



BRIEFING PAPER

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NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training

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Summary

790,000 people aged 16-24 were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the second quarter of 2017, 11.1% of all people in this age group. This was down 10,000 on the previous quarter and down 56,000 from the second quarter of 2016.

NEET trends

The proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET remained relatively steady between 2002 and 2008, and at the beginning of 2008 13.4% were NEET. The proportion increased following the 2008 recession and peaked in July-September 2011 when 16.9% of 16-24 year olds were NEET (1.25 million people). Since then the number of people who are NEET has been falling.

NEET unemployment and inactivity

A common misconception is that someone cannot be NEET unless they are unemployed.

This is not the case. Only 41% of the 790,000 young people who were NEET in the second quarter of 2017 were unemployed (325,000). The remaining 59% were economically inactive, which means they were not working, not seeking work and/or not available to start work.

Likewise, not all unemployed people will be NEET.

60% of the 562,000 unemployed 16-24 year-olds in April-June 2017 were not in education or training and were therefore NEET. The remaining 40% were in some form of education or training.

Gender

Women who are NEET are more likely to be economically inactive than men. In the second quarter of 2017, 69% of the women who were NEET were economically inactive. This compares to 49% of the men.

Historically more women than men have been NEET. Over the last year the number of men and women aged 16-24 who were NEET have been at similar levels, and in the last quarter of 2016 slightly more men were NEET than women for the first time since comparable records began. The gap between the number of men and women who were NEET has narrowed over recent years.

The main reason why there has been a fall for women is a significant decrease in the number of women who are inactive because they are looking after their family or their home.

The number of men who are inactive has been rising over the last couple of years mainly due to a large increase in the number of men who were either long term sick or disabled.

NEET by Region

Of the regions within England, in the second quarter of 2017 Yorkshire and Humberside had the highest proportion of young people who were NEET (14.7%) and London had the lowest (9.0%).

International NEET Statistics

The proportion of 15-19 year-olds who are NEET in the UK is above the OECD average, but the UK proportion is below the OECD average for 20-24 year olds.

1. UK NEET Statistics

790,000 people aged 16-24 were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the second quarter of 2017, 11.1% of all people in this age group. This was down 10,000 on the previous quarter and down 56,000 from the second quarter of 2016.¹

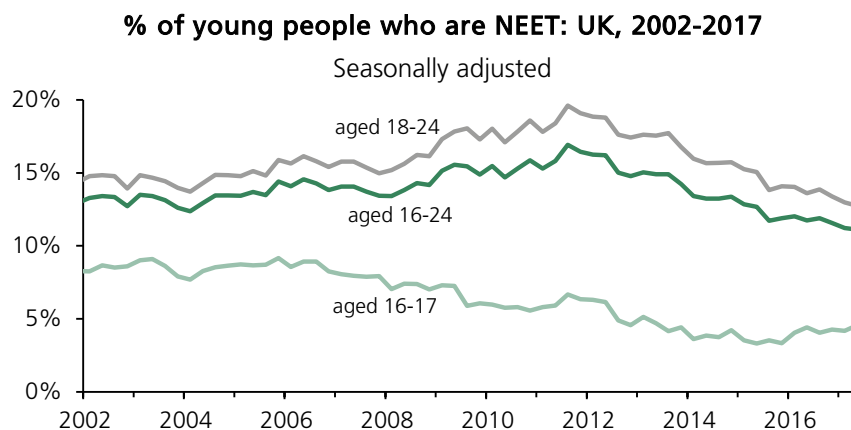
The proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET remained relatively steady between 2002 and 2008, and at the beginning of 2008 13.4% were NEET. The proportion increased following the 2008 recession and peaked in July-September 2011 when 16.9% of 16-24 year olds were NEET (1.25 million people). Since then the number of people who are NEET has been falling.

Of the 7.1 million people aged 16-24 in the second quarter of 2017:

- 3.9 million were in employment (55% of people aged 16-24%).
- 2.2 million were not in employment, but were in full-time education (31%).
- 170,000 were not in employment, but were in part time education (2%).
- 790,000 were not in employment or full-time or part time education (NEET, 11%).

1.1 Trends for different age groups

In April-June 2017, 725,000 18-24 year-olds and 65,000 people aged 16-17 were NEET. This represents 13% of 18-24 year olds and 5% of 16-17 year olds.



