

SAMI MYLLYNIEMI

YOUTH BAROMETER 2015

ABSTRACT



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Ministry of Education and Culture
Youth Research Network
Advisory Council for Youth Affairs

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ABSTRACT

FACTS ABOUT FINLAND

A parliamentary republic in Northern Europe
Population (2015): 5,487,308
Area: 338,432.07 km²

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION: (AT THE END OF 2015):

Age group	Number	Percentage
0–14	896,023	16.3
15–29*	982,915	17.9
30–44	1,020,627	18.6
45–59	1,092,980	19.9
60–74	1,014,088	18.5
75–	480,711	8.8

*Target group of the Youth Barometer

INTRODUCTION

The Youth Barometer is a publication series, in which the values and attitudes of young people aged 15 to 29 living in Finland are surveyed. The barometer has been conducted each year since 1994. Managing everyday life is the umbrella theme for this Youth Barometer. Thus, the publication series continues the approach of previous years by addressing each of the three cross-sectional themes of the Development Programme for Child and Youth Policy 2012–2015; the theme for 2013 was inclusion and for 2014 it was equality.

This is the third Youth Barometer to be published in English as well. The previous ones were the 2012 and 2014 surveys.

In the Youth Barometer survey, many dimensions of managing everyday life are closely connected. Financial, social and practical questions related to everyday life are intertwined, support from the childhood home help in coping with practical everyday activities, which in turn supports the experience of coping with life, which is the basis for well-being. The challenges that young people have in their everyday lives are the same across generations and sectors. Managing everyday life is a multidimensional theme that permeates all the programme documents, as well as the survey data of the Youth Barometer.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SURVEY AND BACKGROUND VARIABLES

Sample and data collection process

The population of the survey comprises young people aged 15 to 29 living in Finland (excl. Åland). A total of 1,894 telephone interviews were conducted. The data included quotas according to gender, age groups (15–19-, 20–24- and 25–29-year-olds), major region and mother tongue. The groups correspond to the proportions in the population. The interviews were conducted in Finnish and Swedish. The telephone interviews were conducted between December 2014 and February 2015. The average length of the interviews was 24 minutes 31 seconds.

Background variables

The background variables of the Youth Barometer were primarily obtained from the respondents themselves. Thus, the information was not extracted from a register, but is based on the interviewees' own understanding. As a result, for example, an individual's main type of activity may not match the one stated in official documents. A young person who both works and studies may state either one as his or her main type of activity. The same applies to a student in a summer job. Such a person may consider himself/herself primarily as a student even though this would not be the case at the time of the interview. The fact that, as a general rule, the background information for the Youth Barometer has been obtained from the respondents does not have to be perceived a source of errors, but it is good to bear in mind that they primarily reflect the young person's own experience of the situation.

FAMILY, HOME, EVERYDAY LIFE

The Youth Barometer survey investigated widely different problems related to the childhood home. Cross-generational issues often emerge when examining social disadvantage. Questions about the childhood home were only put to respondents of comprehensive school age, i.e.

ages from about seven to sixteen years. Up to one in four young people had experienced the divorce of their parents while in comprehensive school.

Moving out of the childhood home

At the time of the interviews, just over a third of all respondents (34%, n=650) lived with their parent or parents. This was the case with 86 per cent of 18-year-olds, 59 per cent of 19-year-olds, 34 per cent of 20-year-olds, and 25 per cent of 21-year-olds. Therefore, the most typical ages for leaving home are 18 and 19. On average, girls move out a little under one year earlier than boys; in the barometer data, 8 per cent of girls and 14 per cent of boys who had turned 20 were living with their parents. (Figure 1).

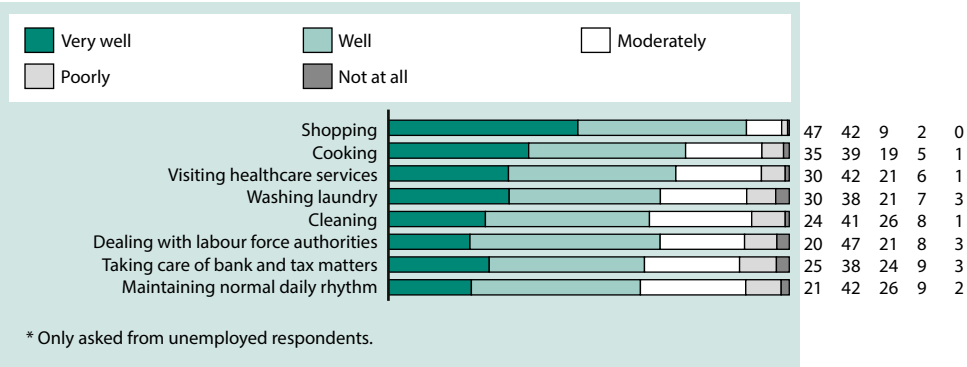
The young people who had already left the family home were asked about their age when moving out. Measured in this way, the average age of leaving the parental home was 18.8 years among all the respondents, 18.4 for girls and 19.3 for boys.

Based on a follow-up study on how young people live, there have been no significant changes to the ages at which young people leave the parental home in recent years. Compared to other European countries, Finnish youth leaves the childhood home at a very young age. In the

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGES OF YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING WITH PARENTS



FIGURE 2: “HOW WELL DO YOU COPE WITH THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES IN EVERYDAY LIFE?”



Youth Barometer data, those living in the centres of big towns are the youngest when moving out of the childhood home. They are followed by those living in the suburbs or outskirts of large towns, whereas those living in small villages, sparsely populated outskirts of small towns or rural environments are the last to move out.

According to the Youth Barometer survey, difficulties in the childhood home clearly influence young people’s decision to leave the childhood home at an earlier age. Moving out earlier is first and foremost explained by the family being subject to child welfare social work; however, young people also become independent earlier due to conflicts in the childhood home, long-term financial difficulties and parents’ problems with alcohol or mental health issues.

Severe conflicts in the family and parents’ separation are strongly connected to the prevalence of experiencing loneliness during youth. Difficulties in life management and making decisions related to one’s personal life are more common among those with severe conflicts in the childhood family.

The strongest indicators for problems in the childhood home are related to family type and the parents’ level of education. Problems appear to accumulate in the families of many of the young people who were living with one parent at the time they started comprehensive school.

Many problems in the childhood home appear to be related to a low level of education of the parents. Indeed, this is a significant and, at least superficially, notably straightforward link: the higher the education, the fewer the problems. However, this image becomes clearer when observing individual questions behind the sum variable. A low level of education of the parents is first and foremost related to unemployment and long-term financial problems.

Similarly, the parents’ level of education strongly correlates with children’s financial difficulties and to an extent with social problems, whereas there is hardly any link with concrete problems in managing everyday life. Social difficulties, such as loneliness and rarely meeting friends may also be partially caused by financial reasons, such as the fact that hobbies are expensive.

Coping with everyday activities

The functionality of everyday life was examined by asking how the respondents coped with the following eight everyday activities: maintaining a normal daily rhythm, cooking, cleaning, washing laundry, shopping, visiting healthcare services, taking care of bank and tax matters, and dealing with labour force authorities (figure 2).

Overall, the figures look relatively positive, as the majority of respondents considered that they cope well or very well with each category.

They fare best with shopping, as only 11 per cent of the young people considered that they cope moderately or poorly in this area. The share of those coping fairly poorly with cooking and visiting healthcare services is reasonably small, amounting to around one quarter. In contrast, the respondents have more difficulties with washing laundry, cleaning, maintaining a normal daily rhythm and taking care of bank and tax matters. Up to around one third of the young people feel they cope moderately at best with most in these areas.

There are clear gender differences in coping with everyday activities. Only in dealing with labour force authorities and taking care of bank and tax matters are there no differences between genders; in all other areas, boys clearly struggled more frequently. There are particularly large differences in coping with washing laundry and cleaning. The survey also revealed a major difference in cooking: 52 per cent of girls and 38 per cent of boys agree with the statement "I often cook at home".

