



Education and Resilience

OLAV SOLENG

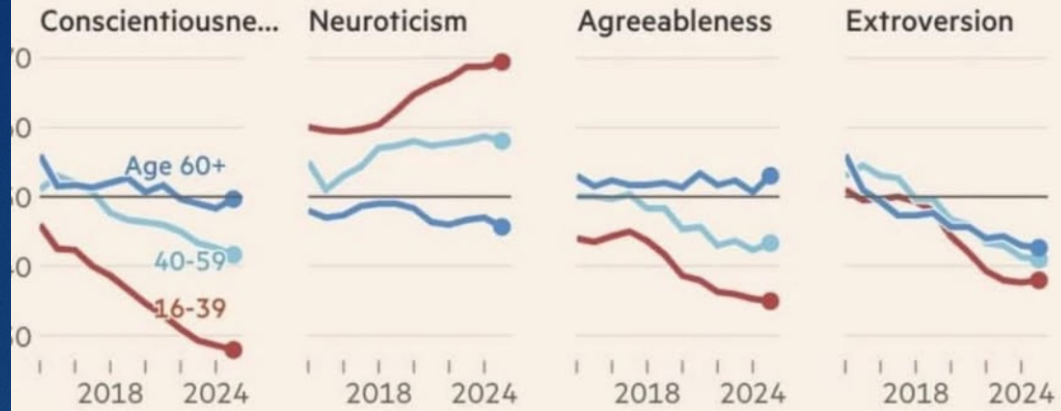
Introduction & Background

- ▶ Personal background (Olav Soleng: former rector, higher education, now advising non-formal education sector under Ministry of Education, Norway).
- ▶ Purpose of talk: link between **adult education, civil society (labor organizations role), and resilience** in a total defence perspective.
- ▶ Define *resilience*: ability of individuals, communities, and societies to cope with shocks, adapt, and recover.
- ▶ Define *total defence* in Nordic understanding: not only military preparedness, but also social cohesion, trust, knowledge, and active citizenship.

The situation today, especially among young people

- ▶ Young people face complex pressures: climate anxiety, economic insecurity, rise of misinformation, polarized debates, and declining(?) trust in democratic institutions.
- ▶ Digital vulnerability: social media bubbles, manipulation, AI-generated disinformation.
- ▶ Many struggle with skills gaps: literacy, numeracy, digital competence.
- ▶ Importance of giving youth – and adults – opportunities for **lifelong learning** beyond the formal system.
- ▶ Security, rapid technological change.

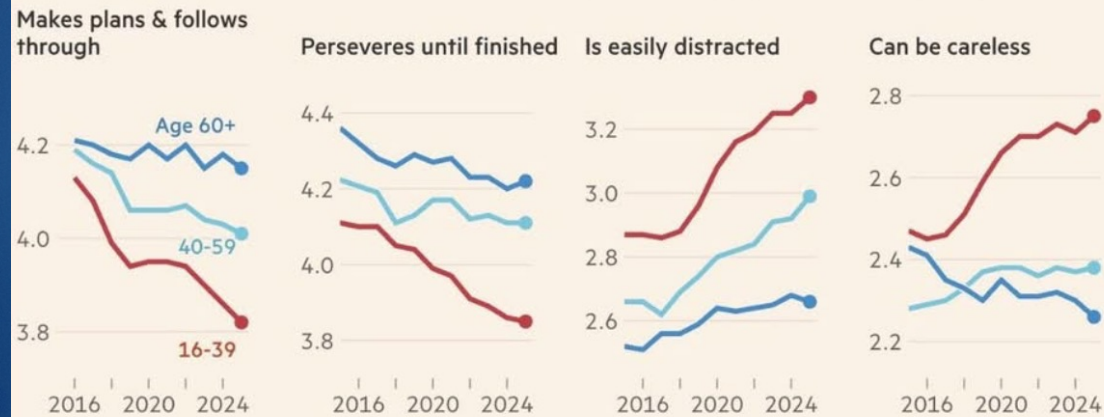
Relative change in strength of different personality traits (2014 average = 50)
by age group



Values are expressed as percentiles of the full population distribution as it stood in 2014

Is the digital world outcompeting real-world commitment?

