Factsheet

Education, leisure time, dating & problem behavior among 17-year-olds

Key findings of the 7th wave of the Zurich Project on the Social Development of Children and Youths (z-proso)
Who are the z-proso youths?

In the spring of 2015, 706 of the youths (54%) who participate in z-proso reported that they were attending vocational training, whereas 384 youths (29%) were attending grammar school and 129 (10%) some other form of training. In total, 85 youths (7%) did not attend school or training.

Leisure time activities

Youths spend a lot of time at school or at their vocational training. Outside of these places, the z-proso youths like to practice sports or spend time with their friends, for example meeting up with friends in the evening or going shopping with them. The 5 most popular leisure time activities are listed in the table below.

Top 5 Leisure time activities

1. Meet up with friends in the evening
2. Practice sports (by themselves, not as part of a sports club)
3. Shopping with friends
4. Meet up with friends in a café or restaurant
5. Go out with friends to a bar/club

Using media such as the internet, computer games, and watching TV is also popular. As the following graph shows, media use is higher on the weekend than on weekdays. On Saturdays, the z-proso youths watch about 1 and a half hour TV, they spend 2 hours surfing or chatting on the internet and they play computer games for about 50 minutes. On weekdays, they watch TV for 50 minutes, spend 1 and a half hour on the internet and play computer games for about half an hour.
Some of the media that the youths use contain violent content. As the following graph shows, boys consume such media much more often than girls. For example, 11% of boys said they had watched horror movies intended for adult audiences on a weekly basis, while 5% of girls had done the same. Also, whereas 38% of boys said they had played PC shooter games intended for adults on a weekly basis, only 2% of girls had done the same.

### Dating and sex

Dating and sex are important new experiences in adolescence and they are also important themes for the z-proso youths. 70% of the youths said that they were or had been involved in a romantic relationship. Slightly less than half of the respondents (48%) said that they had had sex, but the majority (52%) had not.

### Substance use

At age 17, most youths said that they had used substances, such as tobacco, alcohol or drugs, at some point in their lives. A small group reported that they had used substances on a weekly basis over the past year. In total, about one fifth used tobacco on a weekly basis, whereas 9% smoked marihuana and 8% drank alcohol every week.

### Victimization

Youths are sometimes the victims of serious violence by other people, for example robbery, assault with or without weapon, and sexual assault. The graph below shows how many z-proso youths experienced these types of victimization in the past year. In total, 43 youths (3.3%) had been robbed. In addition, 28 youths (2.1%) had been assaulted and injured with a weapon and another 51 youths (3.9%) without a weapon. Finally, 8 youths (0.6%) had been forced to sexual acts.
The development of aggression

In almost every year of the z-proso study, the teachers of the youths among others rated the youths’ aggressive behavior. The figure below displays the level of physical aggression (specifically: hitting, biting and kicking) from age 7 to 15. The graph shows the levels of physical aggression for boys and girls separately. The markers on the line indicate the level of aggression at a particular age. The higher the value on the scale on the left, the higher the average level of aggression at a certain age.

As the graph shows, boys had much higher rates of physical aggression at age 7 compared to girls. Thereafter, the level of aggression steadily declines for both boys and girls as they get older. The decline is stronger for boys compared to girls, so that there are almost no more differences between boys and girls at the age of 15.

Problem behavior at age 17

The study z-proso also examines problem behavior and delinquency. Several types of these are shown in the following graph. For example, 11% of respondents said they had stolen something from a store in the past 12 months. 7% had injured another person by hitting, kicking or cutting them, and 7% had committed vandalism, such as smashing a window or damaging seats on the train. In contrast, few youths said they had committed even more serious offenses: less than 2% of respondents said they had committed a burglary, a robbery or extortion with the threat of violence.