The trend for 18-24 year olds mirrors the trend for 16-24 year olds, with increases following the 2008 recession and a downward trend since July-September 2011. 16,000 fewer people aged 18-24 were NEET in April-June 2017 than in January-March 2017, and 57,000 fewer than in April-June 2016.

¹ Data in this section are from ONS, [Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training \(NEET\)](#), May 2017, and ONS, [Labour Market Statistics](#), March 2017, and are seasonally adjusted, unless otherwise stated.

The number of 16-17 year olds who were NEET had generally been decreasing since the mid-2000s until 2016. Since then there have been small increases for this age group. In April-June 2017, there was an increase of 5,000 people from the previous quarter and a small increase from the previous year.

16-17 year olds

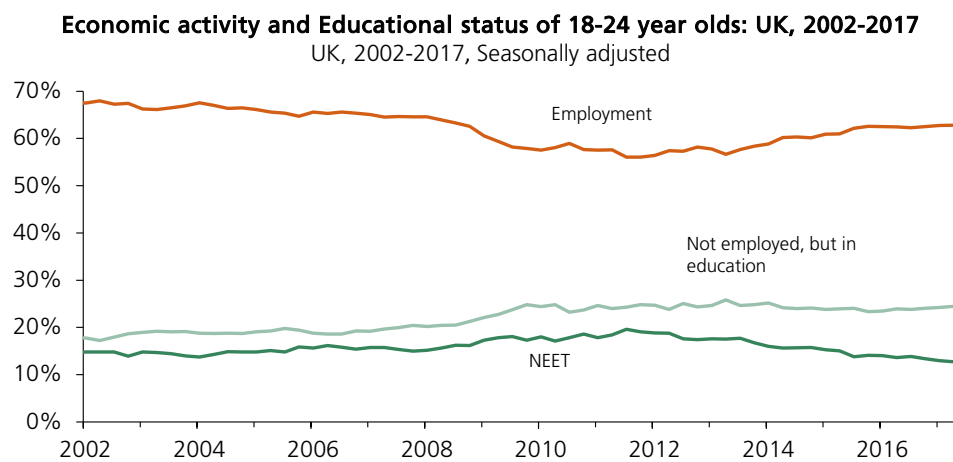
The main reason why the number of 16-17 year-olds who are NEET has dropped is because more young people have stayed in full-time education. 89% of 16-17 year-olds were in full-time education at the end of 2015 compared to 76% a decade previously. This increase was mainly due to less people in this age group going into employment, but also partly due to a reduction in those who were NEET. In the latest quarter, 88% of 16-17 year-olds were in full-time education.

18-24 year olds

The trend for 18-24 year olds is primarily due to changes in the number of people of this age who have been in employment.

Between January-March 2007 and July-September 2011 the number of 18-24 year olds in employment fell, with the employment rate for this age group falling from 65% to 56%. Over the same period the number of 18-24 year olds who were not in employment but were in education increased, but by a smaller amount (from 19% to 24%). Therefore the number of people who were either employed or in education fell, and the number of people who were NEET increased.

Since July-September 2011 there have been steady increases in the number of 18-24 year olds in employment with the employment rate increasing to 63% in April-June 2017. Over the same period the number of 18-24 year olds who were not in employment but were in education remained relatively steady. Therefore the number of people who were either employed or in education increased, and the number of people who were NEET fell.

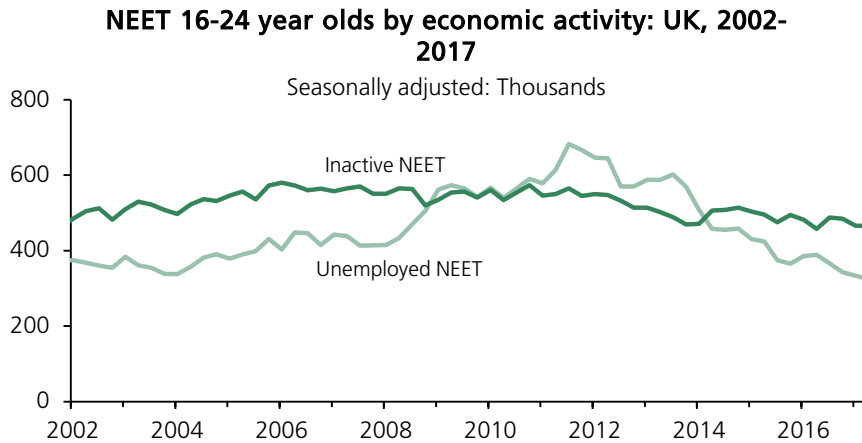


1.2 NEET unemployment and inactivity

A common misconception is that someone cannot be NEET unless they are unemployed.

