



Summary of report 2003:1



THE SWEDISH NATIONAL
BOARD FOR YOUTH AFFAIRS
www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se

They call us youth

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs
Attitude and Values Survey 2003



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Original report in swedish: *De kallar oss unga 2003:1*, 340 pages, ISSN: 1651-2855, ISBN: 91-89050-48-7

editor **Ingrid Bohlin** • text **Susanne Zander** • translation **Graham Ainscough, JNG Writing Group AB**

graphic design **Christián Serrano** • cover picture **Christián Serrano** • print **EO Print AB**

distribution **Ungdomsstyrelsen, Ringvägen 100, Box 17801, S-118 94 Stockholm, Sweden**

tel **+46 8 462 53 50** • fax **+46 8 644 88 13** • e-mail **info@ungdomsstyrelsen.se** • web site **www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se**

Preface

They Call us Youths is the third attitude and values survey that has been conducted among young people in Sweden on behalf of the Government. A postal questionnaire containing questions on the meaning of life, education and training, work, family, leisure, politics, health and the future was sent out in spring 2002 to 5 000 young people aged 16–29 and to 1 500 adults aged 35–74. The wide selection allows analyses and comparisons to be made between different background variables within youth groups: age, gender, urban/rural area, social background, etc. The data has been collected by Statistics Sweden and the response frequency is 57 per cent.

Since both method and selection, as well as some of the questions, coincide with previous surveys from 1993 and 1997, Young People's Welfare and Values (1994) and New Times – New Ideas (1998), comparisons have been made between the 2002 survey and these surveys¹. This publication is a summary of selected parts of the results that are presented in the report entitled They Call us Youths.

Leif Linde, General Director
The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

¹ The National Board for Youth Affairs has co-operated with researchers Ph. D. Erik Amnå, Ph. D. Lisbeth Bekkengen, Ph. D. Jan Carle, Ph. D. Stefan Jerkeby, Ph. D. Ingrid Munck, Prof. Per Nilsson and Prof. Bengt Starrin, who give their own reflections in the report.

The meaning and purpose of life

In the survey, we asked what gives life most meaning, what is most important at the moment and what will become important in the future.

The attitude among young people regarding what are important objectives in life coincides to a large extent with what is important in their lives at the moment, and has since the latter part of the 1990s remained basically the same: leisure, family and economic security.

Since the mid-1950s, leisure has become increasingly important for young people (as well as for older people), at the same time as family, permanent employment and a career have decreased in importance.

This is a trend that partly coincides with the rising level of education in society – young people with a university education to a greater extent take jobs and high salaries for granted. Leisure is more important for students than it is for young people who work, and the family is more important for young people aged 25–29 and has declined in importance among the younger age groups. The period of youth has been prolonged somewhat since the survey conducted in 1997; young people study longer, it takes a long time to become

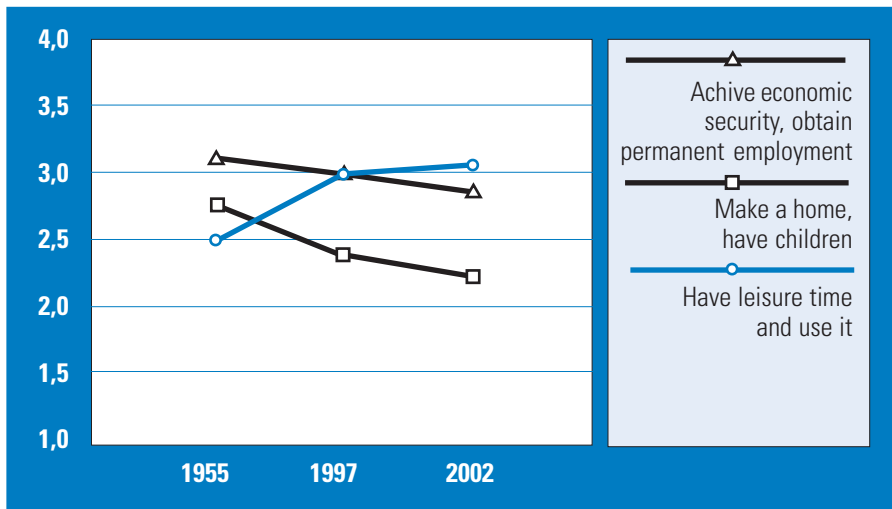


Figure1 How important is it at the moment to ... aged 15–27 for 1955, 16–29 for 1997 and 2002. Mean value on a 4-point scale where 1 = Not important at all and 4 = Most important.

established on the labour market and they start families later. In step with the postponement of their transition into adulthood within various spheres, the view among young people as to when they are regarded as adults has also changed to a certain extent.

However, being able to support oneself is still an important part of being an adult, although existential factors such as taking responsibility for your own

decisions, knowing what you want to do with your life and discovering your identity are also important. Having children has become a more important adult factor since the previous survey. On the other hand, a completed education is not regarded as an important factor for being an adult, perhaps because it is today so difficult to say when you have concluded your education.

Figure 2 You become adult when you ... aged 16-74, 1997 and 2002, per cent

	1997		2002	
	16-29 yrs	35-74 yrs	16-29 yrs	35-74 yrs
assume responsibility for your own decisions	72	81	73	82
discover your identity	44	50	44	57
become self-sufficient	42	39	44	54
have children	36	32	39	41
know what you want to do in life	34	49	36	51
begin co-habiting (get married)	29	31	28	32
get your own housing	18	17	18	21
come of age	17	20	15	21
have completed your education	12	18	13	28

Values 6-7 on a 7-point scale where 1 = Disagree completely and 7 = Agree completely.

Education

In the survey, we ask respondents to state the highest level of completed education they plan and whether they are satisfied with their education.

Over the past ten years, there has been an increase in the proportion of people who set their sights on and plan for higher education. Already in the 1997 survey, it was apparent that young adults had a higher level of education than their parents, and now the difference is even more pronounced. However, the

proportion of people studying has dropped since 1997, which is largely a consequence of the improved labour market.

The proportion of people who are interested in higher education is almost 60 per cent among upper secondary school pupils and even higher among

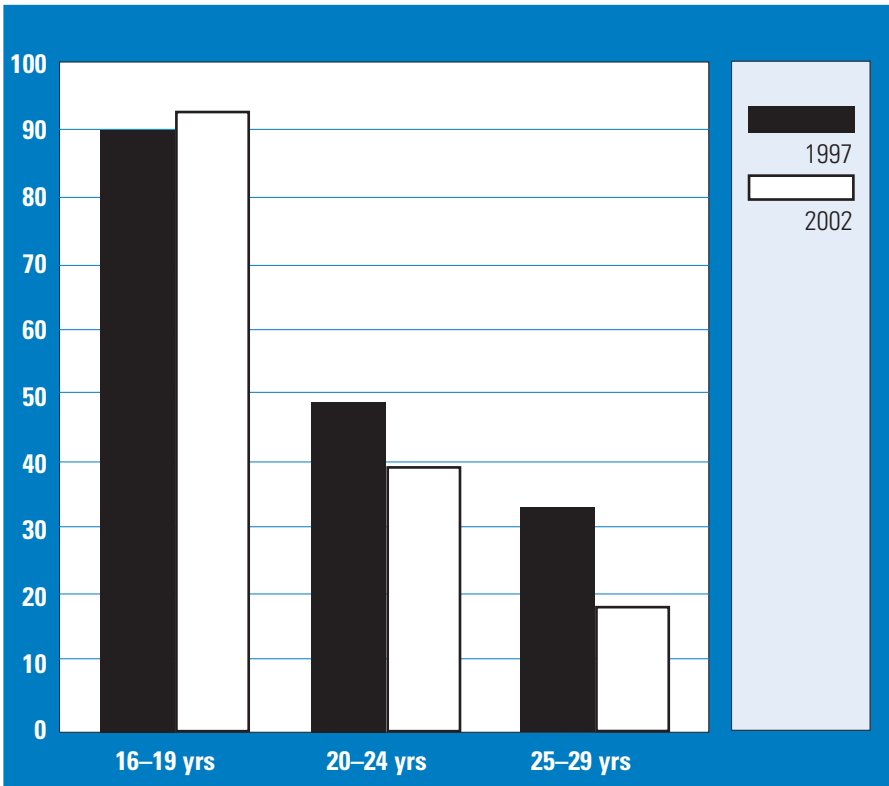


Figure 3 Proportion of young people studying aged 16-29, 1997 and 2002, per cent.

those born abroad. Four out of ten young people from a working-class background also want higher education. There is in other words every reason to believe that there will be a further decrease in uneven recruitment to universities and institutes of higher education (IHE).

