

Active Citizenship and Employability

Developing Composite Indicators from the Italian Universal Civic Service

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H.11 Indicators of Youth Condition Within and Beyond Education: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

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Is active citizenship a driver of employability?

This question does not deny the role of training — it argues that the dominant paradigm has overlooked a constitutive dimension: active citizenship.

If evaluation frameworks measure programmes only through placement rates and time-to-employment, they are seeing only part of the phenomenon.

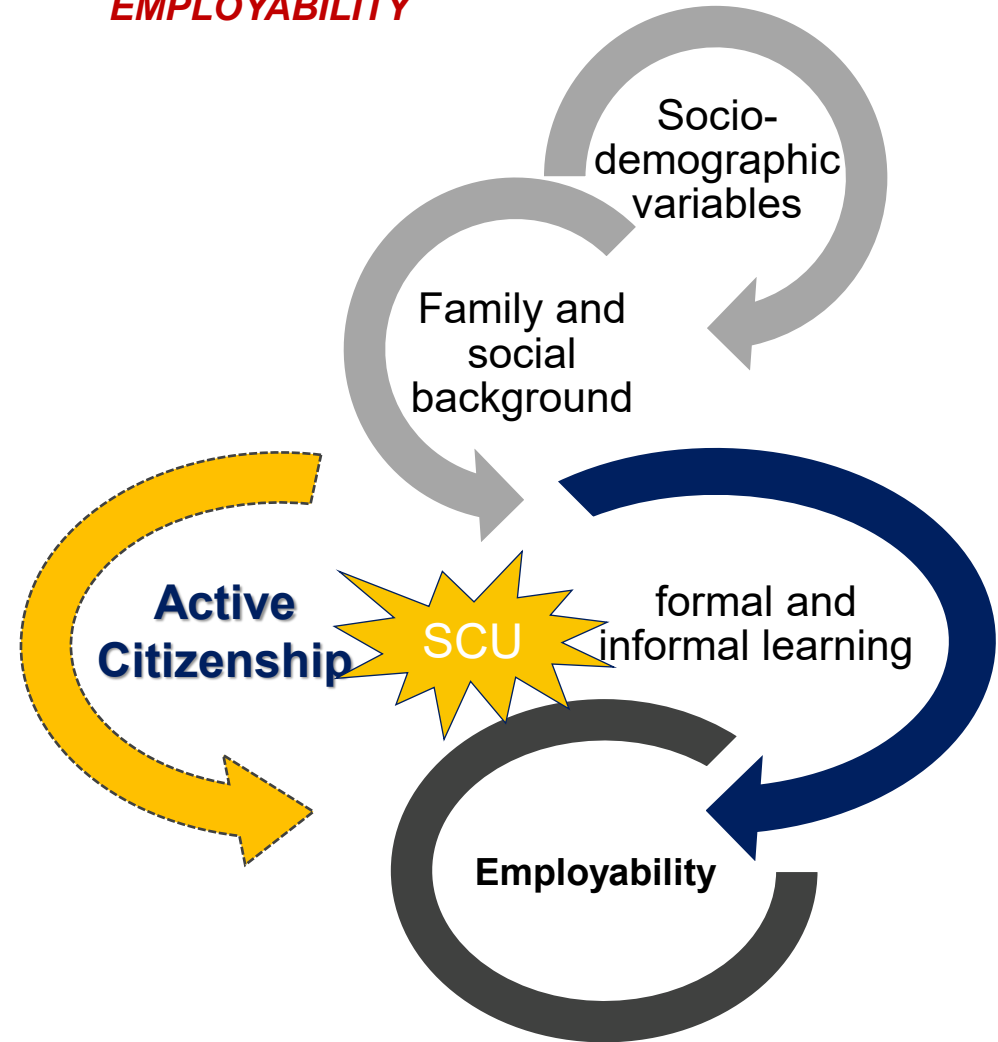
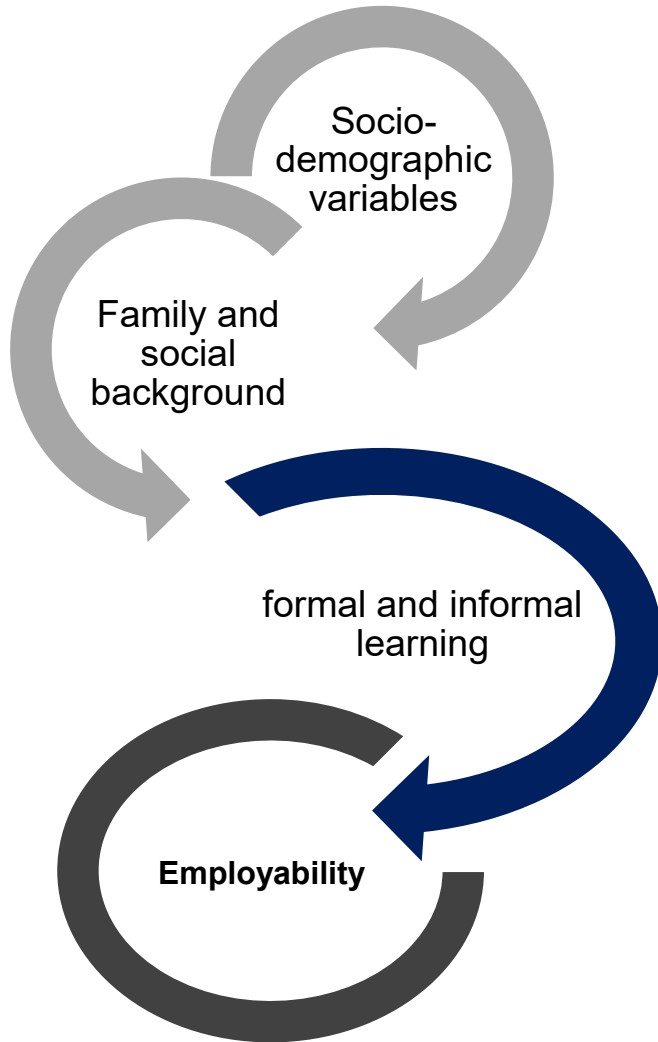
UCS is the empirical laboratory in which this question finds an answer — not because it was designed to answer it, but precisely because it was not.

If an active-citizenship programme produces employability effects without being designed to, the link between citizenship and work stops being theoretical and becomes empirically testable.

Hypothesis

Revising the dominant paradigm

H1 and 2 – ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP IS A DRIVER FOR EMPLOYABILITY



Research questions

Hypothesis Micro (1) about Civic Service

- ❖ What are the effects of UCS on young people?
- ❖ Is there a relationship between Active Citizenship, Employability and Employment?
 - ❖ Are there any UNEXPECTED RESULTS of Civic Service?



investing in "active citizenship" (through the Civic Service)
could increase "activation" on other dimensions as well?



Is it possible for the Civic Service to be such
a rich and formative experience
to be able to impact on employability as well?

Research questions

Hypothesis Macro (2) about Youth Policies

Is it possible that the more ACTIVE CITIZEN a person is,
the more EMPLOYABLE he/she is (or vice versa)?



For the policymakers

Investing in the "active citizenship" of young people
can be used to improve their employability?

If it is ok, this is a useful knowledge for the design of youth policies
and activation policies
that should look to the Civic Service as a good practice and
as a policy lab from which to learn

Object of observation/new laboratory

Premises on Civic Service (as a laboratory for experimental observation)

(Premise 1) Civic Service is founded on "active citizenship" and solidarity.

(Premise 2) Civic Service is **neither a job nor an internship**.

(Premise 3) Civic Service is formative for young people, **but it was created for local communities**.

(Premise 4) Enrolment in Civic Service is voluntary and **conditionality is low**.

(Premise 5) Civic Service is an Institution of the Republic with a distinct value orientation grounded in the **fundamental values of the Italian Constitution**

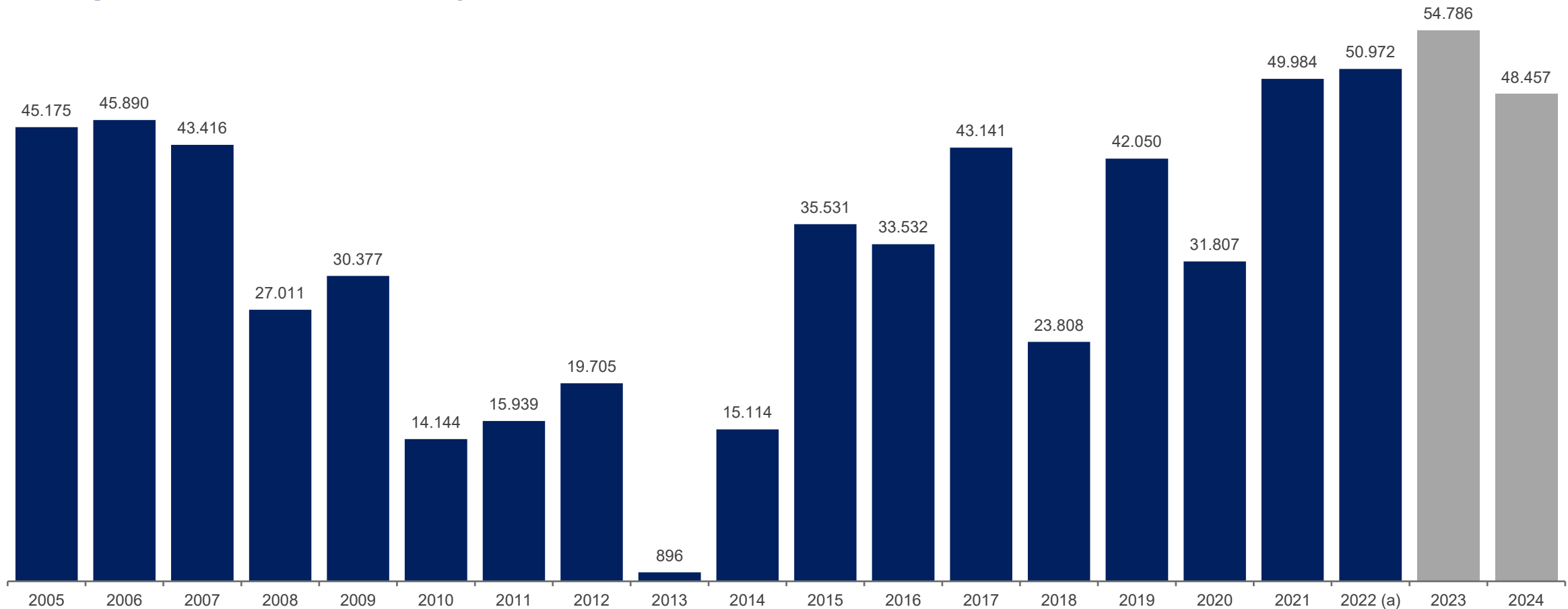
(Premise 6) The young people's monthly **allowance is not a wage**

(Premise 7) The project intervention **areas are precisely defined**

(Premise 8) Civic Service is carried out within public bodies or (accredited) **Third Sector organisations**

- ✓ Civic Service is not an employment-integration policy, nor does it formally fall among active labour market policies
 - ✓ Civic Service volunteers are not representative of the Italian youth population.

A programme active for 20 years, on a national scale

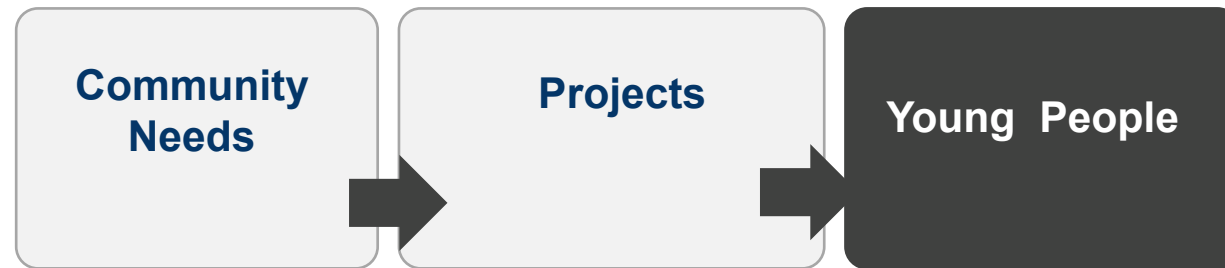


- (I) Over 600,000 young people involved in 20 years
- (II) Projected to reach up to 1.5% of the reference population, 3.5-4% of NEETs
- (III) A rich and consistent time series, which makes UCS a genuine natural experiment.

UCS

**UCS is a voluntary institution of the Italian Republic
(non-armed defence of the homeland, active citizenship, solidarity),
not formally a labour market policy, carried out through public bodies or accredited non-profit organisations.**

UCS — circular logic community→person



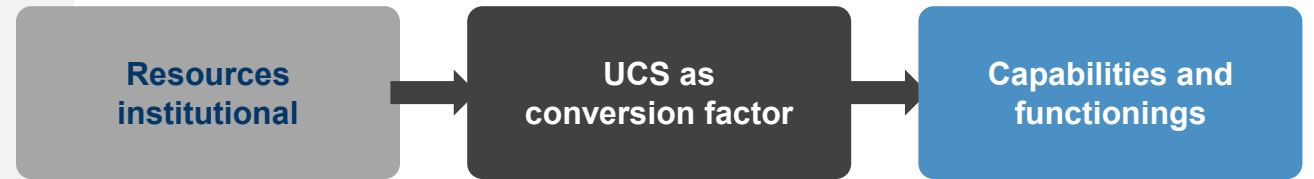
It is plausible to hypothesise that UCS's accreditation criteria and co-programming produce a more uniform minimum quality threshold — not because UCS is "better", but because its circular logic does not make the experience dependent on the organisational capacity of a single body selected by the school.

