

Title: Public Transfers and Private Help: Support Networks of Marginalized and Poor Individuals in Sweden in the 1990s.

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This thesis scrutinizes the public and private help networks of marginalized and poor individuals in Sweden between 1993 and 2001. Marginalization is defined through receipt of three types of public transfers received in 2001: unemployment benefit, sickness benefit, or social assistance. The definition of poverty is fulfilled when the household's equalized disposable income is less than 60 percent of the median of the population income line.

The data used is derived from two sources, the LINDA registry database and a specifically designed questionnaire on private help patterns. These sources enable the analysis of both private and public help patterns. The response rate was 60 percent, and altogether 2,666 individuals answered the questionnaire. The data was gathered in 2001.

Public transfers form a vital part of the marginalized individuals' income as without them, 70 percent of these individuals would have been poor, whereas the percentage now was 24. Thus, public transfers function as a key buffer against poverty in Sweden. Of the individuals that were poor, many were also marginalized with regards the labour market, as poverty is mainly linked to lack of employment.

Thirty-two percent of the respondents had received financial help (gifts or loans) from kin, while 53 percent had received practical help. It was mainly the young and those with low income that received private help, and it was received mainly from parents. Regarding the combination of public and private help, 15 percent of the working aged respondents received neither public nor private help, while 28 percent received both. Nearly half of the respondents (49 percent) only received help from the state, while 8 percent received help only from the kin..

Examination of the extent of private help that the marginalized and poor individuals received shows that people mainly received financial help from kin in a situation of actual poverty. Individuals marginalized for short periods only did not receive additional help. Even in the case of poverty, the sums of assistance were relatively modest, most often under 5,000 SEK (~€550) per gift/loan, and sporadic. The amounts that the poor received did not exceed the sums that other recipients of private help got.

In the Swedish context, it seems that financial help is more ad hoc by nature and is given for specific purposes (for example for buying a washing machine). The respondents perceived that the responsibility for securing sufficient economic resources rested mainly on either the individual him/herself, or alternatively, on the welfare state. In this context, the role of family or kin was seen as marginal.