The survey data does not provide direct information specifically on the significance of gender roles in the childhood family, as boys have more difficulties coping with everyday activities than girls regardless of whether they live with their parents, alone or have already started a family of their own. When comparing the data based on the form of living, there are most differences between genders in shared flats or housing, as the boys living in these forms of accommodation struggle with cooking, cleaning and washing laundry particularly often.

There are clear differences between the level of education of the young people: highly educated young people cope with their everyday activities better than others. Interestingly, the parents' level of education does not correlate with coping with daily life activities, even though education levels tend to be consistent across the generations. Differences based on childhood family type are also not significant. However, the current family type is a strong indicator for the functionality of everyday life.

Those who are married or cohabiting fare best with everyday activities, while those living with their parents cope most poorly. A closer examination reveals that difficulties related to everyday activities are particularly common among those with a parent who struggles with alcohol abuse. In addition, financial difficulties and parental unemployment slightly increase the risk of not coping with everyday activities.

Significance of everyday life and life management

Young people feel that they cope better in life the more well-off they consider their household to be, the younger they were when becoming independent and the less dependent they are on outside financial support. The ethos of early independence and coping on one's own, features characteristic of the Finnish culture, is thus apparent in the Youth Barometer data.

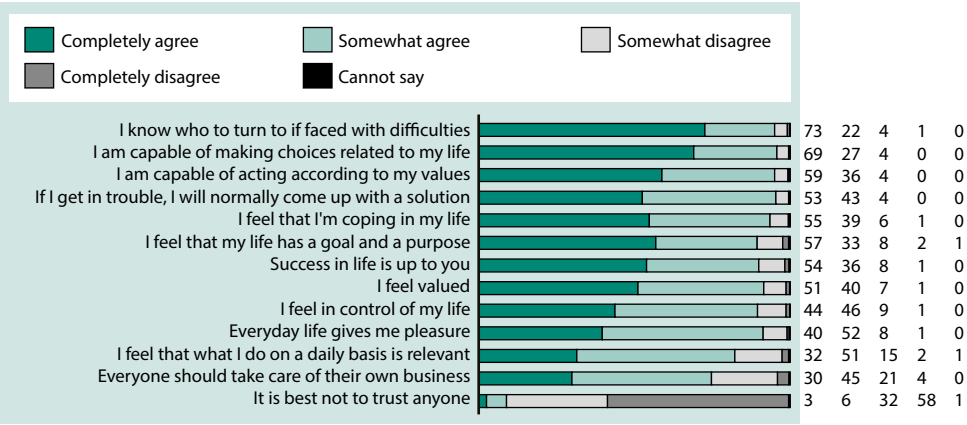
It is peculiar, however, that the Youth Barometer survey data indicates that deficiencies in taking care of basic needs during childhood improve a feeling of coping in the young person's life.

Most of the variables in figure 3 have a strong and significant connection with satisfaction with life, which can also be interpreted as happiness. Particularly strong explanatory factors include an experience of coping with life and having life under control. Feeling valued, relevance of daily tasks and having a goal and a purpose to one's life are also so strongly connected to satisfaction with life that they appear to mean almost the same thing. Even though the experience of coping is related to the experienced subsistence, both have a strong independent influence on perceived happiness.

Atmosphere at home

Based on the young people's assessments, the overall image of the atmosphere at the young respondents' current home is positive. Nearly nine out of ten consider the atmosphere to be

FIGURE 3: EXPERIENCES RELATED TO EVERYDAY LIFE AND ITS MEANING



at least fairly loving and encouraging. Around one in three of the respondents describe the atmosphere as busy, one in ten as noisy or messy, and only a few per cent as acrimonious, uncommunicative or indifferent.

The most significant differences between girls and boys can be detected in how loving and encouraging they consider the atmosphere to be. Interestingly, on average, girls not only experience the atmosphere as better, but also more acrimonious, than boys. On average, those speaking Swedish as their mother tongue perceive the atmosphere at home as worse than those speaking Finnish or some other language as their mother tongue.

The financial conditions of the household are connected to the atmosphere. Whether the household is assessed as wealthy, well-off or middle income is not particularly significant, but the atmosphere at low income and particularly poor households is generally worse.

There is no particularly straightforward connection between parents' level of education and the atmosphere at home. An interesting single observation was the sense of haste experienced by those still living with their parents if the parents are highly educated. The survey does not directly indicate the direction of causal

relationships, but the childhood home, atmosphere in the family and managing everyday life appear to form a closely interlinking entity.

EVERYDAY LIFESTYLES

Sleep rhythm and amount of sleep

The focus of this survey is on young people's experience of everyday life and its management. Sleep rhythm was examined by asking "What time do you normally go to sleep?" and "What time do you normally wake up?" The questions were asked separately for weekdays and weekends. The survey was otherwise not focused on concrete use of time.

School performance positively correlates with the amount of sleep in the Youth Barometer data. On weekdays, there is little flexibility in waking times, and the differences according to school performance are more pronounced in the times for going to sleep than in the times for waking up. As a result, those getting a good night's sleep during weekdays performed better at school. On the other hand, there was greater dispersion in the amount of sleep among those with the weakest school performance, i.e. the

group also included respondents sleeping a notably large amount. Indeed, school performance and level of education are connected to the proportion of respondents either unable to report their times for going to sleep or with variation in sleep rhythm more clearly than with the average amount of sleep.

During weekdays, the most common time to go to sleep is eleven o'clock, which is the reported time for going to sleep for 42 per cent of the young people. Eleven is also the median time for going to bed with half of all young people reporting having already gone to bed by that time. Out of the young people, 3 per cent have gone to bed by nine, 28 per cent by ten, 70 per cent by eleven, 93 per cent by midnight, and 98 per cent by one. (Figure 4).

Time for going to sleep during weekdays strongly correlates with coping with everyday activities (defined as in figure 2). Those going to sleep by ten at the latest clearly cope the best. If the young person goes to bed at midnight on average, his or her coping with everyday activities is at the same level as those who answered "variably" when asked about the time of going to sleep. However, those going to bed after

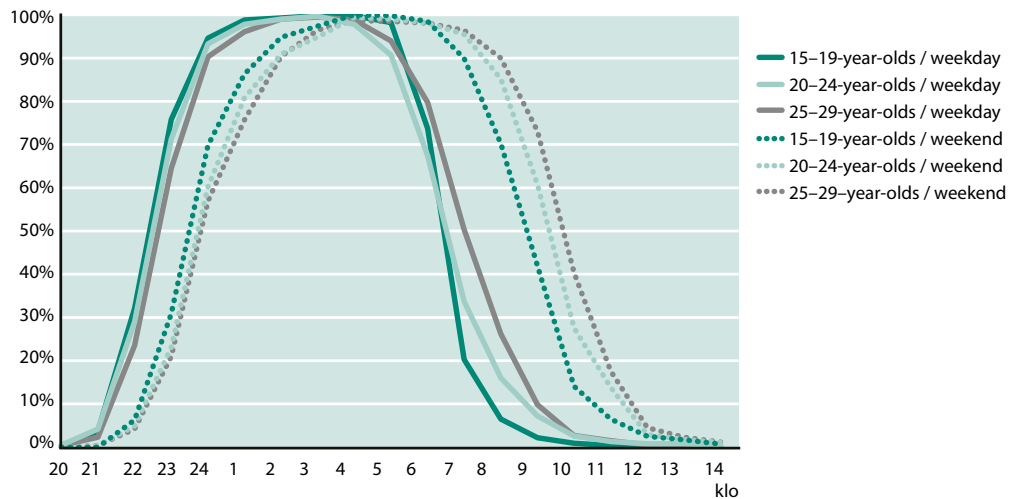
midnight clearly struggle the most with coping with everyday activities.

On weekdays, the young respondents' average sleep duration is 8.2 hours. The most common amounts of sleep are eight hours (37%) and nine hours (26%). The respondents clearly sleep longer during weekends, on average 9.4 hours. It is most common to sleep for nine hours (32%), and ten hours of sleep is also common (31%). The biggest difference in amounts of sleep on weekdays and weekends was found in 15–19-year-olds (8.1 hours on weekdays, 9.7 hours on weekends).

