

Statistical bulletin

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: May 2021

Estimates of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who are not in education, employment or training, by age and sex.



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1 . Main points

- The percentage of all young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the UK who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in January to March 2021 was estimated at 10.6%, which is a record low; the proportion was down 1.0 percentage points compared with October to December 2020 and down 0.4 percentage points compared with pre-pandemic estimates in October to December 2019.
- Of all young people in the UK who were NEET in January to March 2021, an estimated 43.9% were looking for and available for work and therefore classified as unemployed; the remainder were either not looking for work and/or not available for work and were classified as economically inactive.
- There were an estimated 728,000 young people in the UK who were NEET in January to March 2021, which is a record low; the number had decreased by 69,000 compared with October to December 2020 and was down 35,000 compared with October to December 2019.
- The estimated number of people who were NEET and economically inactive in January to March 2021 was 408,000, which is a record low.

Subnational NEET estimates are not published by the ONS but can be accessed by following the links in [section 8 of this bulletin](#).

2 . Coronavirus and measuring the labour market

Latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates are based on interviews that took place from January to March 2021. Interviews relate to the period when a number of the government lockdown measures were reintroduced, but there was also some easing of restrictions towards the end of the period.

Because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the suspension of face-to-face interviewing, we had to make operational changes to the LFS, which moved to a "by telephone" approach. More information can be found in [Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey](#).

Labour Force Survey (LFS) responses are weighted to official 2018-based population projections on demographic trends that pre-date the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. In our [Coronavirus and the impact on payroll employment](#) article we analyse the population totals used in the LFS weighting process and state our intention to make adjustments. Rates published from the LFS remain robust; however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution.

An article published on 17 May 2021 describes the [new LFS weighting methodology](#), which will be applied to results from July 2021.

3 . Young people who were not in education, employment or training

In January to March 2021, an estimated 10.6% of all people aged 16 to 24 years were not in education, employment or training (NEET), a record low for the series, which began in October to December 2001. The proportion decreased on the quarter by 1.0 percentage points, and decreased by 0.4 percentage points compared with October to December 2019. An estimated 11.8% of men were NEET, and for women the proportion was a record low of 9.4%.

The percentage of those aged 18 to 24 years who were NEET was a record low of 12.6%, which was down a record 1.2 percentage points on the quarter.

There were an estimated 728,000 young people in the UK who were NEET, which is the lowest since records began. This was down on the previous quarter by 69,000 and down 35,000 when compared with October to December 2019.

The total number of people aged 18 to 24 years who were NEET was a record low of 679,000.

Of the 728,000 young people who were NEET, 413,000 were men and 315,000 were women (a record low for the series).

Figure 1: The percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) had been decreasing since 2011 but the trend has been relatively flat since 2017

People aged 16 to 24 years and not in education, employment or training (NEET) as a percentage of all young people, seasonally adjusted, UK, January to March 2011 to January to March 2021

Figure 1: The percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) had been decreasing since 2011 but the trend has been relatively flat since 2017

People aged 16 to 24 years and not in education, employment or training (NEET) as a percentage of all young people, seasonally adjusted, UK, January to March 2011 to January to March 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

Unemployed young people who were not in education, employment or training

In January to March 2021, there were an estimated 320,000 unemployed young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), down 33,000 from October to December 2020 but up 18,000 compared with October to December 2019.

Economically inactive young people who were not in education, employment or training

In January to March 2021, there were an estimated 408,000 economically inactive young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), which was a record low. This was down 35,000 from October to December 2020 and down 53,000 compared with October to December 2019. There were 199,000 economically inactive young women who were NEET (a record low), down 15,000 on the quarter.

4 . Young people who were not in education, employment or training data

[Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#)

Dataset | Released 27 May 2021

Quarterly estimates for young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK.

[Sampling variability for estimates of young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#)

Dataset | Released 27 May 2021

Labour Force Survey quarterly sampling variability estimates for young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK.

5 . Glossary

Young people

For this release, young people are defined as those aged 16 to 24 years. Estimates are also produced for the age groups 16 to 17 years and 18 to 24 years by sex, and separately for the age groups 18 to 20 years, 21 to 22 years and 23 to 24 years.