The majority of respondents are satisfied with their education, above all

those with a degree. Those who are least satisfied are young people aged 20–24 who are unemployed and have a short period of education. Among those pupils attending upper secondary school, the majority intend to continue studying directly after leaving school. Most of them are interested in taking a degree.

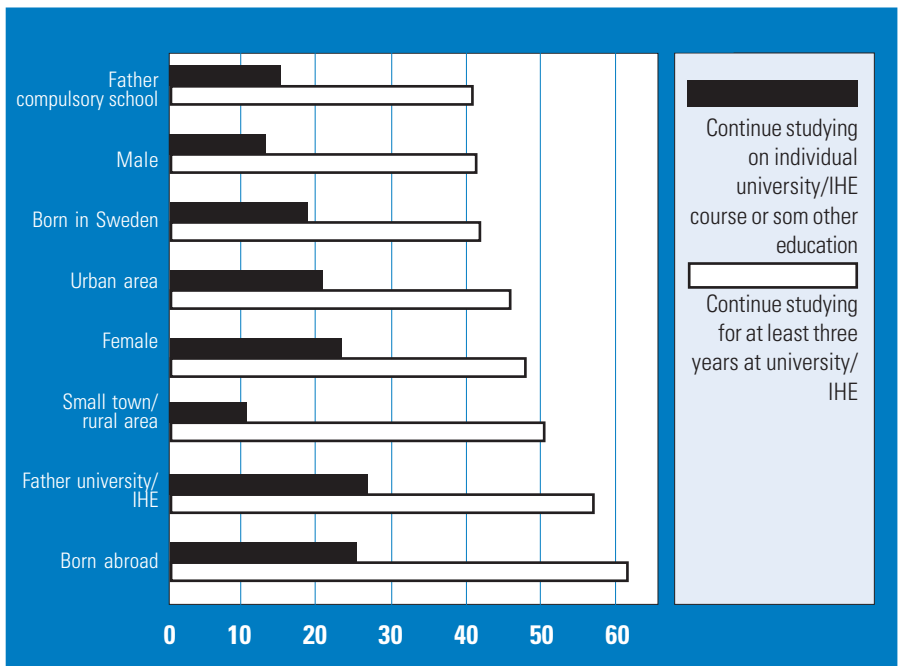


Figure 4 Proportion among different groups of young people who believe that they will study for at least three years at a university/IHE or on individual university/IHE courses directly after leaving upper secondary school, aged 16–19, 2002, per cent.

Work

In the survey, we ask respondents where they work and where they could consider working. We ask what characteristics are important about a job and whether their education and qualifications meet the demands of their job. We also ask whether they are satisfied with their work.

Two important changes have taken place over the past ten years, which may have contributed to a change in attitude among young people as to what constitutes a good job. The proportion of people who have a job that matches their education and qualifications has decreased. Instead, the proportion who have an education that don't match their work has increased.

Concurrently, the proportion of young people who have a job that contributes to a sense of personal fulfilment has decreased.

More young people feel today that their work is just like any other job, and that the only important thing is the money they make. This may be a contributory factor as to why a greater proportion state that career and material benefits are important.

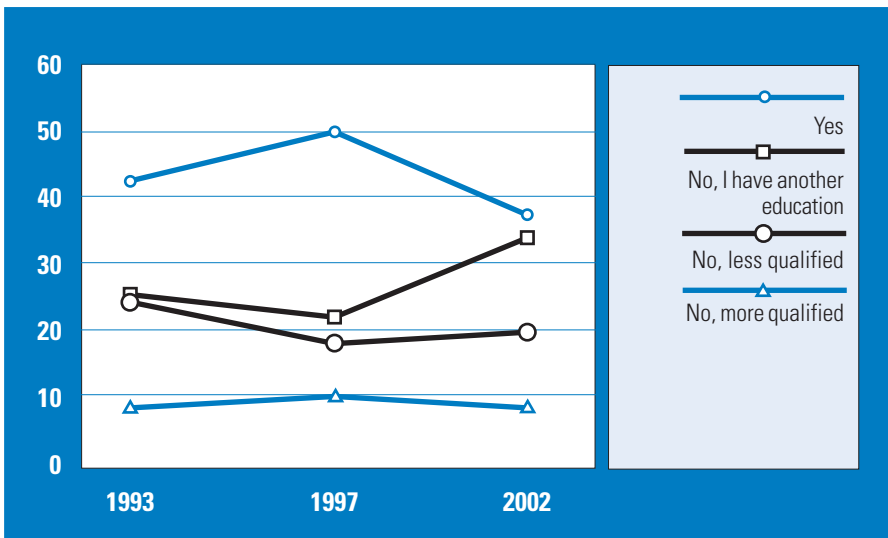


Figure 5 Do you think that your job matches your education and qualifications? Aged 20–24, 1993, 1997 and 2002, per cent

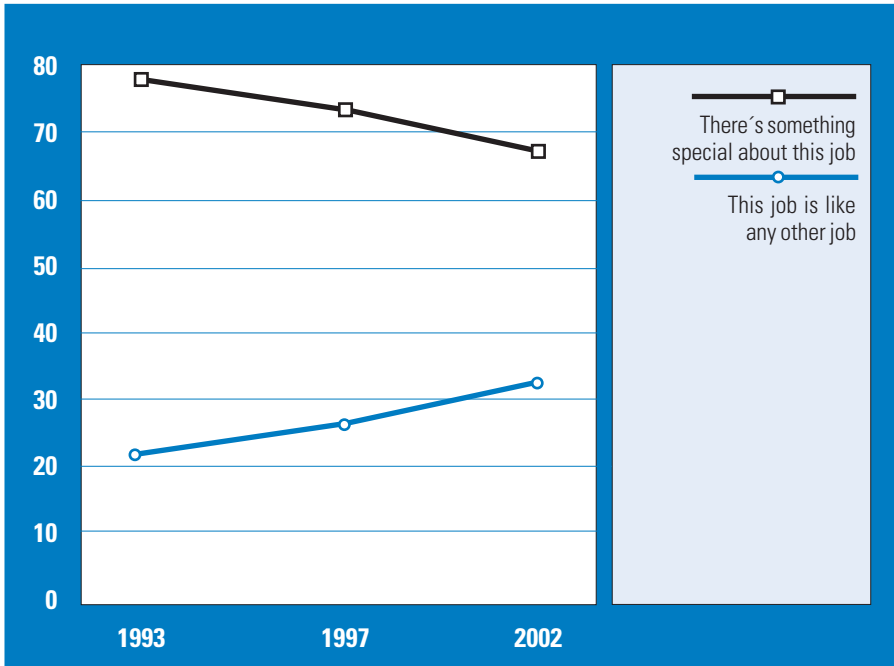


Figure 6 Job assessment, aged 16–74, 1993, 1997 and 2002, per cent.