If 7 to 9 hours is determined as the suitable amount of sleep in the age group of 15–29-year-olds, 81 per cent are able to attain this on weekdays among those reporting their normal times for going to sleep and waking up. 12 per cent sleep more than this and 7 per cent sleep less. On weekends, it is a completely different situation, as 52 per cent sleep 7–9 hours, while 46 per cent sleep more and 2 per cent sleep less.

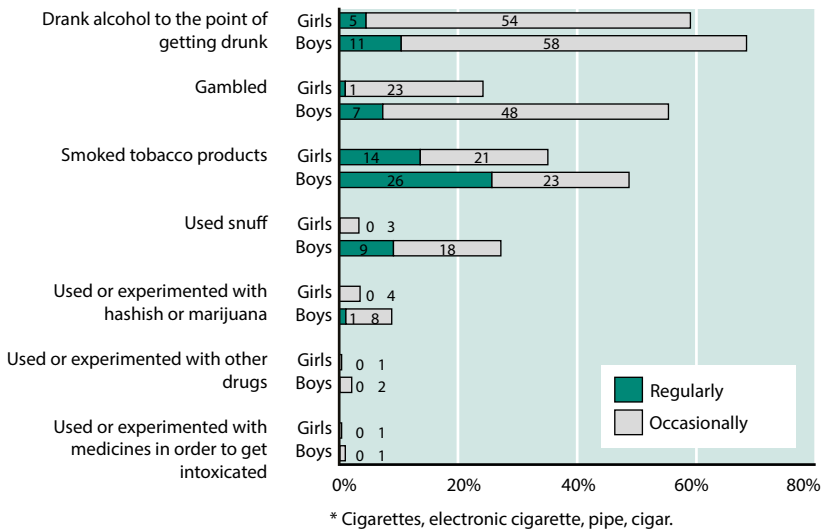
The link between amount of sleep and experienced state of health is not straightforward. Instead, satisfaction with personal health is the

FIGURE 4: SLEEPING TIME DURING WEEKDAYS AND WEEKENDS. PERCENTAGE OF THOSE SLEEPING BY AGE GROUPS.



The numbers do not include respondents who answered "it varies" or "cannot say" to the questions about time to go to sleep or to wake up (weekdays 14%, weekends 17%).

FIGURE 5: “HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DURING THE LAST 6 MONTHS?”



highest among those sleeping 8–9 hours on weekdays or 9–10 hours on weekends. Those sleeping more or less than this consider their health worse. The observed link is strongest in under 20-year-olds, particularly girls. On weekdays, the amount of sleep has a stronger connection with satisfaction with life and its areas than the amount of sleep on weekends.

Alcohol and drugs

The question formulation used in previous Youth Barometers was also applied to examining regular or occasional alcohol and drug use. There is a gender division in the results, and therefore, the rates for girls and boys are given separately in figure 12. (Figure 5).

The rates of both regular and occasional binge drinking remained approximately the same in the surveys of 2002 and 2012. Subsequently, binge drinking has decreased fairly quickly, as in 2012, 72 per cent of the young people reported having consumed alcohol to the point of intoxication at least occasionally within the previous six months, while the number was now 64 per cent. The share of those

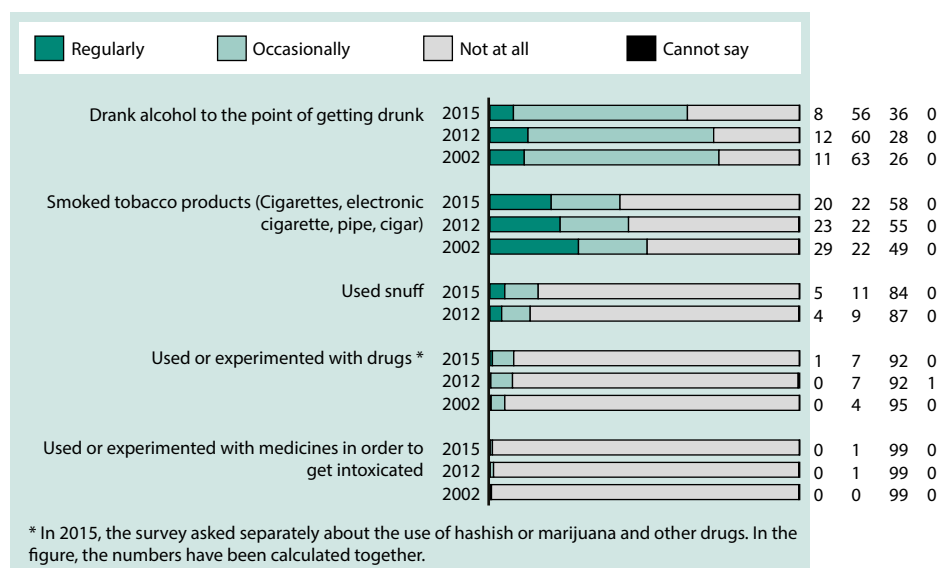
completely abstinent from alcohol was not determined, but the portion of those who had not drank alcohol to the point of intoxication during the previous six months increased from 28 per cent to 36 per cent.

When examining the responses by gender, the share of boys who do not drink has particularly increased in recent years: in the survey of 2002, they amounted to 21 per cent, in 2012, to 24 per cent, and now there are 32 per cent of boys who do not drink. The corresponding rates among girls were 32 per cent in 2002 and 2012 and now, in the survey of 2015, 41 per cent. Young women are thus still slightly more inclined towards sobriety than men, but the differences may have evened out by a few percentage points.

According to the findings of the Youth Barometer, regular smoking among young people has fallen from 29 per cent in the 2002 survey to 20 per cent. Since 2002, the share of regular smokers among boys has dropped from 33 to 26 per cent and among girls from 24 to 14 per cent.

The slightly increasing tendency in drug use, which was detected in 2000, seems to have

FIGURE 6: “HAVE YOU DONE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DURING THE LAST 6 MONTHS?”



evened out. Similarly, the slight increase in misuse of medicines appears to have halted based on the Youth Barometer surveys. From 2002 to 2012, the share of individuals who had used illicit drugs in the past six months increased from 5 to 7 per cent, and the proportion of individuals using pharmaceutical drugs for the purpose of intoxication or having experimented with such use increased from half a per cent to one per cent. Both proportions have remained unchanged from 2012 to 2015. The regular use of drugs continues to be rare, but experimentation is relatively common.

The potentially harmful lifestyles presented in figure 6 clearly accumulate in the same young people. Correspondingly, a proportion of the young people (24%) share none of them. 31 per cent of girls have none of the habits presented in figure 6, while for boys the figure is 18 per cent. If we were to put together all of the examined “vices”, 10 per cent of all respondents have experimented with over half, i.e. at least four, of them. The proportion among girls is 2 per cent, while as many as 18 per cent of boys belong to this group. Therefore, it appears that

there is notably strong accumulation of drug and alcohol use among some boys in particular.

At the regional level, bad habits are concentrated in the centres of large towns and, to some extent, suburbs and other outskirts of towns. However, bad habits are different in different types of regions. Smoking is more common among young people in rural areas than in towns, while the opposite is true for drug and alcohol use.

Nearly everyone who has used hard drugs has also used cannabis. There is also an overlap between alcohol and drugs, as practically everyone who has used cannabis or other drugs has also drank alcohol to the point of intoxication during the previous six months.

Food

Information about young people’s eating habits has been compiled in figure 7. As a general observation, it can be noted that, based on this survey, eating and cooking appear to be important to young people. Three out of four respondents express an interest in the cuisines of

different countries, and the majority consider cooking as a personally important recreational activity. Eating has a social dimension: nearly one in three report often eating with their friends at somebody's home, and even more go out to eat, which is also likely to be in the company of others. Three out of four report often cooking at home, girls more often than boys.

Hobbies, most commonly physical exercise in its many forms, are an important part of the leisure time of many young people and are also an important learning environment. Hobbies can have a positive influence on food habits, not only through direct guidance by instructors or coaches, but also through imitation, social pressure or other, indirect ways.

The responsibility of homes and school for young people's healthy food habits should not be underestimated, even though the survey indicates that the influence of outsiders is limited when it comes to the healthiness of food habits. Nutrition recommendations are probably more significant than the responses show, as people can reasonably feel a sense of ownership related to their decision to follow or not follow expert recommendations. The more highly educated the parents, the greater their offspring perceive parental influence on their diet. Among the offspring of parents with lower level of education, the estimates of the parents' influence on food habits decline more sharply after moving out of the childhood home.