6 NEET: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training

This is not the case. Only 41% of the 790,000 young people who were NEET in the second quarter of 2017 were unemployed (325,000). The remaining 59% were economically inactive, which means they were not working, not seeking work and/or not available to start work.



Likewise, not all unemployed people will be NEET.

60% of the 562,000 unemployed 16-24 year-olds in April-June 2017 were not in education or training and were therefore NEET. The remaining 40% were in some form of education or training, and therefore were not NEET:

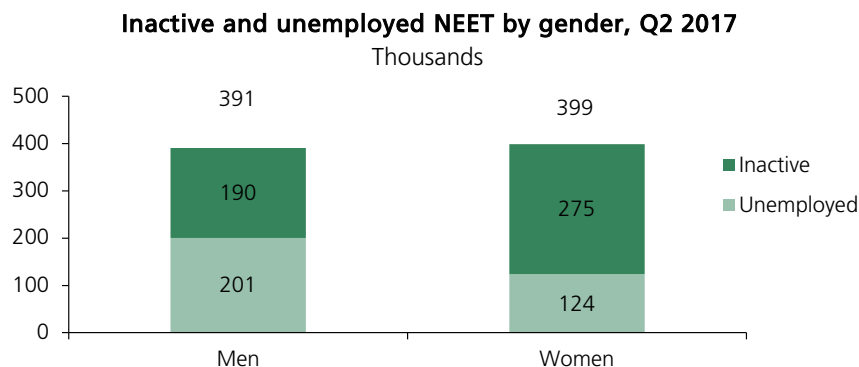
- 186,000 (34%) were in full-time education, but looking for work.
- 34,000 (6%) were in some other form of education or training, but looking for work.

1.3 Gender

In the second quarter of 2017, of the 790,000 people who were NEET, 391,000 were men and 399,000 were women.

Economic Activity

Women who are NEET are more likely to be economically inactive than men. In the second quarter of 2017, 69% of the women who were NEET were economically inactive. This compares to 49% of the men.



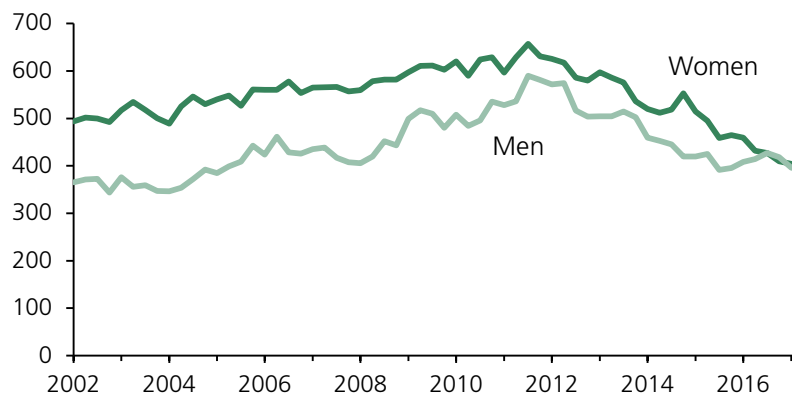
More women are inactive as they are more likely to be looking after family and/or home. In the first quarter of 2017, 34% of women who

were NEET in this quarter were inactive as they were looking after family and/or home, while 2% of men were NEET for the same reason.²

Gender gap

Historically more women than men have been NEET. Over the last year the number of men and women aged 16-24 who were NEET have been at similar levels, and in the last quarter of 2016 slightly more men were NEET than women for the first time since comparable records began. As the chart below shows, the gap between the number of men and women who were NEET has rapidly narrowed over recent years.