A person's attitude to his or her job varies to a certain extent in co-relation to their own education and the type of job involved. More wage-earners, and more of them with a shorter education, feel that their jobs simply provide them with a source of income whereas more salaried employees, and those with a longer education, feel that their jobs give them a sense of personal fulfilment. At the same time as the educational level has increased, a smaller proportion of people feel that they have a job which matches their education and fewer feel that their jobs give them a sense of personal fulfilment. Perhaps it is the delayed establishment on the labour

market that has given rise to this situation. Nowadays, young people often work concurrently with their studies in order to improve their economy. The most important characteristics of a job are colleagues, the working environment and their superiors – and in this context there has been no change since 1993. Among young people, an even distribution of the sexes, international contacts and the possibility of making a career are also important. For young people born abroad, it is important that their job matches their level of education, that the position is permanent, the salary high and that there are chances for personal and professional develop-

ment. Most of the job characteristics are important for a larger proportion of women than for men. The only characteristics that are considered important by a greater proportion of men are

the possibility to make a career/become a manager and the fact that the job is permanent. A high salary and a good salary trend are of equal importance to both men and women.

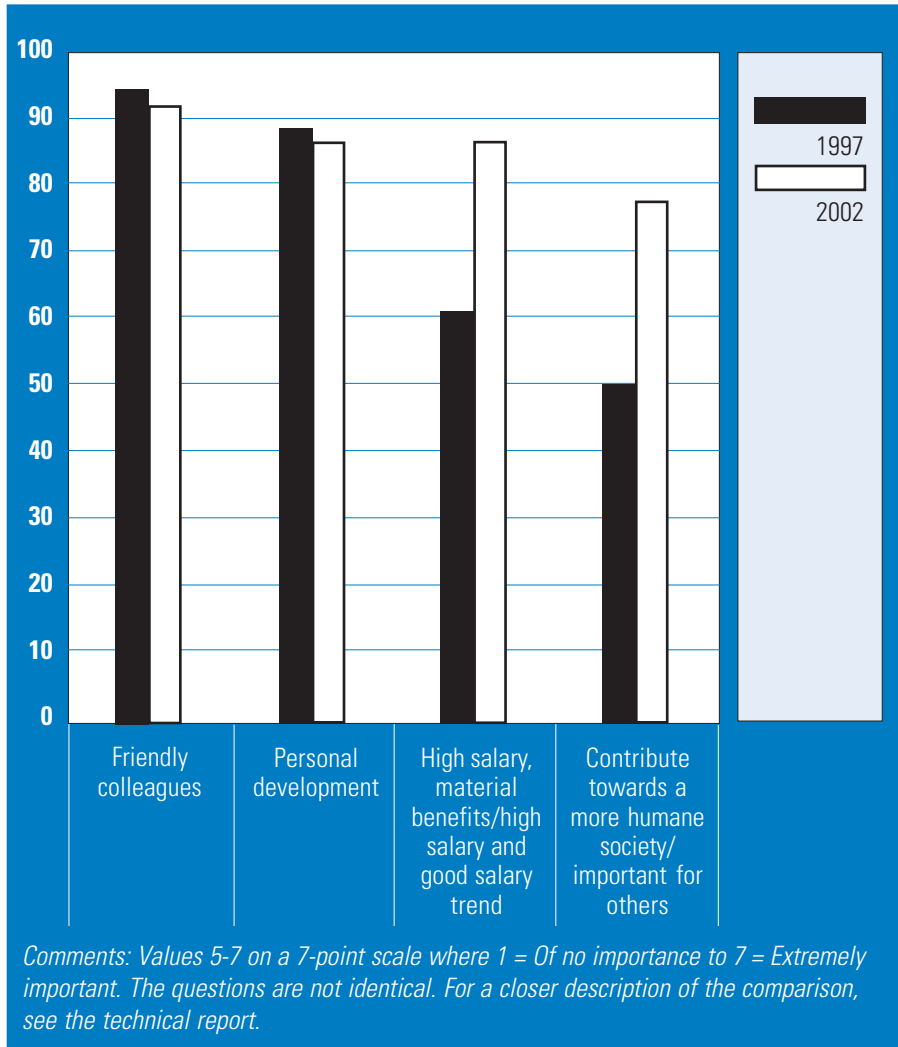


Figure 7 Proportion who consider that these characteristics are important in a job, aged 16–29, 1997 and 2002, per cent.

Leisure

In the survey, we ask how important leisure time is, what people do in their leisure time and what it gives them. We also ask whether they are actively involved in different organisations or associations, whether they are satisfied with their leisure time and whether they feel they have too much or too little leisure time.

A long-term trend among young people is that leisure time has increased in importance at the same time as work and family have become less important.

This applies to all groups apart from young people aged 25–29. For these, work and family continue to be important.

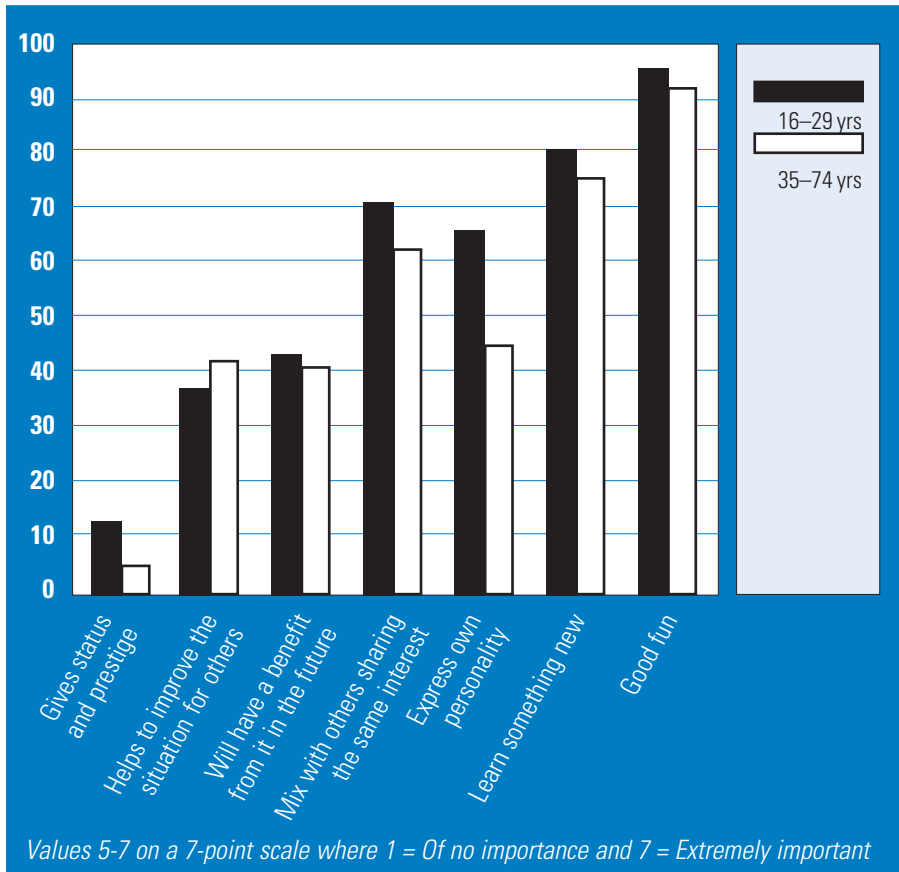


Figure 8 Proportion who state that the following are important or very important characteristics for selected leisure-time activities aged 16–74, 2002, per cent.

The proportion of young people who feel that they do not have enough leisure time is greater than the proportion of adults. However, 58 per cent of young people and 60 per cent of adults consider that they have a lot of leisure time. Those who have a lot of leisure time are more satisfied with their spare time than those who only have a little. Leisure is most important for the youngest group, men and young people who are unemployed.

