

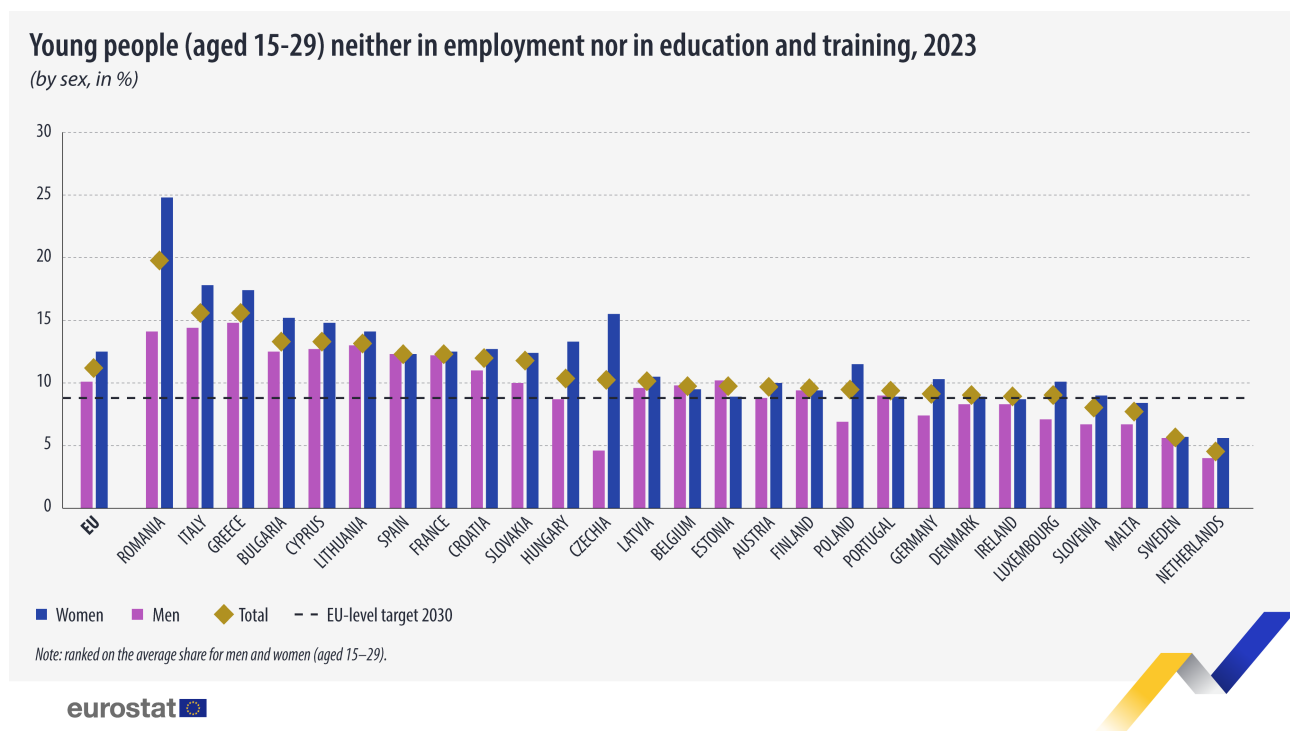
Statistics on young people neither in employment nor in education or training

Statistics Explained

Data extracted in May 2024.
Planned article update: May 2025.

"In 2023, 11.2 % of 15-29 year-olds in the EU were neither in employment nor in education and training."

"The proportion of 15-29 year-olds in the EU neither in employment nor in education and training in 2023 ranged from 4.8 % in the Netherlands to 19.3 % in Romania."



This article presents statistics related to [young people neither in employment nor in education or training \(NEET\)](#) in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) and forms part of the online publication [Education and training in the EU - facts and figures](#). It is important to make sure that the transition from education to work is smooth for young adults and also to highlight the risks of being neither in employment nor in education or training. There are risks, both for the individual and in the long run for society, if young adults find themselves disengaged from both education and the labour market.

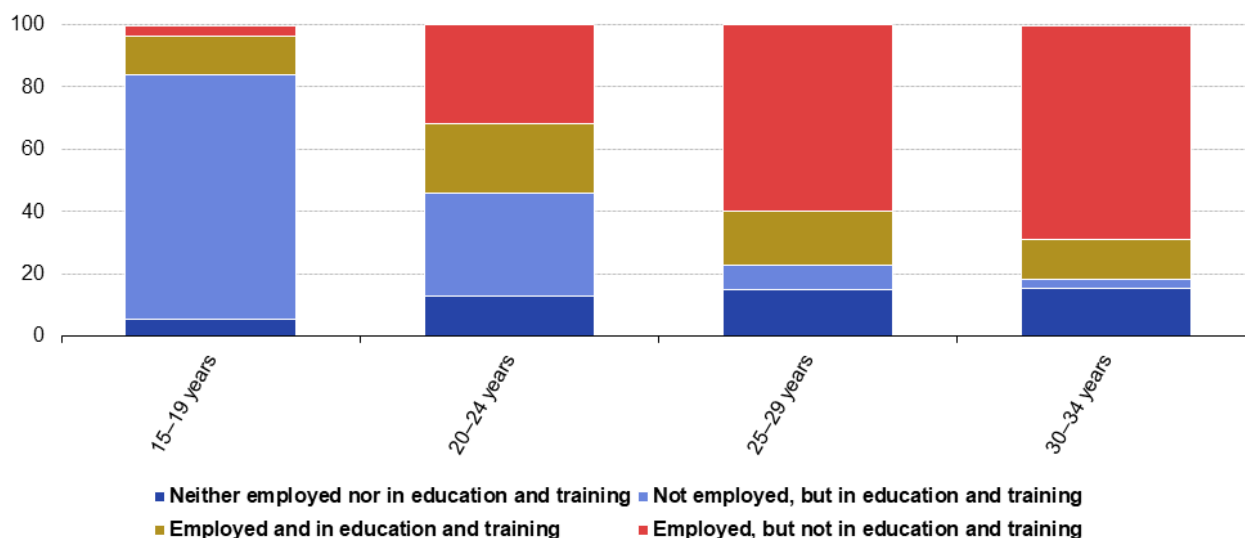
While background information is provided for those aged 15-34 years, the main age group that is studied in this article consists of young adults aged 15 to 29 years. For this age group, the European Union has set an [EU-level target](#) stipulating that the share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training should be less than 9 % by 2030. In 2023, an average of 11.2 % was identified as NEET within EU. However, there are differences between Member States as several countries have already reached the goal for 2030.