Hobbies

Hobbies were investigated with the question 'Have you got a hobby of any kind whatsoever?' In total, 87 per cent of all 15–29-year-olds report having a hobby of some kind. In the 2012 survey, the proportion in the same age group was only 83 per cent, i.e. having a hobby seems to have become more common. This is, indeed, the case in the age group of 15–29-year-olds. A slump in recreational activity during teenage years is apparent in the age group of the Youth Barometer; among boys, 79 per cent of 15–19-year-olds, 85 per cent of 20–24-year-olds and up to 96 per cent of 25–29-year-olds report having a hobby of some kind. Among girls, age-related changes are smaller (corresponding proportions: 81%, 88% and 90%).

Of the respondents whose mother tongue is not Finnish or Swedish, many of whom have an immigrant background, as many as one in four indicate not having a hobby of any kind. 47 per cent of the foreign-language-speaking young people and 34 per cent of others report having been unable to start a hobby due to lack of money. Similarly, 27 per cent of the foreign language speakers and 18 per cent of others report having been forced to give up a hobby due to lack of money. Those with an immigrant background are forced to compromise on their hobbies more often than others. It is not solely a matter of money, but the availability

FIGURE 7: EATING HABITS

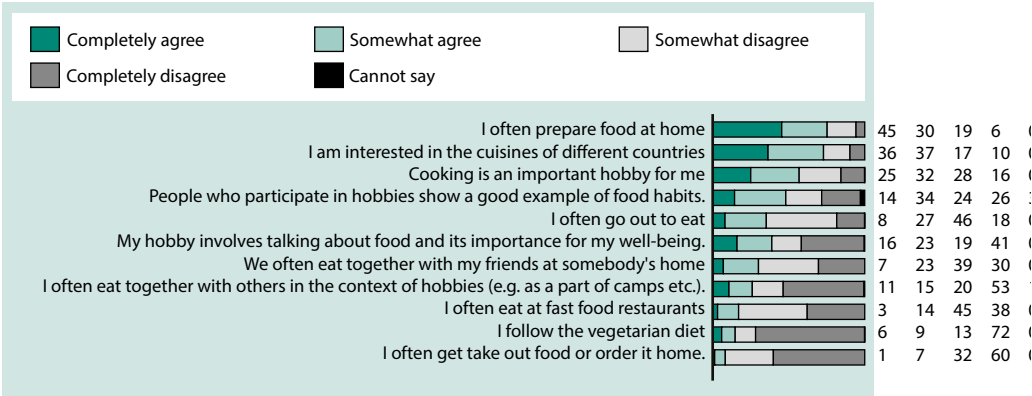
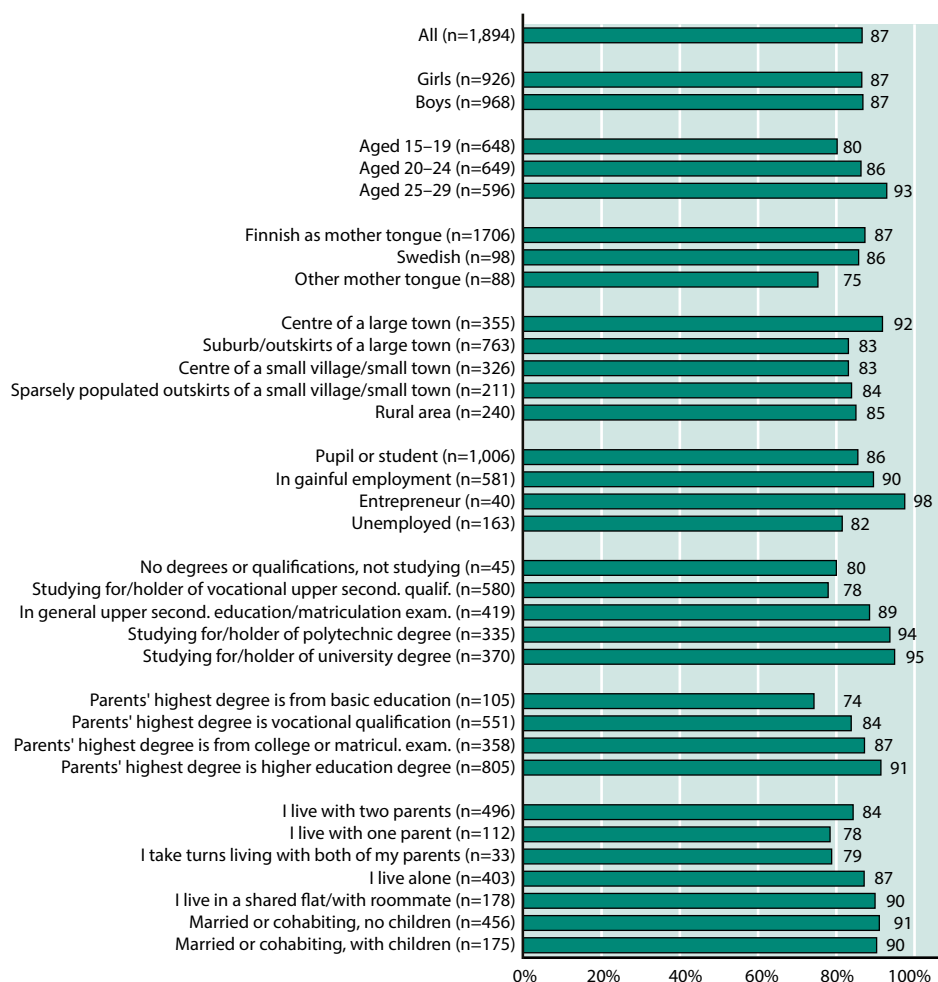


FIGURE 8: “HAVE YOU GOT A HOBBY OF ANY KIND WHATSOEVER?”



of recreational activities is a wider question of equality. Nevertheless, over 80 per cent of the young people who have had to give up a hobby due to lack of money have a hobby of some kind.

Studying and working at the same time does not decrease having hobbies, on the contrary: of those studying in upper secondary vocational education and working, 84 per cent have a hobby of some kind, while the rate is only 70 per

cent among those who do not work. High level of education has a strong positive connection with the prevalence of having hobbies. This is the case when measured with study places, degrees completed as well as school performance based on the average grade in the basic education certificate. Parents' level of education is also nearly as strong of an indicator for hobbies as children's own level of education.

Sport

86 per cent of all the young people report having some form of exercise as their hobby. Overall, 6 per cent of young people are not engaged in sport or any other kind of a hobby.

There is a clear link between education variables and the prevalence of the choice of sport as a hobby, and this does not disappear even when taking into account financial conditions, which are strongly related to level of education. Unemployed people exercise less than others. However, prolonged unemployment does not decrease the prevalence of physically active hobbies.

Tobacco is the intoxicant most strongly connected to the prevalence of a physically active hobby. Those who smoke occasionally are not entirely different from non-smokers, but 22 per cent of those smoking regularly do not engage in any sort of physical activity.

FINANCES

Financial skills play a key role in the management of everyday life, and consumption is an integral part of young people's lives. Clear signs of the significance money were also observed in this study: one in three have not started a hobby because of lack of money and one in six have not met their friends because of lack of money.

Well-off young people meet their friends more often (figure 12), feel less lonely (figure 15) and engage in sports more frequently. The financial position at the time of the interview significantly explains satisfaction with leisure time, interpersonal relationships as well as life on the whole (see figure 17). The financial mobility of children and young people appears to significantly explain possibilities for leisure time activities as well as social life more broadly.

The Youth Barometer questionnaire contained two questions directly asking about the financial situation at the respondent's

household. As assessing income in euros would be too difficult, respondents were asked about how wealthy or poor they perceive their household to be; as was asked in previous barometers Coping financially was also examined with a more tangible question concerned with sufficiency of income. A question about satisfaction with the financial situation measured more or less the same thing.

The financial status of the household was examined by asking the respondents to select one of the following alternatives best applying to their situation: wealthy, well-off, middle income, low income and poor. The majority (56%) place themselves and their households in the middle income category, 27 per cent as the most wealthy and 16 per cent at the poorer end of the scale.