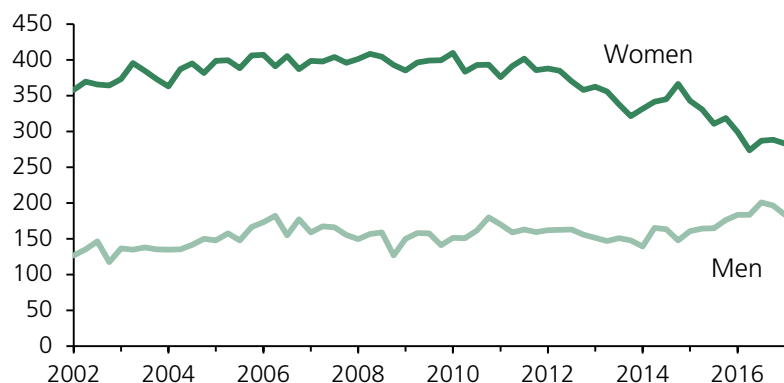
NEETs by gender 2002-2017
Seasonally adjusted: Thousands



Between 2002 and 2010 there were at least 100,000 more women NEETs than men in almost every quarter, and in some quarters the difference was greater than 150,000. Since 2010 the difference has narrowed, although until 2016 there were generally at least 50,000 more women who were NEET than men.

The gap has narrowed because the number of economically inactive women who were NEET has been falling whereas the number of economically inactive men who were NEET has been rising, as shown in the chart below.

Economically inactive NEETs by gender 2002-2017
Seasonally adjusted: Thousands



² ONS Labour Force Survey microdata: Office for National Statistics. Social Survey Division, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. Central Survey Unit. (2017). *Quarterly Labour Force Survey, January - March, 2017*. [data collection]. UK Data Service. SN: 8195, <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-8195-1>

The main reason why there has been a fall for women has been because the number of women who are inactive as they have been either looking after their family or their home has decreased significantly. Across the four quarters of 2012, the average number of women who were inactive for this reason was around 270,000, but in 2016 the average was only 150,000.

The number of men who are economically inactive as they are looking after their family or their home has also fallen over the last few years so this hasn't caused the increase in economic inactivity for men.

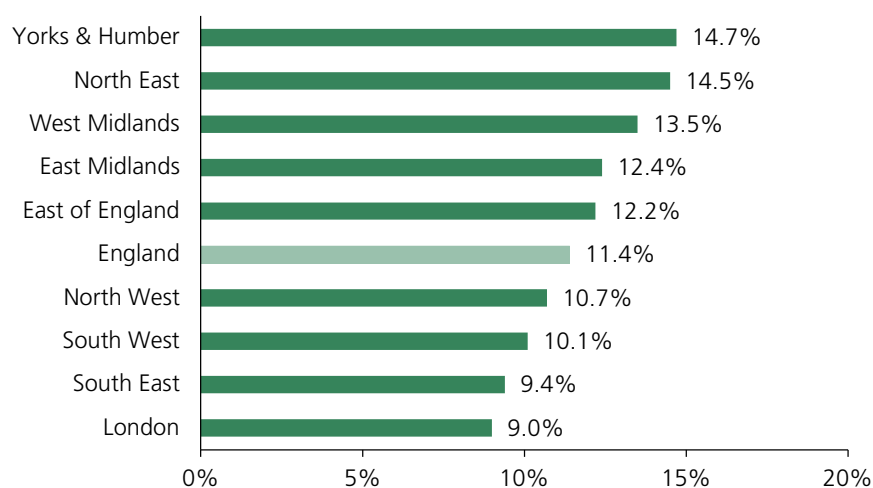
This has increased for a number of reasons, with one reason being a large increase in the number of men who were either long term sick or disabled. Between 2014 and 2016 the average number who were inactive for this reason increased by over 20,000 men, an increase of 37%.

1.4 NEET by Region³

In April-June 2017, 11.4% of 16-24 year-olds in England were NEET (note that this figure is not seasonally adjusted).

Of the regions within England, Yorkshire and Humberside had the highest proportion of young people who were NEET (14.7%) and London had the lowest (9.0%).

16-24 year olds NEET by region, Q2 2017
Not seasonally adjusted



1.5 NEET data sources

The Office for National Statistics publishes NEET estimates for the whole of the UK, but not for individual UK countries. As detailed below, NEET statistics are routinely published for England, Wales and Scotland, but as the definition of NEET varies by country they should not be compared.

- **England:** The Department for Education's [NEET and participation statistics](#) collection includes NEET statistics based on Labour Force

³ Regional figures published in the Department for Education's [Statistics: NEET and participation](#) (last updated June 2017)

Survey data for England and participation figures for young people aged 16 to 18.