To what extent are young adults neither in employment nor in education or training? The transition from education to work

Over time, the transition from education to work has become more complex. Today young people are changing jobs more frequently and it takes longer to become established on the labour market, either by choice or necessity. It has become more common for students in tertiary education to work part-time or seasonally to supplement their income. Furthermore, it has also become more common for young people who are in employment to return to education or training in order to improve their qualifications. As a result of this, the transition from education to work has become less clear, with a growing share of students also working and a rising proportion of people in employment also studying.

In Figure 1 the transition from education to work is illustrated by showing both the employment and the education or training status for young people aged between 15 and 34 years by 5-year age groups. The figure shows that being employed (but not in education and training) increases with age, while the opposite is true for education (not employed but in education and training) where the share decreases considerably with age. Additionally, in 2023, 12.5 % of young people aged 15–19 years in the EU were both employed and in education and thus made use of this more flexible transition from education to work. The share rose to 22.3 % among those aged 20–24 years, before falling somewhat for older age groups, 17.1 % among those aged 25–29 years and 12.8 % for those aged 30–34 years.

Employment, education and training status of young people, by age, EU, 2023
(%)



Note: the shares do not quite add up to 100 % due to the category of young people for which the education and training status is not known.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_18)

eurostat

Figure 1: Employment, education and training status of young people, by age, EU, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_18)

An important factor when studying young adults and their transition from education to work is the risk of becoming a person neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET). In Figure 1 it is shown that the level of NEETs in the respective age groups varies and that the share increases with age. This pattern is plausible since a vast

majority of young people aged 15–19 years in the EU remain in education and training, either formal or non-formal. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that relatively few people in this age group (5.3 %) were NEETs in 2023.

Neither in employment nor in education and training: NEET

Statistics for employment and unemployment have traditionally been used to describe labour markets, in other words, providing data on people who have jobs and those who are actively looking for one. However, an analysis of the labour market participation of younger people is somewhat different, especially when:

- a large proportion of young people are still attending school, college, university, other higher education establishment or training, and;
- another group of young people are neither in employment (unemployed or outside the labour force), nor in education or training (NEETs).

The share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training is an indicator that measures the proportion of a given subpopulation who are not employed and not involved in any further education or training; these people may be subdivided into those who are unemployed and those who are considered outside the labour force (in other words, they do not have a job and they are not actively seeking employment).

The NEET rate within the EU and its Member States in 2023

Given that the EU is striving to lower the rate of young people who are NEETs for people aged 15–29 years to 9 % by 2030, the article will focus on this age group.

Across the EU Member States there were wide variations in 2023 when looking at the NEET rates for the age group that is targeted, see Figure 2. The lowest rates already below the target of 9.0 % could be found in the Netherlands, Sweden, Malta, Slovenia, Ireland, Luxembourg, Denmark, Germany and Portugal. These countries thus reached the long-term EU-level target for 2030 in 2023 or earlier.

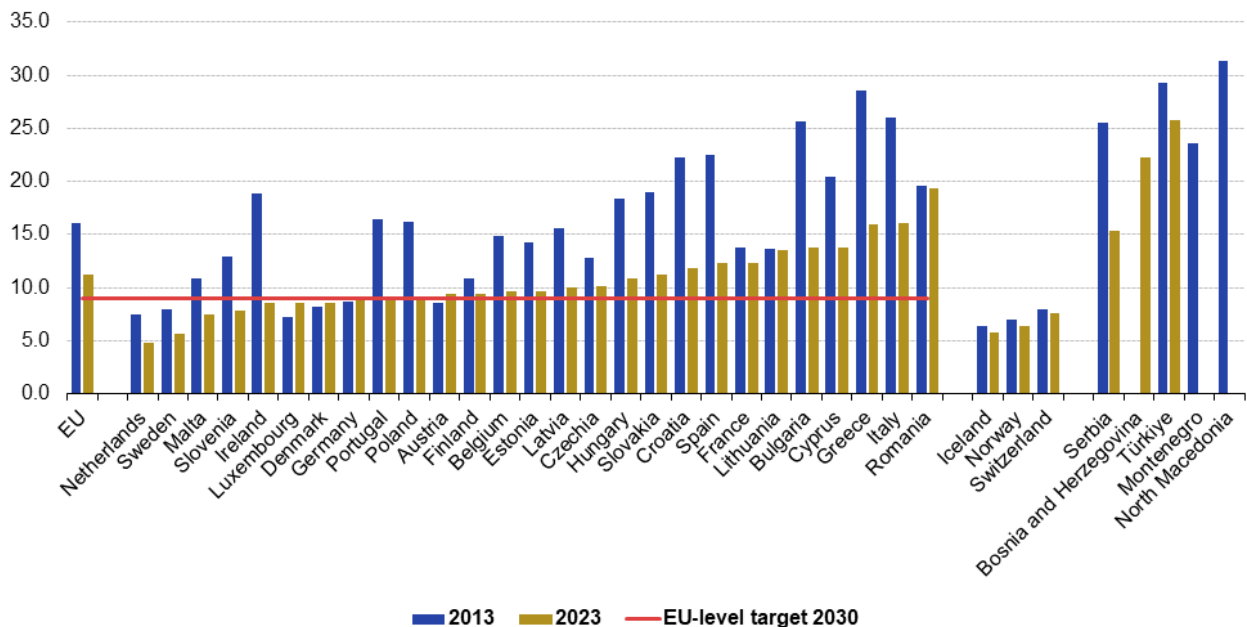
Furthermore, there were nine Member States that recorded NEET rates above the EU average of 11.2 % in 2023. Among these, the highest rates were recorded in Greece, Italy and Romania, where 16 % or more of all young people aged 15–29 years were neither in employment nor in education or training.