The questions concerning wealth and the ease of covering expenses are closely connected. The majority of those in households struggling to cover expenses with income assessed their household as "low income", while finding it easy to cover expenses was an indication of a more affluent household.

According to the Youth Barometer survey, parents particularly support the young people who struggle to cope with their expenses and perceive their household as low income or poor. The young people who have been supported by their parents are less satisfied with their financial situation than others. It would seem that young people only turn to their parents when in dire need.

Sufficiency of income is more directly connected to the experience of wealth among girls than boys. For girls, sufficiency of income also has a stronger effect on satisfaction with the financial situation than for boys. Boys do not necessarily consider themselves as poor even if they have major difficulties in covering expenses with income.

The parents' level of education appears to be linked to the income of the young person's household. The finding that financial problems

in the childhood family appear to be passed on from one generation to the next only among those who drop out of education early is a particularly interesting one.

Sources of income

The answers of all young people interviewed to the question "What is your primary source of income?" are presented in figure 9. A minority of 15–29-year-olds reported their own job as their primary source of income: 35 per cent emphasise regular paid employment as the most important source, while 7 per cent have temporary work as their primary source of income. These are followed by study grant or housing supplement (20%) or money received from parents or relatives (14%). Labour market support or basic daily allowance for the unemployed is the primary source of income for 5 per cent, while earnings-related unemployment allowance is the primary source for 2 per cent. The proportion receiving an allowance from parents as the primary source of income has decreased. In 1996, this amounted to 23 per cent, while it is now only 14 per cent.

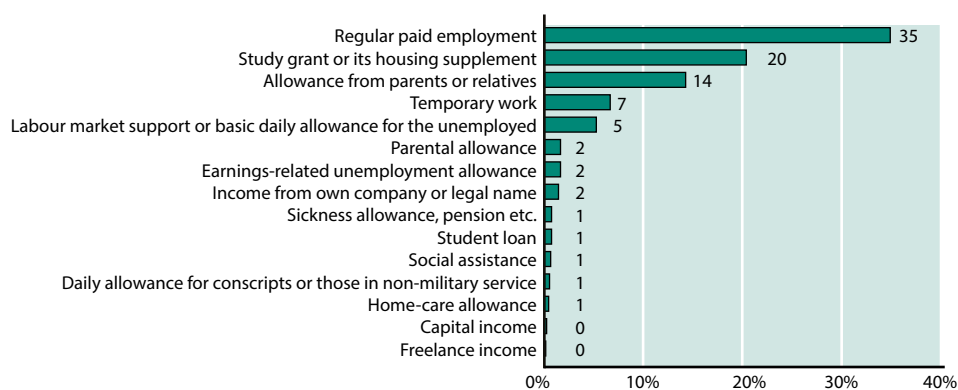
Of all pupils and students, 13 per cent consider regular paid employment as their primary source of income, while for 10 per cent it is temporary work. The proportions are 7 per

cent and 10 per cent respectively among those stating studying as their main type of activity. A relatively small number of comprehensive school pupils receive most of their income from work (15%); instead, support from parents and relatives is the most important source for the majority of them (62%). Similarly, half of students in upper secondary school identify parental support as the most important source of money, while 20 per cent get income from paid employment and 7 per cent receive a study grant. The situation is notably different among those in vocational education, as one-third of them have a study grant, 23 per cent have income from employment and 22 per cent have an allowance from parents as the primary source of income.

The proportion receiving an allowance from parents as the primary source of income has clearly decreased since 1996. In the Youth Barometer of 1996, allowance from parents as the primary source of income was 23 per cent while it is now only 14 per cent.

A comparison of genders indicates that boys more often have income from employment, while girls rely on study grants and transfers of income. This difference is based on the fact that boys enter the labour market earlier than girls, whereas girls spend a longer time in education and go on parental leave more frequently.

FIGURE 9: "WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY SOURCE OF INCOME?"



This was presented as an open question without giving a list of alternatives. In addition to the sources of income presented in the figure, 2% answered "nothing" and 1 % "cannot say".

Financial aid

According to the current survey, a significantly larger proportion of young people (84%) are willing to borrow money from their parents than from their friends (35%). Of all the respondents, 58 per cent report having been financially supported by their parents. Even among the young people who would prefer not to borrow money from their parents, 36 per cent state that they have received monetary support.

There is no variation related to age or gender in willingness to borrow money from parents, but some could be found in willingness to borrow from friends. Male respondents (42%) reported being willing to borrow from friends significantly more frequently than female respondents (27%). The younger the person, the more willing they were to borrow money from friends.

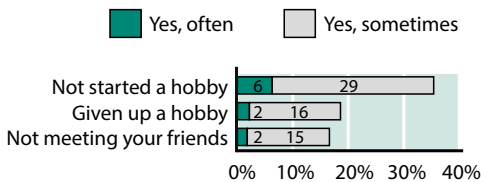
10 per cent of young people reported having taken a consumer loan, while 10 per cent would be willing to take one. For both, the shares were significantly higher among boys than girls.

Lack of money

The link between a weak financial situation and infrequency of engaging in physical activity was noted above. As presented in figure 10, the significance of money also comes up when addressing the issue directly. More than one-third of the young people have not started a hobby due to lack of finances.

In total, 17 per cent of young people have not been able to meet their friends at least sometimes due to lack of money. The majority of these young people feel lonely, and meet their friends more infrequently than others. The Youth Barometer indicates that financial difficulties impact on managing everyday life in a number of ways, but does not directly state the mechanisms with which financial mobility restricts social life.

FIGURE 10: “HAVE YOU HAD TO DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING DUE TO LACK OF MONEY...?”



Of the respondents to the Youth Barometer survey whose childhood homes had long-term financial difficulties, the majority have not been able to start a hobby due to lack of money, over one-third have given up a hobby, and nearly as many have not met their friends because of lack of money.

Indeed, hobbies clearly link finances and social life: the young people who have been forced to give up a hobby, or have not been able to start one, meet their friends significantly less frequently than others (figure 12). Experiencing loneliness (figure 15) is also clearly more common among them. Hobbies are not only a matter of leisure time activity, but have comprehensive effects on young people’s lives. Girls have had to give up a hobby due to lack of money or have been unable to start a hobby more often than boys. However, there are no gender differences in not being able to meet friends.

Financial hardship experienced in the childhood home manifests itself later in young people’s lives as having payment difficulties more often than average. Parents’ low level of education has a similar link to not paying one’s bills, and this remains significant even when controlling for the respondent’s own level of education. Therefore, problems in the family home are strongly connected to the young person’s difficulties in managing his or her finances. The connection is only partially explained by similar levels of education between the generations.

Self-image as a consumer

The respondents were asked to characterise themselves as consumers in five different dimensions (figure 11). Environmental awareness, consideration and frugality are emphasised in young people’s self-image as consumers. Comparison with the Youth Barometer of 2005 reveals clear changes in young people’s self-image as consumers in the last ten years. Environmental awareness is growing, and the majority already perceive themselves as environmentally friendly consumers. A further change is the increase in the share of those perceiving themselves as considerate consumers. Similarly, the number of those considering themselves as frugal has grown, which is not only likely to be a sign of financially tough times, but also indicates that frugality is perceived to be more acceptable and perhaps even more virtuous.

Young people who have left bills unpaid during the past year are more likely to consider themselves as spendthrifts and impulse buyers than others. It would thus appear that payment difficulties are not only underlined by difficulties in managing finances resulting from the economic recession, but also by consumer habits.

COMMUNALITY AND FRIENDS

Meeting friends

Over half of young people between 15 and 29 years of age meet their friends daily, nearly all of them at least weekly. Figure 12 shows that the frequency of meeting friends drops evenly with age. Nearly one out of four of the 15–19-year-olds meet their friends daily, while only one in three aged 25–29 do so. There is a particularly sharp decline in meeting friends at around the age of 20.