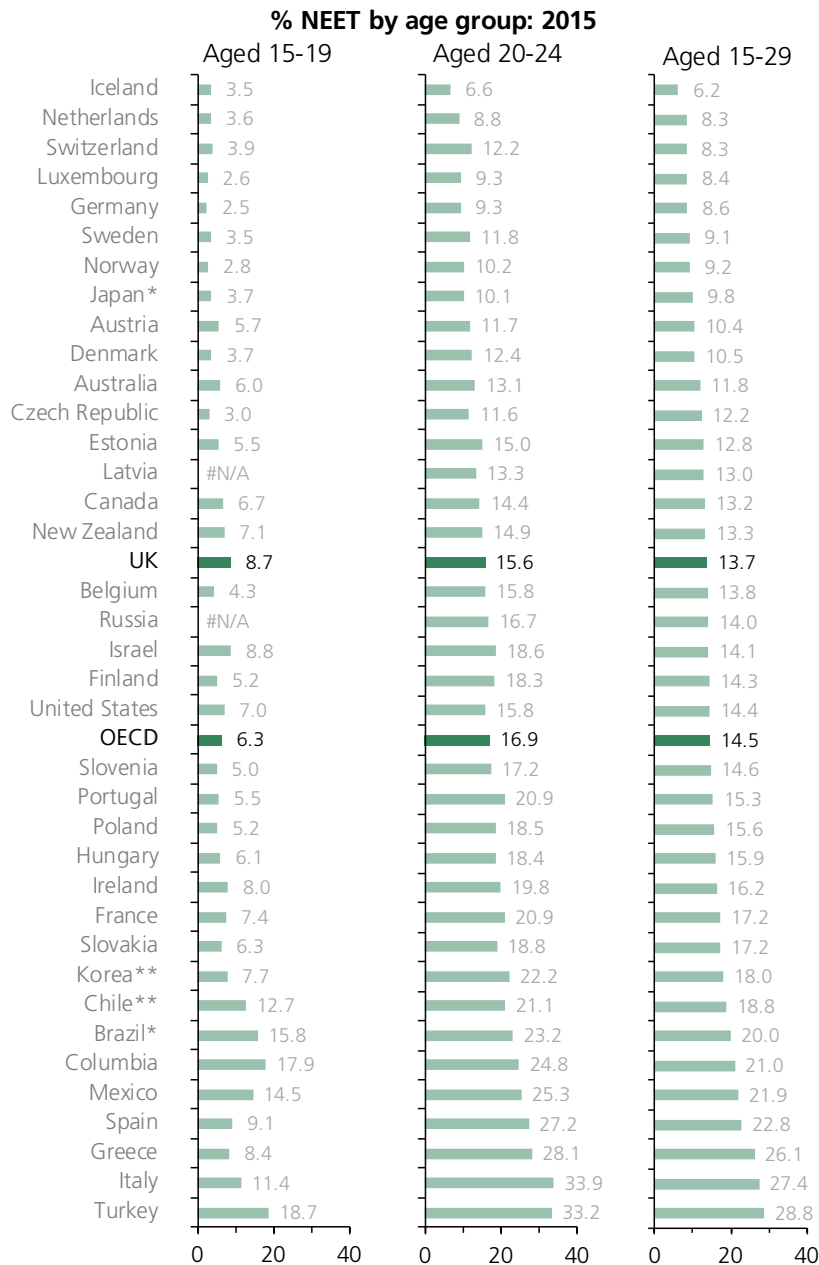
- **Wales:** The Statistical First Release [Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\)](#) provides NEET estimates for Wales.
- **Scotland:** Scottish NEET estimates were published as part of the [Annual Local Area Labour Markets](#) publication up until 2014. The official measure of NEET in Scotland is based on those aged 16-19 and is now released through [Skills Development Scotland Participation Measure](#).
- **Northern Ireland:** The Northern Ireland Assembly does not routinely publish NEET figures. NEET estimates have been produced by adding together the number of economically inactive and unemployed 16-24 years olds.⁴

⁴ NI Assembly briefing paper, [Counting NEETs](#), 29 August 2013

2. International NEET Statistics

The OECD publishes NEET data by age group – though these are not directly comparable with UK national estimates.⁵

The proportion of 15-29 year olds NEET in the UK (13.7%) is below the OECD average (14.5%). However, the proportion for 15-19 year olds in the UK (8.7%) was above the OECD average (6.3%).



