

# Loneliness in Young Adults: The Role of NEET Status and Social Determinants in Norway

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# Background

- Emerging Adulthood (18-29 years)
  - A period of identity exploration, instability, and transition
  - Opportunities and risks coexist- freedom, but uncertainty
- Loneliness in young adults
  - Def: Discrepancy between desired and actual social relationships
    - A public health concern
  - Peaks during the 20s
  - Often linked to lack of belonging and social resonance
- Social context and vulnerability
  - Nordic welfare states may offer structural security and equal opportunities, yet also place high expectations on individual success and participation
  - Some young adults face unstable connections to education or work (NEET). A concern in Norway and Europe
  - Individual, social and structural factors (e.g. gender, social support, local belonging, economics) may shape experiences of loneliness

# Research questions

- How is loneliness distributed among young adults in Norway?
- How does NEET-status relate to loneliness?
- What are key predictors of loneliness in young adulthood?

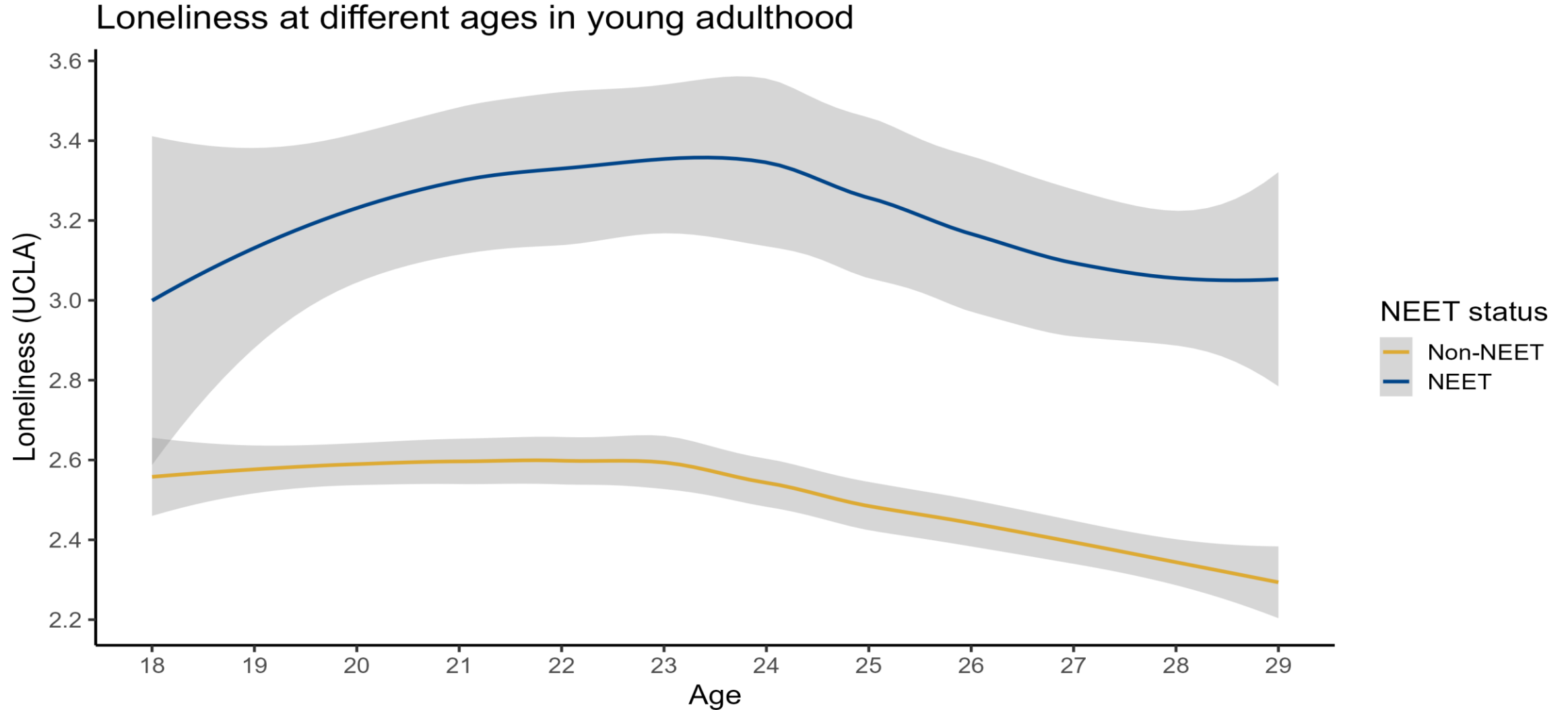


# Methods

- Data from the 2021 Norwegian Counties Public Health Survey
  - 3936 participants aged 18-29
    - 61 % female, mean age 23.6
    - 450 (11 %) young adults were NEET
  - Main outcome *Loneliness* measured using three item loneliness scale (TILS)
    - Predictors included socioeconomic, social and community, and individual-level factors
  - LOESS smoothing explored age trends according to NEET-status
  - Multiple linear regression identified predictors



# Results: *Loneliness in young adulthood*



# Results: *Loneliness as an outcome*

## Socioeconomic factors:

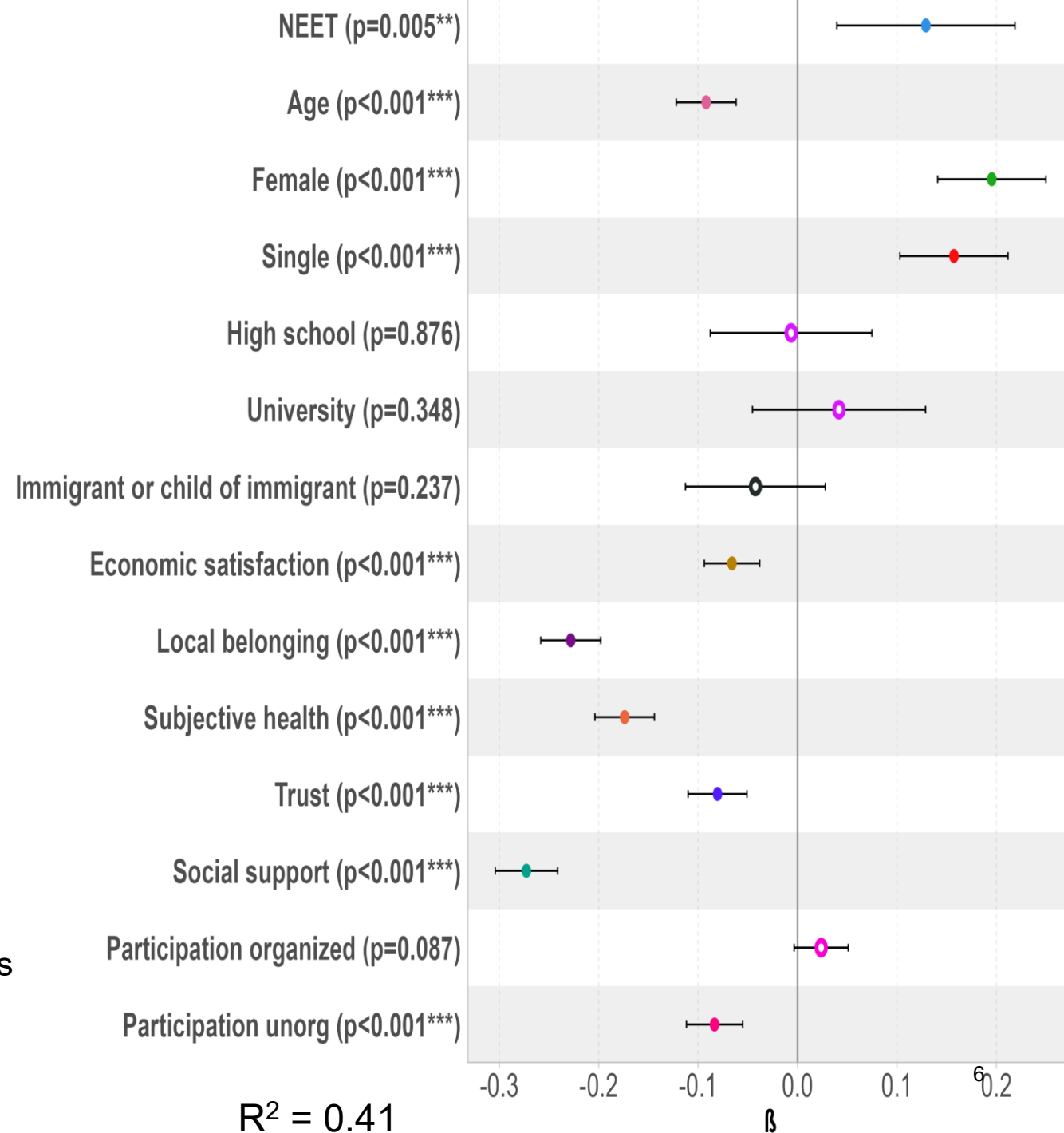
- NEET-status a significant predictor of loneliness
- Higher economic satisfaction associated with lower loneliness
- Education level and immigrant background were not related to loneliness

## Social and community factors:

- Higher local belonging, social support and trust were related to lower loneliness
- Participation in unorganized social activities was associated with lower loneliness, while organized participation was not

## Individual factors:

- Younger age, being single, and female gender were associated with more loneliness
- Better subjective health associated with higher loneliness



# Conclusion

- Young adults in education or employment show relatively stable loneliness levels across the twenties
- NEETs show a distinct pattern, peaking in the mid-twenties before decreasing — the gap to non-NEETs is largest in this period
- NEET status is a key social determinant of loneliness in young adulthood
- Social support and community belonging act as strong protective factors

Strengthening social support networks, enhancing community belonging, and preventing NEET transitions could be relevant targets for public health efforts to reduce loneliness. NEET youth represent a high-risk group for loneliness and may require tailored policies and programs to support inclusion and well-being.

# References

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