A plausible reading, not yet systematically supported by comparative data.

Re-reading the evidence: UCS as a conversion factor

Sen (1999) / Nussbaum (2011): capabilities are the substantive freedoms a person has to pursue the kind of life they have reason to value.

Poliandri and Palumbo (2025): programmes can be read as potential conversion factors, mediating resources into real freedoms and opportunities.

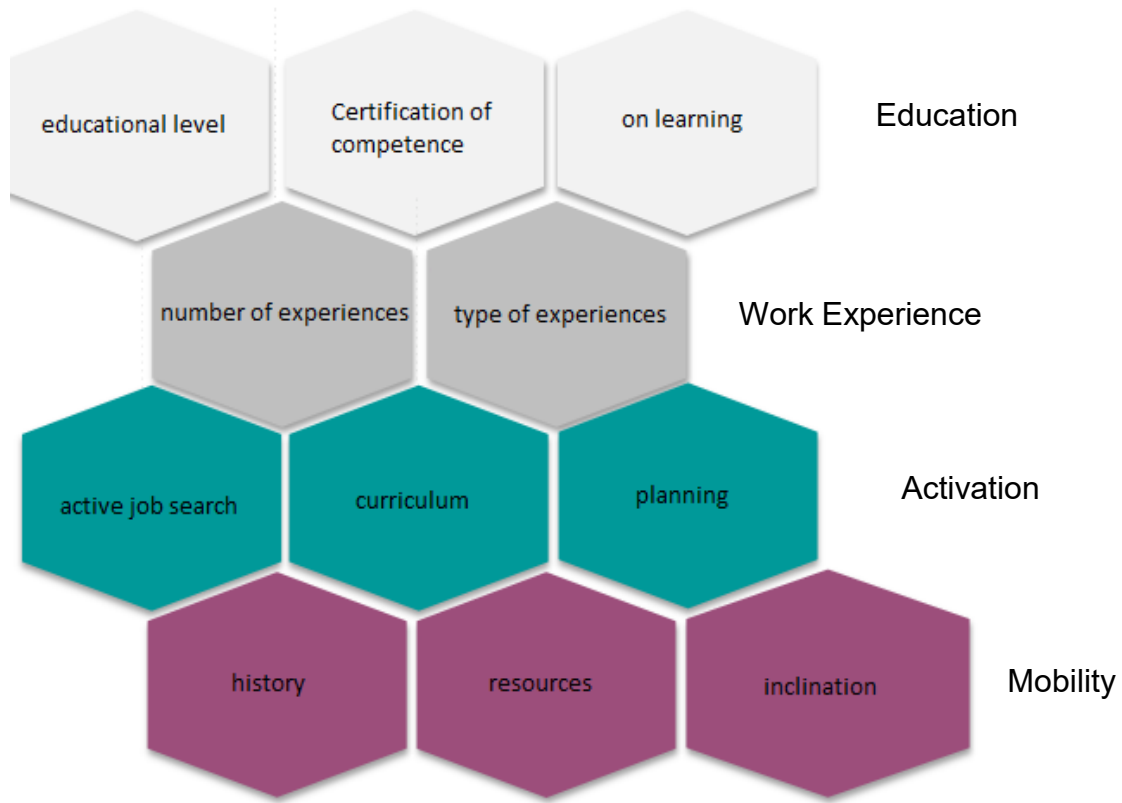


*Not what UCS volunteers obtain,
but what becomes possible for them to be or to do.*

Evaluating SWP programmes from this perspective does not mean asking only whether participants find a job — it means asking whether the programme expands the real opportunities they have reason to value.

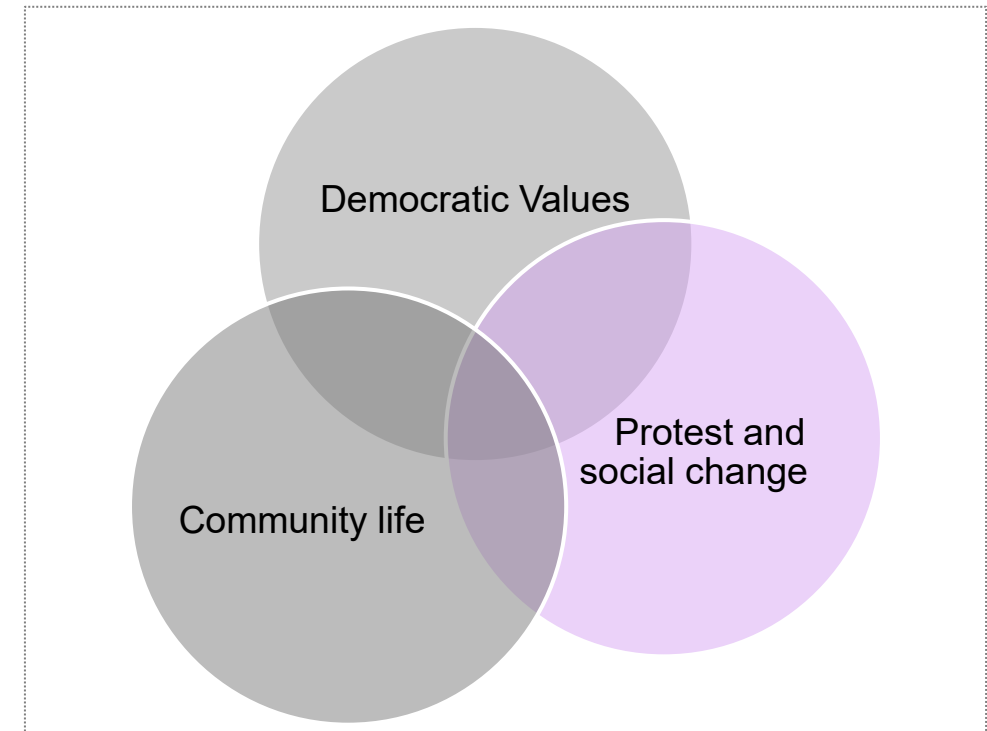
Employability (OKI-INAPP)

Construction by Inapp of an
INDIVIDUAL Multidimensional Index



Active Citizenship (ACCI)

European ACCI Index
by Ecological INDIVIDUAL
→ Individual Index Acci- INAPP

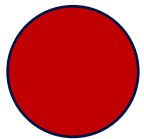


Employability

Literature and Indicator

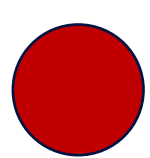
❖ Approaches

1. an approach we will define as "**individualistic**", which identifies the determinants of employability solely in the mix of individual knowledge and professional skills;
2. a predominantly "**socioeconomic**" approach, which identifies the determinants of employability solely in contextual factors (labour demand, labour market characteristics, innovation processes, economic resources, industrial policies, etc.);
3. a "**mixed**" approach, which sees the combination of the first two approaches as the most widespread view in recent years.

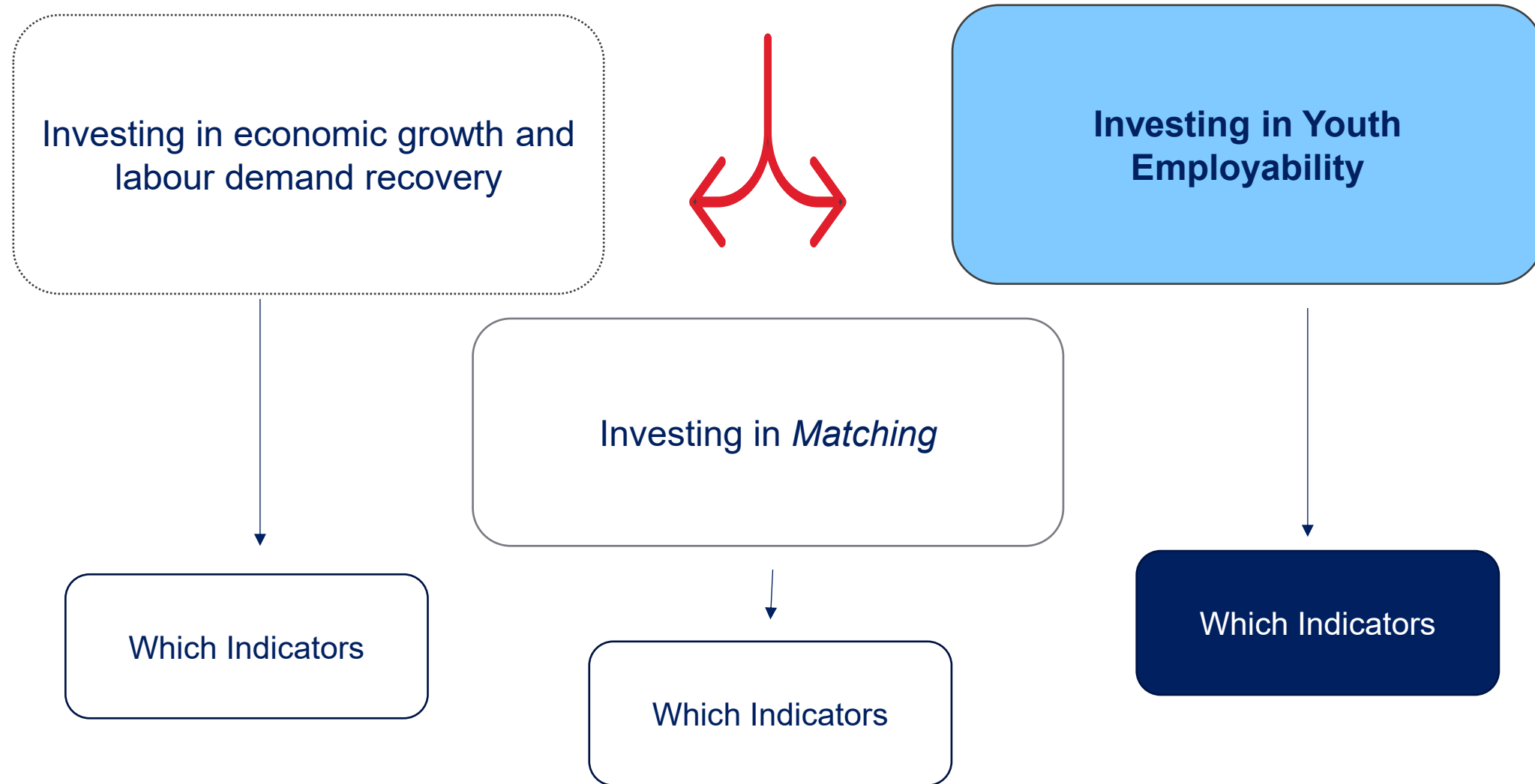


❖ Methods

These three approaches have rarely produced tools for measuring employability. The theoretical and methodological complexity inherent in the concept has so far made it more a generic term than a measurable operational concept; the few analysable experiments can be traced back to two prevailing, and quite distant, options:

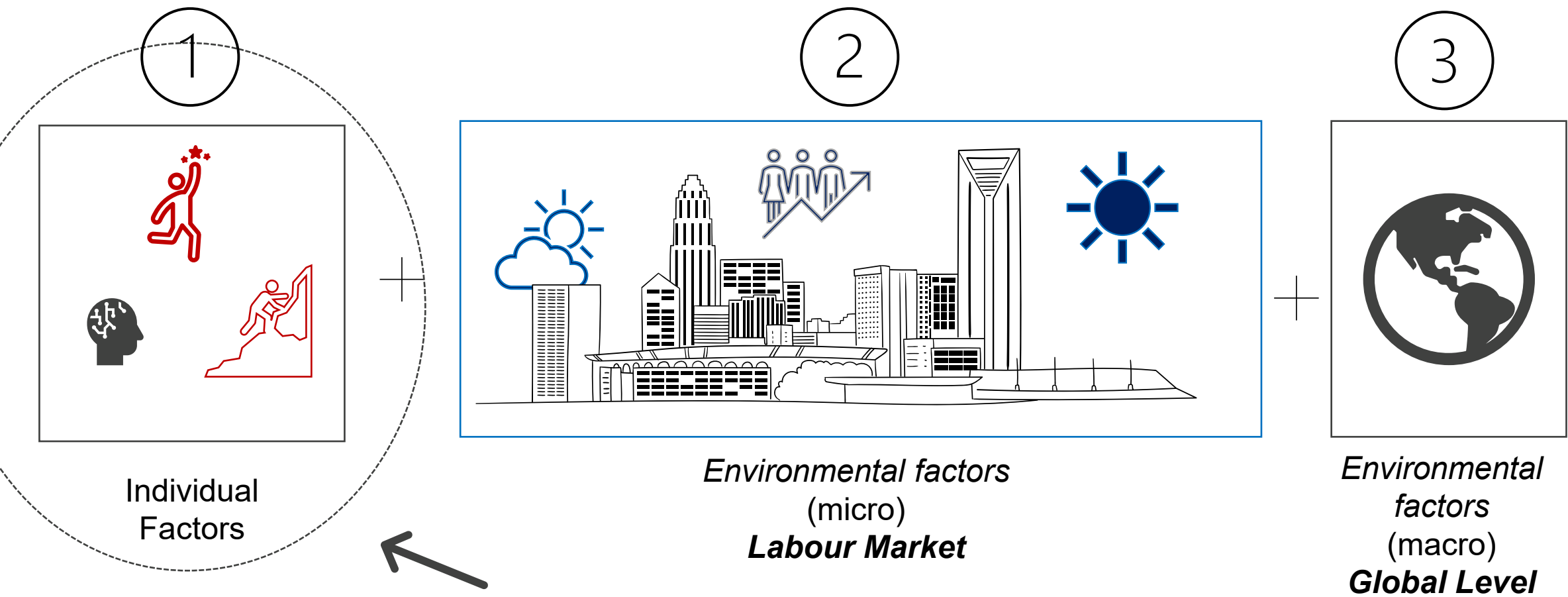


- the **probabilistic** option, which views employability as the statistical probability of finding employment within a given time frame; at the methodological level this option is usually supported by profiling tools
- The **psychological** option, more oriented towards measuring transversal skills and relational competences, closely anchored to self-assessment and feedback to the individual, mainly through psychometric tools. This option has its roots in the culture of guidance, assessment and/or skills audit.



