

Chapter 3: Statistical Snapshots

Contextualising the Lives of Youths in South Africa and the Nordic Countries

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter we use standardised statistical parameters to compare the contexts of the lives of youths in South Africa, Finland and Norway. We draw on publicly available statistics, but also note the limits to comparability of the standardised measurements and provide additional information to afford perspective or indicate caution in comparing very different countries. We are sensitive to the fact that the two Nordic countries have much in common with each other and often stand in stark contrast to South Africa. The national figures presented in the tables below illuminate differences between the countries, but they sometimes conceal gendered, social, regional and other inequalities within them. Because this book is concerned with “youth at the margins” rather than representative samples of young people, we also comment on inequalities internal to the three countries. Since the research for the case study chapters was undertaken in the period 2014 to 2015, we cite statistics from around those years where possible.

The Nordic human geographer Katherine Gough (2008, 220) argues that space is central in the social construction of childhood and to a large extent in the social construction of youth as well; the terms “marginalised youth” and “youth” have different meanings in different places. Gough (2008, 220) states that “[t]here has been a tendency for much of the work on children and youth within the global South to focus on their marginalization, disenfranchisement, and exclusion,” which may also apply to this book to some extent. However, by also focusing on marginalised youths in the Global North, who mostly have access to basic services and grants, we are forced to scrutinise marginalisation beyond basic survival strategies and rights. This book is a contribution towards a better understanding of the agency of youth, not only to understand how youths survive but also how they live with dignity under difficult circumstances. This chapter sets the scene for achieving this aim. Below, we first present general social and economic indicators and then turn to measurements of welfare, health and security, youth employment and education, and religious affiliation, identity and participation. We conclude the chapter with a reflection on the value of comparing these specific countries and the situation of youths in them.

Table 3.1 Key Social and Economic Indicators

Population (census year)		Number of principal languages	Gross national income per capita (current USD)	Gini index	Share of income or consumption of the lowest 20%
South Africa	51 770 560 (2011)	11	6 080	63.4	2.5%
Finland	5 375 276 (2010)	2	46 550	27.1	9.4%
Norway	4 979 955 (2011)	1	93 740	25.9	9.3%

Source: Lewis et al.: 2016; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2016; World Bank: 2017, Table 1.1, Table 2.9.

3.2 General Social and Economic Indicators

Table 3.1 illustrates that the Nordic countries are small, homogeneous, wealthy and egalitarian countries. South Africa, by comparison, is large, heterogeneous, less wealthy and features vast economic inequalities. The South African population is about ten times the size of the Finnish and Norwegian populations. While Norway and Finland have gross national incomes per capita above the average for “high-income” countries, gross national income per capita in South Africa falls somewhat short of the average for “upper-middle-income” countries (World Bank: 2017, Table 1.1). On average, South African citizens are not wealthy when compared to Nordic citizens, but they are better off when compared to citizens of many other developing countries.¹

With regard to economic inequalities, South Africa and the Nordic countries represent two extremes in the world. South Africa has the highest Gini index² of 153 countries listed by the World Bank, while Norway and Finland are among the ten most egalitarian countries in the world by this measure (World Bank: 2017, Table 2.9). However, the Gini ranks must be understood against the backdrop that estimates are unavailable for about sixty states, some of which have very unequal distributions of wealth and income. The Lorenz curves³ in Figure 3.1 visually repre-

1 The gross national income figures in Table 3.1 do not accurately reflect the purchasing power of citizens in the three countries because price levels also differ. Purchasing power parity-adjusted figures correct for this effect, but are not included in this chapter.

2 The Gini index (Table 3.1) is a measure of inequality. A Gini index of 0 represents perfect income equality, an idealised scenario where everybody has the same income, while a Gini index of 100 implies perfect inequality, an idealised scenario where one individual earns the entire national income.

3 Lorenz curves visually represent income distributions by plotting cumulative proportions of total income earned against cumulative proportions of populations, starting with the poorest individual.

