

CO13 Young people not in education or employment

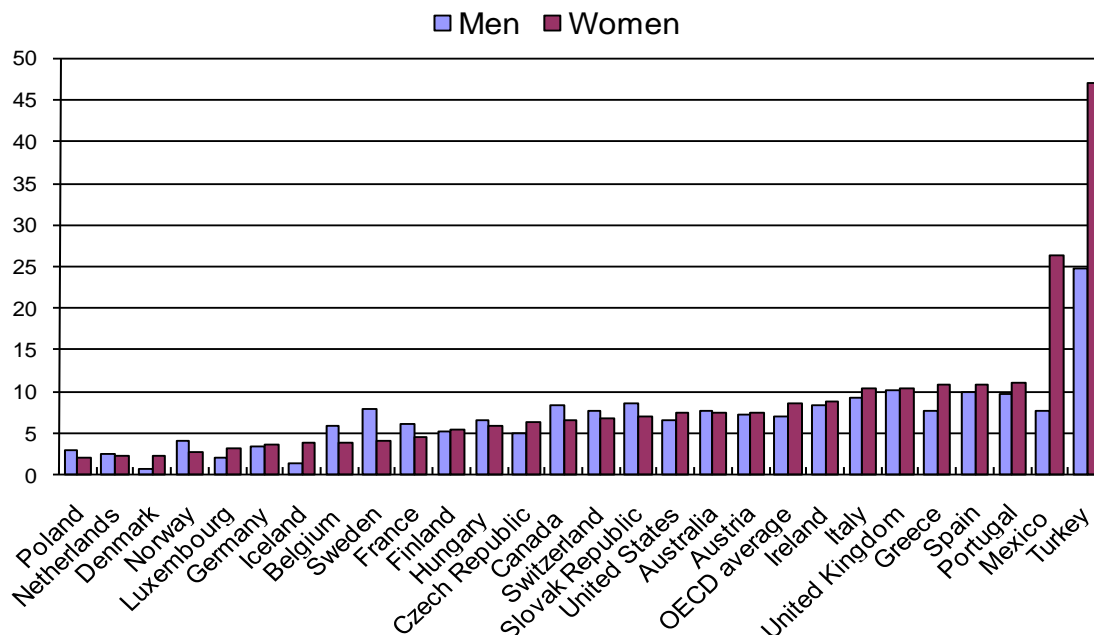
Definitions and methodology

The statistics presented in this indicator are calculated from labour force survey data on age-specific proportions of young people (here, aged 15 to 19 years old), who are not in education or employment (for at least one hour per week) according to the labour force survey.

Rapid social and economic change in OECD countries over the past decades has made the transition from education to working life more complex than ever before. Across the OECD, education policy often encourages young people to complete at least upper secondary education, also to improve their chances at the labour market; low-skill levels are associated with a high non-employment risk. High proportions of youths not in education or employment not only point to issues with school to work transitions they also contribute to smaller pools of skilled workers in future.

Data normally refer to the first quarter and are collected through both the OECD annual Labour Force Survey and for several European countries through the annual European Labour Force Survey. By using the first quarter of the year summer employment can be excluded. Labour force status categories are defined according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines with the exception of those following work-study programmes which are classified as being in education and work and thereby are excluded from the data presented here.

Chart 13.1 Proportion of people aged 15 – 19 who were not in education or employment in 2004, by gender

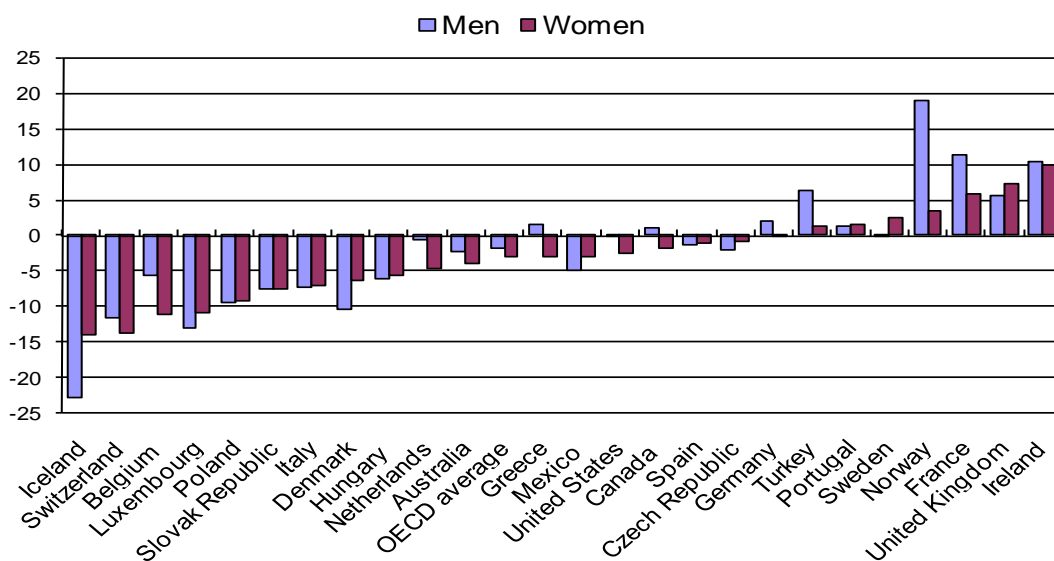


1) 2005 for the United Kingdom
Source: OECD Education database

Other relevant indicators: Public spending on education (PF2); Educational attainment by gender and average years spent in formal education (CO9); Gender differences in choice of fields of study (CO10); and, Literacy scores by gender at age 15 (CO12).

Chart 13.2 presents growth rates over a nine year period (1995 to 2004) of the proportion of youngsters not in education or employment. In most countries, this proportion has fallen, especially for women. This is because participation in education has generally increased, but trends also suggest improved patterns of school-to-work transition. Despite significant increases in the proportion of young men not in education or employment in France (also related to a break in the series) and Norway (Chart 13.2), the relevant proportions are still low in international comparison (Chart 13.1).

Chart 13.2: Average annual growth rates of youth not in education or employment 1995–2004¹, age 15-19, by gender



1) 1998 instead of 2004 for Germany, 1999 for Ireland, and from 2000 to 2005 for the United Kingdom
Source: OECD Education database

Comparability and data issues

Cross-country comparisons are hampered by institutional differences. The length of educational programmes differs between countries and therefore affects the average graduation age at lower and upper secondary levels of education. In countries where average graduation ages are typically lower, the proportion of youngsters not in education represents a larger proportion of the cohort in general, contributing to a higher rate of young people not in education or employment.

Some countries including Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Korea, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey oblige young men to enter military (or national) service whereas most countries OECD do not. However, in some countries, labour force statistics only consider the civilian population. In other countries, military personnel living at home are considered part of the labour force, but conscripts living in barracks are not. In yet other countries, conscripts are counted as part of the labour force, whereas in others they are not. Because of these differences, cross-country variation in the proportion of young men neither in education or employment has to be interpreted with care.

In some countries, for example, Ireland and the United Kingdom, students frequently take a year-out (a “gap-year”) between finishing upper secondary studies and starting at university, and cheaper air fares and economic growth may have encouraged this trend (Chart 13.2).

Sources and further reading: *OECD Education Database* and *OECD Education at a Glance 2006*.