We have asked about important characteristics of what people do in their leisure time. The most important characteristics proved to be that it is good fun and that they learn something new.

Six out of ten young people are actively involved in organisations. It is more common for young people to be active in student, sports and cultural organisations, whereas adults are more involved in local action groups and trade union organisations.

Equal number of young people and adults are active in political organisations although the proportion has dropped, but mostly in the adult group.

Young people are more involved in individual sports today than they were in 1993, and they go to the cinema more often. Adults tend to spend more time in the countryside. Young people use the computer much more than adults.

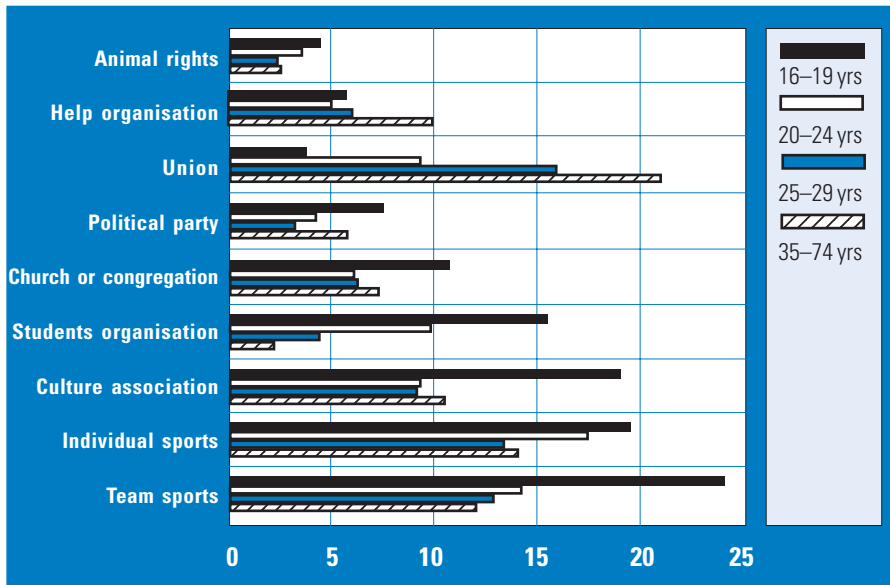


Figure 9 Proportion in different age groups who attend meetings or take part in activities within an organisation, club, society or association aged 16-74, 2002, per cent

Family

In the survey, we ask about people's attitude to the family and how important it is to have children and a family. We ask about parental leave and shared maintenance, and whether or not one's career is affected by having children.

In Sweden, the average age for leaving home is 19, and has been for some time. We can see no change or any signs of an increase in the proportion of young people who remain living with their parents. In the 16–19 age group, almost 90 per cent live with their parents. In

the age group 20–24, a third still live with their parents, a third live with a partner and the other third live a single life. In the 25–29 age group, a third still live a single life, most live with a partner and less than 5 per cent live with their parents.

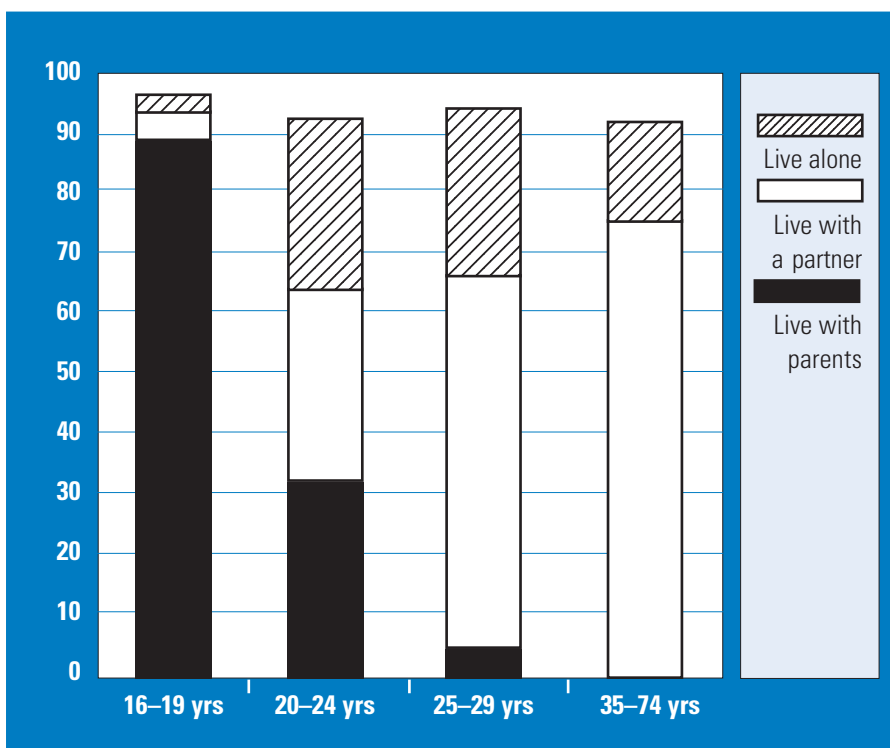


Figure 10 Proportion of respondents who state that they live alone, with a partner or with their parents, aged 16–74, 2002, per cent

Figure 11 Proportion who agree, aged 16–74, 2002, per cent.

	1993	1997	2002
Having children is one of the meanings of life	80	70	69
Children need a home with both a father and a mother in order to grow up happily	79	60	59
Marriage is an outdated institution	6	9	10

Values 6-7 on a 7-point scale where 1 = Disagree completely and 7 = Agree completely.

Among young people aged 25–29, every fourth woman and every fifth man lives with his or her own children. This is a decrease of 10 percentage points since 1997.

The proportion of young people who agree with the statement that having children is one of the meanings of life has also dropped from eight out of ten to seven out of ten over the period 1993–2002. This decrease is above all attributable to the younger age groups. It should be seen against the background that young people are having children later and later in life. In 2002, the average age in Sweden of women having their first child was 28 and for fathers 31. One of the causes of this delay in starting a family could be the concern among young people for their jobs and careers. Considerably more people are worried about the negative consequences of having children than the proportion who state that it was in fact a negative development. The attitude of young people to family and children is ambivalent.

There is a greater tolerance for other types of families among younger people than among adults.

This is demonstrated by the connection between not agreeing that a child needs a home with a father and a mother in order to grow up happily and considering that homosexuals should be entitled to adopt children. In both these statements, young people concur to a much greater extent than adults. The proportion who feel that it is good for the child to be at home with their mother or father has dropped over the past ten years.

At the same time, it would appear that more young people have a traditional attitude to the division of work within the family today than was the situation ten years ago. Among other things, there has been a decrease in the percentage who agree that the father of a small child should take parental leave of absence for at least two months.

Figure 12 The attitude of young people to gender roles. Proportion who agree with the statement, aged 16–74, 1993 and 2002, per cent

	Age	1993	2002
Fathers' parental leave minimum 2 months	16–29 yrs	72	59
	35–74 yrs	52	49
Housework equally rewarding for women	16–29 yrs	13	10
	35–74 yrs	23	20
Both parents should be breadwinners	16–29 yrs	85	76
	35–74 yrs	75	57

Values 6–7 on a 7-point scale where 1 = Disagree completely and 7 = Agree completely.

The proportion who consider that both parents should contribute as breadwinners has decreased, but without an increase in those who feel that housework can be as rewarding for women as working outside the home. A growing number of young people refrain from answering – many answer that they do not know.

But creating a good future for the children is still an important objective for eight of ten young people in the survey.