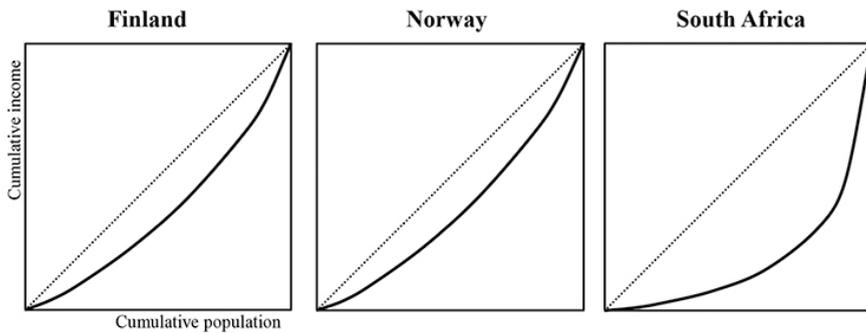


Figure 3.1 Lorenz Curves

The curves in this figure were drawn with data points at 10%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80% and 90% of the population.

Source: World Bank: 2017, Table 2.9.

sent the income distributions of South Africa, Finland and Norway in a different and more detailed way.

Table 3.1 also illustrates that South Africa is more heterogeneous than the Nordic countries. This is manifested, for example, in its eleven official languages. Although some of these languages are in related language groups and many South Africans are multilingual, even the smallest official language group has more than a million mother-tongue speakers (Statistics South Africa: 2012a, 23). In contrast, Finland has two principal languages, and Norway has one,⁴ and the principal languages are first languages for the majority of people in both Finland and Norway. Also, the languages of the indigenous Sami people are administrative languages in some municipalities in both countries (Lewis et al.: 2016). Although Finland and Norway are more homogenous when compared to South Africa, both countries have indigenous populations and other minority populations with deep historical roots. These people, however, are not represented in the case studies in this book.

Immigration has contributed to the diversity in the Nordic countries, especially over recent decades. In 2013 5.3 per cent of the Finnish population had a foreign first language, up from 0.2 per cent in the mid-1980s (Statistics Finland: 2014). By comparison, immigrants and individuals born to immigrant parents in Norway accounted for 16.3 per cent of the Norwegian population at the beginning of 2016 (Statistics Norway: 2016b). The first wave of immigration to Norway in modern

The straight diagonal dotted lines represent perfect income equality (a Gini index of 0). A greater area between the diagonal line and the curve means greater inequality (or a higher Gini index).

⁴ Norwegian is spoken in many different dialects and has two written forms. The dialects and written forms are mutually comprehensible and considered forms of the same language rather than different languages.

times came in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This wave was dominated by Pakistani labour migrants, whose families constituted the second wave when they moved to Norway for family reunification from the late 1970s. Asylum seekers from different countries have come in increasing numbers since the 1980s, constituting a third wave of immigrants, while labour migration from EU countries became pronounced after the accession of eastern European states to the EU in 2004 (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli: 2008). Although Norway is not an EU member state, it is part of the common market and the Schengen agreement, which facilitates the free movement of people.

The immigration waves are reflected in the demography of immigrants and their descendants in Norway; while Poland was the most frequent country of birth among immigrants in 2012, a few years before the research reported in the case studies in this book, Pakistan was the most frequent country of birth among the parents of second-generation Norwegians (Pettersen & Østby: 2013). In 2015, while research was conducted for this book, a surge in the number of refugees and asylum seekers to Europe also reached the Nordic countries. Finland and Norway received over 30 000 asylum seekers each in 2015, a nearly threefold increase from 2014 for Norway and a tenfold increase for Finland; 5 297 asylum seekers to Norway and 168 asylum seekers to Finland were unaccompanied minors under 18 years of age in 2015 (Finnish Immigration Service: 2016; Norwegian Directorate of Immigration: 2016). The number of asylum seekers arriving in Finland and Norway has since declined, although readers may still find evidence of this “wave” of asylum seekers in the case study presentation of Lammi (Chapter 11) in this book.

In addition to substantial internal African migration, South Africa has received large numbers of overseas immigrants since the seventeenth century. South Africa is a former British colony and the Cape Colony had also been under Dutch rule. As in other colonies in Africa, there were systems of racial segregation and hierarchy in South Africa. Waves of migrants from Europe and forced labour migrants from places such as Malaysia, India and China arrived and settled in South Africa during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The population was formally divided into four racial categories in the policies of “separate development” (locally and internationally known as “apartheid”): white, black, Indian and coloured (mixed race). Formal segregation was abolished in 1994, when the first democratic election was held (Davenport & Saunders: 2000), but the effects of these policies are still salient.

