

CO3.5 Young people not in education or employment

Definitions and methodology

This indicator presents data on young people who are ‘NEET’ – those who are not in employment, education or training. Young people are defined as those between 15 and 29 years of age, while an individual is classified as ‘NEET’ as long as they were neither enrolled in formal education or a training programme nor in paid employment (for at least one hour per week) during the relevant survey reference period. Data on NEETs are taken from *OECD Education at a Glance* and from Eurostat Education and Training Statistics for non-OECD EU countries, and are presented using three measures:

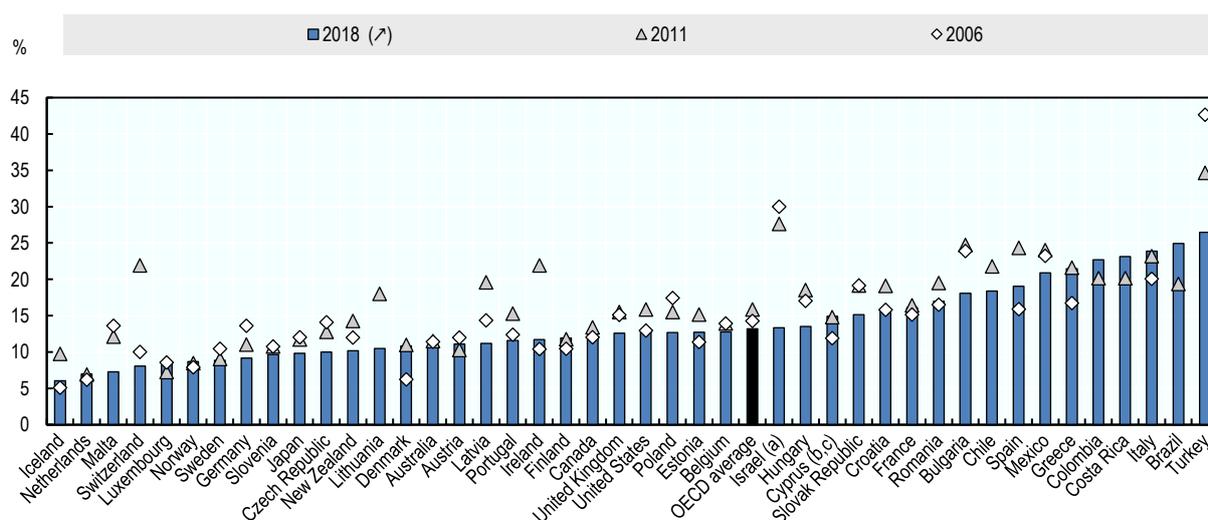
- i) The NEET rate, which is calculated as the proportion of 15-29 year olds that are classified as NEET
- ii) NEET rates by five-year age groups, for 15-19 year-olds, 20-24 year-olds, and 25-29 year-olds
- iii) Gender differences in NEET rates, which disaggregates the overall NEET rate for men and women

An additional measure at the end of this indicator looks at the living arrangements of NEETs and how the living arrangements of NEETs differ from non-NEET young people.

Key findings

Chart CO3.5.A. NEET rates for 15-29 year-olds

Proportion (%) of 15-29 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET), 2006, 2011 and 2018



Notes: For 2011, data for Switzerland refer to 2009, for Lithuania to 2010, and for Colombia and Costa Rica to 2013. For 2018, data for Japan refer to 2014, and for Chile 2017. The OECD average excludes Chile and Korea.

a. The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

b. Footnote by Turkey: The information in this document with reference to « Cyprus » relates to the southern part of the Island. There is no single authority representing both Turkish and Greek Cypriot people on the Island. Turkey recognizes the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Until a lasting and equitable solution is found within the context of United Nations, Turkey shall preserve its position concerning the "Cyprus issue";

c. Footnote by all the European Union Member States of the OECD and the European Commission: The Republic of Cyprus is recognized by all members of the United Nations with the exception of Turkey. The information in this document relates to the area under the effective control of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Source: *OECD Education at a Glance*; For Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta and Romania: Eurostat Education and Training Statistics