Politics

We ask in the survey about the characteristics young people and adults have as citizens, what political action they take and could imagine taking, and whether they are interested in politics, both in general and in terms of political developments in the world. We also ask whether they feel they can make their opinions heard and whether they trust politicians and elected representatives, and many other things.

We can see from the attitudes of young people to democracy a development in which the confidence of young people in politicians has increased at the same time as their interest in politics and their willingness to become involved in politics has decreased.

The growing trend towards distrust in politicians that was apparent in the crisis years of the 1990s has now been broken among both young people and adults.

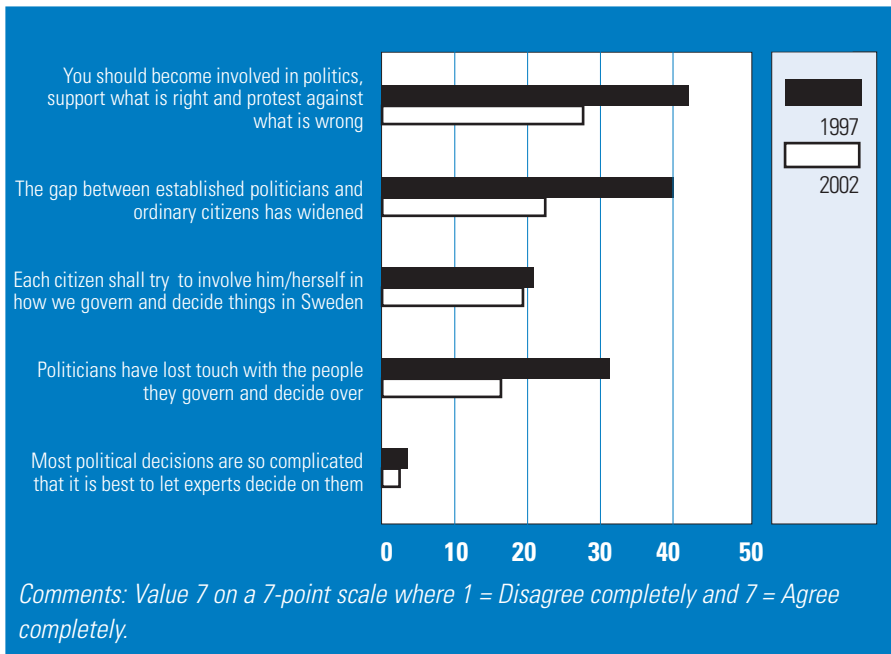


Figure 13 Proportion of young people who agree completely with the above statements, aged 16–29, 1997 and 2002, per cent.

The interest shown by young people in less traditional methods, such as occupying buildings and illegal action, has decreased. However, one out of eight young people consider that it could be right to use violence for a political cause.

There has been a decrease in the interest shown by young people in politics. One in three people aged 16–19 and one in four young people aged 20–24

state that they are not interested in politics, which is double the corresponding number in 1993.

The proportion of people who are most attracted by a society that rewards individual performance has decreased and the proportion who would instead prefer to see a society in which everyone has an equally sound economic situation has increased, also among adults.

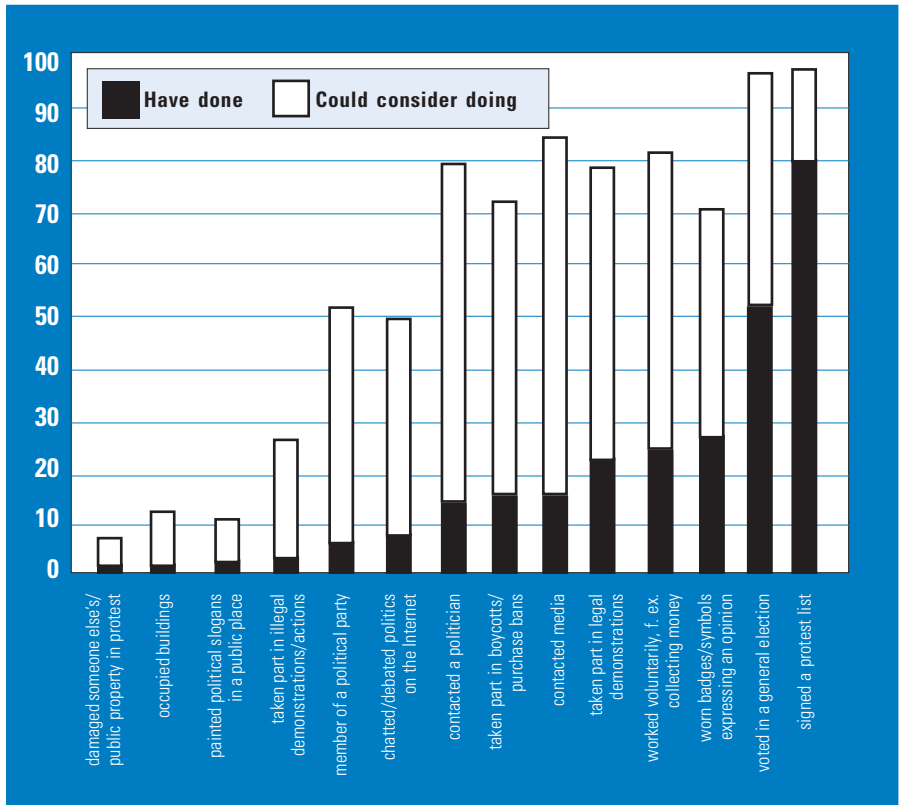


Figure 14 Proportion of young people who have carried out or could imagine carrying out various political actions, aged 16–29, 2002.

Diversity

Among the questions we ask in the survey are the respondent's attitude to refugees and immigrants, as well as to various groups that may be regarded as deviating from the norm.

The proportion of people living in Sweden who feel that Sweden should accept fewer refugees has steadily decreased during the 1990s, and at the same time the proportion who feel that we should accept a larger share has increased. Young people have a more positive attitude than adults to accepting refugees and immigrants.

At the same time, both young people and adults feel that immigrants should largely adapt to Swedish standards and norms with respect to bringing up children and equality of opportunity, and should learn Swedish. Those people who are most negative to refugees and immigrants live in those parts of Sweden where the percentage of immigrants and refugees is lowest, and they are also the

group who are least interested in travelling a broad for a longer period of time. When it comes to the mentally disabled, there is a more cautious attitude among young people. Considerably more adults consider that they should be given a place in our society and more young people want them to be placed in care. The greater tolerance towards the mentally disabled displayed by the older age groups is possibly an experience effect of the same type that explains their attitude to immigrants. In a number of respects, young people and adults find it more difficult to accept racists than immigrants. It is also more difficult for them to accept criminals and extremist or fundamentalist groups.

Figure 15 Proportion of young people and adults who feel that Sweden should accept refugees and immigrants in greater or lesser numbers, aged 16–74, 1997 and 2002, per cent

		16–29 yrs		35–74 yrs	
		1997	2002	1997	2002
Accept refugees	To a greater extent	14	23	10	14
	To a lesser extent	40	36	46	41
Accept immigrants	To a greater extent	5	10	3	7
	To a lesser extent	61	49	69	53

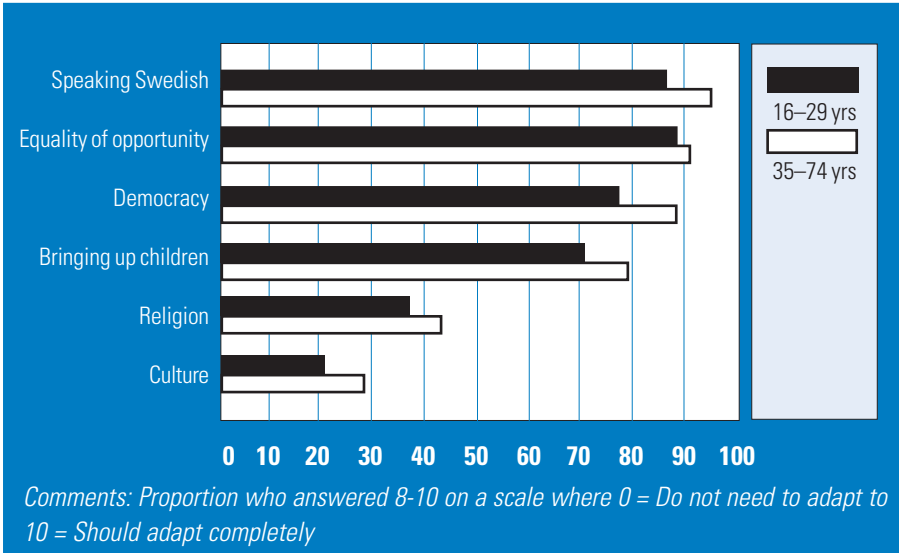


Figure 16 Proportion of young people and adults who feel that newly arrived immigrants should adapt to Swedish conditions with respect to ..., aged 16-74, 2002, per cent.