As has been the case in the previous barometers, boys meet their friends more frequently than girls. Foreign-language speakers, many of whom have immigrant backgrounds, meet their friends slightly less frequently than others. Those who consider their financial status to be poor meet their friends less regularly and feel lonely more often than more affluent young people. One important link between financial status and social life can be found in hobbies. The young people who have had to give up a hobby or who have been unable to start one due to lack of financing meet their friends significantly less frequently than others.

FIGURE 11: “HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERISE YOURSELF AS A CONSUMER?”

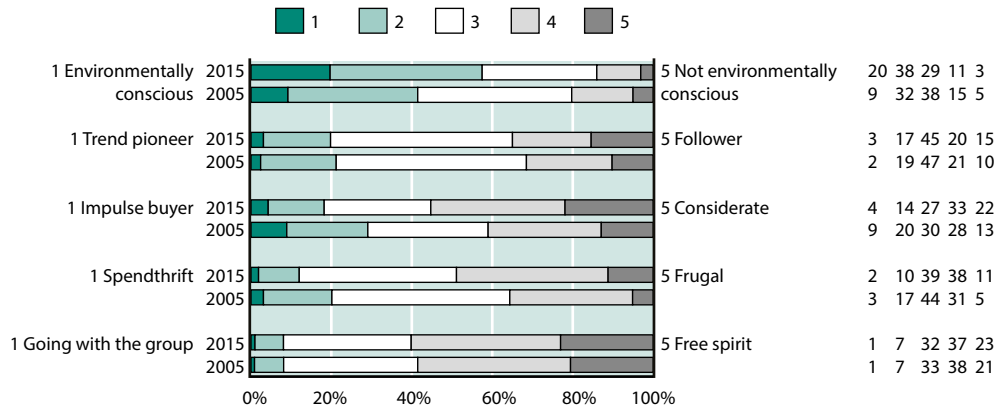
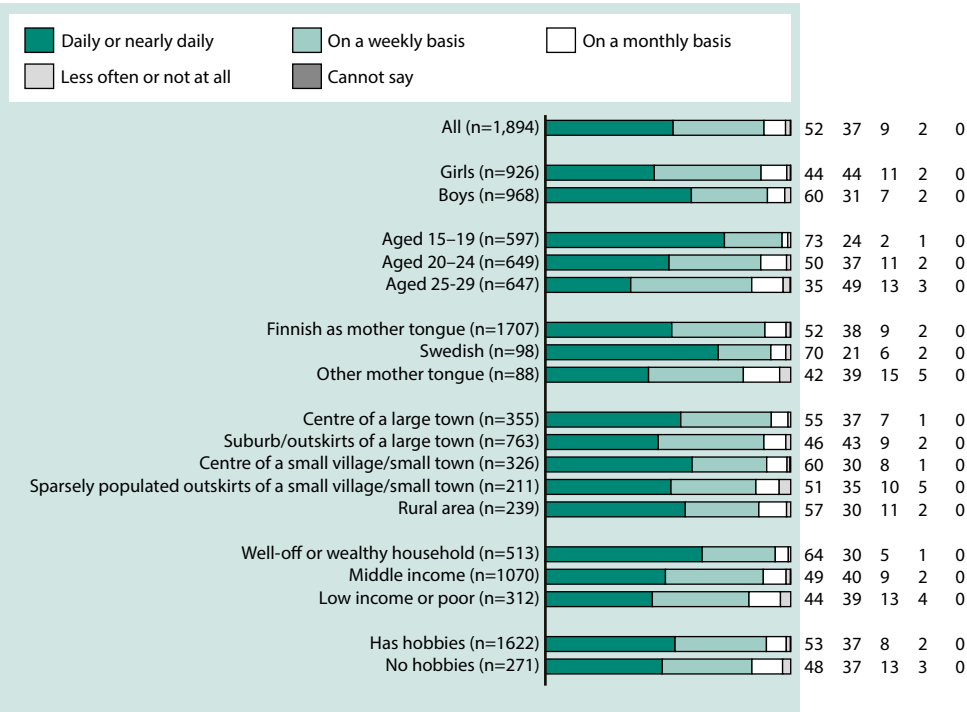


FIGURE 12: HOW OFTEN DO YOU MEET YOUR FRIENDS?



Young people are more likely to be in daily contact with friends online (75%) than by telephone (40%) or meeting them face to face (52%). Change in this area has been notably fast, as the frequency of the proportion of telephone and online contacts have reversed in recent years.

Being regularly in contact with friends by telephone seems to protect the young people from a sense of loneliness better than staying in touch with friends online. In contrast to online contacts, staying in regular contact with friends by telephone is also more strongly connected to meeting friends face to face on a regular basis.

With whom do young people spend their free time?

A new question in the barometer was about who young people spent the majority of their free time with. Most commonly, they spend

most time with their boyfriend or girlfriend (28% of all respondents). Spending time with other friends was divided into two groups in the survey: With 1–3 friends (27%) and in a group of at least 4 friends (10%). Friends and other acquaintances are the most typical people with whom one in three respondents spend their leisure time. The family also plays an important role during free time, as 26% of the young people estimated they spent most of their free time with them. Only 9 per cent reported spending most of their free time alone.

Spending time with friends is emphasised clearly more among boys than girls. Boys particularly more typically spend time in larger groups consisting of at least four friends.

Family is a word with two meanings also in the sense that, in the age group of 15–29-year-olds, it can refer to the childhood family as well as the family established by the respondent. Having children is a central element in this.

FIGURE 13: "WHO DO YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR FREE TIME WITH?" GIRLS

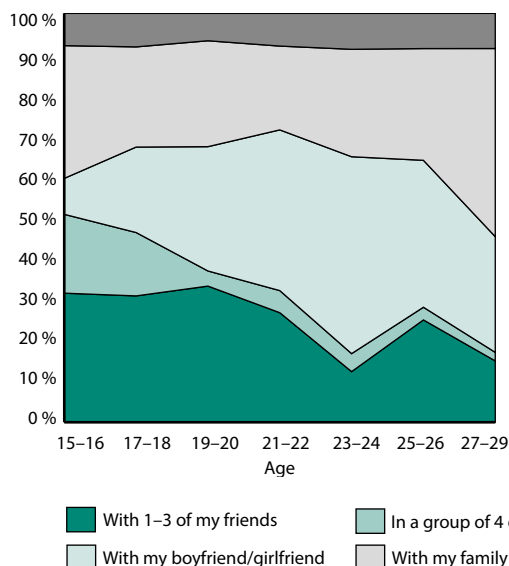
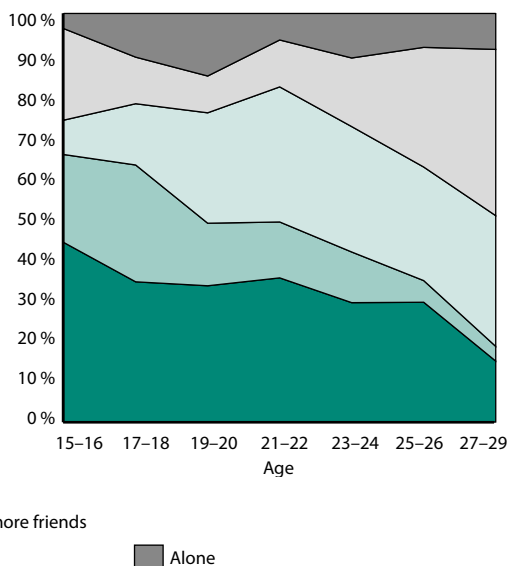


FIGURE 14: "WHO DO YOU SPEND MOST OF YOUR FREE TIME WITH?" BOYS



Of both female and male respondents with children of their own, over 90 per cent report spending most of their time with family. The difference between genders in figures 13 and 14 indicates that the family plays a larger role in girls' leisure time.

Loneliness

Feelings of loneliness were investigated with the new question "Do you feel lonely?" As previous Youth Barometers have not examined loneliness in a similar way, there is no comparative data on the prevalence of experiencing loneliness from different times. One in three respondents report feeling lonely at least occasionally (figure 15). Only 4 per cent feel lonely often.

Feeling lonely is less common among boys (30% feel lonely sometimes at least) than girls (39%). Boys also meet their friends and talk with them on the phone more frequently than girls (figure 12). More emphasis is put on spending time with friends among boys than girls, and spending time in larger groups consisting of at

least four friends is more typical for boys (figures 13 and 14).

