assessment of the possibility of influencing one's life

Source: Personal study.

Whether a person's sex, marital status, education, place of residence, being raised by a single parent, and being dependent on one's family had an impact on selected features related to the state of being unemployed was verified. As the analyzed features were of a qualitative nature, the Pearson chi-squared independence test was used in the research.

The conducted research demonstrates that being raised by a single parent had no effect on the selected features. The results of the remaining tests are presented in Table 6.

The analyses demonstrated that an individual's sex was related to professional experience  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0028$ ), time unemployed  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0169$ ), seeking employment  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0174$ ), and planning to gain employment or education in the near future  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0054$ ).

Women have much more professional experience; every third woman (36%) has been employed for more than 3 years, 27% have worked for 6 to 12 months, and 14% have worked for one to three years. In the group of men, as much as 44% have never been employed, while 31% have worked for less than 6 months. Men were unemployed for a longer duration than women; as many as 38% had been unemployed for more than 2 years, and every fifth man had been unemployed for one to two years. The percentage of men who

had been unemployed for up to 3 months (31%) is quite large. In the group of women, the most frequent duration of unemployment is from 3 to 6 months (43%), and every fifth woman has been unemployed for up to 3 months (19%). Women seek employment much more often (93%), while in the group of men only 69% of the respondents were seeking employment.

Table 6. Pearson's chi-squared test for independence results. A person's sex, marital status, education level, place of residence, whether dependent on family, and selected features related to the state of being unemployed

	Sex	Marital Status	Education level	Place of residence	Dependent on family
	<i>p</i>				
Professional experience	0.0028**	0.0001***			
Time unemployed	0.0169*		0.0175*		
Main source of income during unemployment					0.0055**
Main source of income during unemployment is family					
Whether residing with other unemployed individuals					
Seeking employment	0.0174*		0.0000***	0.0182*	
Plans on gaining employment or education in the near future	0.0054**		0.0480*		

Source: Personal study.

Women more often also demonstrated their intention to take up employment (81%), while in the group of men only 44% of the respondents showed such an aim. Marital status was related to professional experience  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0001$ ). Married women have the greatest professional experience, as many as 67% have been employed for over 3 years, and every fourth has been working for one to three years. On the other hand, unmarried men have the least experience, almost half (46%) have never been employed, and 31% have worked for less than 6 months.

Education was associated with the duration of being unemployed  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0175$ ), seeking employment  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0.0000$ ) and the intention to take up employment or education in the near future  $p < \alpha$  ( $p = 0, 0480$ ).

Individuals with an elementary or middle school education remain unemployed the longest – as many as 63% have been unemployed for over 2 years. People with a vocational education were unemployed for the shortest period – as many as 67% had been unemployed for less than three months, and those with a higher education – 45%, had been unemployed for less than 3 months. Ordinarily, individuals possessing the lowest education (elementary or middle school) as many as  $\frac{3}{4}$  – 75%, are not seeking employment; while in the group of individuals having a higher education, 17% of respondents are not seeking employment. In the remaining groups of education everyone is seeking employment. Individuals possessing

a bachelor's degree (100%) as well as a high school education (79%) and higher education (75%) are most likely to be willing to work. The largest percentage of individuals who do not show a willingness to work is in the group of respondents with an elementary or middle school education (63%), as well as a vocational education (50%).

Place of residence was related to seeking employment. Most often, individuals living in cities with 20 to 50 thousand inhabitants seek employment (50%) and (18%) in the largest cities – over 100 thousand inhabitants. Being dependent on one's family was related to the main source of income while being unemployed. The vast majority of people who indicated that they are dependent on their family during unemployment survive on the gainful employment of other members of their immediate family (86%).

### 3. CONCLUSION

Limiting the scale of the NEET phenomenon presents a challenge for entities in the labor market. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conduct research concerning this category of the unemployed. Unfortunately, in Poland research of this type is still relatively rare. It is indeed a challenge for researchers. This is primarily due to difficulties in accessing individuals in the NEET category or difficulties in persuading respondents to provide answers. Such problems were also encountered by those conducting the pilot studies, the results of which are discussed in this article. However, despite lacking the possibility of extrapolating the research results (pilot), much information was obtained, which in the future may become an inspiration for raising new research problems and research hypotheses.

Above all, the research results indicate that the respondents are seeking employment and are strongly committed to this search. The study showed that individuals mainly seek employment via the Internet and thanks to information coming from one's own family. The respondents assessed their chances in the labor market as low, mainly due to a lack of appropriate professional qualifications and a lack of professional experience. They consider their own personality traits, such as loyalty, diligence and stubbornness, to be their strengths within the context of competing for a job. They assessed very highly the role of education as a factor in achieving success in the labor market. This thesis is substantiated by a high percentage of those wishing to continue their education or take additional training. Unfortunately, those who are often interviewed about the implementation of these plans are hampered by a lack of finances. The respondents are in a poor mental state, as evidenced by a low self-assessment of their state of mind. Their free time is filled by meeting with friends as well as on social networks. The respondents indicate quite strong friendship ties. The respondents had the highest trust in their parents and guardians, while their trust in friends and colleagues was slightly lower. Trust in officials was rated the lowest.

Dependency analyses have shown that such variables as being raised by a single parent, and whether the respondent is dependent on their parents, are not related to one's professional activity in the labor market. Contrastingly, such features as a person's sex, age, marital status, education and place of residence have a significant impact on this activity. Also examined was whether a person's sex, marital status, education, place of residence, being raised by a single parent and being dependent on the family have an impact on the selected features related to the state of being unemployed. The analyses indicated that only the "being raised by a single parent" variable had no effect on the selected features.

In summarizing the research results, it should be stated that the NEET category representatives who were surveyed assess their competences realistically. This is not an

overestimation. The research also demonstrates one more important conclusion: there is a great need to create the widest possible opportunities for young people to gain professional experience (e.g. in the form of apprenticeship or internship programs). In the case of the NEET group, free forms of education are of particular importance, on account of the often difficult financial situation of the NEET group representatives.

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