Racial segregation and hierarchy established vast socio-economic inequalities along racial lines (Davenport & Saunders: 2000). In an influential book, Seekings and Natrass (2008, 236) have suggested that “the primary basis of inequality shifted from race to class under apartheid,” with the result that the end of racial segregation had little redistributive impact. The racial categories are still important identity markers today, partly because they are closely linked with people’s socio-economic status: the majority of white people have been much wealthier for the last three and

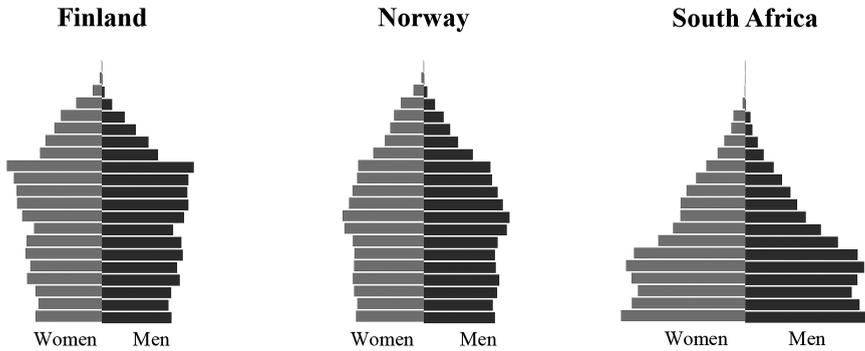


Figure 3.2 Population Pyramids

The pyramids were drawn using five-year age categories from ages 0–100 years and a separate category for those over 100 years of age. The horizontal axis of the South African pyramid is ten times the scale of those of the Finnish and Norwegian pyramids.

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2013a.

a half centuries, while the majority of black and coloured people bear the brunt of poverty. During the colonial and apartheid eras, displacement became a common feature through the physical and harsh removals of black, Indian and coloured people (Allen: 1992, 185–224; Platzky & Walker: 1985). In the post-apartheid era racial categories still intersect with location, with especially black and coloured people often living far from economic hubs as a result of entrenched practices and a general failure of post-apartheid policies to reverse this (cf. Chapter 12). According to the Community Survey of 2016 in South Africa, 80.7 per cent of the inhabitants are categorised as black, 8.7 per cent coloured, 2.5 per cent Indian and 8.1 per cent white (Statistics South Africa: 2016a, 21).

Since 1994 people have migrated to South Africa for various reasons such as being with relatives or to pursue educational and job opportunities. There has also been an influx of forcibly displaced people from other African countries. From 2006 to 2011 South Africa was the largest recipient of applications for asylum status in the world (Smit & Rugunanan: 2014, 5). South Africa was reported to have over a million asylum applications pending on appeal and review at the end of 2015 (UNHCR: 2016, 59). The number of pending applications has accumulated over several years as a result of inefficient processing. In 2014 the overall median age of people obtaining temporary and permanent residence permits in South Africa was between 30 and 33 years. There are substantial variances; for example, the median age for successful applicants for permanent residence from Angola is 17, from Malawi it is 37, and from South Korea it is 21 (Statistics South Africa: 2015a).

Finally, as represented by the population pyramids in Figure 3.2, South Africa has a more youthful population than the Nordic countries. South Africa's larger proportion of young citizens reflects how South African women, on average, give birth to a larger number of children than Nordic women do. According to the World Bank (2017, Table 2.17), the total fertility rate is 1.8 births per woman in Finland and Norway, and 2.4 births per woman in South Africa. However, there are different population dynamics among different racial categories of South Africans. The 2011 census estimated the total fertility rate to be 2.67 for all South Africans, 2.82 for black, 2.57 for coloured, 1.85 for Indian and 1.7 for white South African women (Statistics South Africa: 2015b, v). The population pyramid for white South Africans is thus more like that of the Nordic countries than that of black or coloured South Africans. Nevertheless, South Africa's younger population has different welfare needs, which means that there are different national priorities than in the Nordic countries. This must also be understood against South Africa's much higher levels of socio-economic inequality, as we discuss in more detail in the next section.

3.3 Welfare, Health and Security

Differences in wealth and wealth distribution permeate all sectors of society, such as access to health and welfare services, and the physical security of individuals. In this section, we discuss differences not only in the provision of basic services across the three countries, but also in the outcomes that result from these differences. Although the three countries all have public health and welfare services, they operate in different contexts and are differently funded. The differences in funding are not just a question of expenditure levels, but also of the relative proportions of private and public expenditure that have important implications for the distribution of resources and inequality in the three countries.