Feelings of loneliness become more common with age, in particular at around 17 years of age. The proportion of those experiencing loneliness increases dramatically particularly among boys after the transition from basic education to upper secondary education. For girls, there is a particularly large proportion who feel lonely among those studying in upper secondary vocational institutes.

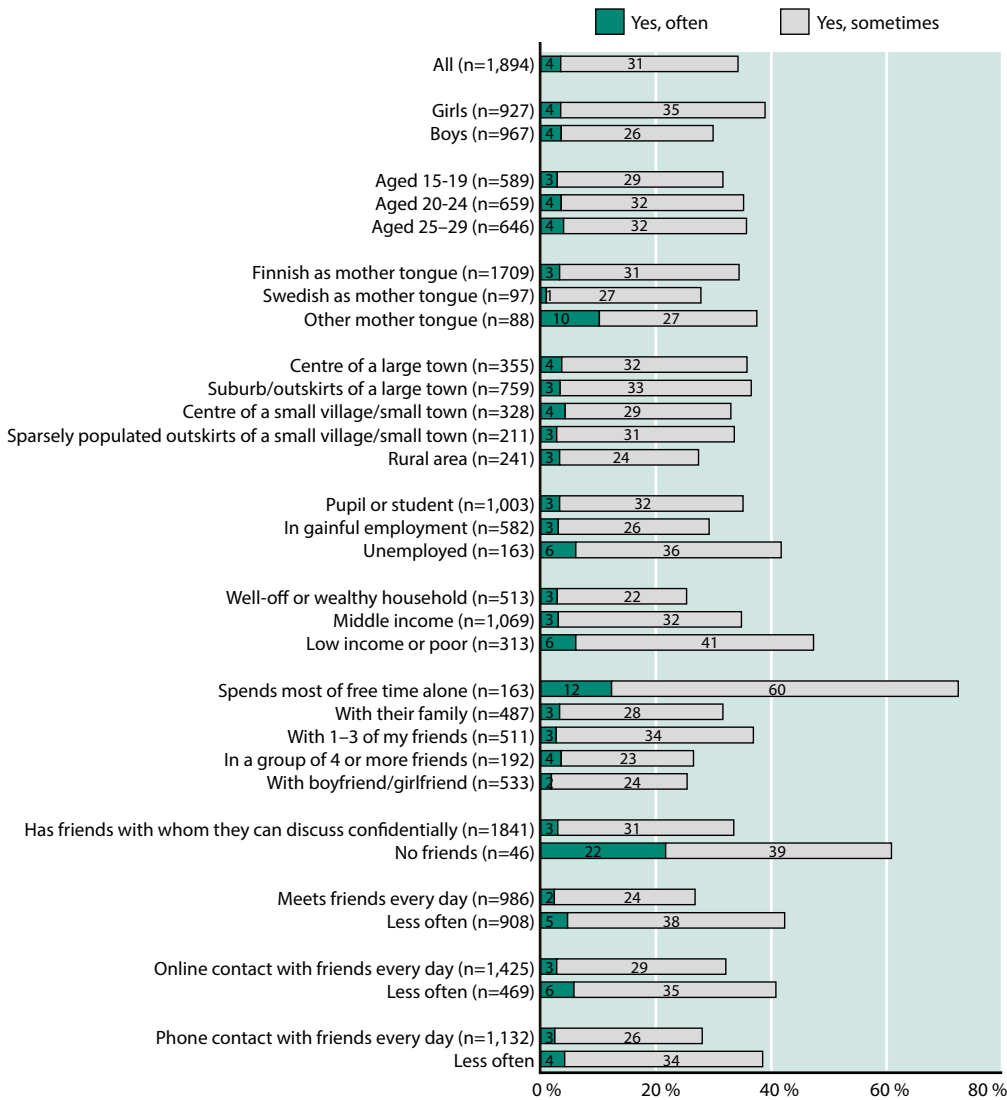
Swedish-speaking young people suffer from loneliness less often than Finnish-speakers. The proportion of those who feel lonely frequently was large among foreign-language speaking young people. Foreign-language speakers, many of whom have immigrant backgrounds, also meet their friends slightly less frequently than others. Feelings of loneliness are less common among young people in rural areas than among those living in large towns.

The perception of the financial situation as poor increases feelings of loneliness. Well-off young people also meet their friends more frequently (figure 12) and keep in touch with them

by telephone more often. As many as one-third of young people have not started a hobby and one in six have not met their friends due to lack of money (figure 10).

Severe conflicts in the childhood family and the parents’ separation are strongly connected to the prevalence of experiences of loneliness during youth. All in all, social problems in the childhood family appear to weaken the management of social relationships in the younger generation.

FIGURE 15: “DO YOU FEEL LONELY?”



In addition to the factors behind loneliness, hints of a link between loneliness and problems in managing everyday life can be found in the data. Young people who often feel lonely also find it difficult to take care of many everyday transactions. Those who feel lonely struggle more than others with maintaining a daily rhythm, similarly with regard to cooking, cleaning, washing laundry and taking care of bank and tax matters.

The young people interviewed were asked whether they had friends with whom they could talk confidentially about their lives. Only 2 per cent said no.

Belonging

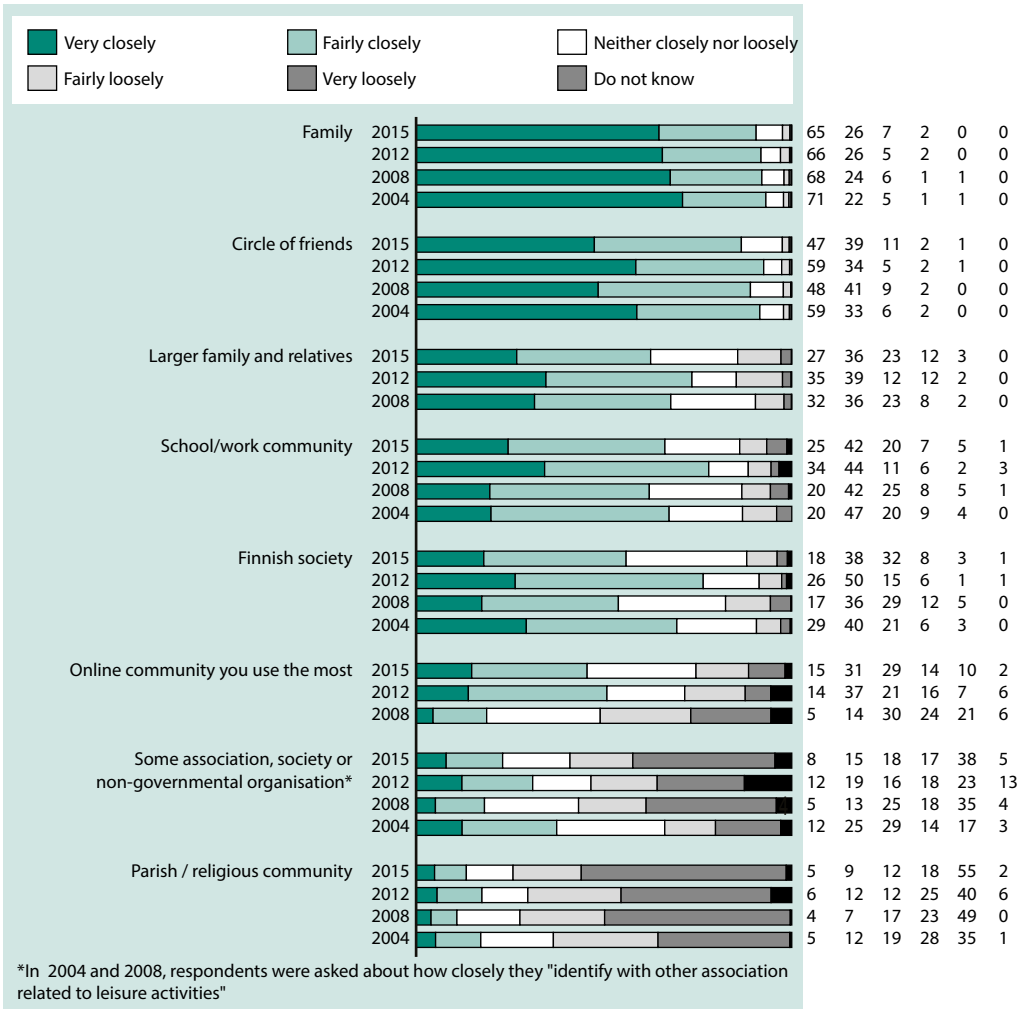
Figure 16 reports about young people’s sense of belonging to different social units. The family remains number one in the measurements, and even though the sense of community has

perhaps been reduced somewhat, it is still by no means loose, as more than 90 people experience their sense of belonging to their family at least as fairly solid.