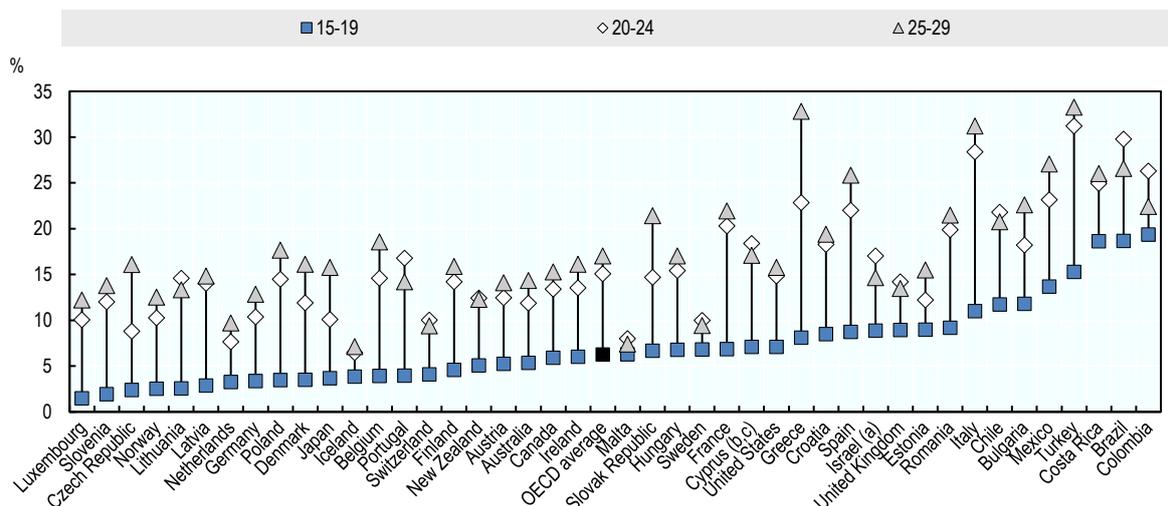
Other relevant indicators: Public spending on education (PF1.2); Educational attainment by gender and expected years in full-time education (CO3.1); Gender differences in university graduates by fields of study (CO3.2); and, Literacy scores by gender at age 15 (CO3.4).

NEET rates vary considerably across the OECD (Chart CO3.5.A). On average across OECD countries the number of young people (15-29 year-olds) neither in employment nor in education or training stands at just over 13%, but rates range from 6% in Iceland to as high as 26% in Turkey. Southern European countries (such as Greece, Italy and Spain) along with Mexico and Turkey have the highest NEET rates. In all these countries, around one-in-five or more young people are NEET. A mixture of northern and central European countries have the lowest NEET rates.

NEET rates are generally higher for young people in their 20s than for those in their teens (Chart CO3.5.B). In OECD many countries, rates are highest for 25-29 year-olds. This is especially the case in Greece and Italy, where NEET rates for 25-29 year-olds (33% and 31%, respectively) are around 20-25 percentage points higher than rates for 15-19 year-olds. On average, 17% of 25-29 year-olds are NEET, compared to around 6% of 15-19 year-olds. In large part, lower NEET rates among younger age groups reflect the expansion of upper-secondary and tertiary education in most OECD countries (*OECD Education at a Glance 2014*: 365). Yet, the risks associated with younger NEETs should not be downplayed – teenage NEETs often lack qualifications and relevant employment experience and tend to remain NEET for a relatively long period of time (Carcillo et al, 2015).

Chart CO3.5.B. NEET rates across age groups

Proportion (%) of 15-29 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET), by age group, 2018



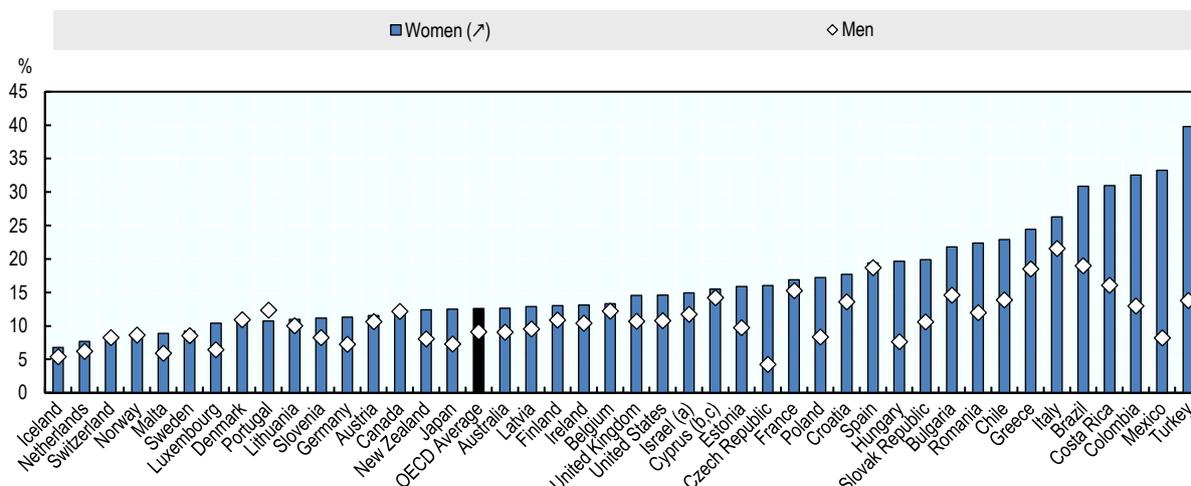
Note: Data for Chile refer to 2017, for Japan to 2014.