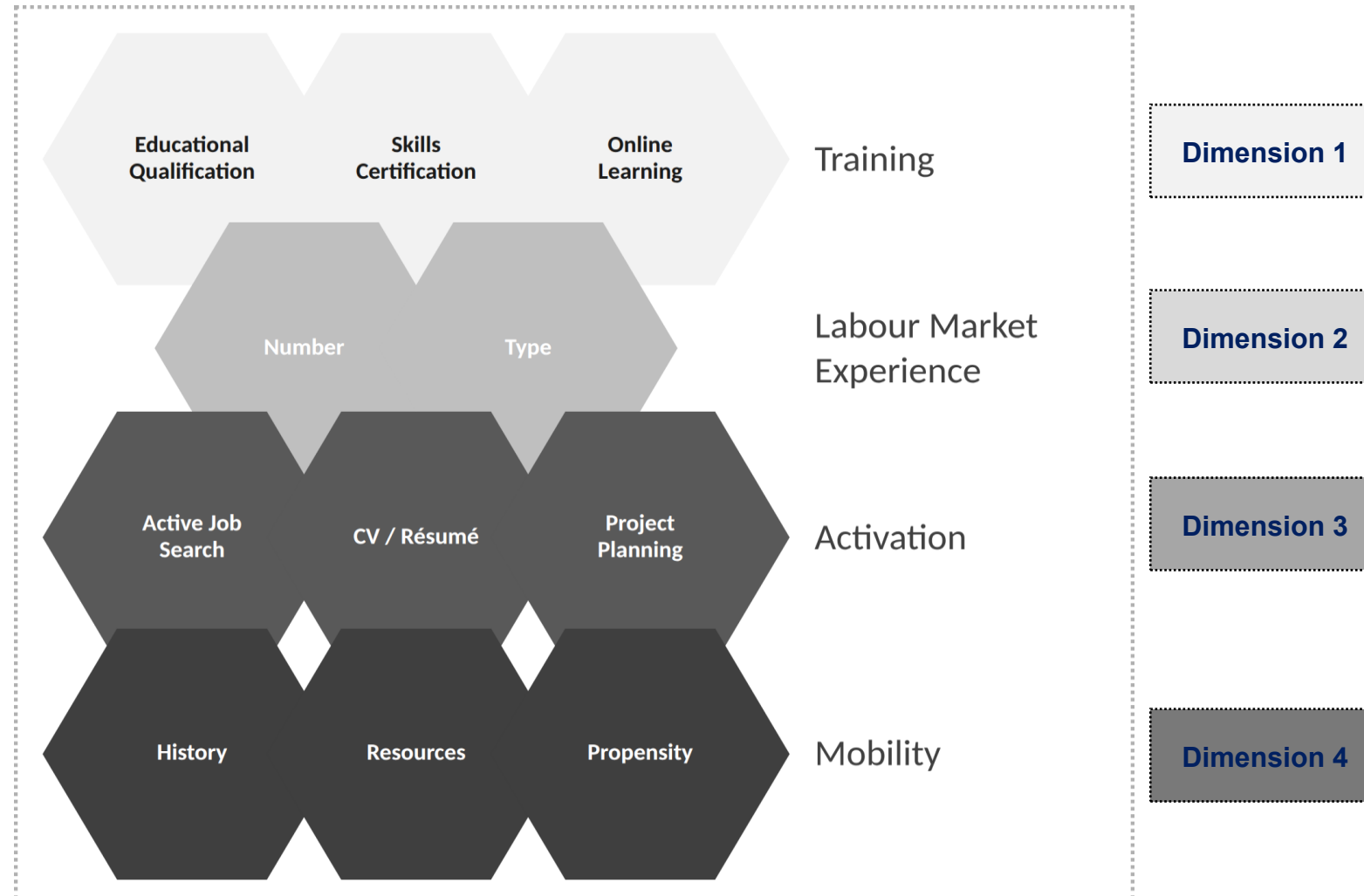
❖The concept of Employability

If one assumes that employability determines the statistical probability of being employed



*statistical probability of being employed (as Total Employability) =
[environmental factors] + [Individual factors]*

❖ Framework Employability index (OKI-Inapp)



**Construction of a
Multidimensional
INDIVIDUAL
Index**

❖Constructing the Employability Index (OKI-Inapp)

Dimension 1

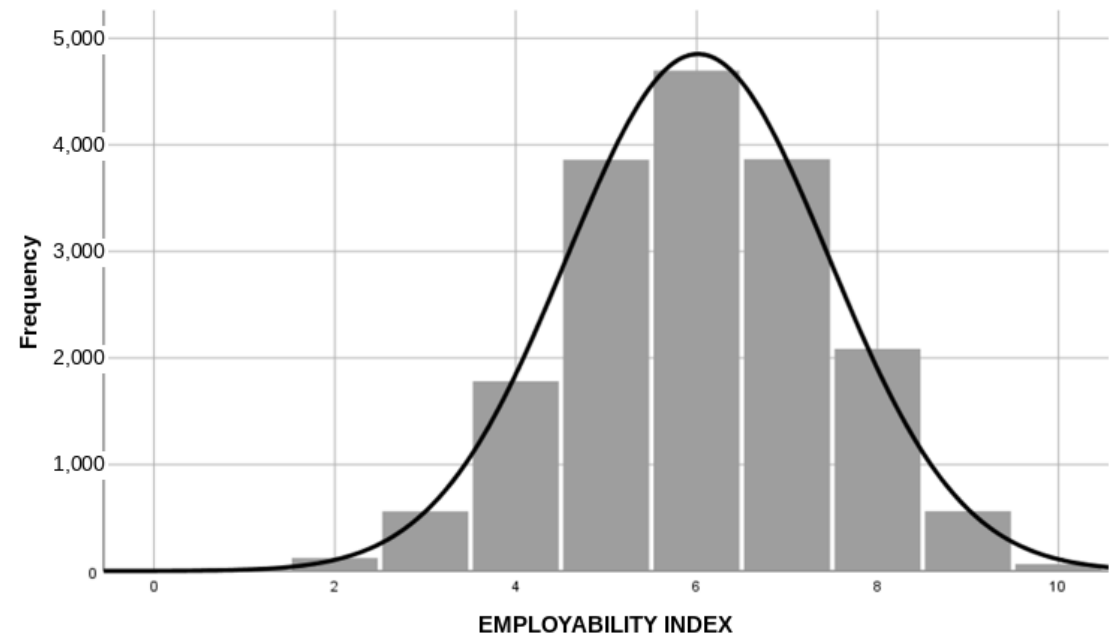
Dimension	Indicators	Scoring
Education	1. Educational attainment; 2. current participation in education or training; 3. skills certification or professional qualification	Raw score: 0–4 → 0–10
Labour-market experience	1. Previous work experience; 2. internships, traineeships or apprenticeships completed before Civil Service	Raw score: 0–4 → 0–10
Labour-market activation	1. Clear career goal; 2. active job search; 3. preparation and updating of the CV	Raw score: 0–4 → 0–10
Mobility	1. Mobility history and independent living; 2. foreign-language proficiency; 3. experience abroad; 4. willingness to relocate for work	Four components: 0–2.5 each → 0–10

Dimension 2

Dimension 3

Dimension 4

Employability Index



INDICES	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	St. Dev.	Regr. B (Unstd.)	Regr. Beta (Std.)
training	0	10	4.91	2.49	0.25	0.44
experience	0	10	4.53	2.56	0.25	0.46
activation	0	10	8.37	2.14	0.25	0.38
mobility	0	10	4.36	1.73	0.25	0.31
EMPLOYABILITY INDEX	0.54	9.46	5.54	1.40		

Pearson correlation between the employability index and its dimensions (sub-index)

	Sub-index 1 Training	Sub-index 2 Experience	Sub-index 3 Activation	Sub-index 4 Mobility	OKI Index
Sub-index 1 - Training	1	0.16	0.11	0.25	0.63
Sub-index 2 - Experience		1	0.11	0.20	0.61
Sub-index 3 - Activation			1	0.09	0.54
Sub-index 4 - Mobility				1	0.64

Source: *Cittadinanza attiva e occupabilità: una sperimentazione di due indici di misurazione*, De Luca F., Ferri S., di Padova P. (2019)

Active Citizenship

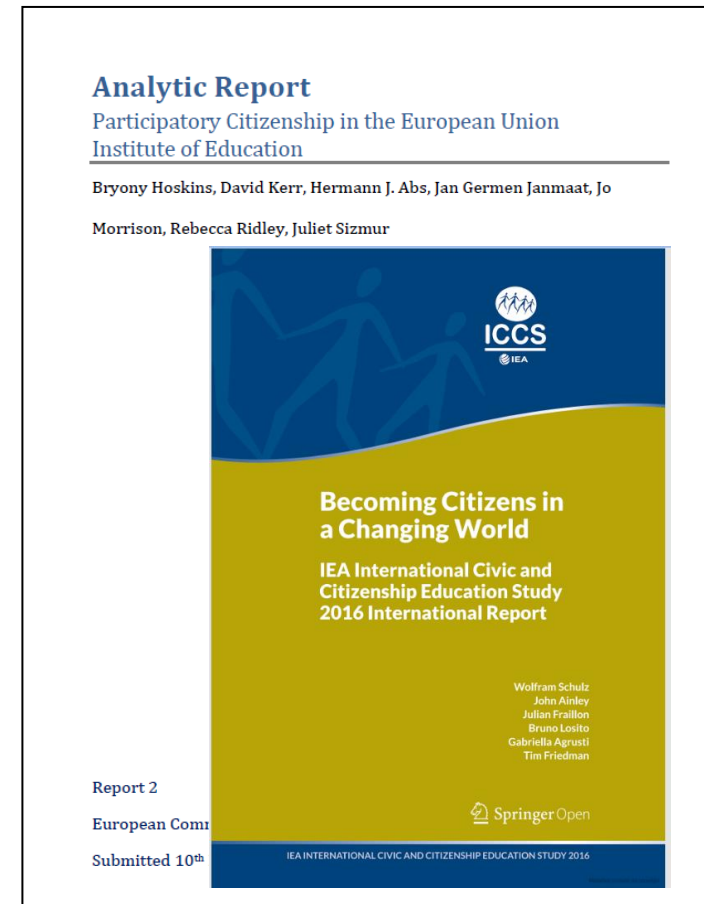
Literature and Inapp Indicator

Definitions and concepts

Active Citizenship: Participation in civil society, community and/or political life, characterized by mutual respect and non-violence in accordance with human rights and democracy (Hoskins 2006)

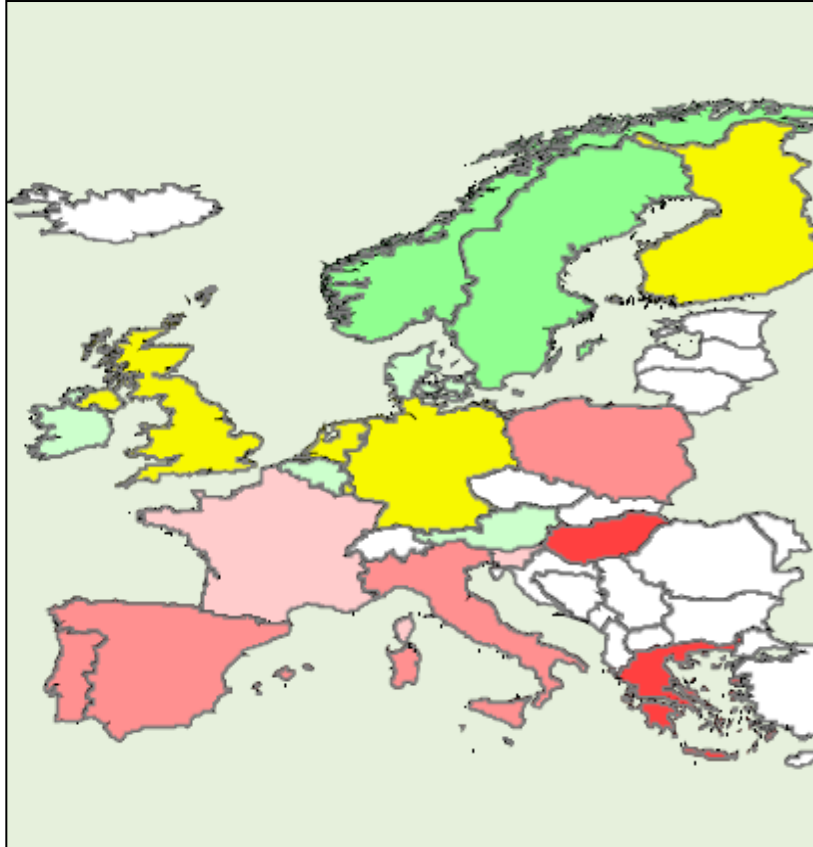
(Mascherini et al. 2009) the term "active citizenship" is used in EU policies to affirm and promote these particular forms of participation in order to ensure the continuity of participatory and representative democracy, reduce the gap between citizens and governing institutions and strengthen social cohesion.

CRELL Set of values, attitudes and behaviours related to the mobilisation of individual and collective resources to facilitate freedom of opinion and the expression of dissent, participation in the political and social life of the community, the defence of citizens' rights and duties, the democratic values of representation, the protection of common goods.