The attitude to homosexuals is a watershed between young people and adults. Homosexuality is regarded to a greater extent as being something

unnatural by the adult groups whereas young people feel to a greater extent that homosexuals should have the same rights as heterosexuals.

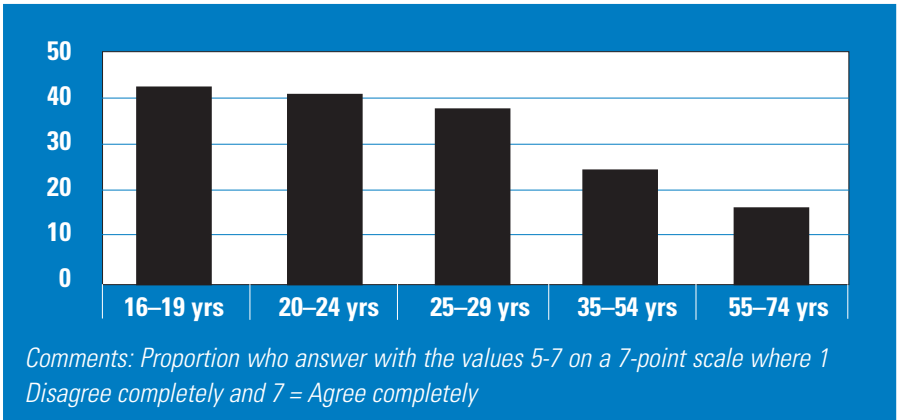


Figure 17 Proportion who agree that homosexuals should have the right to adopt, aged 16-74, 2002, per cent.

Health and quality of life

In the survey, we ask how often people have different symptoms such as stomach ache, headache, whether they feel stressed or worried about their health, and whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with their health and life in general.

How we feel affects our health, and vice versa. Young people who are unemployed state that they are less satisfied with their state of health, and the same thing applies to young people with a bad economy. Since 1993, however, a smaller proportion of people worry about being infected by HIV/aids, about their economy or about being made unemployed. The proportion of people who are unemployed has also decrea-

sed over the period. However, a larger proportion state today than nine years ago that they are concerned about their health.

The increase has been highest in the 20–24 age group where every tenth person is often worried about his or her health. The proportion is higher among the unemployed, young people born abroad and young women.

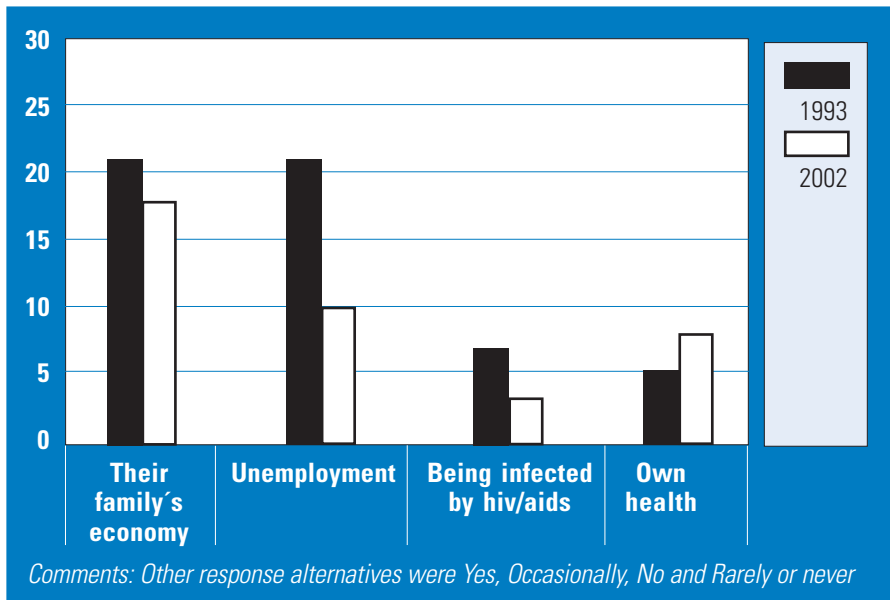


Figure 18 Proportion of people who are often worried about their health, the family economy, unemployment and being infected by HIV/aids, aged 16–29, 1993 and 2002, per cent.

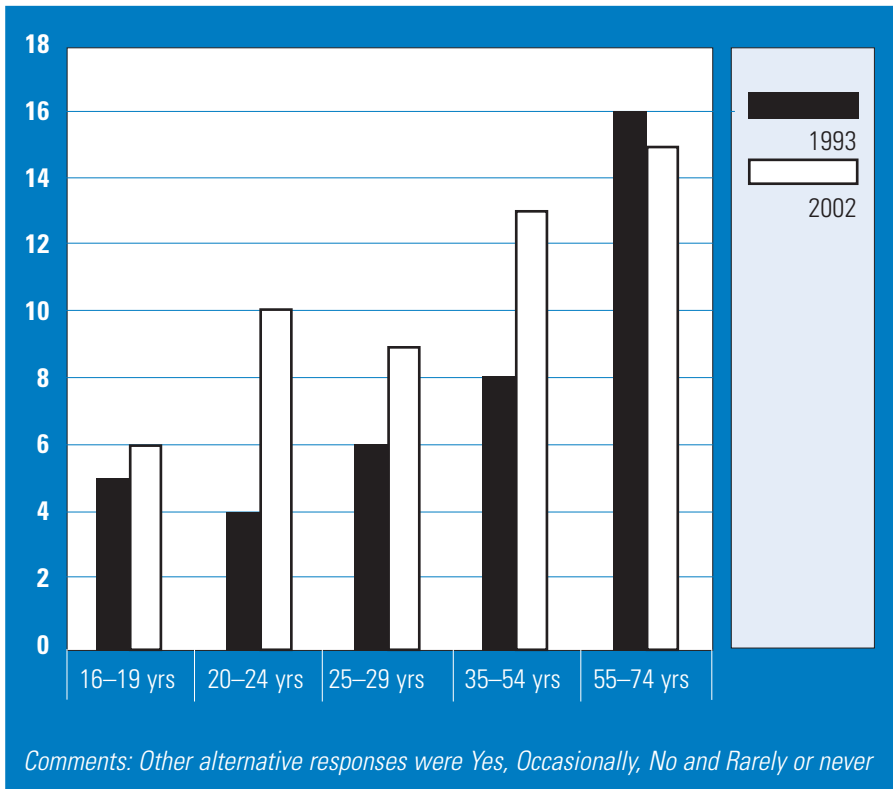


Figure 19 Proportion of people who have often felt concerned about their health recently, aged 16-74, 1993 and 2002, per cent.