A comparison between the two EU Member States with the highest and lowest NEET rates in 2023, reveals that the proportion of young adults who were NEETs was 4 times higher in Romania than in the Netherlands.

The overall share of NEETs decreased in the EU by 4.9 **percentage points (pp)** between 2013 and 2023. Among the EU Member States, the largest reduction by far in the NEET rates (in percentage point terms) between 2013 and 2023 was in Greece (-12.5 pp) followed by Bulgaria (-11.9 pp), Croatia (-10.5 pp), Ireland (-10.3 pp) and Spain (-10.2 pp). There were also four Member States that had increases in their NEET rates since 2013, two of them showing an increase of more than 0.5 pp: Austria (+0.8 pp) and Luxembourg (+1.3 pp).

Young people (aged 15-29) neither in employment nor in education and training, 2013 and 2023

(%)



Note: Breaks in series.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_20)

eurostat

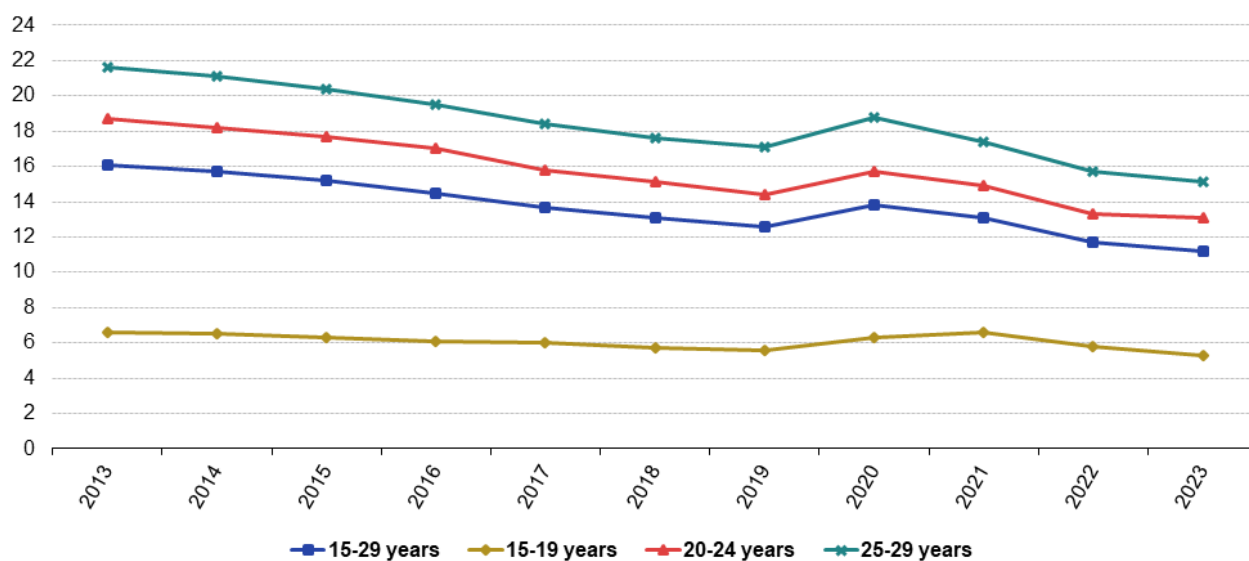
Figure 2: Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, 2013 and 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_20)

Development of NEETs in the EU over time for different age groups

Figure 3 shows the development of NEETs for different age groups within the EU from 2013 to 2023. The share of NEETs continuously decreased from 2013 until 2019. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the share of young adults neither in employment nor in education or training rose. This is natural since the NEET rate for young people is closely linked to economic performance and the [business cycle](#).

By contrast, the share of NEETs decreased considerably from 2021 compared with 2020 for all age groups (except for those aged 15–19 years in 2021). For the age group of the EU-level target the share of NEETs was 11.2 % in 2023, the corresponding share was 5.3 % for those aged 15–19 years, 13.1 % for those aged 20–24 years and 15.1 % for those aged 25–29 years. Thus, in 2023 the share of NEETs was lower than before the onset of the pandemic for all age groups, which can be seen as a sign of recovery.

Young people neither in employment nor in education and training, by age, EU, 2013–2023 (%)



Note: Break in series in 2021.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_20)

eurostat

Figure 3: Young people neither in employment nor in education and training, by age, EU, 2013–2023 (%)
Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_20)

Educational attainment level affects the share of NEETs

Educational attainment levels

Figure 4 shows young NEETs by educational attainment level. The three different levels of educational attainment are as follows:

- less than primary, primary or lower secondary level of education (ISCED 2011 levels 0–2; hereafter referred to as a low educational attainment level or low level of education);
- upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 3 and 4; hereafter referred to as a medium educational attainment level or medium level of education);
- tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5–8; hereafter referred to as a high educational attainment level or high level of education).

In 2023, the NEET rate for young people aged 15–29 years in the EU was 12.9 % among those with a low level of education, compared with 11.6 % among those with a medium level of education and 7.8 % among those with a high level of education (see Figure 4).