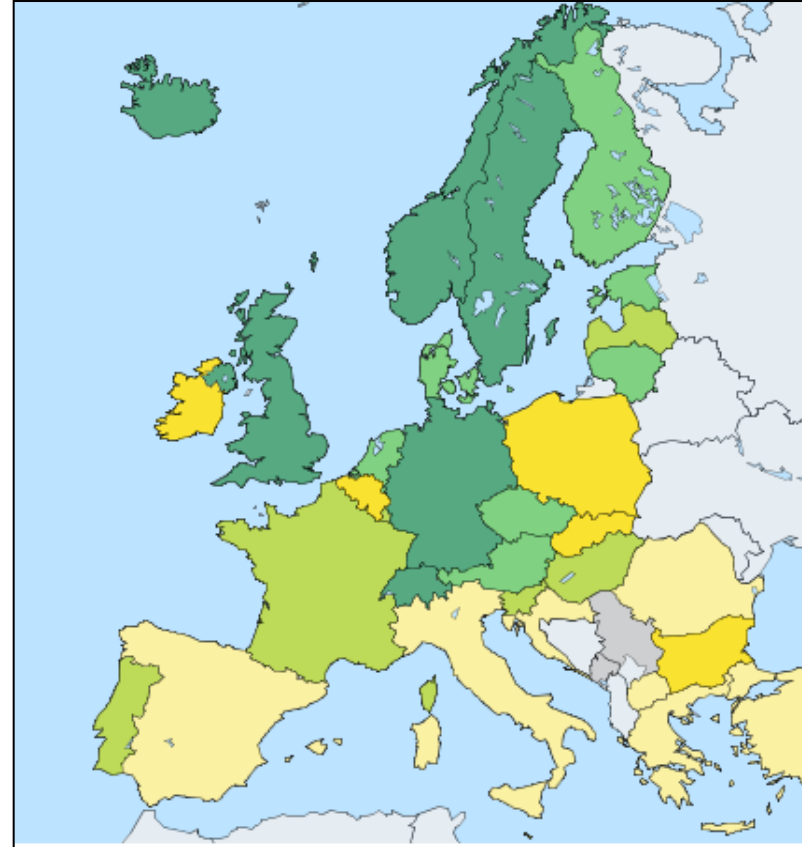


Insight at the start

Active Citizenship
Composite Indicator



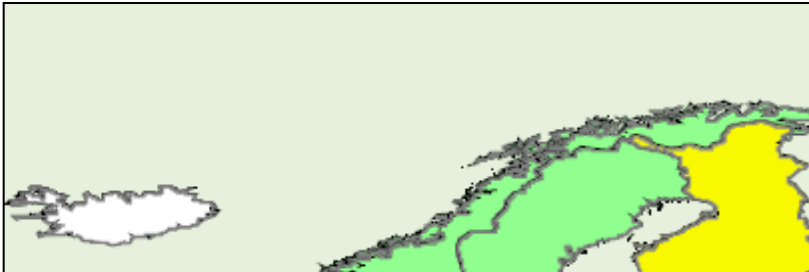
Employment rate to total population,
age group 20-64



Source: *Measuring Active Citizenship through
the Development of a Composite Indicator, 2008*

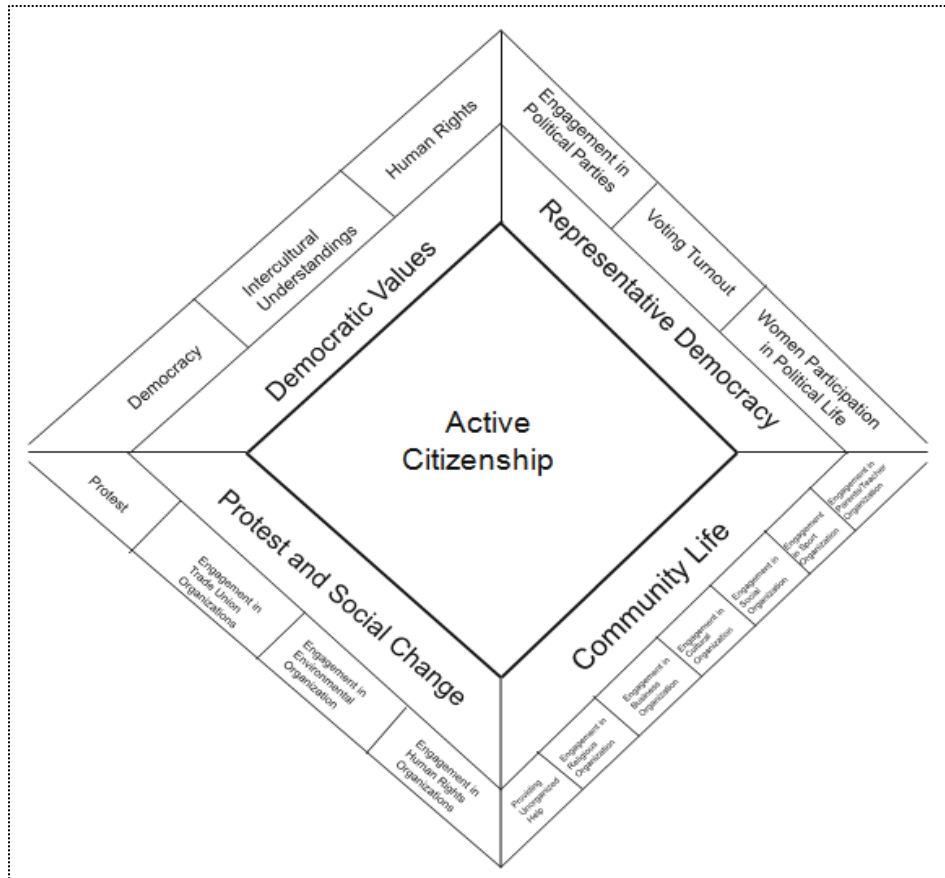
Insight at the start

Active Citizenship Composite Indicator



	Active Citizenship (ACCI)	Civil society domain	Community domain	Values domain	Political Life
Corruption Perceptions Index	0.840	0.862	0.763	0.432	0.604
	Active Citizenship (ACCI)	Civil society domain	Community domain	Values domain	Political Life
GDP per capita (PPP US\$ 2002)	0.79	0.83	0.75	0.30	0.65

EU Index

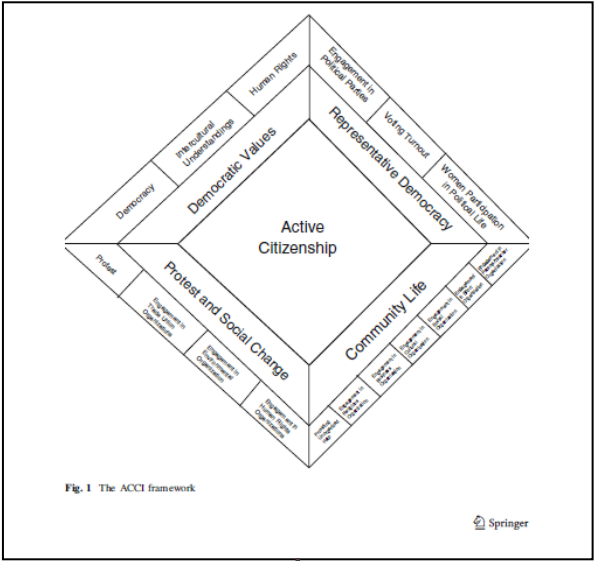


Fonte: *Measuring Active Citizenship through the Development of a Composite Indicator*, 2008

Original ACCI (61 Indicators)

- 4 dimensions standardised and rescaled to 0-10
- ACCI: Average of 4 dimensions (0-10)
- ACCI normalised (mean 0, standard deviation 1)

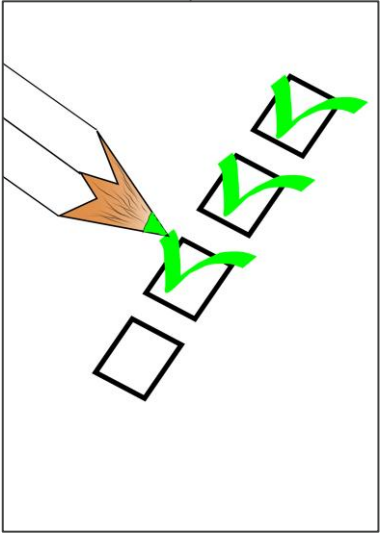
Active Citizenship



Country
Index



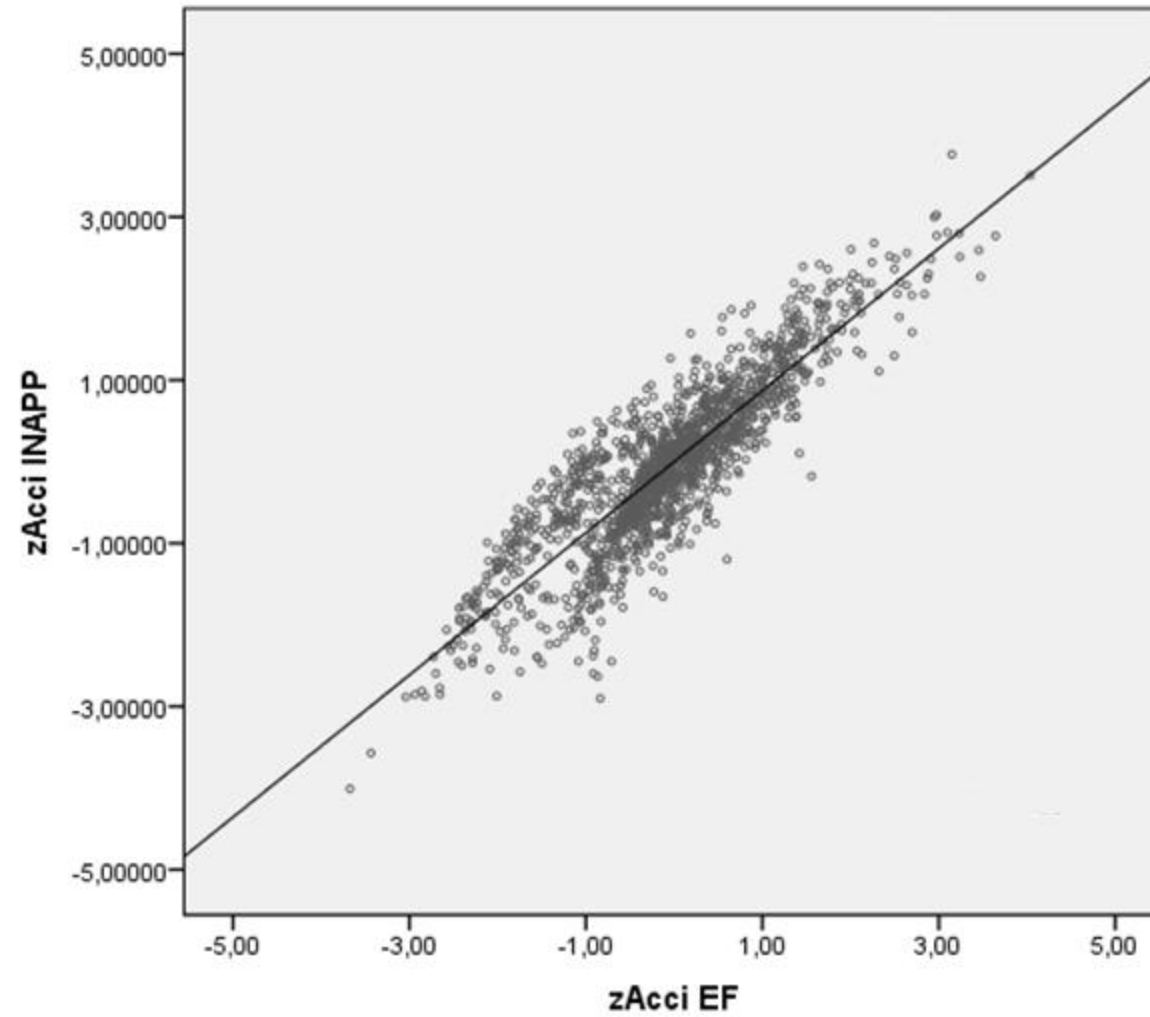
Individual
Index



Dimension

Protest and Social Change	Community Life	Democratic Values	Representative democracy
PROTEST	Unorganized Help	Democracy	Being active in political Parties
Human Rights Organizations	Religious Organizations		
	Sports Organizations	Human rights	Voting to National/ European Election
Environmental Organizations	Culture and hobbies organizations		
Trade Union Organizations	Business Organizations	Intercultural understandings	Women participation
	Teacher/Parents Organizations		
	Social Organizations		

Relationship between the Original ACCI index
and the ACCI-Inapp index



Survey

Linking survey data to Mandatory Communications (COB)

01

Index survey

Sample Survey

Ex-ante and ex-post questionnaires measure the OKI and ACCI indices on volunteers (treated) and a comparison group (untreated).

02

OKI – employment test

Administrative Data Base

Respondents are linked, record by record, to the Mandatory Communications archive (COB) to validate self-declared employment and observe objective outcomes.

03

OKI before/after

Statistical matching

To compares OKI levels at entry and at exit between treated and untreated groups within the counterfactual design.

Each respondent is tracked at record level, from the survey questionnaire to their administrative employment history — turning self-reported indices into objective, verifiable outcomes.

Sample surveys - investigated populations

Survey	Call for Reference	Moment Interview	Total Population (n. volunteers)	Sample Surveyed (n. volunteers)
Ex-Ante	Ordinary	incoming	27.779	1.000
Ex-Post (1)	Ordinary	12/18 months later the end	13.375	1.500
Ex-Post (2)	NEET YOG	6 months later the end	4.250	1.000
			45.404	3.500

Characteristics of INAPP sample surveys

* The samples are all statistically representative of the total population of young people who have carried out the Universal Civic Service in compliance with a given call for applications.