At the same time, a smaller proportion state that they are satisfied with their state of health. The proportion who are satisfied with their health has dropped in all age groups except among the youngest, i.e. 16-19 year olds.

For every fifth young person, life does not live up to their expectations and every tenth young person is dissatisfied with life in general. It is young people aged 20-24, unemployed, men and

young people born abroad who state that they have a low quality of life. The proportion of young people with a low quality of life has decreased since 1997, but instead they report an increase in ill-health.

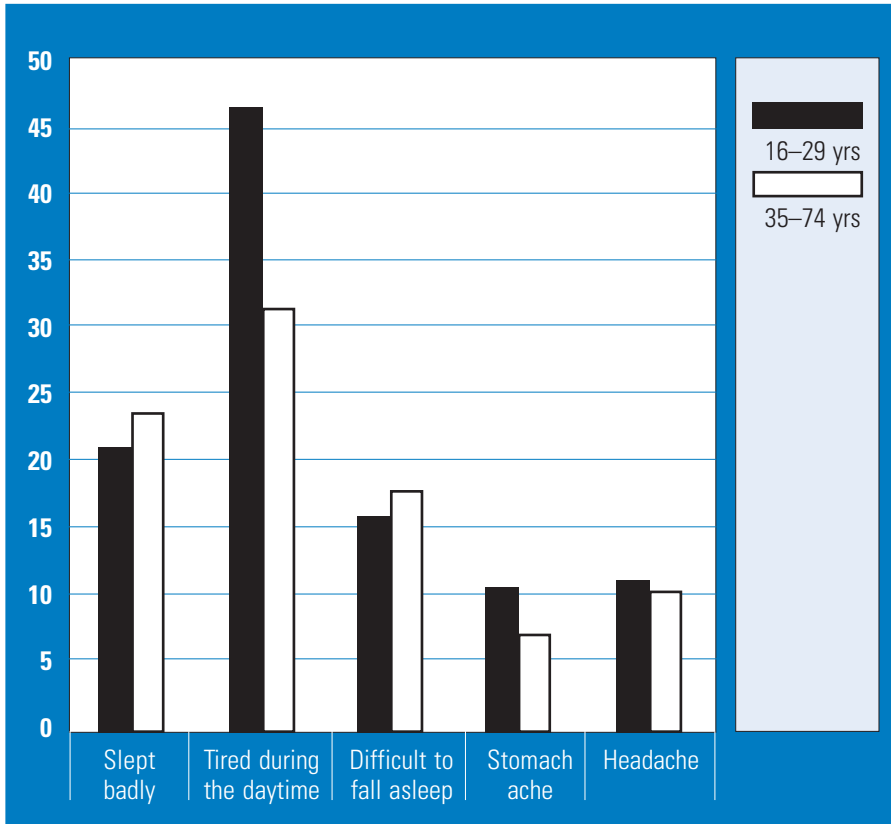


Figure 20 Proportion of people who often or several times a week have suffered the above problems over the past six months, aged 16–74, 2002, per cent.

One out of ten young people in the survey often or several times a week have a stomach ache, headache or have sleeping disorder. One in five sleeps badly and almost every other person is tired during the day. One out of three suffers from stress. Those who to the greatest extent say that they suffer from stress are women, young people born abroad, young people living in cities and pupils attending upper secondary schools. In other words, the group that

experiences stress symptoms is not the same group that experiences a low quality of life. Stress instead seems to be connected to high performance demands and the upper secondary school period.

Three out of four young people, however, feel well, eight out of ten are pleased with themselves, have the strength to do a lot of things and are nearly always in a good mood.

Young people's attitude to law and justice

We have in the survey asked questions about people's attitudes to a number of morally doubtful and more or less illegal actions, including tax evasion, exploiting social benefits, taking drugs and travelling by bus and train without paying.

Developments over the past ten years have with few exceptions meant that the proportion of people who think that something may be right has decreased, and the proportion who answer that various actions are never right has increased among both young people and adults.

Young people believe, however, to a somewhat greater extent than adults, that all actions could be right.

It is above all employing someone without paying tax that one in three young people believe could be right. One in five also feel that it could be

right to travel on a bus or train without paying or buying alcohol for young people under the age of 20 at a state liquor shop. One in ten feels that it could be right to evade tax and one in 20 feels that it could be right to take drugs.

Nearly everyone is of the opinion that drunken driving is never right. The greatest gender-based difference concerns the procurement of sexual services. One man in six considers that it could be right whereas for women the figure is less than one in twenty.

Figure 21 Proportion of respondents who answer that the following actions could be right, aged 16–29, 1993 and 2002, per cent.

	1993	2002
To employ someone without paying tax	12	15
To buy liquor for young people under 20	3	9
To travel by bus or train without paying	7	9
To exploit social benefits	3	3
To evade tax	4	4
To take drugs	3	2
To drive under the influence of alcohol	3	0

Mobility

We have in the survey asked questions about whether people have been abroad and how they would feel about moving abroad or moving away from their home district.

Young people today travel a lot and enjoy travelling. They move around within Sweden's borders, to places of education or work, or simply for a change of environment. Young women appear to be more mobile than young men. One in three feels that it is very important and seven out of ten feel it is important to have had the opportunity to travel round and see the world before they are 35, which is the same proportion as five years ago.

Young people today have travelled more than before; one in three have been abroad more than six times without their parents. Many have also been abroad to work or study.

Young people show somewhat less of an interest in moving abroad for 2002 compared with 1997, even though the difference is minimal. Approximately four out of ten young people can imagine living in another country for at least six months. The proportion who plan

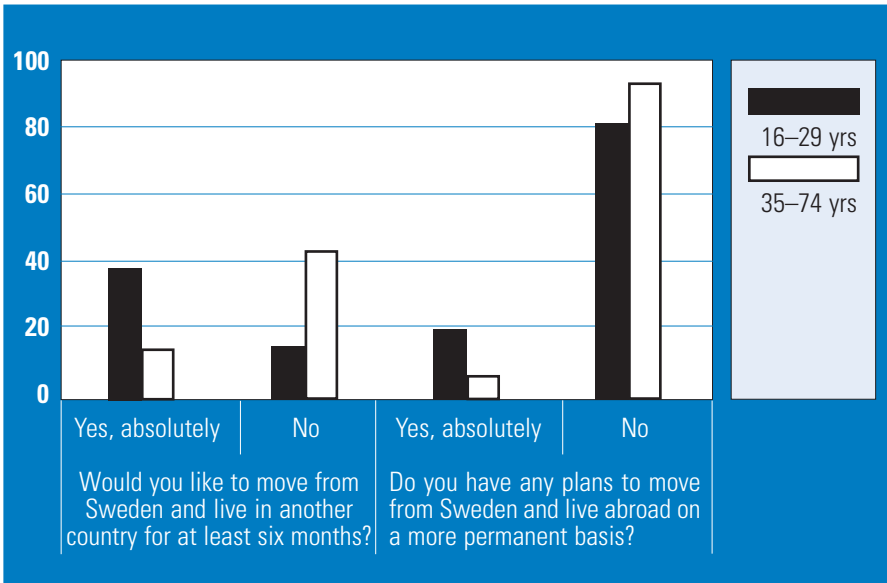


Figure 22 Proportion of young people and adults who answer Yes or No to moving more or less permanently from Sweden to another country, aged 16-74, 2002, per cent.

to live abroad permanently has not decreased but has in fact increased somewhat to one in five.

Just over one in three young people believe they will move away from their home district within the next few years, which is less than in the 1997 survey.

They give reasons such as moving in order to study or work in another place, and many also state that they want to move for a change of environment.