Social insurance against loss of earnings can be posited as the cornerstone of the welfare state (Garland: 2016, 46). In South Africa state-supported social benefits are paid out to people with disabilities, individuals younger than 18 years, and people 60 years and older who earn less than a stipulated amount. In 2014 29 per cent of South African individuals received a state-supported grant and 44.5 per cent of households had at least one member who received such a grant (Statistics South Africa: 2015c). Yet the value of the grants, especially those for children at less than 30 USD per month, is not great enough to cover basic needs and are therefore shared to try and cover the needs of entire households. Instead of extending the grant system to young people older than 18 years, various initiatives have been introduced that aim to address the youth unemployment crisis (Youth Desk: 2015).

The Nordic welfare states offer a wider range of benefits and services that are available to all citizens, in line with the social democratic welfare state model

Table 3.2 Health Expenditure, Life Expectancy and Mortality Rates

	Health expenditure per capita (current USD)	Public health expenditure (% of total health expenditure)	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Children who die within first year (per 1 000 live births)	Maternal death rate (per 100 000 live births)
South Africa	570	48.2%	57	34	138
Finland	4 612	75.3%	81	2	3
Norway	9 522	85.5%	82	2	5

Source: World Bank: 2017, Table 2.15, Table 2.21, Table 2.17.

(Esping-Andersen: 1990). In these countries the states are the main providers of welfare through universally available welfare systems financed through high labour force participation rates and broad tax bases, as was also touched upon in the previous chapter (Chapter 2). As in South Africa, benefits are paid to children and people with disabilities, and old-age pensions are paid out to persons 65 years of age and older in Finland, and 67 years and older in Norway. Child benefits amount to just over 100 USD per month in both Finland and Norway, with conditional additions. Moreover, the public welfare schemes in the Nordic countries include sickness insurance, unemployment benefits and various benefits that are not meant to replace wages, such as social assistance that can be applied for when the income and resources of an individual or family are insufficient to cover their daily expenses. In 2010 in Norway 23.6 per cent of persons aged 15 to 66 years received some form of benefit and 15.5 per cent of the cohort received benefits and did not work (Horgen: 2014). The proportion of the total population that received welfare benefits was even higher than 23.6 per cent as all people under 18 years and over 67 years are covered by child benefits and old-age pensions. Also excluded from these statistics were public loans and grants to cover living expenses while studying; 288 057 individuals in Finland and 397 306 individuals in Norway received such loans and grants during the 2014/15 academic year (KELA/FPA: 2015, 311; Lånkassen: 2016). The value of the loans and grants is low compared to wages earned by full-time workers, but they ensure a certain financial independence for full-time students. They are also often combined with income from part-time employment, an issue to which we return below.

In terms of health services, Table 3.2 shows that South Africa has the lowest per capita health expenditure of the three countries, and that Norway has the highest per capita health expenditure, spending about 15 times as much as South Africa does. However, this figure provides only a very general idea of the differences in the quality of health services in the countries. It exaggerates differences because it is not adjusted to reflect differences in the cost of service delivery and it does not reflect the fact that most of the health expenditure is public spending in the

Table 3.3 HIV Prevalence, Morbidity and Mortality Patterns

HIV prevalence (% of population ages 15–49)		Incidence of tuberculosis (per 100 000 persons)	Deaths by communicable diseases (per 100 000 persons)	Deaths by non-communicable diseases (per 100 000 persons)
South Africa	19.2%	834	897.2	383.6
Finland	–	6	19.0	798.8
Norway	–	6	59.9	749.1

Source: World Health Organization: 2011; World Bank: 2017, Table 2.20.

Nordic countries, unlike South Africa. In the Nordic countries large public health sectors make the same services available to all citizens. It is important that these services are well funded, because privileged citizens are more likely to turn to private alternatives if public services cannot offer the best possible standards, which would undermine the social solidarity and equality of the social democratic welfare states (Esping-Andersen & Korpi: 1986, 70). South African health services, in contrast, feature a well-resourced private health sector that caters for privileged citizens and a lowly funded public health sector. A national health insurance system intended to contribute towards universal health coverage for all South Africans has been under discussion, and it is envisaged that this will be phased in eventually (Mayosi et al.: 2012).