Education and training

People are considered to be in education or training if any of the following apply:

- they are enrolled on an education course and are still attending or waiting for term to start or restart
- they are doing an apprenticeship
- they are on a government-supported employment or training programme
- they are working or studying towards a qualification
- they have had job-related training or education in the last four weeks

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Anybody who is not in any of the forms of education or training listed above and not in employment is considered to be NEET. Consequently, a person identified as NEET will always be either unemployed or economically inactive.

Economic inactivity

People not in the labour force (also known as [economically inactive](#)) are not in employment but do not meet the internationally accepted definition of unemployment because they have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or they are unable to start work in the next two weeks.

Employment

[Employment](#) measures the number of people in paid work, or those who had a job that they were temporarily away from (for example, because they were on holiday or off sick). This differs from the number of jobs because some people have more than one job.

Unemployment

[Unemployment](#) measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work within the next two weeks.

A [more detailed glossary](#) is available.

6 . Measuring the data

This statistical bulletin contains estimates for young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the UK. The bulletin is published quarterly in February or March, May, August and November. All estimates discussed in this statistical bulletin are for the UK and are seasonally adjusted.

Statistics in this bulletin are used to help monitor progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Explore the UK data on our [SDGs reporting platform](#).

An article called [Young people who are NEET](#) providing background information is available. The article explains how missing information for identifying someone as NEET is appropriated based on individual characteristics.

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in the [Labour Force Survey \(LFS\) QMI](#).

The [LFS performance and quality monitoring reports](#) provide data on response rates and other quality-related issues for the LFS.

Coronavirus

For more information on how labour market data sources are affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, see the article published on 6 May 2020, which details [some of the challenges that we have faced in producing estimates](#).

An article published on 11 December 2020 [compares our labour market data sources and discusses some of the main differences](#).

LFS responses are weighted to official 2018-based population projections on demographic trends that pre-date the coronavirus pandemic. In our [Coronavirus and the impact on payroll employment](#) article we analyse the population totals used in the LFS weighting process and state our intention to make adjustments. Rates published from the LFS remain robust; however, levels and changes in levels should be used with caution.

Relationship to other labour market statistics for young people

Our monthly [Labour market statistical bulletin](#) includes the dataset [A06: Educational status and labour market status for people aged from 16 to 24](#). The NEET statistics and the dataset A06 statistics are both derived from the LFS and use the same labour market statuses; however, the educational statuses are derived differently.

For dataset A06, the educational status is based on participation in full-time education only. For NEET statistics, the educational status is based on any form of education or training. Therefore, the dataset A06 category "not in full-time education" includes some people who are in part-time education and/or some form of training and who, consequently, should not be regarded as NEET.

7 . Strengths and limitations

The figures in this bulletin come from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). Results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. As the number of people available in the sample gets smaller, the variability of the estimates that we can make from that sample size gets larger. In general, changes in the numbers and rates reported in this bulletin between three-month periods are small and are not usually greater than can be explained by sampling variability.

[Dataset table NEET 2](#) shows sampling variabilities for estimates of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) derived from the LFS.

8 . Related links

The Office for National Statistics is responsible for not in education, employment or training (NEET) statistics for the UK, published within this release. Estimates of the number of young people who are NEET within the countries of the UK and for subnational areas are the responsibility of the Department for Education, for England, and the devolved administrations for each of the other countries. There is further information on the availability of subnational estimates of young people who are NEET:

[NEET estimates for England](#)

Collection | Last updated 11 March 2021

Young people's participation in education, employment and training and those not in education, employment or training (NEET) from the Department for Education.

[NEET estimates for Scotland](#)

Publication | Last updated 25 August 2020

Annual statistical publication reporting on learning, training and work activity of 16- to 19-year-olds in Scotland.

[NEET estimates for Wales](#)

Statistics and research | Last updated 20 April 2021

Data for young people by age, gender, region and local authority from the Welsh Government.

[NEET estimates for Northern Ireland](#)

Tables | Last updated 18 May 2021

Tables from the Labour Market Report, including Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET)