



nabo

– social inclusion of
youth in Iceland



*"You don't really belong anywhere –
you are not an adult and you are not
a child, you are not taken seriously,
you are somehow in between..."*

– Icelandic youth, Ísafjörður

NABO

– social inclusion of youth in Iceland

*Ellen Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir, Kristín Erla Harðardóttir and
Gestur Guðmundsson*

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Foreword

Young people in the Nordic region generally have good living conditions. However, at the same time the Nordic countries share some challenges, we have groups of youth that feel they do not belong in the community, feel that they are not listened to and are not taken seriously when participating. We also know that there is a geographical factor. The place where young people live and grow up affects their opportunities. Regardless if they grow up in a city, a disadvantaged neighbourhood, a rural village or a sparsely populated area, these preconditions differ, and it is important to emphasize. Youths are heterogenous groups with different needs. We have groups of youth that we know need more support and efforts, for example individuals in risk of becoming NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training), at risk of suffering from mental illness, immigrants and youth with disabilities.

Youths are a resource and we should assume that they are experts on their own lives. In the Nabo project we investigate social inclusion, i.e. how young people between 16–24 years, describe their everyday opportunities and obstacles to live the lives they want to live, and their possibilities to influence that development. An inclusive society is one where everyone feels social belonging and have opportunities to engage in different parts of the social life. A society where everyone actively can participate in policymaking processes that affect both their own lives and society at large.

As part of the Nabo-project we have produced reports which shed light on how youth describe various aspects of social inclusion in all the Nordic countries and in Greenland, the Faroe Island and Åland. This is the Icelandic report.

The Icelandic study shows that in many ways the Icelandic youths resemble their peers in other Nordic countries. They are neither excluded or fully included from the labour market, education and social participation. However, compared with other Nordic countries Icelandic youths has more access to the labour market already when they are teenagers and as young adults (Einarsdóttir et al., 2015).

Stories of being discriminated because of young age appeared frequently from youths participating in the study, they also described a lack of interest in, and possibilities to, influence “big politics”. Participants also described problems with expensive and non-existent affordable housing, dealing with financial matters and mental health as well as the lack of reliable and available public transport. On the other hand, social support and the feeling of belonging was emphasized as important promotion factors for social inclusion.

This report has been carried out by the Nabo-project in cooperation with The Educational Research Institute at the University of Iceland. The authors are Ellen Dröfn Gunnarsdóttir, Kristín Erla Harðardóttir and Gestur Guðmundsson.

Lena Nyberg, director-general
Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society

Figure 1: Word cloud



Note: Word cloud for the open question: "We have talked about belonging to the place where you live, that you matter and that your opinions matter. What meaning does this have for you?"

About

Nabo

Nabo – social inclusion of youth in the Nordic region is a project launched under the Swedish presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers 2018. The project runs over the period 2018–2020 and seeks to make the youth perspective on social inclusion visible through the words of Nordic youth. Project Manager: Jeff Jonsson.

Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society

Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society produces and disseminates knowledge in two principal areas: Youth policy and policy focused on civil society. We produce knowledge on youths living conditions across a range of areas such as work, housing, education, health, leisure time and influence.

Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society also has the task of working to ensure that the youth perspective is developed in the work of other state agencies and to provide support for the municipalities in their youth policy work.

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Summary

This report summarizes the findings from six focus groups interviews with youths in Iceland on the topic of social inclusion. The interviews took place from September 2018 until end of January 2019. The report is part of the project *Nabo – social Inclusion of youth in the Nordic Region*, run by *The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society* that takes place in the Nordic countries including the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The aim is to gain knowledge on how young people experience social inclusion and possibilities for social and political participation.

The report shows that stories of being discriminated because of young age appeared frequently from youths participating in the study, they also described a lack of interest in, and possibilities to, influence “big politics”. Participants also described problems with expensive and non-existent affordable housing, dealing with financial matters and mental health as well as the lack of reliable and available public transport. On the other hand, social support and the feeling of belonging was emphasized as important promotion factors for social inclusion.

1. Introduction

This report summarizes the findings from six focus groups interviews consisting of 38 individuals in Iceland that took place from September 2018 until end of January 2019. The focus groups are part of the project *Nabo – social Inclusion of youth in the Nordic Region*, in collaboration with *The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society* that takes place in the Nordic countries including the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The aim is to gain knowledge on how young people experience social inclusion and possibilities for social and political participation. In these interviews, groups of four to eight people from 18–24 years old, were asked to discuss their experience of their social inclusion and belonging in the Icelandic community.

1.1 Methodology and participants

Six focus group interviews were undertaken in Iceland. Each interview took around 90 minutes. The interviewers were Katrín Ágústa Johnson and Unnur Edda Garðarsdóttir, employees of the Educational Research Institute of the University of Iceland. Participants in the six focus groups are described as following:

- *LGBTQ group. Participants:* six individuals, aged 18–24. *Occupations:* both students and employees. *Location:* Reykjavík.
- *Ísafjörður group. Participants:* five women, one 20 years old and four 18 years old, two men aged 18. *Occupations:* students. *Location:* Ísafjörður Upper Secondary School in Ísafjörður, in the Westfjords of Iceland.
- *Mosfellsbær group. Participants:* three women aged 20–22 and four men aged 18–24. Five participants live in Mosfellsbær, one woman in Grafarholt (one of Reykjavík's municipalities) and one woman lives in Kópavogur (another municipality of Iceland). *Occupations:* Both students and employees. *Location:* Mosfellsbær Upper Secondary School in Mosfellsbær, one of six municipalities of Greater Reykjavík.
- *Breiðholt group. Participants:* five women aged 20–23 and two men aged 20–21. One woman was born in an Asian country and has one Asian parent and one Icelandic. Another woman has on one East-European parent and one Icelandic parent. *Occupations:* Both students and employees. Two women live in Grafarvogur, a municipality of Reykjavík and one in Hlíðar, a neighbourhood centrally located in Reykjavík. *Location:* Municipal Service Centre for Breiðholt, in Breiðholt, a south-eastern district of Reykjavík with a population of around 20,000 people, one of largest districts in Reykjavík.

- *Reykjanes-group. Participants:* four women, aged 20–23. *Occupations:* three out of four were participating in a programme run by *Virk*, a vocational rehabilitation Fund. One woman was a single parent, unemployed. *Location:* Education Centre of Reykjanesbær, in Reykjanesbær, southwest Iceland.
- *FB-group. Participants:* five women, aged 18–19 and one man, 23 years old. *Occupations:* students and employees. *Location:* Breiðholt Upper Secondary School, in Breiðholt.

The study includes a guide with questions for the focus groups interviews, provided in Appendix i. The guide includes questions for six main themes and an approximate time that should be allotted to each theme. In addition, participants were asked to grade eight questions on the scale 1 to 10, provided in Appendix ii. Participants were given a sheet where they could mark their grade for each question. In the last question on the sheet, they were asked to write three to five words about belonging and what is important to them.

1.2 Neither fully included nor totally excluded

In many ways the Icelandic respondents resemble their peers in other Nordic countries. They are neither excluded from the labour market, education and social participation nor fully included. However, compared with other Nordic countries Icelandic youth have more access to the labour market already when teenagers and as young adults (Einarsdóttir et al., 2015). As in other Nordic countries more than 90% are already enrolled in upper secondary education from the age of 16, but a considerably higher proportion of Icelandic youth, compared to other Nordic and OECD countries, do not complete this education until their twenties or even later (OECD 2013 & 2018). They become acquainted with the labour market already as teenagers in part-time jobs. Later they work along with studies and may take a sabbatical year and even abandon education for several years, but later they return to studies, this time adult education.