Figure 23 Why young people in various groups would want to move from Sweden and live in another country for at least six months, aged 16–29, 2002, per cent

	Work	Study	Holiday "back- packing around"	Work with develop- ment aid/ voluntary- service	Other	Don't know
16–19 yrs	50	41	48	13	9	3
20–24 yrs	60	42	49	18	9	2
25–29 yrs	57	23	38	18	8	2
Male	54	28	40	11	9	2
Female	59	40	57	22	8	2
Born in Sweden	58	35	45	17	8	2
Born abroad	47	31	33	15	12	2
Work	58	24	42	16	8	1
Study	61	50	49	20	6	2
Unemployed/ employment programme	48	21	45	12	14	2
Father's education, compulsory school	53	25	40	17	7	2
Father's education, university or IHE	65	47	49	19	9	1
Total 16–29 yrs	56	34	44	17	8	2

The future

In the survey, we have asked how the respondents see their future and whether they believe things will go well for them in the future. We have asked the youngest what they think they will do after leaving upper secondary school and we have asked whether life is living up to their expectations.

Young people view their future with more optimism today than five years ago. One in twenty young people regard their future with pessimism. There has

been a decrease in all groups. The proportion who view their future with optimism, however, is highest in the 25–29 age group.

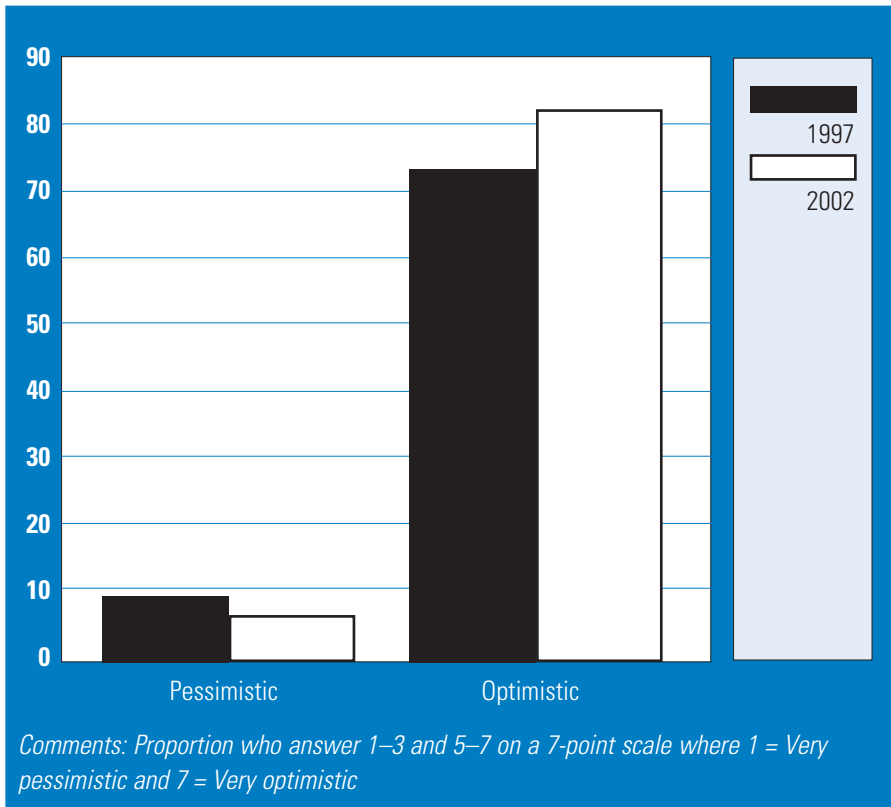


Figure 24 Proportion of young people who view their future with pessimism and optimism, respectively, aged 16–29, 1997 and 2002, per cent.

Even among those who declare they have a low quality of life, eight out of ten have an optimistic view of the future.

The proportion who state that their lives live up to their expectations has increased among both young people and adults since 1997.

The highest proportion of optimists is to be found among young people living in cities and among those who are

studying or working. How they regard the future – optimistically or pessimistically – should be influenced by their present situation. The figure below distinguishes those with a pessimistic view of their future, the pessimists, quite clearly from young people in general in the survey. Those who view their future with optimism, the optimists, are considerably more numerous and at the same time answer more in line with

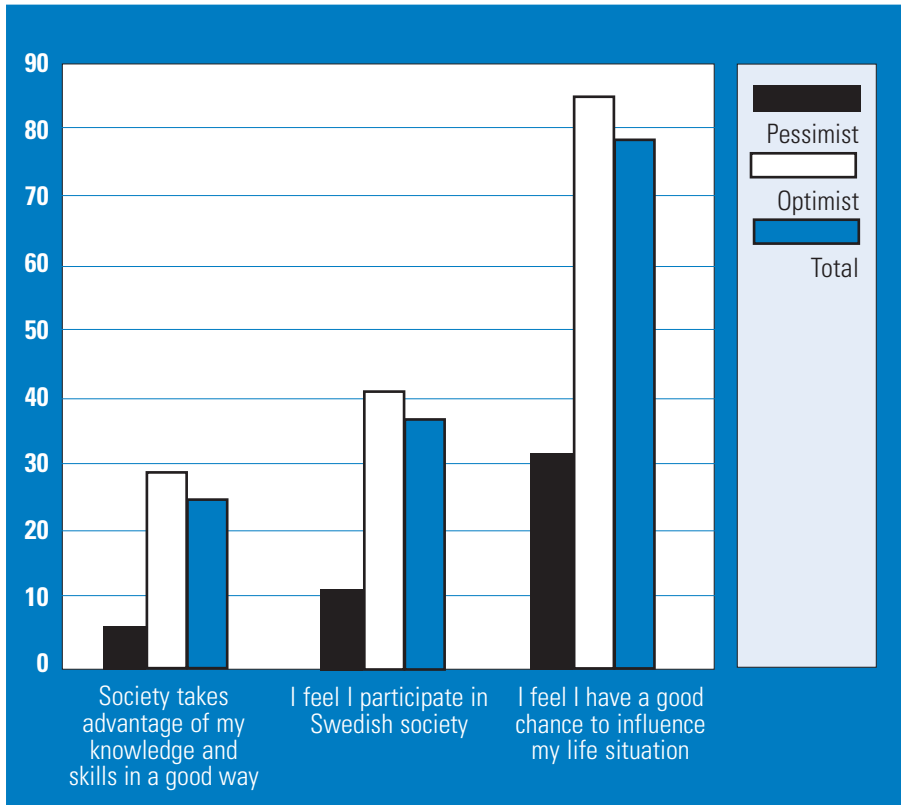


Figure 25 The extent to which optimists and pessimists feel they participate in society and feel that they can exert an influence, and the degree to which their resources are utilised, aged 16–29, 2002, per cent.

everyone in the survey. The pessimists' lives do not live up to expectations, and 28 per cent of them feel that life does not live up to expectations at all (the corresponding figure for the entire young people group is 4 per cent and 2 per cent for the optimists). They feel to a very limited extent that they can influence their life situation, they experience a low level of participation in society and they do not feel that their skills are being utilised. During the 1990s, the situation in Europe and the rest of the world has been turbulent. A lot has happened, and young people today declare a greater concern for the international situation than in 1993, but also for their health and for being burgled. A smaller proportion are concerned about environmental pollution, the cost of housing, HIV/aids and unemployment.

The proportion who believe that things will go well for them in the future is highest among young people with a university or equivalent education, young people living in cities and in the 25–29 age group. Unemployed youths with a short education and young people living in small municipalities do not believe to the same extent that things will go well for them in the future.



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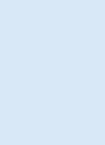
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is a governmental authority working in four fields.

We work with method development in young peoples' leisure and associative activities, as well as in international youth exchanges. In addition we allocate public funds in these areas.

We support the development of local youth policies and coordinate the follow-up of the national youth policy.



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