Dimensions investigated - ad hoc evaluation model.

1. "Demographic" profiles

2. Family background

Also Helios Data

3. Media Use

4. Relational network

5. Employability

- Training
- Mobility
- Labour market activation
- Professional Experience



6. Active Citizenship

- Protest and Social Change
- Community Life
- Democratic Values
- Representative Democracy



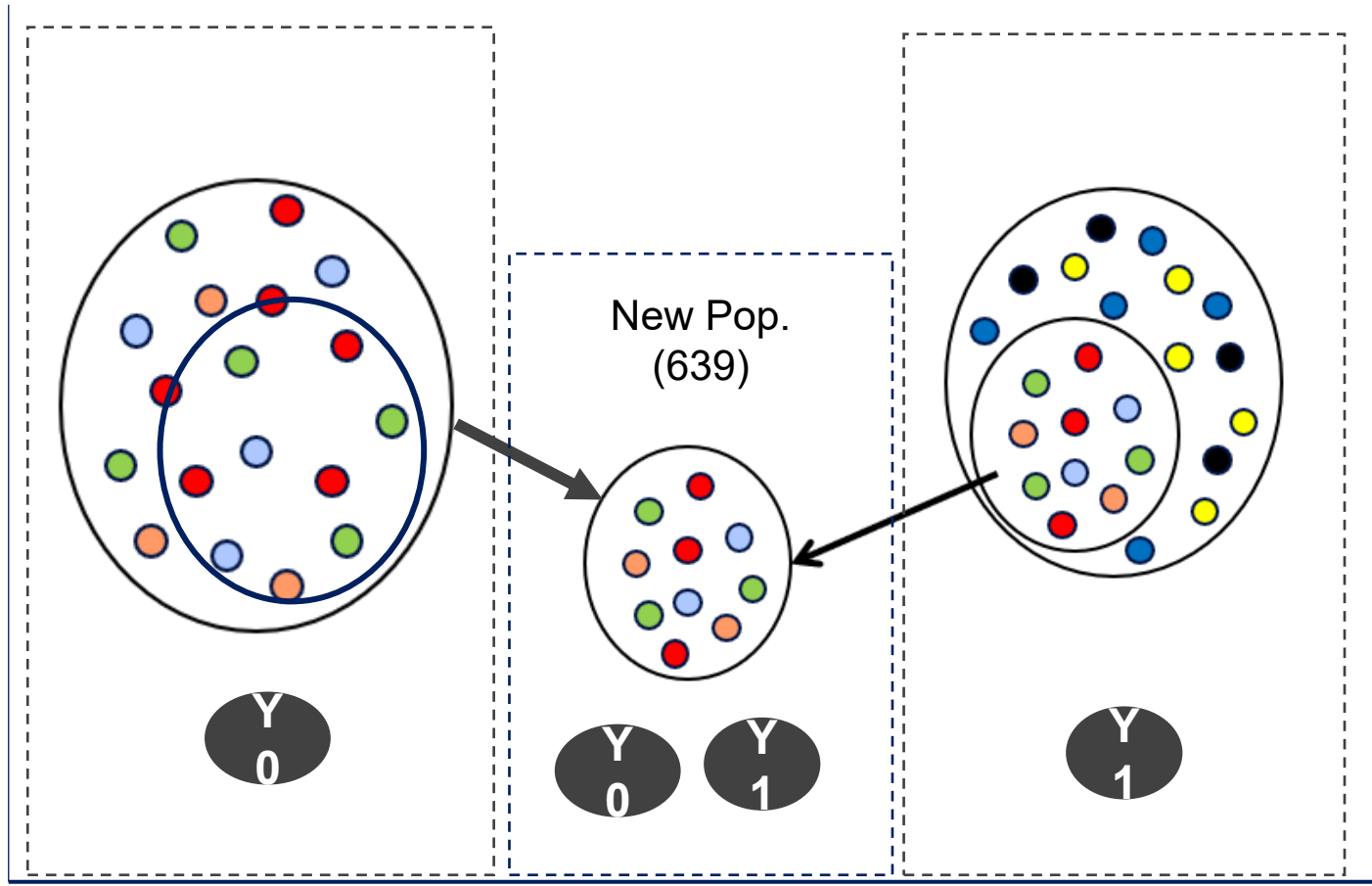
7. Evaluation of the UCS Experience (Volunteer Satisfaction)

8. Self-assessment of Skills Acquired

*Ex-post Surveys
Only*

Matching

$$(Y_1, Y_0) \perp T \mid X$$



Starting from a maximum of 1,000 matchable individuals, the matching procedure identified 639 "twin" individuals, based on very stringent profiling (1:1 matching).

The five pre-treatment covariates (X) on which the matching strata were built are:

- X(1) Gender;
- X(2) Age;
- X(3) Educational qualification;
- X(4) Geographical area of residence;
- X(5) Family background;
- + X(6) Employment.

Statistical Matching: the counterfactual design

639

matched "twin" pairs identified
(1:1 matching, from 1,500
treated and 1,000 untreated)

Under the conditional independence assumption, OKI levels 'at exit' (Y1) and 'at entry' (Y0) are treated as independent of treatment (T) within strata defined by all combinations of the observed covariates (X) — for conditional ignorability to hold, groups balanced on all relevant pre-treatment characteristics are required (Lucchini, 2013).

6

pre-treatment covariates
gender, age, education, area, background,
employment

12/18

months, the observed
post-treatment period

ANOVA

significance test
 $p < 0.05$ on between-group differences

A quasi-experimental design that isolates the effect of UCS from volunteers' pre-existing characteristics — the foundation of rigour underlying all the evidence presented.

Evidence

Who are the UCS volunteers: gender, territory, background

66%

of volunteers are women
(60% among Youth Guarantee
NEETs)

A polarised profile: a more educated female component (50% graduates) and a younger, less educated male component; a Southern component (60% South and Islands) from more disadvantaged family backgrounds and a central-northern component from higher backgrounds — differences that become more extreme among NEETs.

60%

reside in the South and Islands
at the time of application

50%

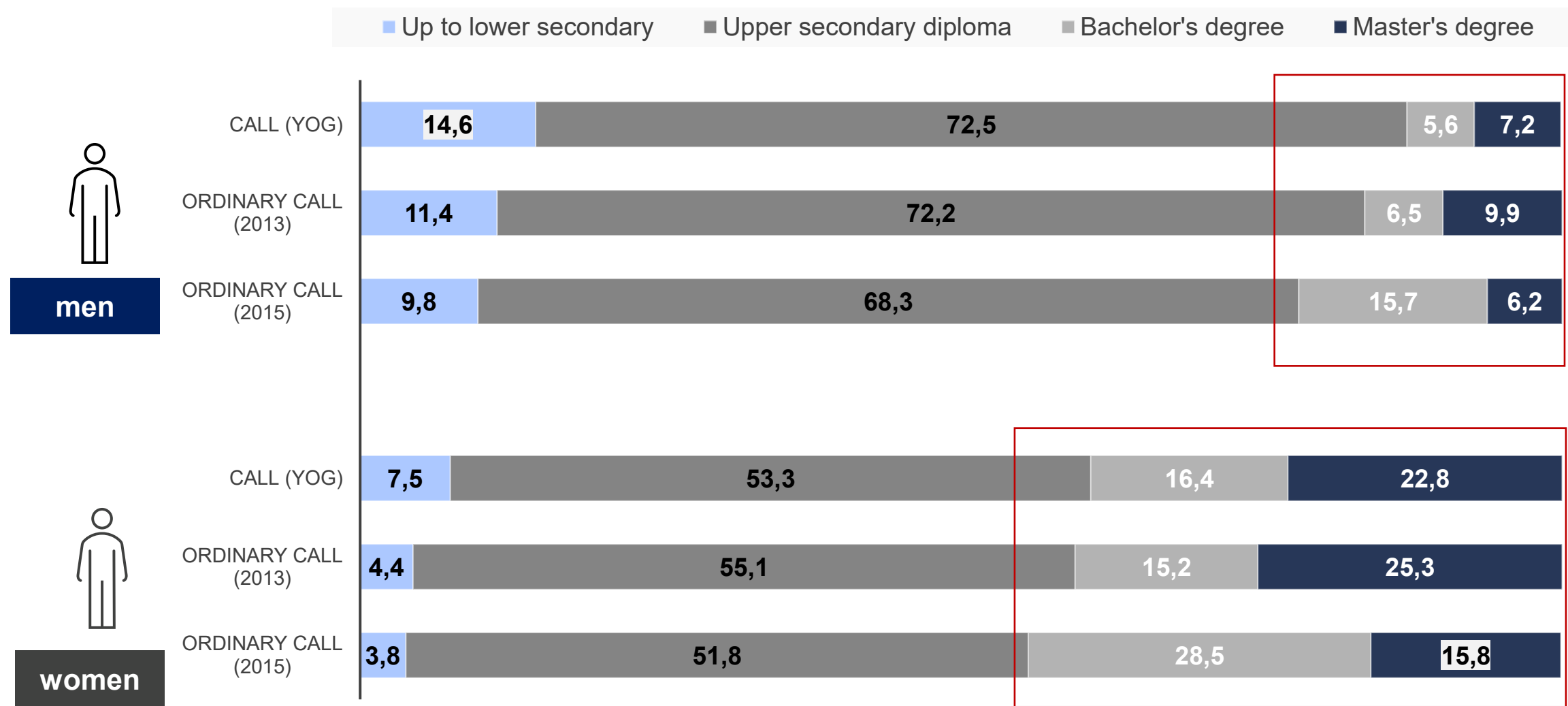
of women are graduates,
compared with 24% of men

7.5%

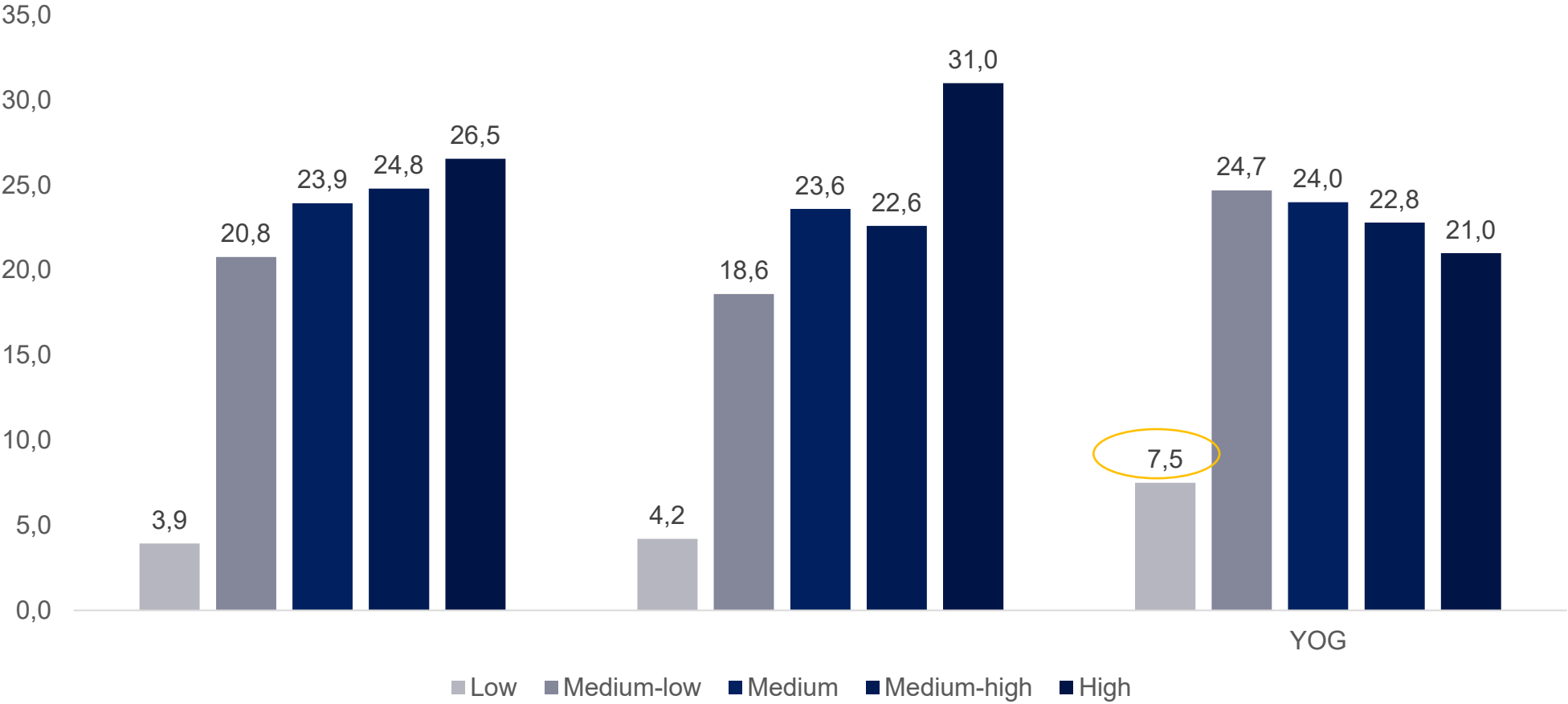
of NEETs have a very low
family background (double the rate for ordinary
volunteers)