Average agreement with different descriptions of self (5 = strong agree, 1 = strong disagree)



Source: FT analysis of the [Understanding America Study](#).
FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @jburnmurdoch



Disturbing Information about personality traits

Broader context: world challenges that affect resilience

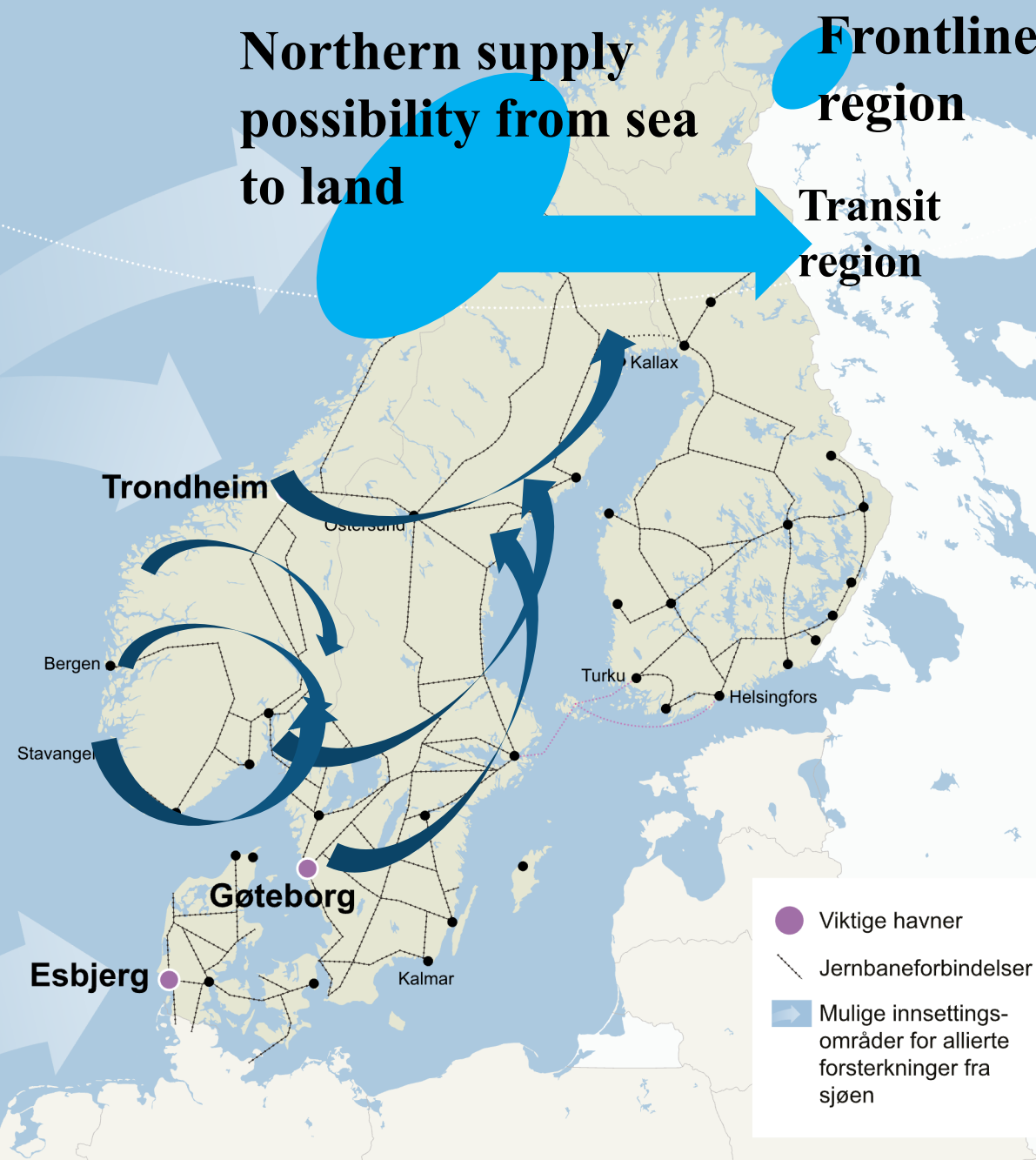
- ▶ **Security challenges:** increased geopolitical tensions, war in Europe, fragile international cooperation.
- ▶ **Natural disasters:** floods, landslides, wildfires, drought, pandemics – expected to increase with climate change.
- ▶ **Domestic social and economic pressures:** integration, inequality, polarization, populism, mistrust in institutions.
- ▶ **Nordic countries:** often seen as resilient, but also vulnerable due to high reliance on trust, digitalization, global supply chains.
- ▶ **Conclusion:** resilience is not only about defence forces, but also about knowledge, skills, and civic preparedness in society.

Nordic infrastructure

Northern supply possibility from sea to land

Frontline-region

Transit region



The map shows railway lines. In addition there the Nordic road Infrastructure. The traditional concept is north-south thinking. Presently, west east thinking is becoming more important.

Ports, railway and roads need upgrading to handle heavy military equipment during increased political tension, conflict or even war.