- a. See note a. to Chart CO3.5.A
- b. See note b. to Chart CO3.5.A
- c. See note c. to in Chart CO3.5.A

Source: OECD Education at a Glance; for Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta and Romania: Eurostat Education and Training Statistics

NEETs are also more likely to be female than male (CO 3.5.C). In almost all OECD countries, NEET rates are higher for women than for men – indeed, the OECD average NEET rate for young women is almost 4 percentage points higher than the rate for young men. Only in Canada, Denmark, Portugal and Switzerland are young men more likely to be NEET than young women, and even then differences are only small. Gender gaps in NEET rates are largest in Mexico and Turkey, where female NEET rates are around 25 percentage points higher than male NEET rates.

Chart CO3.5.C. **Gender differences in NEET rates**
 Proportion of 15-29 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET), by sex, 2018



Note: Data for Chile refer to 2017, for Japan to 2014.

a. See note a to Chart CO3.5.A

b. See note b to Chart CO3.5.A

c. See note c to Chart CO3.5.A

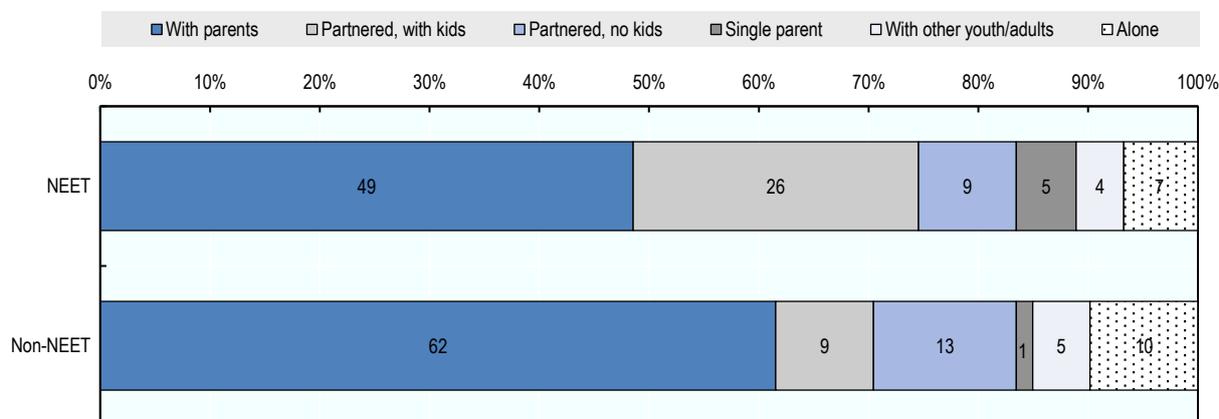
Source: OECD Education at a Glance; for Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Malta and Romania: Eurostat Education and Training Statistics

On average, NEET young people are less likely to live with their parents than non-NEETs (Chart CO3.5.D. Panel A). About half of all NEETs live with their parents, while the figure for non-NEET youth is almost two-thirds. The latter include students, however, who may be more likely to live in the parental home. A substantial proportion of NEETs, 26%, live with a partner and at least one child compared to just 9% of non-NEET youth. This may be an important factor in not being in employment nor education (OECD, 2016).