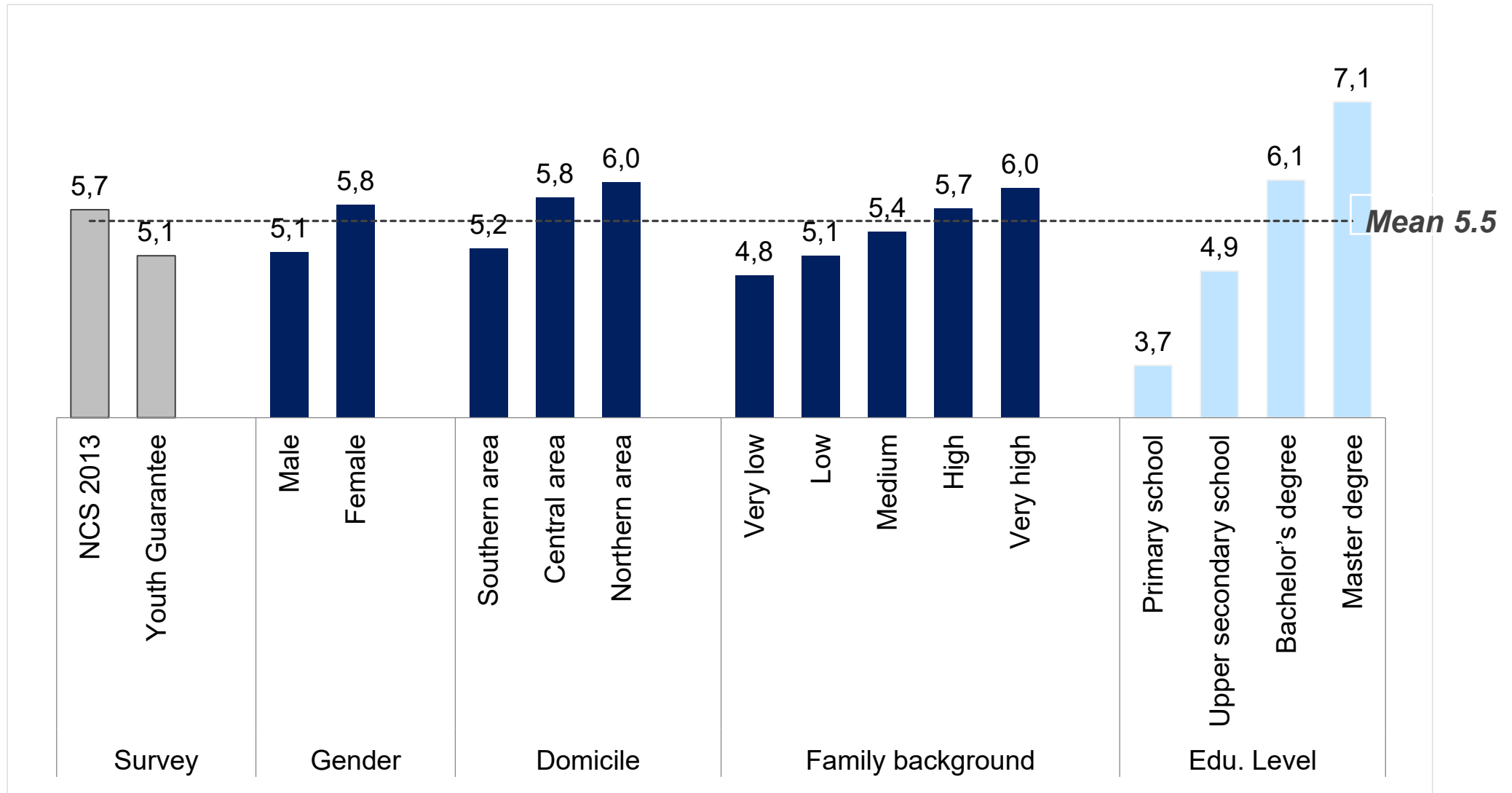
Entry selection favours profiles that are already more "high-performing": a crucial issue for reading intersectional inequalities in the youth condition, as called for by the H.11 call.

Educational Qualification at the time of application

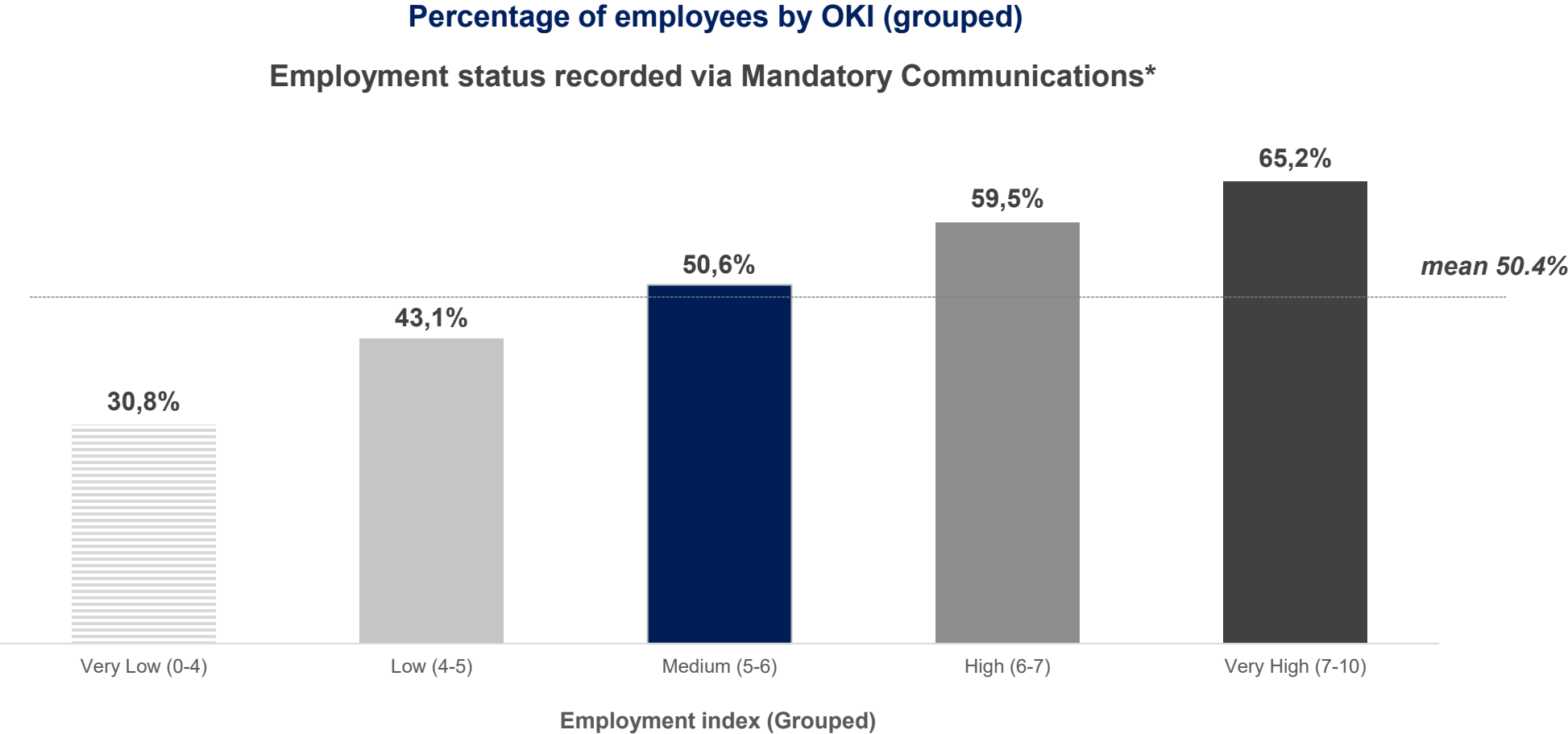


The family background of Youth Guarantee volunteers is markedly lower than that recorded in the ordinary calls, but it should be borne in mind that these are predominantly young people from the centre-south.





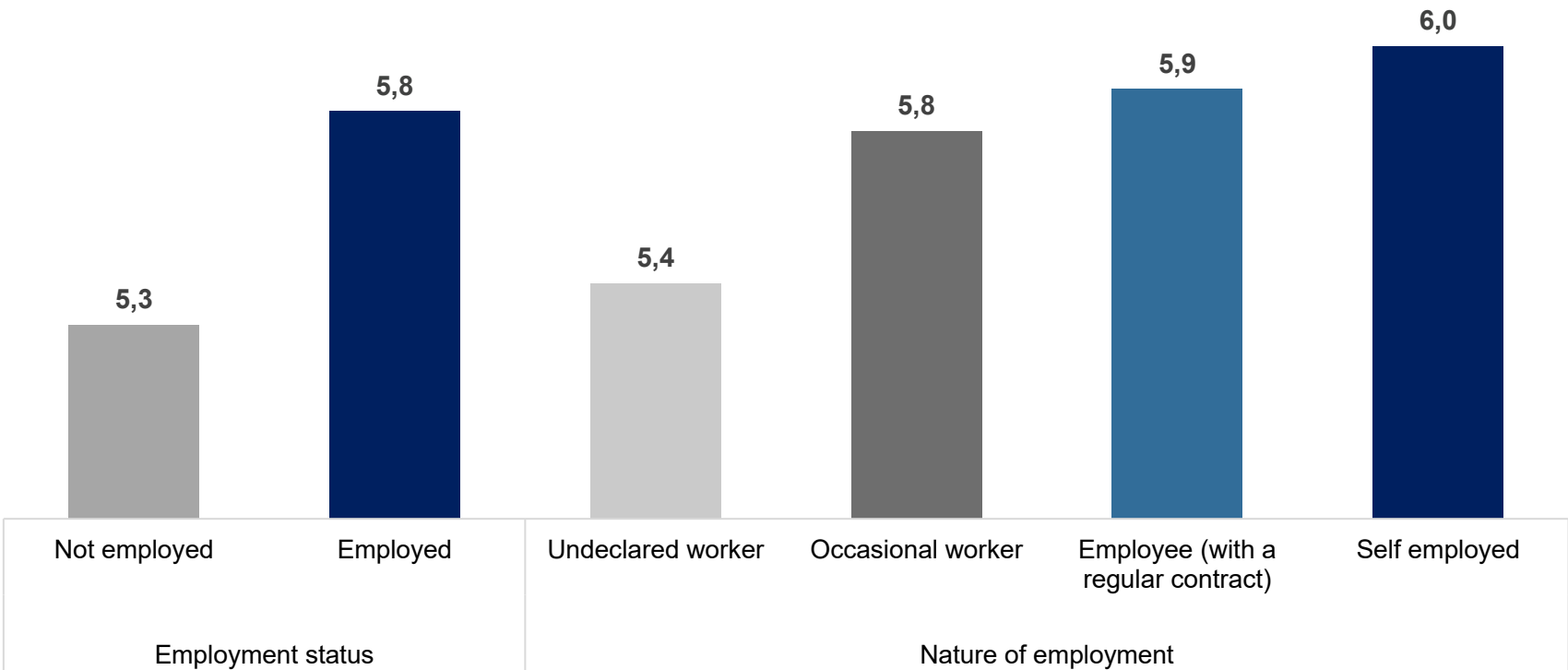
The reliability of OKI-Inapp with respect to the "employment" outcome



The reliability of OKI-Inapp with respect to the "employment" outcome

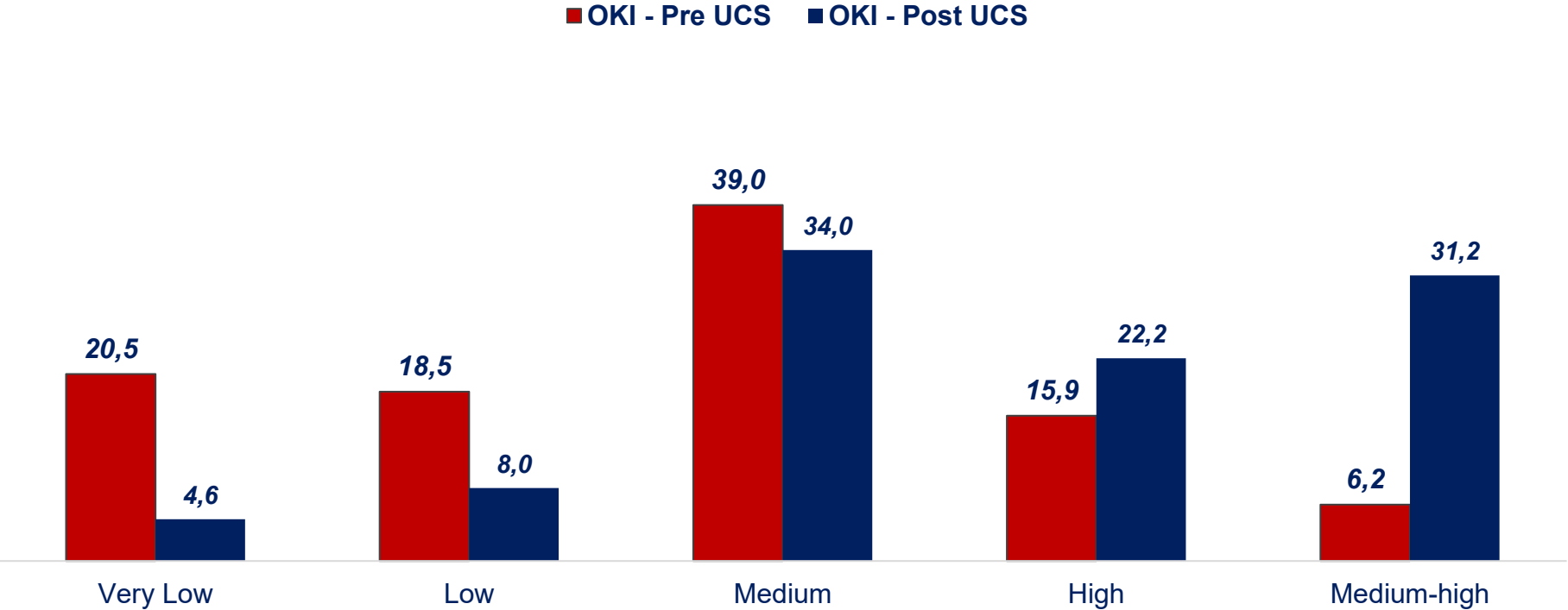
Employability Index OKI by employment status* and nature of employment** (mean)