Experiences from Ukraine

- ▶ During war conditions society has to function and municipalities must still deliver services to inhabitants.
- ▶ Many may not be called for service because of their important function in society. This requires planning.
- ▶ Everything in society must be used for defensive struggle if necessary.
- ▶ Strengthen local preparedness, train inhabitants and generate voluntary preparedness groups.
- ▶ Civilian groups may support emergency services and civil defence
- ▶ Strengthen municipal crises leadership and collaboration with governmental services and voluntary defence services
- ▶ Increase regional self sufficiency in terms of food, fuel and medical equipment as well as drugs in storage.

Education as foundation for resilience

Short description of the **formal education system vs non-formal** (schools, universities, vocational education, Bologna process).

Strength: provides structured qualifications, recognized mobility across Europe.

Limitation: not always flexible enough to reach vulnerable groups or provide rapid upskilling through a long-life.

Lifelong learning requires **both formal and non-formal education systems**.

Formal Education System

Overview of the Norwegian Education System

- ▶ Kindergarten
- ▶ Primary and Secondary Education
- ▶ Folk High Schools
- ▶ Tertiary Vocational Education
- ▶ Higher Education
- ▶ Lifelong learning

Non-formal adult education – the role of study associations .

- ▶ The Norwegian “study associations” (studieforbund):
 - ▶ Nationwide infrastructure anchored in civil society.
 - ▶ Close collaboration with trade unions, employers’ organizations, and NGOs.
 - ▶ Combine professional expertise with voluntary contributions.
- ▶ Reach groups often outside formal education:
 - ▶ Adults with low digital skills, weak language proficiency, low educational background.
 - ▶ Migrants and people needing integration.
 - ▶ Also highly educated who need reskilling and upskilling.

Non-formal adult education – the role of study associations (2)

- ▶ Contributions to resilience:
 - ▶ Courses in **digital literacy, critical thinking, democratic citizenship**.
 - ▶ Strengthening trust, dialogue, and inclusion.
 - ▶ Building local networks and social capital across communities.
- ▶ Legal framework:
 - ▶ Regulated by Ministry of Education.
 - ▶ Public funding provides accountability and quality assurance.
 - ▶ At the same time: flexibility and room to adapt to new challenges (e.g. disinformation, trust crisis).

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a set of keys. The hand is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the frame, with the fingers gripping a silver keyring. The keys are silver and include a standard house key and a smaller key. The background is blurred, showing warm, golden light, suggesting an indoor setting. The overall image conveys a sense of security, access, or responsibility.

Example of content in a security course



- Security management
- Risk assessment
- Basic principles in ICT security
- Valuation and protection of security-graded information
- Damage assessment
- Security-grade procurement
- Physical security



How to protect oneself from insider trading:

- Create a holistic system to protect personnel safety
- Take care of personnel security before, during and after employment
- Make sure the business has sufficient security expertise and resources
- Facilitate a good safety culture
- Establish or update guidelines and advice for safe use of digital platforms and social media where work and private life meet (ex LinkedIn)
- Handle events, evaluate measures and learn from experience
- What qualities and characteristics should people who work such information in our business have?

Nordic cooperation and improvement potential

- ▶ . Nordic countries share strong traditions of civil society and popular education.
- ▶ Opportunities to strengthen **cross-border collaboration** on:
 - ▶ Democracy learning and resilience education.
 - ▶ Exchange of methods and curricula for digital competence, critical thinking, and media literacy.
 - ▶ Mobilizing volunteers and community networks across the Nordic region.
- ▶ Importance of **policy support**:
 - ▶ Secure sustainable funding.
 - ▶ Ensure recognition of non-formal learning as part of lifelong learning strategy.
 - ▶ Encourage cooperation between state, municipalities, NGOs, and social partners.

Conclusion & Call to Action

- ▶ Non-formal adult education is not a luxury, but a **strategic part of total defence**.
- ▶ It strengthens the “soft infrastructure” of society: trust, participation, competence, and social cohesion.
- ▶ Complementary to formal education – together they ensure that people are not only trained for jobs, but also prepared as informed citizens.
- ▶ In a time of global instability and rapid change, we need both **bottom-up resilience building** through civil society and **top-down policy frameworks**.
- ▶ Call for stronger recognition and cooperation in Nordic and European contexts.

Proposal

LIFE LONG LEARNING TO SUPPORT RESILIENCE

THE THREE-PART COLLABORATION SHOULD INCLUDE A YEARLY COURSE OF APPROXIMATELY 15 HOURS FINANCED PARTLY BY GOVERNMENT, EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEES. THIS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE TARIFF NEGOTIATIONS AND HOPEFULLY PROMOTED BY THE NORDIC COUNCIL.