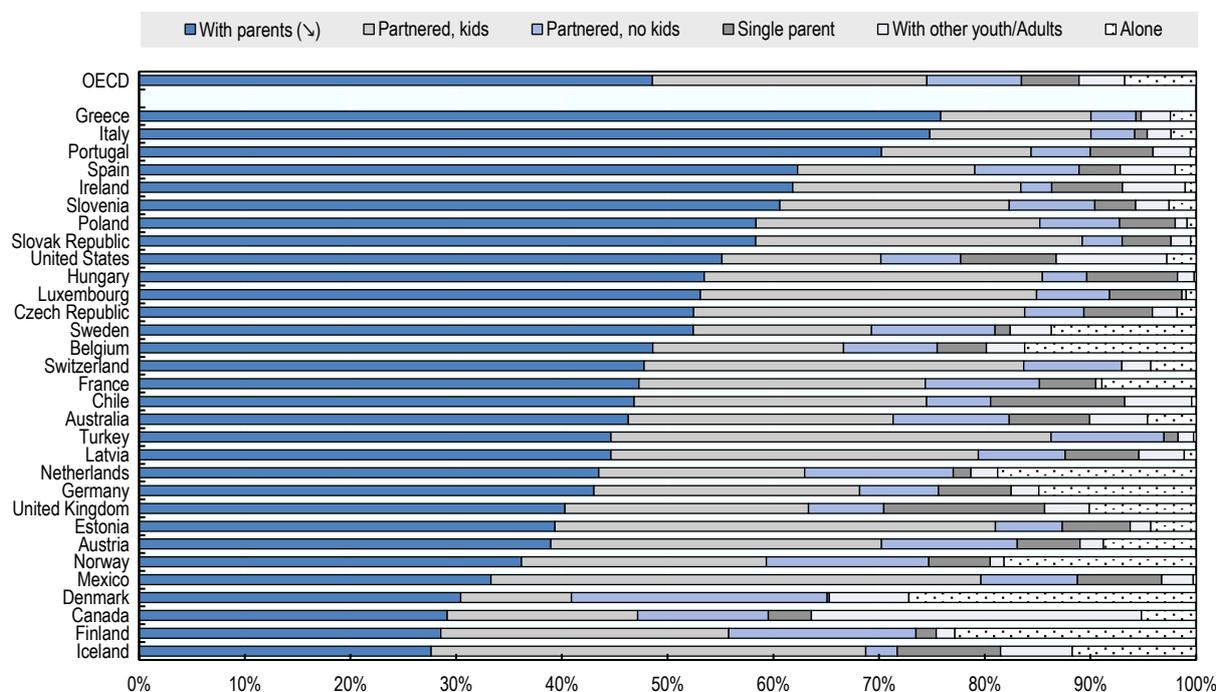
Some single young people living with children may have no choice other than inactivity. Single parenthood among NEETs is five times higher than for non-NEET youth – 5% versus 1%. The single parent rate among NEETs is highest in the United Kingdom, where 15% of NEETs are single parents (Chart CO3.5.D. Panel B). They may choose to stay at home to take care of their children rather than seek employment. They might well find it harder to organise childcare than couples who can co-ordinate their work hours and have wider extended families to help them. And, of course, they may well struggle to afford childcare. In addition, many countries run minimum-income support programmes for single parents with young children on very low incomes. Such schemes often have little or no activity requirements at all.

Chart CO3.5.D. **Living arrangements of young people**

Panel A. Living arrangements of NEETs and non-NEETs, aged 16 to 29, OECD average percentages, 2014



Panel B. Living arrangements of NEETs, aged 16 to 29, by country, 2014



Note: In Panel B, countries are sorted, from top to bottom, in descending order of the share of NEETs living with their parents. In Panel B “alone” denotes a young person living on their own; “with other youth/adults” denotes a young person living with at least one other young person or adult over 30 who is not their partner (and possibly with children); “single parent” means that the young person lives with at least one dependent child and no partner; “partnered, no kids” indicates that the young person lives with a spouse/partner but no children; “partnered, kids” indicates that the young person lives with a spouse/partner and at least one child; “with parents” indicates that the young person lives in the same household as their parent(s). It was only possible to identify lone parents or couples with children in Canada if they were not living with others, e.g. their own parents or sharing with other adults. The single parent rate and rate of NEETs living with their partners and children may therefore be underestimated. Data for Chile and Switzerland relate to 2013, data for Turkey relate to 2012 and for Canada to 2011.

Source: [OECD \(2016\), Society at a Glance 2016: OECD Social Indicators](#)

Comparability and data issues

Cross-country comparisons of NEET rates are hampered somewhat by institutional differences. For instance, the length of educational programmes differs between countries, which affects age at graduation from secondary and tertiary levels of education. NEET rates tend to be higher in countries where average graduation ages are lower, at least in part because a smaller proportion of young people are enrolled in education.

Additionally, some OECD countries oblige young men (and some cases, young women) to enter military (or national) service. In some countries, labour force statistics only consider the civilian population so any young persons on military service would not be included in the NEET figures. In others, military personnel living at home are considered part of the labour force but conscripts living in barracks are not, while in certain countries even conscripts are counted as part of the labour force. It is possible that the presence of national service may influence cross-national variations in the proportion of young people neither in education nor employment, although the figures shown above suggest there is no systematic difference in NEET rates between countries with or without national service

Sources and further reading:

OECD (2016) *Society At A Glance 2016: OECD Indicators: A Spotlight on Youth*. <http://www.oecd.org/social/society-at-a-glance-19991290.htm>;

OECD Education Database, <https://www.oecd.org/education/database.htm>;

OECD Education at a Glance 2019, <https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>;

Carcillo, S., Fernández, R., Königs, S. and Minea, A. (2015) *NEET Youth in the Aftermath of the Crisis*, *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, no. 164.