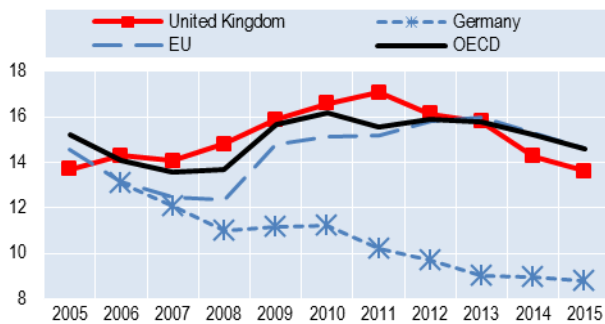


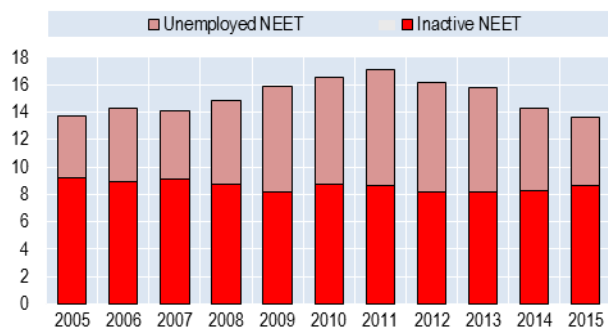


The 2016 edition of *Society at a Glance* examines social well-being and its trends across the OECD. The number of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) remains elevated in many countries since the crisis; the report therefore focusses on this group of young people examining the characteristics of those at risk of being NEET along with policies to help meet the challenge. This edition also includes many new youth-specific indicators on family formation, self-sufficiency, income and poverty, health and social cohesion.

#### The NEET rose during the crisis but is now back to its pre-crisis level NEET rate, 2003-2015



#### NEET rate by activity status in the UK, 2003-2015



Notes: The NEET rate is the proportion of 15-29 year olds who are not in employment, education or training. [Figure 1.5]

### THE NEET SITUATION

The proportion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (the NEET rate) rose substantially in the United Kingdom during the Great Recession (as it did in most OECD countries) from 14.1% in 2007 to a peak of 17.1% in 2009. Since then the NEET rate has declined and is now back to just below its pre-crisis level and slightly below the OECD average. Despite these recent improvements, the NEET rate in the UK remains above the best performers such as Germany where the rate is below 9%. **1.6 million young people in the UK out of work and education** and the cost is 1% of GDP in 2014 in foregone earnings alone. Furthermore, close to two-thirds of this NEET group are inactive i.e. not even looking for a job.

Youth with low education levels fare particularly badly in the United Kingdom – **39% of youth who left school** before completing upper secondary school are NEET compared to just 8% of those with a third level degree, one of the largest gaps across the OECD [Figure 1.9]. Youth with below upper secondary education make up one-fifth of the youth population

but two-fifths of the NEET group, despite improvements in the numbers completing upper secondary in the last decade. In addition, basic skills are often lacking for those who left school early. **Those with low literacy and numeracy skills are respectively 7 and 9 times more likely to become a NEET than youth with high levels of these skills.** These gaps are double those seen across the OECD. A worrying development for the future, and one that may lead to a rise in NEET rates, is a decline in the level of these skills across the generations. The United Kingdom has the third highest level of poor literacy and numeracy skills amongst youth and is one of the few countries in which literacy and numeracy skills have deteriorated between the older and younger generation [Figure 4.7/4.8] – on average across the OECD the proportion of young people (16-29) with poor literacy skills is 26% lower than the older age group (30-54) and the proportion of young people with poor numeracy skills is 13% lower than the older age group. In the United Kingdom, however, the proportion of youth with poor literacy skills is 18% higher, and is 9% higher for poor numeracy skills, compared to the older age group.

Apprenticeships are a useful way of bridging the gap between school and employment for youth, particularly those with lower education levels, but rates are low in the United Kingdom with **less than 2% of youth engaged in an apprenticeship** compared to over 9% in Denmark and 15% in Germany. Increasing apprenticeship rates would help more practically minded students into the workforce.

**NEET rates for women** in the United Kingdom are **52% higher** than for men – a bigger difference than the OECD average (38%) [Figure 1.11]. High childcare costs are one reason for this [Figure 1.14]. **The United Kingdom has the highest proportion of NEETs living as lone parents** across the OECD, its rate of 15% being three times the average [Figure 1.17].

The United Kingdom is one of the few OECD countries in which there is **no difference in NEET rates between migrant and native born youth**.

Around 40% of NEETs in the UK live with their parents, lower than the OECD average where nearly half of NEET live in their parental home.

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## OVERVIEW OF OTHER SOCIAL INDICATORS

### The recession reduced incomes for youth

**Youth experienced slightly larger income losses** (-1.5%) than older age groups (-0.9%) [Figure 3.3] during the recession and losses for youth were nearly three times the OECD average. **Unemployment rates for youth remain 3.6 times higher than those over 25**, substantially above the average ratio of 2 [Figure 4.5]. Overall, income inequality remains above average in the UK but fell slightly between 2007 and 2014.

### Health is worsening but life expectancy is improving

70% of adults in the UK report being in **good health**, in line with the OECD average [Figure 6.4], but this is down from just under 80% in 2010. Disparities are large ranging from 62% of the poorest income group to 83% of the richest income group [Figure 6.5]. **Life expectancy** at 81.4 years is slightly ahead of the OECD average and is up nearly 10 years since 1970, but it is still behind the best performers such as Japan and Spain [Figure 6.1].

### High underage alcohol consumption amongst girls

Overall, alcohol consumption is slightly higher than the OECD average [Figure 6.12] but **underage drinking is significantly above the OECD average, especially for girls** - 31% of 15 year old girls reporting having been drunk at least twice [Figure 6.14]. This is significantly above the 26% rate for boys, which is in line with the OECD average. The United Kingdom is one of just 3 OECD countries to have **higher underage drinking rates for girls than for boys** with the **United Kingdom having the highest gap**.

### Youth are less likely to vote

**Voter turnout** in the last national election at 61% was slightly below the OECD average [Figure 7.7] but **young people were one-third less likely to vote than adults**, the third largest gap across the OECD [Figure 7.8]. Disinterest in politics **amongst 18-24 year olds** is relatively high with nearly **one third expressing no interest at all in politics** [Figure 7.9]. However, there are signs that youth do engage on particular issues, and their voting rate in the Brexit referendum was significantly higher than in the previous general election. Around **half of youth expressed confidence in national government** in 2015 (prior to the Brexit vote) slightly higher than the 44% OECD average [Figure 7.5].

### Marriage rates are falling but fertility rates are high

The average age at first marriage is 32.2 for men and 30.2 for women up from 27.2 (men) and 25.2 (women) in 1990 [Figure 3.11]. Marriage rates are in line with the OECD average but have fallen since the nineties. Divorce rates are also close to the OECD average [Figure 3.12]. At 1.81 children per woman of child-bearing age the **fertility rate is above the OECD average** (1.68) and closer to the 2.1 rate required to keep the population constant [Figure 3.4]. **The average age of a first-time mother (28.6)** is just below the OECD average and has risen by 2 years since 1995 [Figure 3.6].

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