Important measures of the quality and availability of health services are life expectancy at birth, infant mortality rates and maternal death ratios. As illustrated by Table 3.2, infant mortality rates and maternal death ratios are much higher in South Africa than in the Nordic countries. This reflects that high-quality health services are unavailable to many South Africans. In addition to this lack, Table 3.3 indicates that larger proportions of South Africans also die of communicable diseases when compared to the Nordic countries. The main causes of death in South Africa are coexisting infectious diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis, non-communicable diseases, persistent child diarrhoea and malnutrition, as well as interpersonal violence and accidents (World Health Organization: 2011). In the Nordic countries, where communicable diseases are less prevalent and more often successfully treated, more people grow old and develop non-communicable diseases. Malign neoplasms (cancers) and cardiovascular diseases (heart diseases) are the main causes of death in the Nordic countries (World Health Organization: 2011).

Norway and Finland have high life expectancies at birth, while South Africa's life expectancy at birth is 25 years lower (see Table 3.2). With the advent of AIDS-related deaths, the life expectancy of South Africans plummeted as many people died at much younger ages. South Africa was estimated to have 6.3 million people living with HIV and 2.4 million children younger than 18 years who were orphaned in 2013, mainly as a result of their parents dying from AIDS-related ill-

Table 3.4 Unnatural Causes of Mortality

	Death by violence (per 100 000 persons)	Death by self-inflicted injuries (per 100 000 persons)	Death by road traffic accident (per 100 000 persons)
South Africa	27.3	6.3	19.1
Finland	2.3	20.0	6.6
Norway	0.6	10.5	6.2

Source: World Health Organization: 2011.

nesses (UNAIDS: 2014). However, mass implementation of antiretroviral treatment that slows the progress of HIV in the public health sector is associated with a slow increase in life expectancy (Mayosi et al.: 2012). Also, the high infant mortality rate in South Africa was linked to the mother-to-child-transmission of HIV, although this is decreasing (Motsoaledi: 2012). Still, even the most optimistic health indicators reflect enormous health needs and high levels of inequality in South Africa, especially when compared to the Nordic countries.

As noted, major causes of death in South Africa include road accidents and interpersonal violence. This reflects the higher risks that South Africans are exposed to in their daily lives. In Cape Town and Pretoria, two urban areas in South Africa, the death rates for young people are lower than for other age categories, but deaths among young people are more likely to be the result of unnatural causes, including assault and transport accidents (Statistics South Africa: 2014a). Also in Norway, a recent study indicates that young people are more frequently exposed to violence than older people are (Thoresen & Hjemdal: 2014). Finland has higher rates of death by violence and self-inflicted injuries than Norway, suggesting a more violent society with a particularly high suicide rate.⁵ However, it has been suggested that the high incidence of violent deaths in Finland, compared to the other Nordic countries, is caused by alcohol-related violence among middle-aged men (e.g. Lehti & Kivivuori: 2005). Table 3.4 reflects how the distribution of risks, as well as their magnitude, varies between the three countries.

In terms of managing risks, the private security industry in South Africa is believed to be the largest in the world, comprising 2 per cent of the total GDP of the country. It has been argued that the sector is taking over functions that the state should be performing (Berg & Nouveau: 2011). The state's responsibility is towards all citizens, but private companies have responsibilities only towards their paying clients. Wealthier citizens are thus becoming clients, while poorer citizens only have public facilities to turn to for health and security services. While the

⁵ This is the only reported death rate where South Africa scores lower than the two Nordic countries, though these figures should be treated with caution as suicides may not always be reported as such.

Table 3.5 Youth Employment and Education

	Youth unemployment rate (2014)	Youth inactivity rate (2013)	Gross enrolment rates for tertiary education	Number of births per 1 000 women ages 15–19	Mean age at first birth (latest year available)
South Africa	54.7%	73.9%	20%	44	22.5 (2003)
Finland	20.6%	48.4%	89%	6	28.2 (2009)
Norway	7.9%	43.1%	77%	6	28.1 (2008)

Source: Higher Education South Africa: 2014, 2; International Labour Organization: 2016, Table 10a, Table 13; United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs: 2013b, Table A.6; World Bank: 2017, Table 2.11, Table 2.17.

relatively wealthy can afford to contain some of the risks of life in South Africa, the less wealthy cannot and become even more vulnerable (Murray: 2009). In South Africa risks are thus concentrated along certain socio-economic, racial and spatial lines, a situation that does not provide fertile grounds for social cohesion. In the Nordic countries, on the other hand, public welfare is designed to pool risks and responsibility among all citizens.

3.4 Youth Employment and Education

The indicators presented so far have compared the contexts that young people live within in South Africa, Finland and Norway. We will now turn to indicators that reflect young people's lives more directly and discuss access to employment and education within these contexts. An indicator that captures this in one figure – namely rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET young people) – has emerged over the last few years. It shows how the large majority of young people in Finland and Norway are in education, employment and training, or some combination of these activities, while a large proportion of young South Africans are not. However, as the NEET concept is given extensive consideration in Chapter 2 of this book, we do not discuss it in this chapter. Instead, we highlight other measures of young people's participation in education and employment.

Table 3.5 shows that the youth unemployment rate, a commonly cited measure, is higher in South Africa than in the Nordic countries, but also higher in Finland than in Norway (see also Chapter 2). This figure refers to the proportion of people between 15 to 24 years who are not in paid employment and seeking work. The youth unemployment rate is much higher than the general unemployment rate in all three countries. Breaking down the youth unemployment figures by gender, we find that youth unemployment is slightly higher among men than among women in the

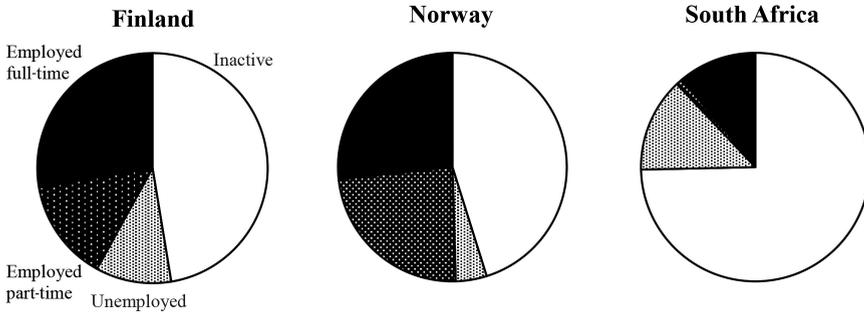


Figure 3.3 Youth Aged 15–24 by Labour Market Status

Source: International Labour Organization: 2016, Table 6, Table 10.

Nordic countries, whereas the opposite is true of South Africa (International Labour Organization: 2016, Table 10a). Chapter 2 also indicates that there are substantial differences between the different races' participation in education, employment and training in South Africa.

The youth unemployment rate gives only a partial picture of the labour market situation of young people, as 73.9 per cent of South African youths and nearly half of young people in the Nordic countries are not in the labour force (Figure 3.3). The “youth inactivity rate” is comprised of young people who are not employed and do not seek employment, for example because they are full-time students, unpaid interns, engaged as care persons, or work in the informal sector. One reason why the youth inactivity rate is low in the Nordic countries is that it is common for students in secondary and tertiary education to have part-time jobs. Figure 3.3 indicates that many of the young people who work in these countries work part-time. Over a third of Finnish youths aged 15 to 24 years who were employed in 2014, and nearly half of those in Norway, worked part-time (International Labour Organization: 2016, Table 6).

As important as labour market statistics are to understanding young people's lives, the gross enrolment rates for tertiary education in Table 3.5 suggest that a large number of young people in the Nordic countries pursue tertiary education. The gross enrolment rate includes older people who study, but is expressed as a percentage of the total population of the five-year age group following on from secondary school-leaving age. It does not give the exact proportion of young people who pursue tertiary education, but it gives an indication. It is much higher in the Nordic countries than in South Africa, but also higher in Finland than in Norway.

The difference between the South African and Nordic tertiary education enrolment rates must be understood in the light of a number of factors. The most frequently cited reason for not attending an educational institution among young

people between 15 to 24 years in South Africa is not having the money to pay the fees (Statistics South Africa: 2013, 54). In the Nordic countries young people do not pay fees to study at most educational institutions. Family commitments and pregnancies are also relatively frequently cited reasons for non-attendance in South Africa by women, while men are more likely than women to indicate that they are working (Statistics South Africa: 2013, 54). Although the nature of work mentioned by young people may include precarious work, adhering to traditional gender roles prevents young people from attaining higher levels of education. Such factors are less frequent in the Nordic countries, where there are fewer teenage pregnancies and the mean ages of first birth are higher (Table 3.5). Loans and grants to cover students' living expenses, mentioned above, also make it possible for young people to combine family commitments with higher education, and therefore contribute to the high tertiary education enrolment rates.

3.5 Religious Affiliation, Identity and Participation

The above sections show that young people are exposed to greater unmitigated risks in South Africa than in the Nordic countries, and that a larger proportion of young South Africans lack opportunities to work and study. We will now address indicators of religious affiliation, identity and religious participation in South Africa, Finland and Norway as a backdrop to asking what faith-based organisations (FBOs) can do for youths at the margins in these very different contexts in the chapters that follow in this book.

In all three countries, most citizens are members of a faith community, but there are large differences in the proportions of the populations who say that they identify as religious persons or that they attend religious services regularly. As indicated in Table 3.6, the majority of people in Norway and Finland are members of the Lutheran national churches, although rates of membership have been decreasing over recent decades (see also Chapter 5). In Finland 22.1 per cent of the population had no religious affiliation, 1.1 per cent belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church, and 1.5 per cent belonged to other religious communities, including the 0.2 per cent of the population who belonged to Islamic congregations (Statistics Finland: 2014). By one estimate, at the beginning of 2016 12 per cent of the Norwegian population were members of other faith communities than the Church of Norway. Of these, over half were members of Christian communities and one in four (or about 3 per cent of the population) were members of Islamic communities (Statistics Norway: 2016c). The high rates of faith community membership in Norway and Finland can be put in perspective by the lower proportions who said they identified as religious people and the much lower proportions who said they attended religious services once a week or more in the World Values Survey (Table 3.6). The difference

Table 3.6 Religious Affiliation, Identity and Participation

	Members of national church (% of population)	Identifies as religious person	Attends religious service once a week or more
South Africa	–	79.7%	54.4%
Finland	75.3%	58.5%	6.7%
Norway	72.9%	40.9%	4.5%

Source: Statistics Finland: 2014; Statistics Norway: 2016d; World Values Survey Association: 2014. Because Norway and Finland were not included in the 2010–2014 World Values Survey, this refers to the 2005–2009 wave.

may indicate that faith community membership can reflect traditions and national identities, as well as religious identities and the intention to participate in religious services.

At the same time, Nordic faith communities' youth work reaches large proportions of the countries' youth populations. Participation rates in the confirmation ritual in the Lutheran national churches remain high. In 2012 85.6 per cent of 15-year-olds in Finland and 64 per cent of 15-year-olds in Norway were confirmed in the Lutheran national churches (Høeg & Krupka: 2015; Niemelä & Porkka: 2015). Secular humanist associations offer alternatives to the rites of the Lutheran national churches, and an additional 15 per cent of Norwegian 15-year-olds had secular humanist confirmations in 2012 (Høeg & Krupka: 2015). Comparable statistics are not easily available for other faith communities, but one study found that 71 per cent of Norwegians aged 16–25 years with immigration backgrounds from Pakistan, Turkey and Vietnam had participated in at least one religious meeting or prayer in a faith community over a period of twelve months (Løwe: 2008, 70). Particularly active, but also particularly numerous, those with a Pakistani background had participated in 49 religious meetings or prayers in a faith community during the preceding twelve-month period, on average. Young men participated more actively than young women (Løwe: 2008, 70). This indicates that faith communities have a presence in many young people's lives – even if for a shorter, intensive period in the case of the Lutheran national churches – and that faith communities play a particularly important role among young people with an immigration background. A recent report suggested that young people with an immigrant background in Norway consider religion to be more important in their lives than young Norwegians who do not come from immigrant families (Friberg: 2016). Overall, faith communities may thus potentially contribute to social cohesion in the Nordic countries through their youth work, but it is not possible to assess whether and how they do so from the publicly available statistics we draw on for this chapter.

Compared to Finland and Norway, larger proportions of South Africans said they identified as religious people and that they attended religious services once

a week or more in the World Values Survey (Table 3.6). More than half of South Africans attended a religious service at least once a week. A question asked on attending religious services and ceremonies in the General Household Survey of 2013 revealed that Muslims were the most active; 74.3 per cent of Muslims attended a service or ceremony at least once a week, while 56.4 per cent of Christians, 55 per cent of Hindus, and 28.2 per cent of followers of ancestral, tribal, animist or other traditional religions reported weekly attendance, not including weddings and funerals (Statistics South Africa: 2014b, 33).

The proportion of South Africans who said they identified with specific religions in the General Household Survey was higher than the proportion who said they identified as religious people in the World Value Survey, indicating that religion may be a proxy for identity in South Africa, as in the Nordic countries. Based on the General Household Survey of 2013, it is estimated that 85.6 per cent of South Africans describe themselves as Christian, 5.6 per cent say they follow no religion, 5 per cent say they follow ancestral, tribal, animist or other traditional religions, and 2 per cent describe themselves as Muslim (Statistics South Africa: 2014b, 32). The last South African census to include questions on religious affiliation, the 2001 census, shows a great variety of Christian churches with which people identify. The Dutch Reformed, Zion Christian, Catholic, Methodist, Pentecostal/charismatic and other Apostolic churches each have between 6 and 13 per cent of South Africans aligning themselves to them (Statistics South Africa: 2004, 28).

The phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal and charismatic churches in South Africa should be noted in this regard. In 2001 8.2 per cent of the population indicated that they belonged to such churches compared to 5.5 per cent in 1996. This is an estimated growth of 1.5 million people (Chipkin & Leatt: 2011, 42). Chipkin and Leatt (2011, 43) argue that this growth in Pentecostalism can be associated with the decline of the economy and the development work being undertaken by churches in FBOs or, as the authors put it, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) acting as “subsidiaries of church organisations”. A second observation by the authors is that the “churches preach a gospel of ‘wealth and health’” that finds fertile ground where uncertainty in South Africa is fuelled by the kinds of risks outlined above (see also Norris & Inglehart: 2004). Yet these churches grew the fastest among the middle classes, and hence Chipkin and Leatt (2011, 44) argue that the development of these churches should be understood within “broader social and political processes”. These include the transition to a democratic society since the first democratic election held in 1994.

Despite the ground gained by the Pentecostal and charismatic churches, South Africa remains characterised by multiple religious institutions. In this regard, interdenominational and interfaith umbrella bodies such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the National Interfaith Council of South Africa (NICSA) and the South African Christian Leaders Initiative (SACLI) are noteworthy. SACC and

NICSA have youth forums, but from their stated missions or programmes it is clear that they have overarching goals such as poverty alleviation and a focus on “family values” (NICSA: 2013; SACC: 2014). SACLI, which includes the SACC, describes its role as strengthening the voice of churches in the South African public domain (SACLI: n.d.). It is thus evident that many religious institutions in South Africa regard their role as extending well beyond religious matters only. Compared to Finland and Norway, faith communities’ central role in South Africa is also evident from how more people attend religious services regularly. This feature is examined in greater detail in Chapter 5.

3.6 Conclusion

The above indicators illuminate how living in South Africa is very different from living in Norway or Finland. In South Africa, a diverse country with stark economic inequalities and high exposure to risk, the safety nets provided by the state are minimal and risks must be contained in other ways. There is a high prevalence of private health and security services among those who can afford it, while support and care by families may be precarious for young people who live in communities where poverty, illness and morbidity are rife among adult family members. It appears that young people are more likely to be working in the informal sector, employed or seeking employment in order to help support families. Young South Africans also have fewer opportunities to further their education than young people in the Nordic countries, who are more likely to be students and to have part-time jobs while in secondary and tertiary education. In the Nordic countries, high rates of attendance in education and high youth employment rates mean that schools, universities and places of work become important social arenas for young women and men, making social as well as economic marginalisation a likely outcome for those who do not participate. This may not apply to the same extent in South Africa, where youths in some communities rather share experiences related to unemployment and exclusion (cf. Dawson: 2014).

What can be gained from comparing these very different countries? The statistical snapshots presented in this chapter illustrate how the Nordic countries and South Africa are “extreme contexts” for the study of youths’ opportunities and welfare (Holte et al.: 2019; cf. also Chapter 2). The countries also have very different patterns of diversity, with majority populations sharing the same histories, languages and religious affiliations in the Nordic countries, while there is no single, uniform majority in South Africa. However, the populations of the Nordic countries have featured minorities over several centuries, and they are becoming more heterogeneous as immigrants are accommodated and continue to have children. Policy-makers, researchers, social workers and activists from these countries can gain insight from

experiences in culturally, socially and religiously diverse countries such as South Africa in addressing issues related to “youth at the margins”. Policy-makers, researchers, social workers and activists from South Africa can gain from the Nordic experiences by trying to understand the experiences of marginalised youths who are not challenged by absolute poverty and fighting for survival. Being poor and without access to vital resources is so common in South Africa that youths in certain communities are not necessarily socially marginalised by these challenges, but fit in with their peers. However, in the Nordic welfare states, educational failure or unemployment places youths outside important social arenas. Moving from such marginal spaces may be challenging for youths on an individual level in the Nordic countries, while youths may feel marginalised as a group in South Africa, at least in certain communities. Comparing these very different countries and identifying similarities and diversities in the lives of their youth can provide insight into the global, national and local structures shaping youths’ lives, as well as the role of faith-based (and other) organisations in responding to the needs and ambitions of young people.