In the Icelandic study, focus groups were gathered in comprehensive upper secondary schools in suburban neighbourhoods in the capital area and in two other municipalities with 15,000 and 4,000 inhabitants. These schools are to a high degree populated by children of working class and lower middle-class origin, while the upper middle classes dominate at least five grammar schools in the central capital area and in well-off suburban areas (Auður Magnús Auðardóttir and Berglind Rós Magnúsdóttir, forthcoming).

Our respondents are of mixed social origin, but are all facing different elements of exclusion – often unstable educational careers, economic disadvantages, limitations of social participation, discrimination of sexual minorities etc. Recent longitudinal studies (Gestur Guðmundsson & Hulda Karen Ólafsdóttir, 2013) indicate that a high proportion of this population has an extended transition to adulthood. They take sabbatical years when in upper secondary education, go from one job to another and embark on higher

education as adults. Many of them start a family early in life but are later divorced and may start a new family. Our focus groups include people aged 18–24; some of them have taken on the responsibilities of adults, but they are also in many other ways likely to take detours as youths long into their lives.

2. Participation

2.1 Leisure time

Most participants were students and commonly had a part-time job alongside their studies. Some were full-time students, less commonly full-time employees. A few were unemployed, single parents and some enrolled in a vocational rehabilitation programme. When asked about their leisure time they named sports, computers, TV, drawing, writing, music, riding horses and spending time with family, friends and partners. Some of them had more specific interests, for example being a member of the Christian Association of Youth, a leader on the directorial board of NQOI and one was starting a new business making prosciutto. Many participants talked about having little leisure time: "What is leisure time?" said a single mother.

2.2 Limitations of participation in different aspects of society

The most frequently mentioned limiting factor of social participation was young age. Participants felt that because of their young age, they are not listened to. One participant in the LGBTQ group said it is much harder for young people to be members of political parties for example and felt discriminated against because of young age. Not being taken seriously because of youth was also a common theme:

"I went to the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Authority to try to find out how food production works if I want to produce it and they were very hesitant to help me because I was so young and didn't have culinary education and wanted to start to produce food. Instead of helping me they said: 'are you sure?'"

One participant complained about the high legal drinking age for alcohol in Iceland (20 years) and the age limits for going to bars (also 20), which is among the highest in Europe. Gender bias was also named as a hindrance for social inclusion. Many felt that being male is an advantage and makes it easier to have an influence and get things done:

"My friend was working in Flugger [paint shop] and no one wanted her help. They always said: 'can I speak to your boss or someone who knows what he is talking about' and she said fine and got a boy and then they always had to ask her ... she knew everything, but they always wanted a boy. She worked there for two years and this was always happening to her."

Both women and men commonly felt the same about the privileged position of men in society. In relation to gender issues, LGBTQ people face different challenges. They feel they have limited options for travelling for example. In many countries, homosexuality is still illegal, and they feel unsafe visiting those countries, fearing for their safety.

Practical issues such as filling forms including gender where there is no third option feel like a hindrance. One participant in the LGBTQ-group said that going through a name change is tremendously tedious and hard for trans people. Gender norms, with moms and dads defining the nuclear family is restricting for LGBTQ people, as other forms of the nuclear family are marginalized. Yet another concern for LGBTQ people is sports. Hormonal intake can influence their opportunities in competitive sports because of restrictions and regulations on hormonal intake. Sports are strongly gender defined, which limits the participation of some LGBTQ people. The LGBTQ-group wanted to see more variety in gender defined roles and a shift from the binary definitions of gender.

Financial matters were one of two most frequently mentioned limiting factors in social participation across all groups. Lack of money prevents them from living independently in their own accommodation, getting a driving licence, travelling and participating in different leisure activities. As Iceland is very expensive, many discussed moving abroad where things are more affordable which increases their opportunities. Some participants living outside Reykjavík said their district only has limited options to offer to young people, such as bowling. Interestingly, participants in Ísafjörður did not feel there were many limiting factors regarding social participation, even though Ísafjörður is the most isolated of all locations in this report. Overall, lack of trust and being doubted because of young age were the things they were concerned about across all groups.

The average scores of the groups regarding the question "How many of the things you like to do, can you do" (Appendix iii) ranged from 4.5 (Reykjanesbær-group) to 7.5 (Ísafjörður-group) with the overall average of 6.4. In conclusion, even though participants in all groups felt there are some things that limit social participation, they lean towards being more positive than negative in this respect.

3. Influence

3.1 Opportunities for decision-making at home

Most participants who lived at home felt they could influence decisions there. They said they had a good relationship with their families, and that their opinion mattered: “We just painted our house and we all got to decide on the colour, and then we got a new sofa and we all had to agree on which one to get before it was bought.” Many talked about having a lot of support from their families, although there are regulations they have to follow if they live at home and some have family meetings where important decisions are discussed with the whole family. The family of one participant in the Reykjanesbær-group runs a business and she is obliged to work for the family business, there is no choice of opting out. Another participant said she persuaded her parents to take on an exchange student, even though the parents were hesitant, and that made her feel she had a strong voice in her home. The parents of many participants have encouraged them to acquire an education, especially if the parents are educated themselves:

“I’ve heard that children of parents with a university degree are more likely to get a university education and in my case my parents have a university degree and the emphasis on that was strong: ‘you will have success in life if you have an education... you need to get a university degree to get opportunities in life.’”

Others felt they had less influence in decision-making at home:

“I don’t want to have too many opinions at home, like what’s for dinner – it depends on who’s the loudest. My parents come up with ideas and then it depends on what we think, we are four brothers, all quite loud. But I don’t want to decide.”

Half of the participants in the Breiðholt-group concurred: “When I lived with my mother-in-law I had no saying”, “It’s not like that at my home, if there is dinner, you should eat... come home and eat” and yet another said: “My godfather decides the menu for the week.” The size of the family also makes a difference; one participant in the FB-group said it is hard to make common decisions because there are so many children in the family, so the parents make the big decisions.

3.2 Having an influence in and outside the neighbourhood

The feeling of having an influence varied quite a lot between participants. In the Breiðholt- and FB-group, students who were studying at Breiðholt Upper Secondary School were very happy with a voting system that is operated in the school. Each

semester, students can participate in voting concerning changes in the school, for example the layout of the classrooms. Others were not sure how, in practice, they can have an influence. A participant in the Mosfellsbær-group said there is a neighbourhood council meeting where she lives in Grafarvogur (a neighbourhood in Reykjavík) on Wednesdays at 2pm where people can influence decision-making concerning the neighbourhood, "...but only the retired people can make it at this time."

The online voting system the city of Reykjavík runs was mentioned by a few, where it is possible to vote on ideas for the city such as the location of playgrounds, city and traffic lights and leisure parks, but some find the options too limiting: "It's like, fixing three holes in a pavement somewhere in the neighbourhood and it costs 5 million kronas! I would like to see the reason for that cost", and another one added: "...but there is no option of adding for example proper housing for elementary schools or building a new school, there are so many kids in one class."

Participants in the Mosfellsbær-group complained about not having a similar system for Mosfellsbær, as Reykjavík is probably the only municipality that can afford such a voting system. Even though many have used this system, they generally wanted to have more control over what is done and a more transparent process.

Some expressed little interest in influencing practical aspects of their neighbourhood while others felt that their opinion is simply not taken into consideration. For example, in Reykjanesbær where residents protested against a silicon plant with a petition, this had no influence whatsoever. A respondent in the Breiðholt-group felt that it is hard to have an influence:

"...but how is it possible? You just vote for a government and if you don't win, the others are in power and you have no control. You can't control how the health-care issues are... so I don't have a strong opinion because I don't have a say in it."

Participants in the Reykjanesbær-group all agreed that they would like to have more influence, but felt prejudiced against because of social position, age and drug addiction problems. They said they have opinions on matters concerning their local community, but no real opportunities to express them. Another issue that some felt strongly about was housing; they felt they lacked power to influence town planning. For young people, housing is a big problem as accommodation is very expensive. One respondent was displeased with the building of new private homes on state owned land that no one wants to buy, instead of building apartments for the public.

Many of them also felt that being young can be a hindrance in having an influence, as one participant in the Ísafjörður-group said: "You don't really belong anywhere – you're not an adult and you are not a child, you are not taken seriously, you are somehow in between..." and another one in the same group added that she pays taxes like an adult, but she does not know what she is paying for and regardless of her right to vote she did not feel she was having an influence: "I can vote, but I don't feel like I have a saying."

3.2.1 *Public transport*

Many of the participants living outside Reykjavík complained about the cost of transport to access other places. Different activities are more easily accessible in Reykjavík, but because of the cost of transport, many of them said they mostly keep to their own region/neighbourhood. Both public and private transport is costly, petrol is very expensive and so are bus-tickets to go to Reykjavík. The price for a bus-ticket to Reykjavík from Reykjanesbær is around ISK 4,000 (approximately EUR 30), a high cost for young people. Some in the Breiðholt-group also complained about the time schedules for buses as buses start running very late on the weekend:

“My boyfriend starts work at 8 and then needs to find a ride to work. It’s bad that you have to wait until 10 am [when the bus starts] ... when my boyfriend was doing night shifts I told him he had the right to use a taxi and he said it doesn’t work like that. It depends on your employer if he wants to pay for the taxi. I think maybe it was because he’s Polish and he doesn’t know, he [the employer] tried to lie to him.”

Others added that there is a need for more buses; that is, to cover a larger area. Connections are bad and if you miss your connection you have to wait a long time for the next bus. In addition, the buses are often late, so it is hard to rely on the schedule.

3.2.2 *Access to health care*

Many participants living outside Reykjavík mentioned that access to proper health care is limited and that geography is an isolating factor in their lives. A woman in the Reykjanesbær-group had no idea about the rehabilitation programme run by Virk, and the three women participating in the programme were able to inform her about all the benefits gained by it. She was very interested in participating and wants to explore her options at Virk. She had been wanting to see a psychologist but had refrained from it because of the high cost and was happy to hear that psychological services are included in the Virk-programme. The other three women in the group said that they would not be able to get psychological help outside the Virk-programme because of the cost but are in great need of it. One participant in the Ísafjörður-group who is dealing with depression complained both about access to psychological help and the high cost; one session with a psychologist cost around ISK 15–16 thousand (approximately EUR 110).

In most neighbourhoods in Reykjavík and the surrounding municipalities, there is a local health care centre where residents normally have their own general practitioner. But many complained about the local health care centres; waiting time is very long and they feel as if their complaints are not taken seriously: “I had waited many hours and then he [the doctor] tells me that there’s nothing he can do for me” and another added: “Last time I went here to the health care centre [in Mosfellsbær], I had waited for 30–40 minutes and then I asked how many were ahead of me and they said ‘13’, and I just said, ‘ok – see you later’.”

Others complained about the time it takes to get an appointment with their general practitioner (GP), around 2–4 weeks. There is an after-hour health care watch that people can go to after the local health care centres close but waiting time can be very long. A few

mentioned that the problem with the after-hour service is that you cannot get a medical certificate from there as they are only issued by the GP and sometimes they just get referred back to their GPs for the health problems they are seeking help with.

3.2.3 Proximity to resources

A common opinion was that proximity to resources is very important when choosing where to live. Living close to kindergartens, health service, sport centres and schools is of high importance. For some, different emphasis in schools and kindergartens (gender division, Waldorf education policy etc.) is an important factor also. While some found it crucial to live close to a secondary school, others found it more important what secondary schools have to offer. For grocery shopping, many participants said that they cannot afford the local shops, but rather go a longer distance to shop at the cheaper and bigger grocery shop chains, like *Bónus*.

3.3 Successful changes

When asked whether they have had the opportunity to change something they do not like, not many responded but a few said they had. The participants in the Reykjanesbær-group said they are happy about their programme at Virk, especially as they themselves can have a strong influence on it. One participant in the Mosfellsbær-group said that when he was younger there was a very small skate park in his neighborhood that was run down and ugly. He and his friends met the town mayor with ideas to renovate the park and six months later it was done. Those who were studying at Breiðholt Upper Secondary School said they had managed to influence how a study-room was designed; a new sofa and nice lighting. The study-room was the students' idea and the authorities listened.

The scores given for the question "Can you participate in decision-making, for example concerning things in your neighbourhood?" (Appendix iii), were generally very low across groups, with an average of 3.2, the lowest average score of all questions. It was especially low in the Breiðholt and Reykjanesbær-groups. In summary, it appears that the interviewees do not feel they can participate in decision-making concerning things in their neighborhoods. Nevertheless, some of them expressed a will and interest in such decisions but felt there were not many opportunities to participate.

4. Social support and social networks

4.1 Knowing people in and outside the neighbourhood

Most participants knew people in their neighbourhoods, except those that had recently moved to a new location. Most of them also knew people outside their neighbourhoods. Iceland has a small population and people tend to have family members and friends in different places in Iceland: "I have a family in almost every town in Iceland." Some get to know people in the schools they attend, through programmes they participate in, in different social groups like mom-groups and in connection with shared hobbies. Sometimes it is hard to make friends or keep friendships going. One of the students in the FB-group said that because she is a little older than the average student it is hard to make friends and others who had friends far away complained about not seeing them often: "There is no time for that." A participant in the Reykjanesbær-group said her best friends are in Reykjavík: "I feel a little lonely here sometimes" and added that it might be due to the fact that she was an addict in Reykjanesbær.

Participants in the Ísafjörður-group claimed that they know almost everybody in their neighbourhoods (towns), and nearly all the kids in their school: "Maybe not everybody's names, but you know who they are." They meet up in school or in the local supermarket, *Nettó*. Most also knew people from other communities, not just close to their towns, from sports for example. Some have lived in Reykjavík and in other parts of Iceland, and therefore know people from there, but also from abroad through exchange programmes. Others said they did not know many people in the neighbourhood/area, many of them just moved to the neighbourhood/area they live in. Most of those that had lived in the neighbourhood/area for a long time knew their neighbours well: "My best friend lives next door, and I'm always babysitting her little brother."

When asked about where they meet up with their friends they said they mostly meet at friends' places. Some mentioned going to the cinema, bowling or driving for example and sometimes activities are organised on Facebook. Participants living outside Reykjavík said they sometimes go to the city centre for going out to pubs or clubs, but mostly stay in their neighbourhoods/areas.

4.2 Practical help: "You have to know people"

For help with practical things, most participants go to their families or friends: "If there's a problem with my car I go to my brother's friends, and I hardly need to pay." But those living outside Reykjavík said that they often must go to Reykjavík for practical

things, such as shopping and having electrical devices repaired. Many also look for problem solving online, but quite a few mentioned that this is often unsuccessful or yields no results: "Once my mom wasn't at home and I wanted to recycle the garbage because I didn't know how to, and I couldn't find the answers online." Many believed that information online can be misleading or downright wrong. Others felt it was better to call relevant agencies instead of seeking information online, but this can be time-consuming: "like when I wanted to call and ask for tax matters I called the tax office and I was on hold for 2 hours and 14 minutes." Another respondent said that once when he needed information from the Icelandic Food and Veterinary Institute they were very unhelpful and referred to some ill-understood regulations, "I needed a lawyer to go through it." Some also mentioned going to people at their school for help with practical things and Reykjanesbær-group can use VIRK for getting practical help for different things. Some felt there is a need for a place that can provide practical information, like the youth centres for younger people (13–16 years) but do not operate for their age range.

4.3 Jobs

Across groups, participants claimed that it always helps, and is sometimes necessary, to know someone to get things done, like finding a flat or a job. Iceland is such a small community that in their opinion it is almost necessary to have a family member, or close friends, to influence your opportunities for jobs and other things:

"Like when I applied for a job in my local community, I didn't get a reply until months later and it was no. And when I applied here I never got a reply, but my friend applied at the same time and immediately got a reply because her dad knew the people that were hiring."

In the LGBTQ-group, one participant said that young people often lack the knowledge to make a good CV:

"But I see that there is lack of knowledge of practical things ... like making a CV. When I was working at Stígamót [Education and counselling centre for survivors of sexual abuse] and was receiving CVs I just thought: 'what are these kids thinking?' – one sent a picture of himself bare-chested. And I thought, why don't they talk about these things at school? What are you thinking?"

One participant in the Ísafjörður-group talked about lack of job opportunities in Ísafjörður: "...either you are working in a shop, or in the fishing industry." For getting a job, the social network is crucial, you need to know someone to get a job was the consensus in that group and many were working for their parents. Some said they used a job-application app called *Alfred*, but many commented that it is much less effective to send in your CV rather than knowing someone when you apply for an advertised job. One participant in the FB-group said: "Don't send your CV online, show up in person. As soon as you show your face you'll get an answer. Because you're sending something digital, no one will listen."

4.4 Housing and education

Most participants said they cannot afford living by themselves and many live at home with their parents, others with partners or alone. Most in the Mosfellsbær- and Ísafjörður-groups lived with parents. In the Reykjanesbær-group the consensus was that it is too expensive to live by yourself, even for their parents:

Me and my boyfriend have talked about it, because even my mother has had big problems finding a flat for us, the family, and she had to move back to her mom several times. She just bought a place in Sandgerði [a town close to Reykjanesbær] and she even needed financial aid from her parents. That gives me little hope so me and my boyfriend have talked about moving abroad, it might be easier for us, to a good place like Canada for example.”

Many others had also thought about moving abroad because of the high cost of accommodation as a limiting factor in their lives. One participant in the Ísafjörður-group said the reason he moved back to Ísafjörður from Reykjavík was that he could not afford living in Reykjavík even though he wanted to finish school there. There is financial support for rural areas, but those living outside Reykjavík say it is not enough. They agreed that it is easier to live alone in rural areas in Iceland because rent is much cheaper, but on the other hand, job opportunities are worse there.

Many participants felt it is hard to both live alone and get an education, since as a student you do not have much money. Food is also expensive, making independent living even harder. But getting a good job often requires an education so most felt they would increase their opportunities by studying for a university degree. Many felt it was very hard for them to acquire an education, both because of finance and geographical isolation (for those living outside Reykjavík). Obtaining a university degree can take a long time, requiring sacrifices for some. One participant in the Mosfellsbær-group said she received financial aid from the state and can therefore stay in school, otherwise it would be impossible. It is easier for those living with their parents, as even students' flats are expensive and very hard to access. One mentioned the option of sharing a flat, something that seems to be less common in Iceland than elsewhere.

Those living outside Reykjavík felt that getting an education is harder for them as it means moving away from home and living alone. One participant in the Ísafjörður-group claimed that it is not possible to get further education in Ísafjörður and if you want to go to a university you have to go Reykjavík, which he does not want to do. There is *Háskólasetur Vestfjarða* (University Centre of the Westfjords), connected to the University of Iceland, but it has limited options. Furthermore, they said that for some things, such as studying to be a veterinarian, you need to go abroad, as this is not offered in any of the universities in Iceland.

4.5 Confidential matters

For confidential matters it differs where they seek help. Some of them are seeing psychologists but one participant in the LGBTQ-group admitted: "I don't tell my psychologist everything." In that group some mentioned going to the counsellor of *Samtökin 78* (the NQOI). Most of them said they mainly go to their families, friends or partners for confidential matters, but many said that you cannot talk to your parents about everything, because it is too private or you want to spare them: "I would talk to mom and dad about financial matters, but I would never talk to them about something related to sex or sorrow or something like that" and another said: "It's just problems that need to be solved, no one else needed to think about that, it would just put unnecessary pressure on someone that doesn't need it." A participant in the Breiðholt-group said she does not talk about her problems until they become unbearable:

"I try to talk to my mom about everything but I'm rather closed off, sometimes I'm thinking about something but keep it inside for a few months. Then comes the day I start crying and I just don't know what to do and just: 'mom, I need help, I don't know what to do.'"

Many also said that it depends on the problem where they seek help; some things you only discuss with your friends and others with parents. Most stressed the importance of having good friends to go to:

"It's good to have close friends, best friends, that you can keep their secrets and they yours. You really need to build up a lot of confidence to be able to do that, but when you've got that, you know you won't break down. Also, I see a doctor regularly and that's confidential",

and another one had this to say about the importance of close friends:

"Two weeks ago my boyfriend broke up with me after two years and my mom called my best friend, she's also going through stuff, serious stuff, and she said: 'I'm coming.' She didn't ask any questions, just said she'd come. And she stayed over, helped me clean up..."

When asked to scale the question: "Are you happy with the support adults provide" (Appendix iii), the average score (7.6) was one of the highest for all scale-questions. It was the lowest in the Breiðholt-group (6.1) and highest in the Ísafjörður-group (9.0). In summary, these young adults feel they do get support from adults around them, be it their parents, professionals (social workers, psychologists, counsellors) or friends.

5. Prejudice and unfair treatment

5.1 Sexual orientation and trans

Most participants had experienced some kind of prejudice and unfair treatment in their lives, although this differed significantly between individuals, often related to their age, origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and socio-economic status. The LGBTQ-group discussed issues of intersex and said they often feel obliged to educate others, even though they don't always want to take on that role. Some of them are trans, and they have experienced much unfair treatment concerning seemingly basic things for non-trans people, such as going to the swimming pool. They are not able to choose which locker room to use, even though the pools are supposedly trans-friendly. Therefore, trans people often need to use a private cabin.

The LGBTQ-group also discussed the *minority burden*, giving this example: if someone asks whether you have a husband you must explain that you are queer, or when you go to a doctor or travel to countries where homosexuality is illegal. In these circumstances you must assess whether you want to come out of the closet: "It's tiring to always have to come out of the closet." Some of them have also been harassed, for example when they go out to bars. Some men think they are entitled to approach lesbians and ask about their sexuality or ask them to be part of a threesome. One participant in the FB-group also said:

"The strangest thing that has happened to me is when I was at KIKI, that is a gay bar, and I'm bisexual and I was talking to some lesbian but when she found out I was bisexual she was like: 'yuck, you should choose!'"

The LGBTQ-group have experienced prejudice in most areas of their lives; one said she had to quit a job because of a homophobic colleague. They also sometimes experience prejudice from cis-homosexual men that cannot accept that trans-men are real men. They claim that some people in *Samtökin 78* find it hard to accept trans-people, perhaps because originally the organisation was for homosexual people.

The health care system is very gender-biased in their opinion and some of them complained about the lack of understanding they have met with:

"Once I met a 25-year old nurse and thought, if you are that young in Iceland 2018 and work in the health care sector, then you should have heard what trans is at least once in your life. He had no idea! And my brother, he's a medical student, and he's wonderful. Once he walked into the coffee-lounge and people were discussing gender-fluidity and pan-sexuality and were saying: 'what is that?' and my brother just: 'ehem', sat down and started: 'here's some education...' because he has of course been educating himself on the subject because of me."