Approximately half feel very closely connected to their circle of friends, while nearly nine out of ten feel at least a fairly close sense of belonging.

The question of the young people’s sense of belonging to Finnish society is important when considering social integrity. There is a

FIGURE 16: “HOW CLOSELY CONNECTED DO YOU FEEL TO THE FOLLOWING?”



recent shift towards an increasingly low sense of belonging, which is also in line with the longer trend over a period in excess of ten years.

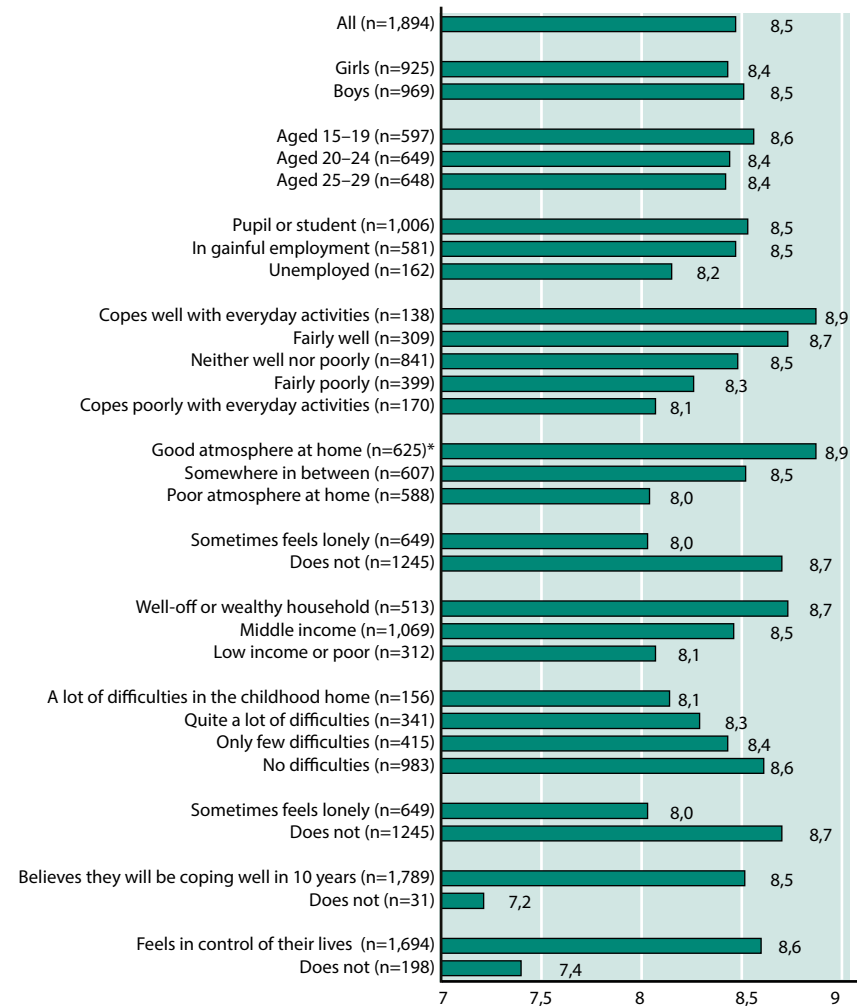
The sense of belonging to the online community most frequently used by the respondent, which was dramatically increased between 2008 and 2012, has no longer continued growth increase in recent years. The transformation of social media into a part of everyday life can assume to have continued, but this change is no longer apparent as a stronger sense of belonging.

FUTURE AND SATISFACTION

The views of young people related to their financial future appear to be surprisingly bright considering the time of the interviews and the preceding economic turmoil. Nearly all of the married and cohabiting respondents (97%) believed in a good livelihood in the future.

Satisfaction was examined by asking young people to assess different areas of life on a scale of four to ten. Young people are the most satisfied with their mental health (8.8), interpersonal

FIGURE 17: “HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH YOUR CURRENT LIFE AS A WHOLE?”



This was presented as an open question without giving a list of alternatives. In addition to the sources of income presented in the figure, 2% answered "nothing" and 1 % "cannot say".

relationships (8.5) and health (8.4). They are slightly less satisfied with their appearances (8.2), leisure time (8.1), physical condition (7.9) and particularly financial situation (7.6).

Boys are slightly more satisfied than girls, but the differences are not significant in the areas of interpersonal relationships, health condition and life as a whole. In particular, girls are less satisfied than boys when it comes to their appearance, financial situation and mental health, the last of which was asked about for the first time in the current study.

The average score for satisfaction with life is 8.5. There have not been any significant changes to this during the follow-up period of nearly twenty years.

In the Youth Barometer survey, boys (8.5) are slightly more satisfied with their lives than girls (8.4). The satisfaction level among girls does not change with age; however, there is a sharp drop in satisfaction among boys, particularly at around 20 years of age.

Level of education does not correlate with satisfaction with life. There is also no difference between students and employees in terms of satisfaction. Unemployed respondents are slightly less satisfied, but the length of unemployment has no effect.

When comparing types of family, married or cohabiting couples with children are the most satisfied with their lives (8.8). Those living with parents also appear satisfied regardless of whether they live with one (8.6) or two (8.6) parents or take turns in living with both parents (8.7).

Problems in the childhood home have a strong impact on young people's satisfaction with life. This link is most prominent in those under 20 years of age, partially due to the fact that the majority of them still live with their parents. A positive atmosphere in the current childhood home also has a clear connection with better satisfaction with life.

ORGANISATIONS IMPLEMENTING THE YOUTH BAROMETER

Finnish Youth Research Network

The Finnish Youth Research Network is a community of researchers that engages in cooperation with universities and polytechnics and with professionals operating in research institutes and in the field of youth work. The network aims both to produce high-quality academic research and to use the research conducted by it to influence the development of youth policy and youth work.

The youth research network tackles phenomena related to youth and young people and introduces new knowledge and perspectives to public debate. The following topics are emphasised in the research projects of the network: research on youth cultures, questions related to an individual's life course and becoming an adult and the themes of social exclusion, ethnic relations, education and youth work.

The Youth Research Network organises seminars and training. Many of the researchers in the network act as experts in different education and training events and development projects in youth work and youth policy.

The main financier of the Finnish Youth Research Network is the Youth Policy Division of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Advisory Council for Youth Affairs

The national Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (Nuora) is a consultative body in child and youth policy appointed by the government. The members of the council are individuals well-versed in the growing and living conditions of children and young people especially called to the task by the government. The secretariat of the council operates under the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Under the Youth Act, the tasks of Nuora include:

- annual assessment of the implementation of the government's child and youth policy programme;
- preparing proposals for programmes and measures concerning young people, and
- generating new, up-to-date information on young people and their living conditions.

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs implements its statutory tasks by issuing statements and producing the annual Youth Barometer measuring the values and attitudes of young people in cooperation with the Finnish Youth Research Network.

YOUTH BAROMETER 2015

The Youth Barometer is a publication series, in which the values and attitudes of young people aged 15 to 29 living in Finland are surveyed. The barometer has been conducted each year since 1994. Managing everyday life is the umbrella theme for this *Youth Barometer*. Thus, the publication series continues the approach of previous years by addressing each of the three cross-sectional themes of the Development Programme for Child and Youth Policy 2012–2015; the theme for 2013 was inclusion and for 2014 it was equality.

This is the third *Youth Barometer* to be published in English as well. The previous ones were the 2012 and 2014 surveys.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
YOUTH RESEARCH NETWORK
ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS