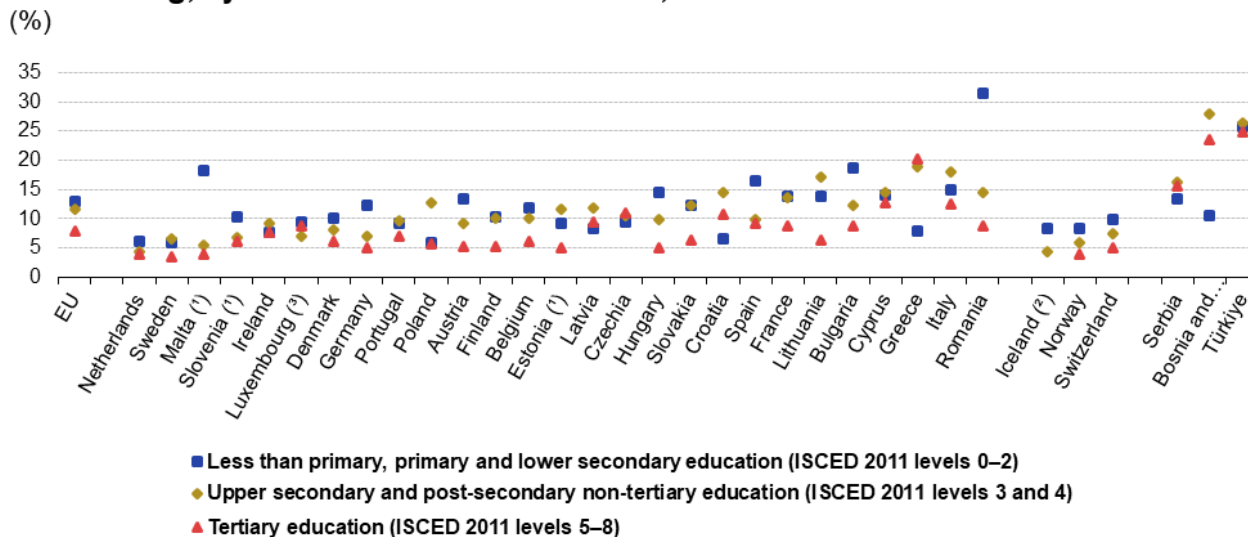
NEET rates in the EU Member States for people aged 15–29 years with a low level of education ranged from 5.8 % in Sweden to 31.5 % in Romania in 2023. Looking more closely at these figures, 10 countries had higher NEET rates than the average for the EU and these countries were: Austria (13.3 %), France and Lithuania (both 13.9 %), Cyprus (14.0 %), Hungary (14.4 %), Italy (14.9 %), Spain (16.5 %), Malta (18.2 %), Bulgaria (18.6 %) and Romania (31.5 %).

Among young people aged 15–29 years with a medium level of education, NEET rates ranged from 4.3 % in the Netherlands up to a peak of 19.0 % in Greece. For this level of education, three countries recorded a NEET rate of 17 % or higher (Lithuania, Italy and Greece) while the only country with a share lower than 5 % was the Netherlands.

Concerning people aged 15–29 years with tertiary education, their NEET rates were in general considerably lower

than for the other levels of education. The lowest share was 3.5 % in Sweden but a value as high as 20.2 % was reported in Greece.

Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by educational attainment level, 2023



Note: Ranked on the overall NEET rate.

(*) ISCED 2011 levels 5-8: low reliability.

(*) ISCED 2011 levels 5-8: not available due to very low reliability.

(*) low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: edat_ifse_21)

Figure 4: Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by educational attainment level, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_21)

It is common to have high NEET rates for people with a low level of education and low NEET rates for people with a high level of education. Comparing the three levels of education at Member State level, NEET rates were almost always higher for young adults with a low or medium level of education compared with tertiary education (the only exceptions being Greece and Czechia). Looking at the other end of the scale, young adults with tertiary education recorded the lowest NEET rates in 2023 in all but five EU Member States (namely Czechia, Greece, Croatia, Latvia and Luxembourg) where the lowest NEET rates were found for those with medium level (Luxembourg) or low level of education (all other four countries).

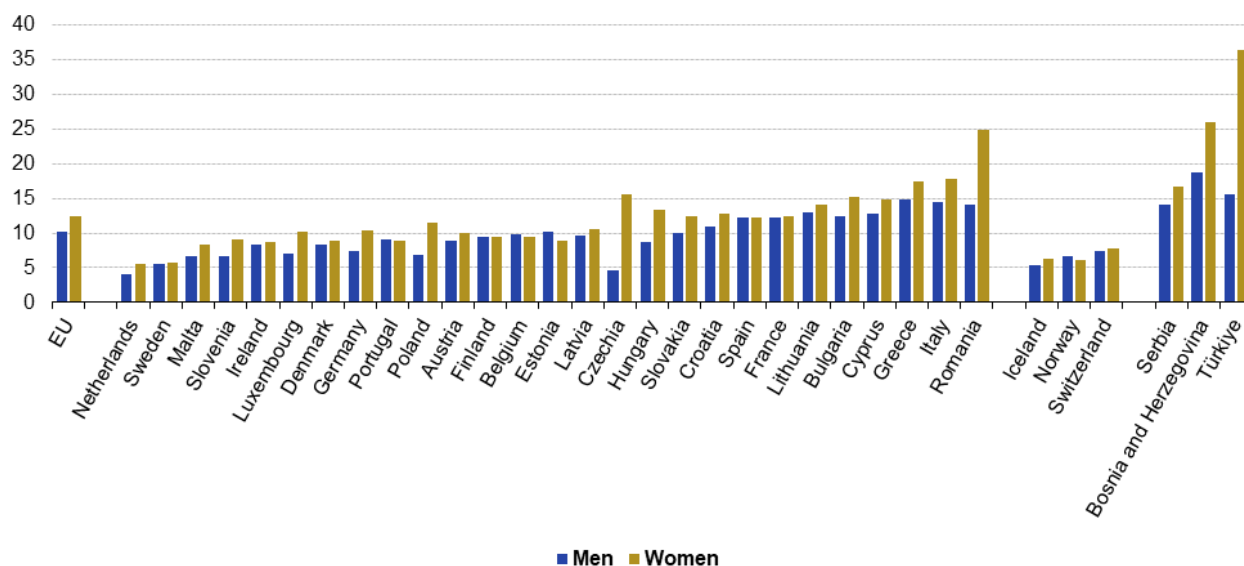
Young women are more likely to neither be in employment nor in education or training than young men

Figure 5 shows that there is a difference between the sexes in relation to the proportion of young adults who were neither in employment nor in education or training. In 2023, 12.5 % of young women aged 15–29 years in the EU were NEETs, while the corresponding share among young men was 2.4 percentage points lower, at 10.1 %.

There are a range of factors that may explain the gender gap. For example social conventions or pressures, which tend to place a higher importance on women’s role within the family and on men’s role to provide for the family through work. Additionally, there is a risk for labour market issues, such as: employers preferring to hire young men over young women; young women facing assimilation difficulties when returning to work after childbirth; young women being more likely to have low-paid jobs or precarious employment etc.

Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex, 2023

(%)



Note: ranked on the average share for men and women (aged 15–29).

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_lfse_20)

eurostat

Figure 5: Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex, 2023 (%)
Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_20)

In 2023, there were two EU Member States where the proportion of young female NEETs was at least 10 pp higher than the corresponding share for young men. The largest difference was found in Czechia (10.9 pp), followed by Romania (10.7 pp). However, three countries had higher NEET rates for men compared with women but to a much lesser extent. Estonia had the largest difference; here the share for men was 1.3 pp higher than for women. There were four countries, where the NEET rates were about the same for women and men (+/- 0.1 pp): Portugal, Finland, Spain and Sweden.

As young women become older they are more often neither in employment nor in education or training

An analysis of the three different age groups of young people (aged 15–19, 20–24 and 25–29) shows that the EU gender gap for NEETs increased in relation to age in 2023, see Table 1. For the youngest age group, men had a higher share of NEETs than women, the difference was 0.8 pp. In the next age group, 20–24, there is a shift and the NEET rate for young women was about the same as the rate for men, only 0.1 pp higher than those for young men. The gap between the sexes widened to 7.5 pp among people aged 25–29 years. This pattern may be linked, at least in part, to the growing number of women who postpone childbirth, a low share of men who interrupt their careers to help raise a family, and a range of difficulties faced by women who wish to integrate a professional career with their maternal role.

In 2023, the NEET rate for young people aged 15–19 years was lower for women than it was for men in all the EU Member States except in the Netherlands, Denmark, Slovenia, Czechia, Malta and Hungary.

Among people aged 20–24 years the picture was more mixed and 13 Member States had a lower NEET rate for women compared with men, while 10 Member States had a higher NEET rate for women. The remaining four countries either have the same share for both sexes or the figure for one sex is not available due to the sample size being too small. Furthermore, there were large differences between the countries, Croatia and Italy had no difference between the sexes while Romania reported the largest difference; here the NEET rate for women was 13.0 percentage points higher than the corresponding rate for men.

As previously said, the EU gender gap for NEETs increased in relation to age and this is clear when looking at the oldest age group, those aged 25–29 years. For this group the NEET rate was consistently higher for women than for men in all EU Member States except Luxembourg, where the shares for women and men were about equal. The

difference between men and women ranged from 2.1 pp in Sweden to 24.4 pp in Czechia.

Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex and age, 2023 (%)

	Total				Men				Women			
	15-29 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	15-29 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years	15-29 years	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years
EU	11.2	5.3	13.1	15.1	10.1	5.7	13.0	11.4	12.5	4.9	13.1	18.9
Belgium	9.6	3.1	10.3	15.1	9.8	3.8	11.5	13.8	9.5	2.3	9.1	16.3
Bulgaria	13.8	7.2	16.2	18.9	12.5	7.6	15.4	15.1	15.2	6.8	17.0	22.8
Czechia	10.1	3.8	9.1	17.3	4.6	3.5	5.4	4.9	15.5	4.1	12.6	29.3
Denmark	8.6	4.1	9.9	11.2	8.3	4.1	10.2	10.0	8.9	4.1	9.6	12.3
Germany	8.8	5.5	9.2	11.1	7.4	5.6	8.6	7.8	10.3	5.4	9.8	14.7
Estonia (*)	9.6	7.1	12.5	9.5	10.2	8.5	16.0	6.9	8.9	5.6	9.0	12.3
Ireland (*)	8.5	3.7	9.5	12.9	8.3	4.1	9.9	11.6	8.7	3.3	9.1	14.3
Greece	16.0	5.4	19.4	24.3	14.8	5.5	19.9	19.9	17.4	5.2	18.8	29.3
Spain	12.3	5.8	14.1	17.1	12.3	6.7	14.7	15.7	12.3	4.8	13.4	18.5
France	12.3	5.8	15.5	16.3	12.2	6.4	17.0	13.6	12.5	5.2	13.9	19.0
Croatia (*)	11.8	6.3	13.2	15.3	11.0	6.8	13.2	12.7	12.7	5.8	13.2	18.2
Italy	16.1	6.3	19.0	22.7	14.4	7.0	19.0	17.0	17.8	5.5	19.0	28.7
Cyprus (*)	13.8	5.5	17.5	16.0	12.7	5.7	15.8	14.6	14.8	5.3	19.1	17.3
Latvia (*)	10.0	2.5	12.6	16.1	9.6	:	14.1	12.9	10.5	:	11.1	19.5
Lithuania	13.5	9.9	17.2	13.5	13.0	10.6	18.3	9.9	14.1	9.2	16.1	17.2
Luxembourg (*)	8.5	6.7	10.9	8.0	7.1	:	:	:	10.1	:	12.5	9.2
Hungary	10.9	6.2	13.3	13.0	8.7	5.4	11.8	8.9	13.3	7.0	15.0	17.2
Malta (*)	7.5	10.7	6.2	6.7	6.7	10.2	6.5	5.3	8.4	11.3	:	8.5
Netherlands	4.8	1.9	4.6	7.6	4.0	1.9	4.2	5.7	5.6	1.9	4.9	9.5
Austria	9.4	7.9	9.4	10.5	8.8	8.1	9.1	9.2	10.0	7.8	9.7	11.9
Poland (*)	9.1	2.3	11.4	13.0	6.9	2.5	11.7	6.6	11.5	2.2	11.1	19.7
Portugal (*)	8.9	3.4	12.0	11.0	9.0	4.0	12.7	9.9	8.9	2.9	11.2	12.0
Romania	19.3	10.4	23.5	25.3	14.1	10.5	17.2	15.0	24.8	10.4	30.2	36.1
Slovenia (*)	7.8	6.8	7.7	8.8	6.7	6.6	7.5	5.9	9.0	6.9	8.0	12.3
Slovakia (*)	11.2	4.8	12.9	15.0	10.0	6.1	14.0	9.8	12.4	:	11.8	20.5
Finland (*)	9.4	4.6	10.9	12.4	9.4	5.2	11.4	11.3	9.4	4.0	10.4	13.5
Sweden	5.7	2.8	7.5	6.7	5.6	3.0	7.2	6.7	5.7	2.7	7.8	6.8
Iceland	5.8	:	4.8	8.7	5.3	:	6.2	5.9	6.3	:	:	11.8
Norway (*)	6.4	4.1	6.8	8.1	6.6	4.20	7.2	8.2	6.2	4.00	6.4	7.9
Switzerland	7.6	6.0	9.0	7.8	7.5	6.2	9.8	6.5	7.8	5.8	8.1	9.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	22.2	6.6	25.3	31.6	18.8	8.1	25.7	21.1	25.9	5.0	24.9	42.8
Serbia	15.3	7.2	17.7	20.4	14.0	8.3	17.1	16.4	16.6	6.1	18.3	24.6
Türkiye	25.8	16.1	29.2	31.9	15.6	12.5	18.9	15.7	36.3	19.9	39.9	48.3

- (*) Total 15-19: low reliability
- (*) Total 20-24: low reliability
- (*) Total 25-29: low reliability
- (*) Men 15-19 years: low reliability.
- (*) Men 20-24: low reliability.
- (*) Men 25-29: low reliability.
- (*) Women 15-19: low reliability
- (*) Women 20-24: low reliability.
- (*) Women 25-29: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_20)

Table 1: Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex and age, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_20)

Young female NEETs were more likely to be outside the labour force than young male NEETs

Table 2 shows that a higher proportion of young female NEETs aged 15–29 years in the EU were outside the labour force (not actively seeking work) compared with young male NEETs of the same age. The share of young men outside the labour force was 5.4 %, compared with 8.7 % among females. This gender difference, amounting to 3.3 pp, in the EU may be attributed, in part, to family structures, as a higher proportion of young women (than young men) may spend time caring for children and/or other family members. Czechia and Romania had the largest differences between the sexes. These differences exceeded 10 pp in disadvantage to women i.e., more women were NEETs outside the labour force than men.

When looking at unemployed NEETs the results are reversed and a higher proportion of men were unemployed NEETs compared with women. In the EU, the share of young male NEETs who were unemployed amounted to 4.7 %, the corresponding share for women was 3.8 %. This pattern was the same in all EU Member States except in Croatia and Greece where more women were unemployed NEETs, while the shares were about the same for women and men in Czechia and Denmark.

These numbers show that women who are neither in employment nor in education and training seem to be outside of the labour force to a larger extent than men, while men are unemployed to a larger extent than women. Being unemployed suggests that the individual still has some kind of connection to the labour market while persons outside the labour force do not have this connection, and having such pronounced gender differences may be a cause for concern.

Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex and activity status, 2023

(%)

	Unemployed			Outside the labour force		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
EU	4.3	4.7	3.8	7.0	5.4	8.7
Belgium	4.2	5.0	3.3	5.4	4.8	6.1
Bulgaria	3.1	3.5	2.5	10.8	9.0	12.7
Czechia	2.0	2.0	2.0	8.1	2.6	13.5
Denmark	2.8	2.9	2.7	5.8	5.4	6.3
Germany	2.2	2.6	1.7	6.6	4.8	8.6
Estonia	3.4	4.1	2.7	6.2	6.1	6.2
Ireland	2.9	3.7	2.0	5.6	4.6	6.7
Greece	8.6	8.1	9.2	7.4	6.7	8.1
Spain	6.8	7.4	6.1	5.5	4.9	6.2
France	5.2	5.8	4.6	7.1	6.3	7.9
Croatia	5.7	5.5	5.9	6.1	5.6	6.8
Italy	6.0	6.4	5.6	10.0	8.0	12.3
Cyprus	6.2	7.6	4.9	7.6	5.1	9.9
Latvia	3.7	4.7	2.7	6.3	4.9	7.7
Lithuania	4.0	4.8	3.2	9.5	8.2	10.9
Luxembourg ⁽¹⁾ ⁽²⁾ ⁽⁴⁾	3.3	3.4	:	5.3	3.7	7.0
Hungary	3.9	4.3	3.4	7.1	4.4	9.9
Malta ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾ ⁽⁴⁾	3.0	3.5	2.3	4.5	3.2	6.0
Netherlands	1.6	1.8	1.4	3.2	2.3	4.2
Austria	3.7	4.0	3.3	5.7	4.8	6.7
Poland	2.9	3.0	2.7	6.3	3.9	8.8
Portugal	5.3	5.4	5.1	3.7	3.5	3.8
Romania	5.0	6.2	3.7	14.3	7.9	21.1
Slovenia ⁽²⁾ ⁽³⁾	2.3	2.7	1.9	5.4	4.0	7.1
Slovakia	5.4	6.6	4.2	5.8	3.4	8.3
Finland	3.1	3.5	2.7	6.3	5.9	6.7
Sweden	2.6	3.0	2.2	3.1	2.7	3.6
Iceland	2.0	2.7	:	3.8	2.6	5.0
Norway ⁽³⁾	1.8	2.1	1.4	4.6	4.5	4.8
Switzerland	2.5	2.7	2.2	5.2	4.8	5.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9.6	10.4	8.8	12.6	8.4	17.0
Serbia	7.2	8.3	6.0	8.1	5.7	10.6
Türkiye	6.3	6.7	6.0	19.4	8.9	30.4

⁽¹⁾ Unemployed total: low reliability.

⁽²⁾ Unemployed men: low reliability.

⁽³⁾ Unemployed women: low reliability.

⁽⁴⁾ Men outside the labour force: low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_20)

Table 2: Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by sex and activity status, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_20)

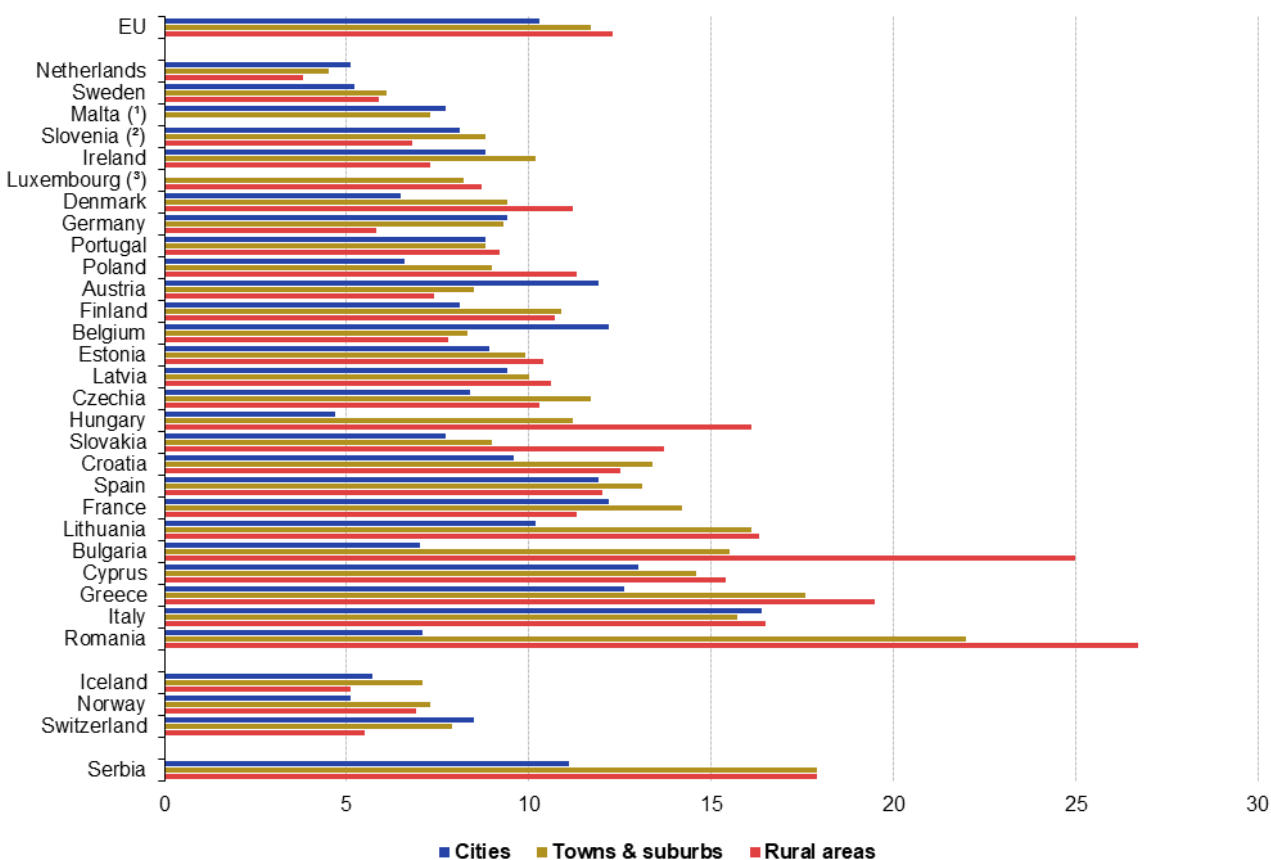
Does it matter where you live? A glimpse at the degree of urbanisation

Figure 6 presents information on young people (aged 15–29) who were neither in employment nor in education or training, according to their place of residence, as defined in terms of its [degree of urbanisation](#).

In 2023, the share of young people (aged 15–29) in the EU who were NEETs was lowest in cities (10.3 %) and about the same level in towns and suburbs (11.7 %), and rural areas (12.3 %). The pattern of lowest NEET rates in cities (as compared with both rural areas and suburbs) was repeated in 17 EU Member States. The largest differences of the rates between cities and rural areas in terms of percentage points (pp) were recorded in Romania (19.6 pp) and in Bulgaria (18.0 pp).

Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by degree of urbanisation, 2023

(%)



Note: Ranked on the overall NEET rate.

(*) Rural areas: not available due to a very low reliability.

(2) Cities: low reliability.

(3) Cities: not available due to a very low reliability.

Source: Eurostat (online data code: edat_ifse_29)

eurostat

Figure 6: Young people (aged 15–29) neither in employment nor in education and training, by degree of urbanisation, 2023 (%) Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_29)

Source data for tables and graphs

- [NEETs: tables and figures](#)

Data sources

The EU [labour force survey \(LFS\)](#) provides statistics on individuals neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs). The LFS is documented in this [background article](#) which provides information on the scope of the data, its legal basis, the methodology employed, as well as related concepts and definitions.

Levels of education

Common definitions for education have been agreed between the [UNESCO](#) Institute for Statistics (UIS), the [OECD](#) and [Eurostat](#). UNESCO developed the [International standard classification of education \(ISCED\)](#) to enable comparisons across countries on the basis of uniform and internationally agreed definitions. It was first developed in 1976 and then revised in 1997 and 2011. In 2011, a revision to the ISCED was formally adopted, this is known as [ISCED 2011](#). Prior to this, [ISCED 1997](#) was used as the common standard for classifying education systems.

Eurostat's online database presents data on educational attainment for four aggregates:

- Less than primary, primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 0–2)
- Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED levels 3 and 4)
- At least upper secondary education, i.e. upper secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary and tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 3–8, ISCED 1997 levels 3–6)
- Tertiary education (ISCED 2011 levels 5–8, ISCED 1997 levels 5 and 6)

At this level of aggregation data are comparable over time for all available countries except [Austria and Estonia](#). In the article 3 levels of educational attainment are studied which corresponds to low (ISCED levels 0–2), medium (ISCED 3–4) and high (ISCED 5–8).

Key concepts — the labour force

According to the EU [labour force survey \(LFS\)](#), there are three mutually exclusive groups when it comes to describing the labour status of a person: employed, unemployed and outside of the labour force.

Following guidelines of the [International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#), the LFS defines an **employed person** as someone who, during the reference week of the survey, performed work (even if just for one hour) for pay, profit or family gain. Alternatively, the person was not at work, but had a job or business from which he or she was temporarily absent (less than three months) due to illness, holiday, industrial dispute or education and training.

An **unemployed person** is defined as someone who was without work during the reference week of the LFS; was available to start work within the next two weeks (or had already found a job to start within the next three months); and who actively was seeking employment during the four weeks preceding the LFS.

A person is **outside the labour force** if he or she does not take part in the labour force (i.e. neither employed nor unemployed). In addition to people of working age that are not working nor unemployed the population outside the labour force includes children, students and pensioners. More information on the main concepts of the LFS are provided in the [article on the EU labour force survey](#).

Key concepts — NEETs

Statistics for employment and unemployment have traditionally been used to describe labour markets, in other words, providing data on people who have a job and those who are actively looking for one. However, an analysis of the labour market participation of younger people is somewhat different, especially when:

- a large proportion of young people are still attending school, college, university, other higher education establishment or training, and;

- another group of young people are neither in employment (unemployed or outside the labour force), nor in education or training (NEETs).

The share of young people neither in employment nor in education or training is an indicator that measures the proportion of a given subpopulation who are not employed and not involved in any further education or training; these people may be subdivided into those who are unemployed and those who are considered outside the labour force (in other words, they do not have a job and they are not actively seeking employment). The definition of the group is as follows:

- The numerator of the indicator refers to people meeting two conditions. Firstly, they are not employed — in other words, they are unemployed or outside the labour force. Secondly, they have not received any (formal or non-formal) education or training in the four weeks preceding the LFS.
- The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding non-response concerning 'participation in regular (formal) education and training', in other words, respondents who failed to answer this LFS question.

Tables in this article use the following notation: ':' not available, confidential or unreliable value.

Context

Within the EU the labour markets in the member countries are increasingly described as being insecure, with a higher proportion of the workforce on temporary, part-time or casual (so-called zero-hours) contracts. Many of the workers that have this kind of contract are often relatively young. It might be the first job for an individual who strives to move from education or training into the labour market. These individuals are often particularly vulnerable when the business cycle is turning, as they may be the first to leave the workplace (last in first out) since they are competing with other job-seekers who have more experience.

The still quite high share of young people who are neither in employment nor in education or training in the EU may mean that employers recruiting in EU labour markets have a wide choice of potential candidates, although the high share may reflect labour market mismatches, for example geographically or in terms of skills. Some employers criticise the lack of basic skills that some young people have when they leave the education system, as well as their under-developed life skills (communication and presentational skills, ability to work in a team, problem-solving skills), or their lack of work experience and knowledge in relation to their chosen profession. With a surplus of labour, employers may prefer to recruit young people who have completed a tertiary level of education or an apprenticeship (for more details in relation to employment rates for young graduates, see this [article](#)). As such, young people with few or no qualifications may struggle to enter the labour market and may be excluded of work or increasingly find themselves stuck in a cycle of low paid jobs with little opportunity for progression. This was particularly the case during the financial and economic crisis in the late 2000s, when tertiary graduates also faced difficulties in finding a job, and may have taken jobs for which they were over-qualified in order to get into the labour market. Similar behaviour might have been triggered by the economic downturn related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The level of education that a young person achieves therefore has a strong influence on his/her chances of finding work and remaining in work, for more information see the article regarding [employment rates of recent graduates](#). A relatively high proportion of young people in the EU are neither in employment nor in education or training and policymakers are increasingly concerned by the economic and social consequences of their disengagement. There are a wide range of factors that may contribute to young people being NEETs, among which: having a low or medium level of educational attainment; living in a household with a low level of income; coming from a family where a parent experienced unemployment; being raised by a single parent; living in a rural area; having been born in a country outside the EU; or having a disability. Young people who spend a considerable period of time as NEETs are often affected by a range of social conditions, such as poverty and social exclusion, insecurity, crime or health problems.

In 2012, a specific Youth employment package was launched, which led to an increased focus on providing quality traineeships and apprenticeships for young people and called for the introduction of a ' [Youth guarantee](#) ', designed to ensure that all young people up to the age of 25 should receive a quality job offer, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. In 2013, the ' [Youth employment initiative](#) ' was launched: it was designed to specifically support young people not in education, employment or training in regions where the youth unemployment rate was over 25 %. In October 2020, all EU countries committed to the implementation of the reinforced Youth guarantee in a [Council Recommendation](#)

which steps up the comprehensive job support available to young people across the EU and makes it more targeted and inclusive, also when it comes to the challenges caused by the pandemic.

The [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) sets out 20 key principles and rights essential for fair and well-functioning labour markets and social protection systems. Principle 4 ('Active support to employment') states that 'young people have the right to continued education, apprenticeship, traineeship or a job offer of good standing within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving education'. An overall commitment to an inclusive high employment rate is made by setting an [EU-level target](#) : the overall goal is that at least 78 % of the population in the EU aged 20–64 years should be in employment by 2030. In order to reach this goal a decrease in the rate of young people neither in employment, nor in education or training (NEETs) aged 15—29 years to 9 % is aimed at, namely by improving their employment prospects.

Although policymakers have sought to address particular groups of young people such as unemployed youth, early leavers from education and training, or young people whose qualifications do not meet labour market needs, there remains a high number of young people in the EU who are neither in employment nor in education or training: NEETs.

Other articles

- [Education and training in the EU — facts and figures](#)
- [EU labour force survey statistics — online publication](#)

Main tables

- [Education and training \(t_educ\)](#) , see:

Education and training outcomes (t_educ_outc)

Database

- [Education and training \(educ\)](#) , see:

Education and training outcomes (educ_outc)

Transition from education to work (edatt)

Young people by educational and labour status (incl. neither in employment nor in education and training – NEET) (edatt0)

- [\(yth\)](#) , see:

Youth employment (yth_empl)

Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and labour status (NEET rates) (yth_empl_150)

Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and educational attainment level (NEET rates) (yth_empl_160)

Dedicated section

- [Education and training](#)

Methodology

Metadata

- [Educational attainment level and transition from education to work](#) (ESMS metadata file — edat1_esms)

Manuals and other methodological information

- [Further methodological information on NEET](#)

Legislation

- [EU labour force survey – main features and legal basis](#)

External links

- [European Commission — European Skills Agenda](#)
- [European Commission — European employment strategy](#)
- [European Commission — Education and training policies](#)
- [Eurofound — NEETs](#)

View this article online at http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Statistics_on_young_people_neither_in_employment_nor_in_education_or_training