5.2 Age prejudice

Age prejudice was a common theme across all groups. They felt that older generations (especially older men) are prejudiced against young people and do not take them seriously: "I feel like old people don't even want to listen to young people, 'oh, you are so young, only 22 years old, haven't lived your life...' I have often heard that." A participant in the Mosfellsbær-group felt he was not taken seriously when helping his girlfriend out with her anorexia:

"When I was with my ex, I was helping her out with an eating disorder treatment, enrol her... and help her get going you know, but I was never taken seriously because I wasn't her brother or parent or something like that. Because I was young and not married to her. It was really hard to get things done because officially I was not bound to her in any way."

Another participant in that group said she is taking care of her boyfriend's son as the mother is not in the picture and she has experienced a lot of prejudice because of her young age, especially when she takes him to a doctor or kindergarten, then there is always some trouble.

5.3 Social status

Some of the participants have been dealing with drug addiction problems, financial and housing uncertainty, low economic status and health problems. All those who had dealt with addiction problems felt they had been discriminated against because of them:

"Like the police here in Keflavík (Reykjanesbær), I've been sober for one and a half year and still, the police know I have a driving license and that I'm sober and everything is good, no problems. But they still stop me and make me get a blood test, but still I'm not doing anything. They're just regularly checking on me, no matter what. Someone called the police, I live in an apartment building, there was some racket on the balcony downstairs, and they came immediately and assumed it was me."

Many participants felt they had been prejudiced and discriminated against because of health problems, both physical and mental. One participant in the Mosfellsbær-group said she often had to skip classes in school because of her health problems, but the teachers have not been taking her illness seriously. In the Breiðholt-group, one participant claimed she was fired because of her arthritis, and another one in that group said she was fired because of mental health problems. She sought help at the Directorate of Labour which was not helpful, and she experienced prejudice in their attitudes toward her health problems. She felt there is a lack of understanding about mental health problems such as anxiety and depression:

"... depression is way more serious than it sounds. There is not only a month when you feel bad, it can last for years, I just wish that people would take more time to understand it, like my dad. When I told him, I was depressed he just said, 'grow up!' So, I just wish people like him would educate themselves better on it and know how serious it is."

Another one in that group, who is currently undertaking the 12-step programme, has also dealt with depression and experienced the same lack of understanding:

“Depression led to heavy drug abuse. And you know, it led to loss of friendships that made me more depressed and irritated and there was no understanding, just you know, ‘you’re a damn loser, always getting high.’ You know, I can’t control it, it’s my solution to the problem...”

Many felt that you are not taken seriously unless you have a physical problem: “I feel like in the health system, you are not taken seriously unless you have physical problems. ‘Oh you have a broken bone, ok’ but if it’s something else, then...” But even with physical health problems some felt the same way. A participant in the Mosfellsbær-group had some eye problems and the doctors did not take him seriously; he said he woke up almost blind, but the doctors thought he was imagining it.

5.4 Ethnicity and origin

A participant of Asian origin in the Breiðholt-group felt she had been the victim of prejudice because of her ethnicity. She said she applied for a job and when they saw the photograph attached on the CV they got back to her and said they had already hired, “...but my mother in law [of Icelandic origin] sent in an application later and got the job.” Another respondent in the FB-group said:

“I have many friends from Poland and Romania and I have heard, from many older, say – ‘oh, Polish people are taking all the jobs’ and it’s not okay to say these things because I have many friends from Poland that are very good people. I don’t want to hear such things, and especially when people come from Romania that they are just beggars.”

Looks can often be the cause of prejudice and if someone looks different, a negative attitude can be expected:

“Like my boyfriend was trying to change something with his phone and he can be a bit scary, dark and big and muscular and he was asked for proof that it was his phone, the receipt, what shop and where did you buy the phone. Then I went to the same place for the same purpose next day and was able to do it immediately. It’s like that everywhere, if you want to be listened to it depends on how you look.”

A participant in the FB-group had experienced similar things:

“I was bullied when I was little because of my looks, for being different ... so when someone comments on my looks or something like that, it’s a total shutdown for me because my head starts: ‘it’s all true, that’s how I am.’”

Not speaking fluent Icelandic has also been used against some participants who have not been raised in Iceland, according to two participants in the FB-group; one of whom said:

“It happened to me when I was working in Hagkaup [a supermarket] in Seltjarnarnes [a municipality next to the western part of Reykjavík], a lot of old people come and shop there. I was working at the service desk and when I started in August, I speak Icelandic but sometimes I don't understand, twice..., I have been working there for half a year, twice I have asked what something means when I don't understand, and once there was a woman that started screaming at me, just saying: 'you're a loser, what's wrong with you, I'm going to fire you, why are you in Iceland, go back to your home country.'”

5.5 Reaction to prejudice

When asked how it feels to be treated unfairly most say they have experienced rage and find it intolerable not to be taken seriously because of their young age or receiving unjust and unfair treatment for being of different origin or because of a sexual orientation that does not fit into predefined societal norms. The LGBTQ-group have been particularly exposed to unfair treatment and most said they had experienced a lot of anger and defeatism: “It's like all your energy is drained out of you, you go many steps backwards and just [sigh]...” and another said: “It depends on the situation if I get crazy mad or just sink into myself and feel like less of a person and less worthy.”

They expressed feeling bad about having been mistreated, that life events in their young age had led them to make bad decisions. This has, in some cases, led to anxiety, depression and drug abuse: “No one wants to get to know me because I was using.” They agreed that the prejudice has affected their identity and self-image.

For the scale-question “Have you ever experienced prejudice or been treated unfairly in a certain context?” (Appendix iii) the scale was reversed. It had an average score of 6.0 (standard deviation (SD) = 2.7). The FB-group had the lowest score of 3.8 (felt they had experienced the most prejudice) and the Ísafjörður-group the highest with a score of 9.1 (experienced the least prejudice). None of the participants in the Ísafjörður-group felt they had been treated unfairly or been discriminated against, but the two from Hnífsdalur jokingly said that they had been asked: “Why would anyone want to live there?”

6. Experience of social inclusion and participation

6.1 The neighbourhood and belonging

Generally, the participants felt like they belonged to the neighbourhood/area where they grew up, but not as much to the new neighbourhood/area if they had moved. In the Reykjanesbær-group, the two women raised in Reykjanesbær felt like belonging there and calling it their home: "It's so nice to live in a town of 3,000 people. Really nice." They talked about their experiences of Reykjavík being a big city and feeling lost there.

Even though one participant in the Breiðholt-group had recently moved to a new neighbourhood, she said she immediately felt as if she belonged there. It's not all about having grown up in a place, many mentioned safety as an important factor of belonging, and knowing the neighbourhood well. Also, belonging to a different kind of community, like being a parent, makes it easier to get to know people and feel connected in the neighbourhood. Having children who go to kindergarten or school in the neighbourhood gives a sense of inclusion, as you get to know the other parents and children.

In the Ísafjörður-group the general feeling was a strong connection to the places where they grew up, in small communities: "People are very close in my community", and another added: "Maybe not close, but everyone knows everyone." But being from a small place can have its downsides: "The bad thing is that if you do something, everyone knows immediately." Some of these places have a high percentage of immigrants which has, in some cases, created a divided community. In *Súðavík* [a town of 200 inhabitants, close to Ísafjörður] there are two cliques according to one participant in the Ísafjörður-group: the people in the town councils and the workers, "...and some people think that they are better than others, it's a little silly" she added.

Some of the participants who have dealt with problems such as financial hardship, drug addiction or mental health difficulties, did not feel as if they belonged to their neighbourhood. One participant in the Mosfellsbær-group said she did not relate to the feeling of belonging, and that most of her family and friends are outcasts, while another said she has experienced defeat from the people around her, requiring them to fight the system to try to make something out of themselves. Some did not feel they belonged to their neighbourhood, but rather to the place where their loved ones are.

6.2 Being part of a larger community

Across groups, there was a feeling of belonging to a bigger community, relating to interests, sexual orientation or different roles in life. A young mother in the Breiðholt-group said she felt she belonged to another community when she became a mother:

“Yes, my friends who have children, I feel like I belong with them, I feel different when I meet my friends without children. Everything changed. I felt like it was a whole different community. My mother always told me this when I was pregnant with my boy: ‘you’re going to belong to a very different community’, and it was true, another world opens.”

A bisexual participant in the FB-group expressed feeling as if she belonged to a bisexual community, and many in the LGBTQ-group felt that they belonged to the LGBTQ society more than anything. Those with mental health problems also talked about belonging to a community of people dealing with the same problems, and those with addictions to communities of rehabilitation, like the AA. Some talked about nerd-communities and one talked about belonging to a group of people who in some way associate with a game-store called *Nexus*. Others talked about sports clubs, or makeup artists and different things relating to their interests. An interesting conversation started in the FB-group on the subject of belonging to a community and being a *nerd*. They felt the concept of nerd has been normalized; there are sports-nerds, game-nerds, make-up artist-nerds, anime-nerds, car-nerds and the consensus were that being a nerd is just knowing a lot about a particular thing. In general, participants across groups agreed on the fact that common interests and common experiences tie people together, in a sort of community.

Some participants in the Ísafjörður-group complained about being isolated from other places in Iceland. Ísafjörður is not even part of the ring-road: “We are always forgotten, you know, when there is a presidential election for example. The Westfjords are always forgotten, we are so few.” Another added: “I follow the news, and then, like two years ago, there was snow here that reached your waist in Ísafjörður. But that didn’t make the news only that in Reykjavík the snow reached the soles of your feet...” In the LGBTQ-group, one participant said the issue of inclusion is problematic:

“Yes, it’s very tiring and especially in spaces that are defined for inclusion, but they do not include you. It’s worse than when I just know that I don’t belong to heterosexual space, I know that. No one has to tell me that. But don’t lie to me that you are a feminist, then you don’t know anything about LGBTQ matters, only talk of men and women, never about LGBTQ people, parents as moms and dads, it really hurts. Then you know that you should belong, but you don’t. Always a slap in the face.”

The scale question for belonging was in four parts: “Do you feel like you belong to... a) the place you live at? b) the area you live in? c) another community? and d) to Iceland?” (Appendix iii). The average scores were 7.7 (s.d. = 2.0), 7.1 (s.d. = 2.2), 5.6 (s.d. = 3.6) and 8.0 (s.d. = 2.1). The question of belonging to another community had the lowest score, but the highest standard deviation as opinions on this question differed quite a lot. The Ísafjörður-group had the lowest score of 1.8 (did not identify with belonging to another community) while the LGBTQ and FB-groups had the highest (8.6 and 8.3 respectively).

7. Equal opportunities

7.1 What needs to change and who is responsible?

Across groups, participants talked about preventive measures in order to change things that negatively affect young peoples' lives in Iceland today. They wanted more education on alcoholism, depression, anxiety and computer-game addictions, to name but a few. Young people dealing with these problems are often marginalized but want to be included. Some mentioned that people with difficult experiences dealing with these problems should come to schools and share their stories, as a preventive measure:

"...I liked one presentation in particular. It was about drug abuse. She came to FS [high school] and was talking about her experience as a drug addict. It really affected her, she had a hard time thinking as quick as the others. I just thought it was so... to hear her story from her point of view".

Some had had to deal with prejudice in the school-system for minor things such as left-handedness and dyslexia:

"I had a lot of problems in my school. I was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia and had very bad grades in math, not just because of that but also because I couldn't always attend school. Because of that I experienced a lot of prejudice from students and teachers. I had responses like 'you're stupid, you will end up on the streets.' But it had nothing to do with that. It wasn't until at the end of grade 10 that one teacher took me aside and helped me and then I started to do much better. Because she knew what to do but the others judged me and made me feel horrible."

Even though it can be assumed that there is in general a better awareness of learning-related problems in Iceland today, it is obvious that many of the participants have felt like outsiders in some respect. In their opinions, teachers should help students who are doing poorly, and there should be easier access to psychological services. Many mentioned that being equal necessitates a more general open-mindedness of others. They still feel like they have to fight for their rights and there is still a lot of prejudice: "There is still a lot of people that think others are idiots because they have a different opinion." To change this, the whole community needs to change: schools, upbringing, media, politicians. Not all have the same opportunities in Icelandic society. Not all get support from family or friends.

The LGBTQ-group also talked about the need for more open-mindedness as they often feel discriminated against, being outside of the gender-norms:

"I just wish that everybody would assume that we are all different from the time we are born. That I could say to my nephew: 'it's fine that you are gay', you know, and I will assume that you are gay until something else is proven. That the child is not sexualized. Just no. It's sad how fast you are moulded in forms."

In the same respect, another participant from the LGBTQ-group expressed her unhappiness with the popularity of gendered baby showers and gendered public toilets. In their view, the society or the government should do more about changing these gender norms. There should be more education on LGBTQ and other minority groups, perhaps courses for the general public. They want to be normalized, not marginalized:

“Also, when two women are holding hands in public and people think: ‘oh, how cute it is to see this.’ But as soon as you take us out of the general society then you are discriminating against us. Even though you are not discriminating against us in a bad way you are still discriminating against us compared to others. Like an instant label: ‘you are a lesbian.’”

In the Breiðholt-group, they spoke of the need for a more equal salary and governmental changes. The participant of East-European origin talked about better education for immigrants and more knowledge about their rights. She felt they are being mistreated because they do not know their rights. All people should be more equal: foreigners, LGBTQ-groups – society needs to change to accommodate the needs of diverse groups of people. Some in the Ísafjörður-group said young people should be more accepted and less prejudiced against: “...that adults don’t look at us as idiots that waste their time doing nothing.” Another added:

“I hate when they say: ‘your generation is just glued to the screen’. Then my mom picks up her phone and uses Facebook and says: ‘I did something – can you help me with this? I just don’t have a clue how to...’”

Societal changes were also discussed. Society is very different today than it was when their parents’ generation was young, especially concerning technological changes. They talked about parents needing to be more aware of how things are for kids these days; a 9-year-old is given a phone and has access to everything and it can have a huge impact on her/his identity. There is a big generation gap in this respect as the parents’ generation did not grow up with social media and they do not know how to educate their children about it, whereas the children of their generation will be able to get information from their parents.

In a nutshell, this chapter can be summarized in the words of one participant: “We shouldn’t be scared of criticising older people, we need to be loud, say ‘no – there is a common responsibility, we need to talk, they need to listen.’”

8. Discussion

In this report, we have summarized the findings of six focus-group interviews with participants from different places in Iceland and diverse neighbourhoods in Reykjavík. All participants were 18–24 years old, with different social backgrounds, ethnicities, sexual orientation and gender identities.

Often the same individuals had experienced both inclusion and exclusion in their neighbourhoods. In some focus-groups, several participants were unanimous in describing their childhood as a secure and inclusive life in a community, but they would now, in a later phase of life, to a much higher degree describe the same neighbourhood as controlling and prejudiced.

In recent decades, social workers, researchers, police, politicians and neighbourhoods in Nordic (and European) countries have described certain suburbs as nests of exclusion. Many of these suburbs were planned and built to provide the working class with better housing and surroundings, but through the years they have become scenes of high unemployment, drop-out, criminality etc. According to sociological analysis they have turned into dens of territorial stigmatization (Sernhede, 2011). Jobseekers who send applications from such a return address receive no answer and are often labelled as losers or criminals, and gradually the inhabitants develop an identity of doom and deficit.

Some of the Icelandic participants in our study live in neighbourhoods close to becoming stigmatized, but this label does not dominate their choices. Probably, the main reason is the situation of full employment, also in these areas. When young people from such locations move to other and less labelled neighbourhoods, they can show a record of participation in the labour market.

However, our participants identify problematic tendencies, especially the isolation of immigrants in some communities. They point out a small village, with only 200 inhabitants, where there is a kind of “iron curtain” between the Icelanders and the immigrants. Similar reports have been heard from other, a slightly larger communities, where people talk of two separate populations with minimal contact with each other, and rather isolated ethnic communities have been reported from the suburbs of Reykjavík.

Our participants were asked about various aspects of their lives; participation in decision-making, opportunities to influence, social networks, prejudice, social inclusion and equal opportunities. They are willing to discuss bigger issues such as building a silicon plant close to their town, but their conclusion concerning such matters is that politicians do what they want to do regardless of public protests. Such experiences breed a dislike of traditional politics and, as many groups of young people, they withdraw from “big politics” and would rather try to shape society through individualized and everyday practices (Harris, Wyn and Younes, 2010). Thus, an interest in being part of decision-making for their neighbourhoods/areas is prevalent and a

positive attitude towards having an influence. In some cases, they felt they lack opportunities to exert influence and many felt they are doubted and not taken seriously because of their young age. The high cost of living independently, as well as of other basic things such as public transport and leisurely activities, inhibits their chances to influence and make decisions about their own lives. Those who, for some reason, fall outside the societal norms often feel marginalized and call out for more understanding and open-mindedness from others. Many of these young people have experienced some kind of prejudice which has had a damaging influence on their identities.

Individuals in our sample have had to struggle with drug addiction and/or with mental issues. Many of them have found crucial help in mutual aid groups, especially Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), who have not only helped them to stay sober but also to overcome hurdles within themselves and in their surroundings. They share the community of AA not only with their peers but with people of all ages, and Iceland is often described as a stronghold of AA.

The AA experience has for instance helped some of our participants to enter rehabilitation programmes in their municipality – not only to start afresh but to utilize these opportunities fully, and to help friends to do the same. It must be emphasised that only a small minority of our participants had been drug-users, and that more had experienced mental depression or anxiety.

Many of our participants have not developed an identity relating to specific jobs. They have been 10–15 years in school but have not left school with a clear label – as an academic, carpenter, farmer, nurse etc. They have been working as unskilled labourers and have rather built up their identity in relation to leisure activities – and as members of certain residence areas. Research has shown that young people with such trajectories often go a long way to find their identity until they gradually discover that they accumulate general and specific competences and have developed lasting relations to individuals, groups and communities (Reegaard, 2017).

Most of the LGBTQ people in our sample have walked the straight way through education. Perhaps they need a stable basis for a job career, as they have to fight for so many things that straight individuals take for granted. Our LGBTQ people are also among the well-educated group of leaders in their segment. If they want to do sports, they meet hurdles as soon as they come out of the closet – are perhaps disqualified because of hormone intake.

The discussions in all focus groups revealed a strong sense of belonging to a place and neighbourhood. However, this “the good community” was not necessarily the neighbourhood where they were raised as children, nor their present “hood”. In many cases, good childhood memories formed their image of a good neighbourhood, and so did elements of the place where they are living now. They were rather building an “imagined community” – a construction built on their experiences and the ideas that they have developed throughout their life. Their strong sense of community is based on their experiences and expresses a wish to be embedded in a community they have helped to develop. This community can be their neighbourhood/area, Iceland or other communities related to their identities or social roles.

The LGBTQ participants do not disclose any strong affiliation to the parts of town where they live – except the university campus. However, when asked about participation in voting on local issues, they all underline that they always participate. Their need to fight for their rights seems to make such participation self-evident.

Disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged youth, and sexual minorities share the wish to have equal opportunities. They want to be taken more seriously and to be heard by the older generations, they have strong voices and opinions that they want to channel, and it is a shared responsibility of all generations to give that channel enough space.

8.1 Recommendations

Based on the stories that have been presented in this report, the Nabo project highlight some concrete measures that young people discussed can be improved, to promote social inclusion in the Icelandic society:

- preventive measures to change things that negatively affect young peoples' lives in Iceland today. i.e. more education on different forms of addictions and mental health issues. Promotion factors could be school lectures with professionals and/or people that have experiences dealing with different kind of problems;
- easier access to and lower thresholds to psychological services for youths;
- prejudice and intolerance are interlinked and affects young people. This needs to be acknowledged and addressed at different levels in society simultaneously;
- create conditions for young people to be able to participate in and influence questions in the local democracy. For example, questions relating to housing, public transport and leisure time activities. Decisions affecting young people, should be based on knowledge of young people;
- monitor the living conditions for groups of young people that we know need extra support from the public. For example, LGBTQs, migrants, young people suffering from mental illness and youths with disabilities.

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Sammanfattning

Den här rapporten sammanfattar resultaten från sex fokusgruppintervjuer med unga i Island på temat social inkludering. Fokusgrupperna genomfördes under hösten 2018 och början på 2019. Rapporten är en del i *Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällesfrågors* projekt *Nabo – ungas sociala inkludering i Norden*. Liknande delstudier genomförs i alla nordiska länder och i Färöarna, Grönland och Åland. Syftet är att öka kunskapen om och synliggöra möjligheter och begränsningar för ungas sociala inkludering i Norden.

Rapporten visar att unga återkommande upplever diskriminering på grund av ung ålder. Unga beskriver också en brist på intresse och möjligheter att påverka i större politiska frågor. Andra saker som diskuterades under samtalen var problem att skaffa eget boende och brist på prisvärda lägenheter som unga har råd med. De pratade också om privatekonomiska frågor, psykisk ohälsa och bristen på tillförlitlig och tillgänglig kollektivtrafik. Å andra sidan lyfts socialt stöd och känslan av tillhörighet och sammanhang fram som viktiga främjande faktorer för social inkludering.

Appendix

i) Interview guide

Interview guide: social inclusion of youth in the Nordic region

Opportunities to participate in different aspects of society 15 min

- Tell me about your leisure time! *(It can for example be leisure activities [sports, youth centres, club activities], cultural activities [theatre, dance or play music, museums] etc.)*
- Is there anything you would like to do, but can't? What would that be?
- Why can't you do it? *(e. g. prohibited, the activity is not available where I live, too expensive, wrong people go there etc.)*
- How much of what you feel you want to do, can you do? *(Everyone marks with a sticker on a sheet that has a scale from 1 – 10. Scale 1=Nothing, 10=everything.)*

Opportunities to influence 25 min

- Do you have a say in what is decided and is happening in your family? *(e. g. what you will have for dinner, what you will do on holidays, when to be home at night, who your friends are or which sofa to buy.)*
- Do you know how to, or can you, influence things in your neighbourhood? How do you do that? *(e.g., lighting, parks and recreation etc.) (Everyone marks with a sticker on a paper that has a scale from 1 – 10. Scale 1=Not at all, 10=everything)*
- Why do you think you have placed the sticker like this?
- Do you think it is easier or more difficult for you to participate in decision-making compared to others in the same [region/city]? Why is it different?
- Has anyone asked you this kind of questions or encouraged you to make your voice heard? Who is this person? Did this make you take part or make your voice heard?
- If we look outside your neighbourhood. Do you have an opinion on different questions concerning everyone who lives in [name of city/region] *(e. g. when and where buses and trains depart, where there are sport halls or youth centres and what you can do there? What kind of jobs are available where you live and in other cities? What kind of housing is available, how much a visit to the dentist costs. Whether it is difficult to be accepted at the university.)*
- Do you think it is important that you have a say in questions regarding your own life? Why/Why not?

- Do you think it is important to support things that are right and protest against what is wrong? Why/Why not?
- Have you had the opportunity to change something that you do not like or agree about? How did you do that? (*e. g. from earlier group discussions on what they would like to change, focus on the larger questions, outside the neighbourhood.*)
- What would make you more eager and able to take part in such questions?

Resources – Social support and social network

25 min

- If you do not know how something works in your area or in your municipality, how would you find out?
- Do you know many people in your area? How and when do you meet?
- Do you know people from other areas too? Are there more or fewer of them than those you know in your own area? How did you get to know them?
- If you need help with something practical, who can you ask for help? (e.g. write a job application, fix a flat tire on the bike, get a ride somewhere)
- Are you able to get your own apartment, get a job you want or start studying if you stay here?
- Do you think it is easier or more difficult in other places/cities? Why/Why not?
- If you need a job, how would you get one?
- If you would like to tell someone something in confidence, who would that be?
- Are you satisfied with the support you can get from adults in your proximity?
(*Everyone marks with a sticker on a paper that has a scale from 1 – 10. Scale 1=very disappointed, 10=very satisfied.*)

Treated unfairly

15 min

- Have you ever experienced prejudice or been treated unfairly in a certain context or at some point? (*Everyone marks with a sticker on a paper that has a scale from 1 – 10. Scale 1= always 10=never. N.B. – the scale is reversed.*)
(*It can be regarding gender, age, disability, ethnicity, religion, gender identity or gender expression, sexual orientation, home district, appearance.*)
- What are your comments on your sticker placements?
- Who has/have done this to you? For what reason?
- How did it make you feel?
- Have you ever seen others being exposed? How did that make you feel?

Experience of inclusion and participation

20 min

- How would you describe your neighbourhood? (*Do you feel at home there? Why/Why not?*)
- Do you feel like a [name of the region - Stockholmer, Londoner, etc.]?

- Do you feel you are part of a larger community, for example Sweden as a country, a community on the internet, or as part of an ethnic, religious or political community? Which ones?
- Do you feel you belong in: a) the place where you live, b) the region where you live c) some other large community, d) Sweden as a country?
- Why do you think you feel at home in those places?
- Do you think others around you feel that they belong in a larger community? Why? /Why not?

Closing questions **5+5 min**

- What needs to change to make you feel you have the same opportunities as everyone else?
- Who is responsible for changing that?
- What we have talked about here today is whether you feel like part of the place where you live and whether you feel it matters what you think and do. What does social inclusion mean to you? (*Write 3 – 5 words on a post-it.*)

ii) Scale questions

How many of the things you like to do, can you do?

1 = Nothing

10 = Everything

Can you participate in decision-making, for example concerning things in your neighbourhood?

1 = Agree

10 = Disagree

Are you satisfied with the support adults around you provide?

1 = Very unhappy

10 = Very happy

Have you ever experienced prejudice or been treated unfairly in a certain context or at some point?

1 = Very often

10 = Never

Do you feel you belong...?

a) to the place where you live?

1 = Not at all

10 = Completely

b) to the area where you live?

1 = Not at all

10 = Completely

c) to other communities?

1 = Not at all

10 = Completely

d) to Iceland?

1 = Not at all

10 = Completely

We have talked about belonging to the place where you live, that you matter and that your opinions matter.

What meaning does this have for you? Write 3 – 5 words:

iii) Results from the numerical evaluations

Scores for each participant relating to the questions, with averages and standard deviation for each question in all group.

Table 1: a)

Mosfellsbær-group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q5c	Q5d
M1	5	2	10	7	8	7	2	10
M2	3	2	5	3	5	5	8	9
M3	2	7	3	3	4	7	7	7
M4	8	4	10	10	10	2	8	10
M5	8	1	10	5	10	10	10	10
M6	6	3	6	4	7	8	2	10
M7	8	10	8	6	9	7	4	8
M8	6	7	5	5	3	3	8	6
Average	5.75	4.5	7.125	5.38	7	6.13	6.13	8.75
s.d.	2.17	2.96	2.57	2.18	2.55	2.47	2.85	1.48

Table 2: b)

Breiðholt-group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q5c	Q5d
B1	4	1	8	2	5	4	3	8
B2	9	1	5	3	6	4	6	7
B3	10	5	8	10	5	NA	NA	NA
B4	5	1	5	3	10	6	5	8
B5	4	1	5	5	8	8	10	10
B6	7	1	5	9	9	10	1	10
B7	NA	2	10	8	7	10	10	10
Average	6.5	1.71	6.57	5.71	7.14	7.00	5.83	8.83
s.d.	2.36	1.49	1.41	3.09	1.95	2.33	3.03	1.20

Table 3: c)

Ísafjörður-group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q5c	Q5d
l1	8	4	10	8	8	8	1	9
l2	8	3	10	8	8	8	1	9
l3	7	2	9	9	9	8	1	5
l4	7	2	8	10	4	3	1	3
l5	5	1	8	9	9	7	7	5
l6	8	3	9	10	10	10	1	8
l7	9	2	10	9	10	10	1	8
l8	8	1	8	10	9	8	1	10
Average	7.5	2.25	9	9.13	8.38	7.75	1.75	7.13
s.d.	1.12	0.97	0.87	0.78	1.80	2.05	1.98	2.32

Table 4: d)

LGBTQ-group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q5c	Q5d
L1	7	5	6	7	9	5	4	5
L2	8	3	9	8	7	8	9	8
L3	7	4	9	3	8	8	10	8
L4	7	2	8	3	10	10	10	8
L5	5	5	8	5	NA	NA	NA	NA
L6	9	7	8	8	6	6	10	7
Average	7.17	4.33	8.00	5.67	8.00	7.40	8.60	7.20
s.d.	1.21	1.60	1.00	2.13	1.41	1.74	2.33	1.17

Table 5: e)

Reykjanesbær-group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q5c	Q5d
R1	5	1	10	9	10	8	5	10
R2	2	1	10	7	8	10	1	10
R3	6	2	9	3	8	8	9	10
R4	5	1	6	3	3	8	1	9
Average	4.5	1.25	8.75	5.5	7.25	8.5	4	9.75
s.d.	1.50	0.43	1.64	2.60	2.59	0.87	3.32	0.43

Table 6: f)

FB-group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5a	Q5b	Q5c	Q5d
FB1	7	5	9	8	9	7	10	9
FB2	4	5	7	3	7	6	10	8
FB3	8	4	8	3	9	6	7	8
FB4	6	3	8	4	9	7	10	5
FB5	6	4	5	2	10	4	6	2
FB6	10	7	7	3	9	9	7	10
Average	6.83	4.67	7.33	3.83	8.83	6.50	8.33	7.00
s.d.	1.86	1.25	1.25	1.95	0.90	1.50	1.70	2.71



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NABO – social inclusion of youth in Iceland

Nabo is a project launched under the Swedish presidency in the Nordic Council of Ministers 2018. The project is run by the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society over the period 2018-2020 and seeks to make the youth perspective visible through the words of Nordic youth. Young people's voices will be heard in questions regarding their lives. And based on that knowledge they will be given the opportunity to participate and influence political decisions.

Young people are asked to describe their everyday lives and how they perceive their opportunities and obstacles. From their stories Nabo builds a framework of success factors for social inclusion in the Nordic region. This study is based on six focus group interviews with youth in different places in Iceland.

In this report you find the result from the Icelandic study. Similar studies are carried out in the other Nordic countries and in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.



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