*Employment status declared at the time of interview; **Type of job declared at the time of interview



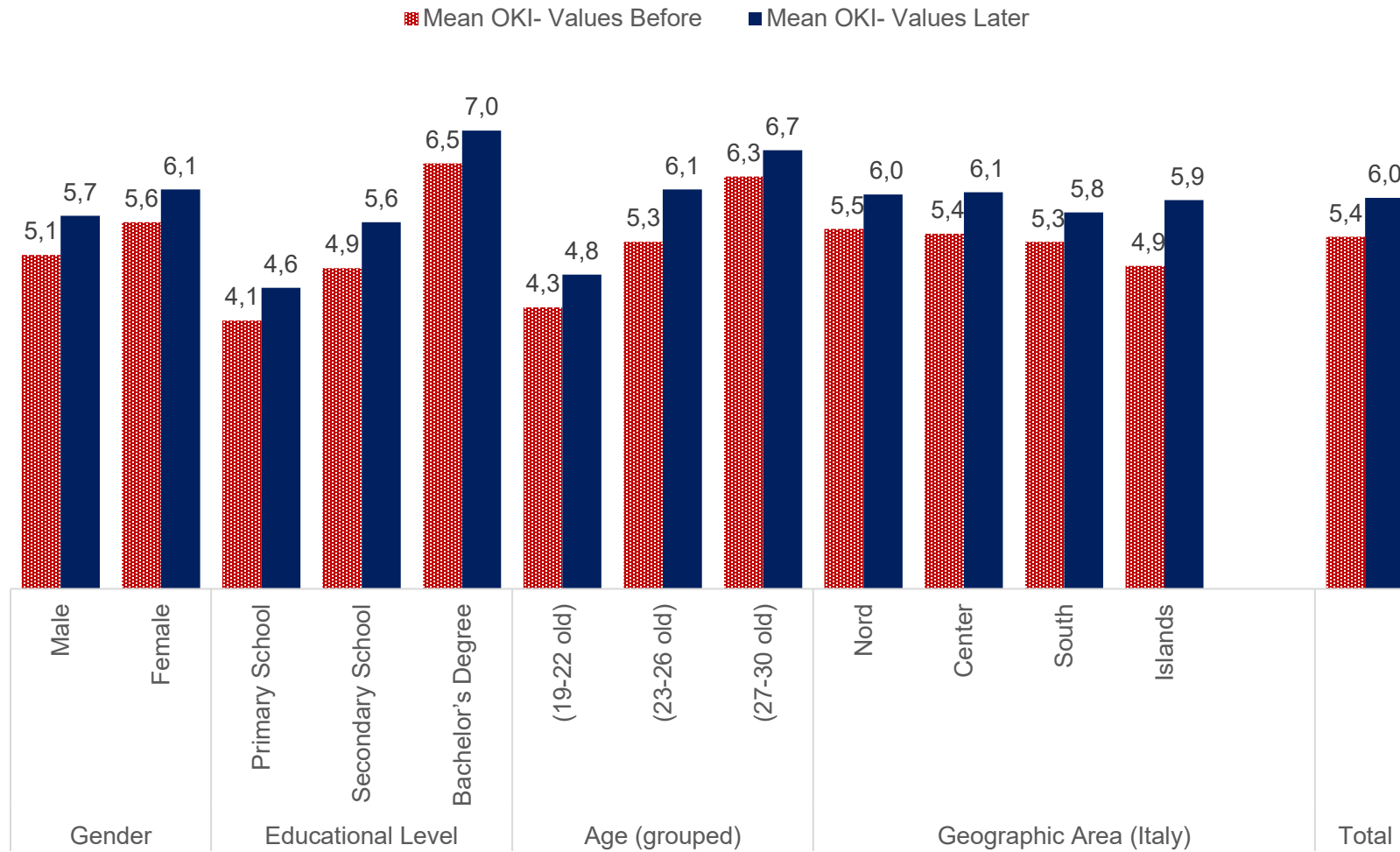
Increase in OKI after UCS - 12% -

OKI-Inapp Index Values by Class and Survey Wave (%)



Democratic effects

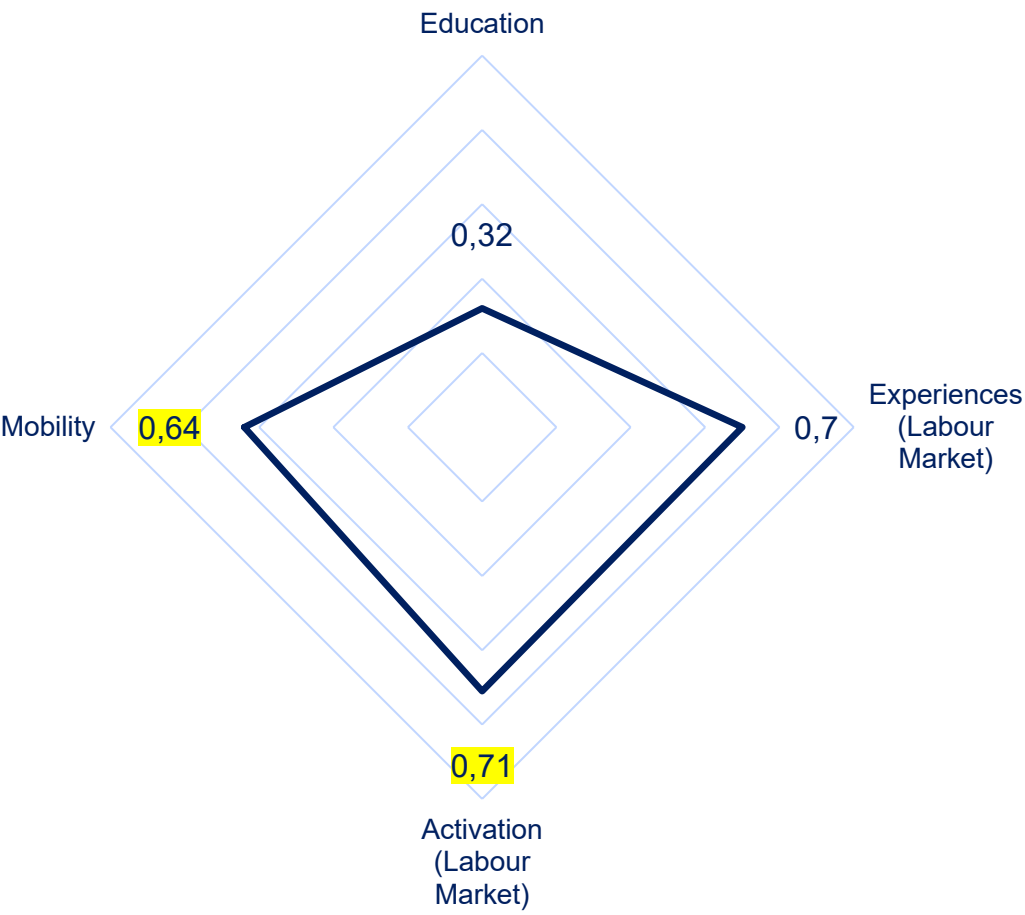
Data Ordinary Calls (ex-ante and ex-post)- Countrofactual Experiment through Statistical Matching



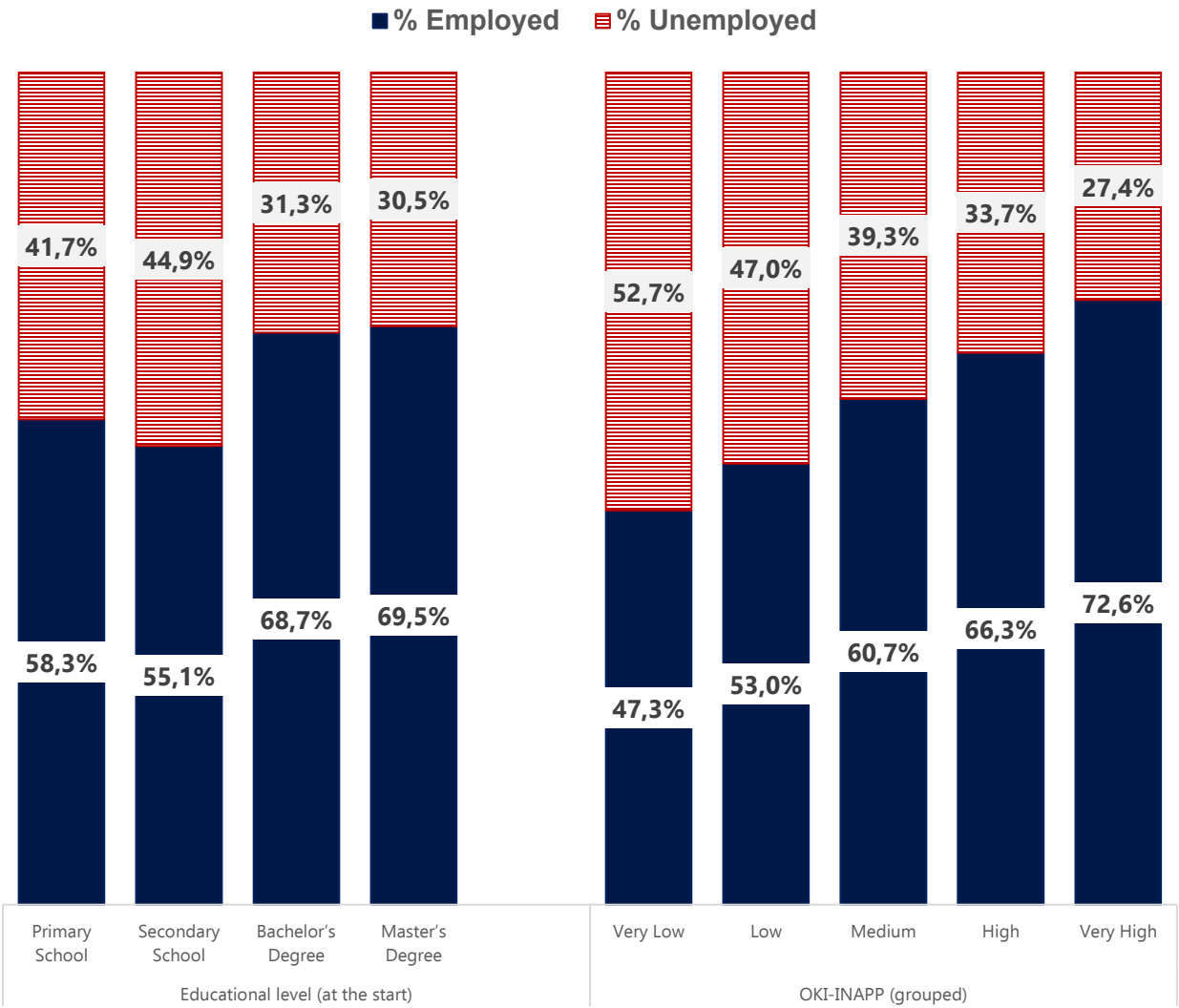
The Increase in the levels of employability of volunteers is independent of the starting data variables and the family background of origin.

Differences in OKI ante/post by gender, degree, geographical area and family background are not significant.

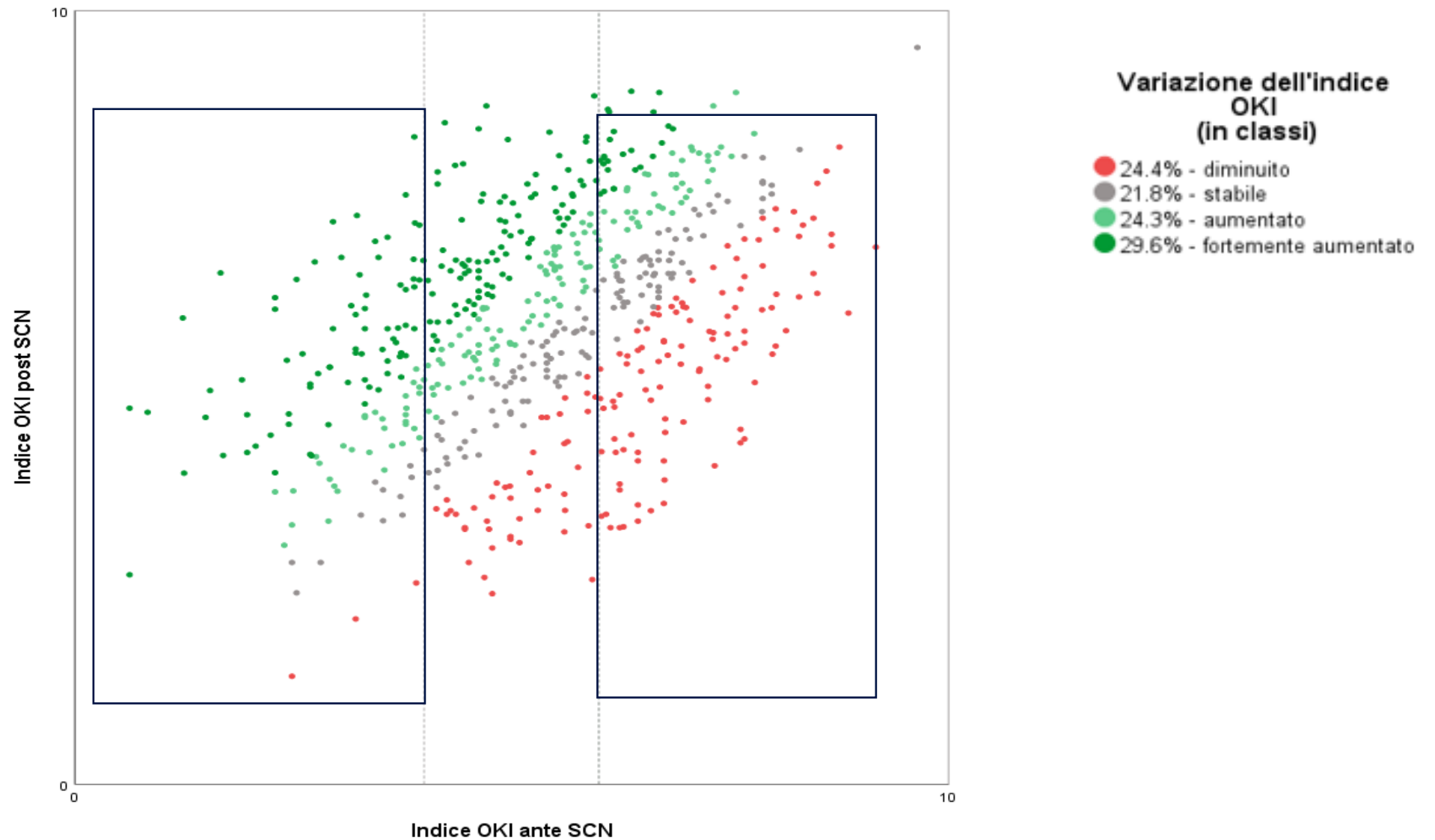
OKI size variations after SCU



OKI/Educational Level and Employment



OKI increases in 54% of cases



After UCS: employability rises, inactivity disappears

+12%

average OKI increase
(5.38 → 5.97 / 10)
counterfactual matching, $p < 0.001$

A "democratic effect": the increase is transversal — no significant differences by gender, education, geography or family background (ANOVA, $p > 0.10$). Largest gains: Activation (+0.71) and Experience (+0.70), then Mobility (+0.64).

1%

declared "inactive" 12-18 months after UCS
(vs 10% who joined to escape inactivity)

69%

found UCS useful for their
professional project

20%

changed their mind and revised
their professional plans

UCS doesn't only add resources for the labour market — it reshapes young people's professional agency. In capability terms, this is where voice and agency show up empirically.

REGRESSORS	Odds Ratio	Sign.	95% C.I.per EXP(B)	
			lower	upper
Unemployment rate [rif. High (>40%)]		0,000		
Medium unemployment rate (25%-40%)	2,051	0,000	1,659	2,536
Low unemployment rate (<25%)	3,962	0,000	3,014	5,206
OkI [rif. Very low (0-4)]		0,000		
OkI low (4-5)	1,559	0,002	1,178	2,064
OkI medium (5-6)	2,072	0,000	1,580	2,718
OkI high (6-7)	2,875	0,000	2,156	3,834
OkI very high (7-10)	3,664	0,000	2,671	5,026
Gender female [rif. Male]	1,528	0,000	1,255	1,861
Sector: welfare/assistance [ref. Other sectors]	1,544	0,000	1,306	1,825
Constant	0,141	0,000		

Regression model

The regional unemployment rate (notoriously higher in the South than in the centre-north) shows significant coefficients: compared with an area with a high unemployment rate (the model's reference category), the odds ratio (OR) for areas with an average unemployment rate is slightly above 2, while for low-unemployment areas the OR rises to almost 4.

In other words, at equal OKI, a young person living in regions with a low unemployment rate has a four-fold probability of working compared with someone living in high-unemployment regions

...the higher the employability index, the greater the probability of being employed; at the highest employability level, the probability of working is even three times higher than for those at the lowest OKI level.

The greater precision of the employability index compared with educational qualification in "predicting" employment is also evident when neutralising the impact of geographical area (of residence), which, as shown, is the factor with the greatest influence on employment. Indeed, at equal geographical area, OKI shows a stronger correlation with employment than educational qualification does.

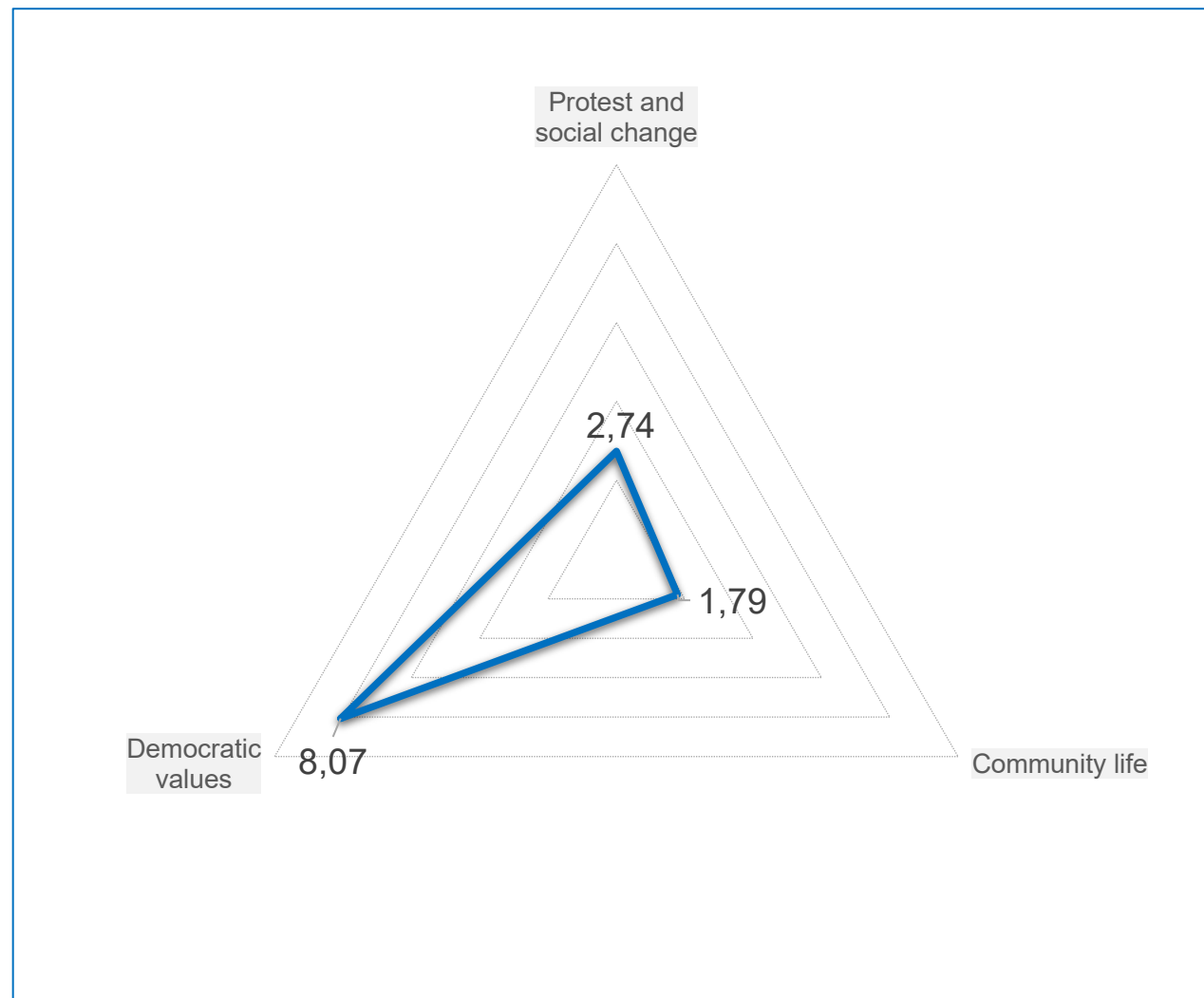
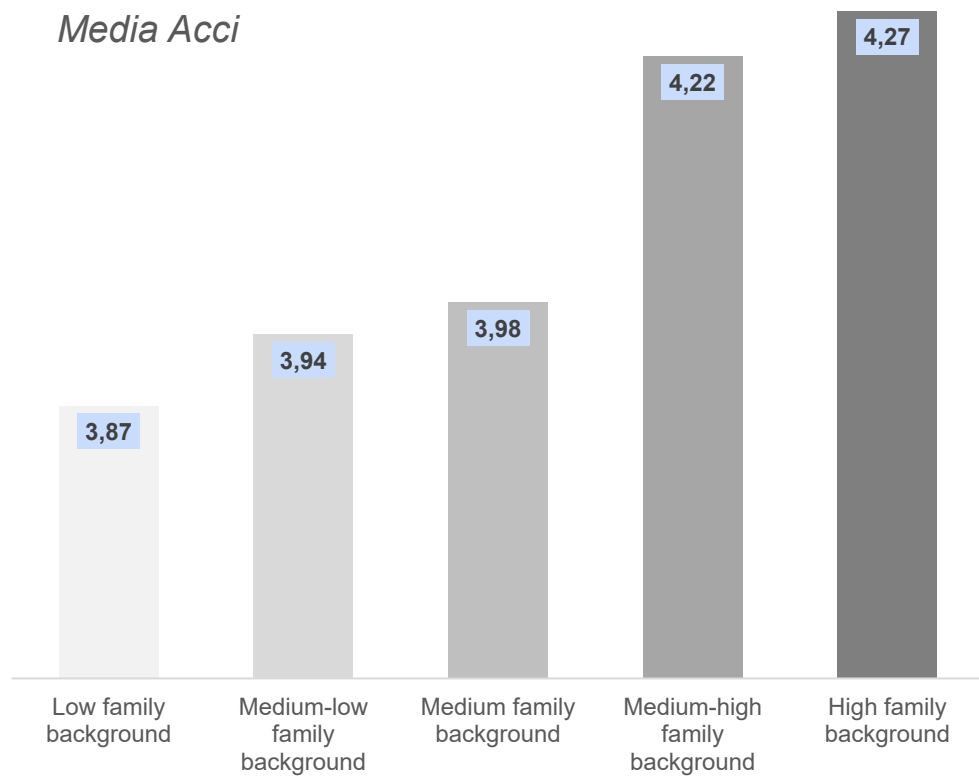
It can therefore reasonably be stated that the OKI index is a better predictor of the likelihood of being employed — at least as regards young people's individual characteristics — than the simple "Educational Qualification" proxy, while also capturing many other dimensions of knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of the populations observed.

Correlation of educational qualification and OKI with employment, by geographical area of residence

Classes of normalised OKI (mean 0, variance 1): Very-low (< -1); Low (-1 to -0.5); Medium (-0.5 to +0.5);

High (+0.5 to +1); Very-High (> 1)

Geographic area of residence	Educational qualification		OKI Inapp	
	R	R-quadrato	R	R-quadrato
North	,035 ^a	,001	,060 ^a	,004
Centre	,108 ^a	,012	,103 ^a	,011
South	,111 ^a	,012	,121 ^a	,015
Islands	,141 ^a	,020	,204 ^a	,041

Media Acci

		Employability index					Total
		Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High	
Active Citizenship Index	Very Low	42,1	51,7	59,1	59,3	63	55,4
	Low	40,4	51,5	57,4	67,3	68,3	58,1
	Medium	38,1	47,8	56,8	57,9	69,1	56,5
	High	48,6	28,7	51,8	63,8	62,9	55
	Very High	48,7	54,1	59,6	65,8	73,7	63,7
	Total	41,2	48,1	57	61,4	68,1	57,2

Note: Values refer to all three populations

Two-year employment, dummy, cob

Active citizenship is a component of employability, not just a predictor

73.7%

employed among those with the highest OKI AND highest ACCI levels

57.2%

overall average employment rate

*Pearson r (ACCI–OKI) = 0.215**, De Luca 2022; 2024*

Active citizenship is an "extra gear": it doesn't replace the traditional dimensions of employability — it adds to them, expanding the probability of employment beyond what OKI alone explains.

97% would do UCS again · 90% report improved relational competences and self-understanding · 86% used communication skills a lot

The data answer the generative question affirmatively: greater employability can, at least in part, be the product of a more conscious, more actively exercised citizenship.

UCS soft skills: what is learned, what is left behind

90%

report having developed
relational competences and having
gotten to know themselves better

Communication, organisational/managerial and professional skills are used a great deal; foreign languages and digital skills are used little. The level of perceived skills is correlated with active citizenship (ACCI): those who feel they have learned more also show greater civic participation.

86%

use of communication skills
(a lot/quite a lot)

11%

use of foreign languages
(a lot/quite a lot)

97%

would do
Civic Service again

The skills acquired during UCS are transversal and relational rather than technical: an asset that formal recognition systems still struggle to make visible.

Future prospects for valorising the experience

Civic Service, as it currently stands (voluntary and based on social solidarity):

- **increases employability (in terms of skills, activation and probability of finding employment) in a transversal way (democratic effect)**
- **Eliminates inactivity (even among NEETs)**
- **Represents a (perhaps unique) opportunity for active citizenship**
- Represents for young people a "training ground"/a "protected" setting in which to exercise professional skills and soft skills
- Positively affects OUTGOING SKILLS (self-assessment)
- **Reorients professional plans (reorientation)**

*The only complaint is having had too little opportunity to exercise
"Foreign languages" and "digital skills"*

How can these effects be valorised? Do they all need formal recognition?

What are OKI and ACCI for?

For research: OKI and ACCI capture multidimensional aspects of youth pathways — employability as a process, active citizenship as a transversal competence — which official statistics, based solely on educational qualification and employment status, fail to detect.

For policy: they enable entry profiling of young people and the evaluation of intervention effects even when these were not designed to produce them — as in the case of the Universal Civic Service.

OKI and ACCI show that employability and active citizenship are not separate outcomes to be measured after the fact, but dimensions that are built together — and that, measured together, become a concrete tool for steering and evaluating youth policies.

Thank you for your attention!

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