* Data for 2014

** Data for 2013

Source: OECD, Youth not in employment

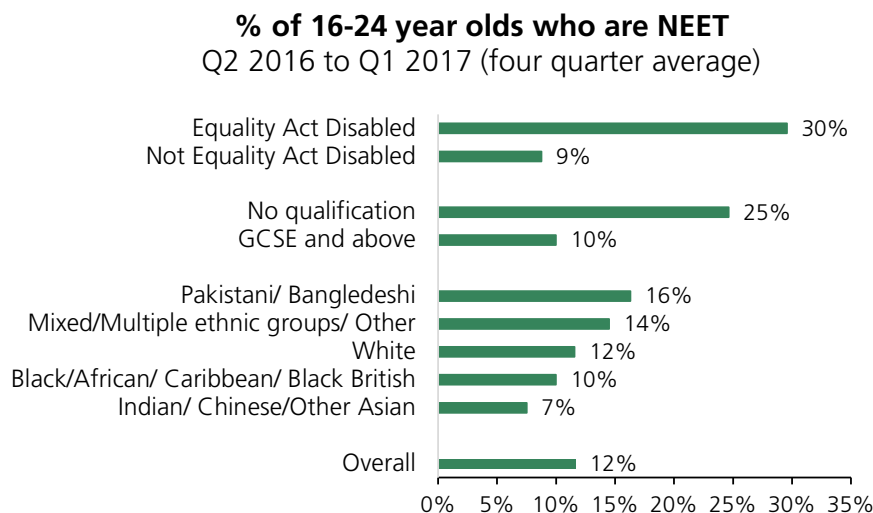
⁵ OECD (2016), Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) (indicator). doi: [10.1787/72d1033a-en](https://doi.org/10.1787/72d1033a-en) (Accessed on 28 July 2017)

3. Characteristics of people who are NEET

3.1 Key characteristics

The chart below shows the key characteristics of people who are NEET using data from the **ONS Labour Force Survey**, over the four quarters to Q1 2017:

- The proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET was higher for those with disabilities (30%) than those without (9%).
- A higher proportion of 16-24 year olds without any qualifications were NEET (25%) than the proportion of those qualified to GCSE level and above (10%).
- By ethnicity, the proportion of 16-24 year olds who were NEET was highest for those from Pakistani/Bangladeshi backgrounds (16%) and lowest for those from Indian/Chinese/Other Asian backgrounds (7%).



Source: ONS Labour Force Survey microdata and House of Commons Library calculations

Notes:

Disability is defined using the Government Statistical Service harmonised standard definition. This covers people reporting (current) physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more, which reduce their ability to carry out day-to-day activities. Those who gave no response have been excluded from the analysis.

GCSE and above includes those with a highest qualification of GCSEs, A-Levels, Higher Education or Degrees.

The **Longitudinal Study of Young People (LSYPE)** in England interviewed a group of young people who were aged 19 at the beginning of the 2009/10 academic year.⁶

Of the people interviewed, 14% were NEET at the time of the survey, 35% had been NEET at some point between the ages of 16 and 19, while 14% had been NEET for a period of at least a year.

⁶ Department for Education, [Youth cohort study and longitudinal study of young people](#), July 2011

The study found that participants with certain characteristics were more likely to be NEET. For each of the following groups, over half were NEET at some point between the ages of 16 and 19, and over a quarter were NEET for at least a year:

- Those with their own child.
- Those who been permanently excluded or suspended from school.
- Those who hadn't achieved 5+ A*-C GCSE grades.
- Those who were eligible for free school meals.

It also found that disabled people were more than twice as likely to have been NEET at the time of the study than those without a disability.

3.2 Risk Factors in becoming NEET

The **Audit Commission** produced a report in July 2010, [Against the odds](#), which examined NEET characteristics, the geographic distribution of NEET people and how government can work effectively to help them. Contained in this report is a table (below) which summarises the increased likelihood of young people becoming NEET associated with certain risk factors.

Increased chances of being NEET

Factor	Increase in chance of being NEET for six months or more
Being NEET at least once before	7.9 times more likely
Pregnancy or parenthood	2.8 times more likely
Supervision by youth offending team	2.6 times more likely
Fewer than three months post-16 education	2.3 times more likely
Disclosed substance abuse	2.1 times more likely
Responsibilities as a carer	2.0 times more likely

Source: Audit Commission, analysis of Connexions data from fieldwork areas (approximately 24,00 people). 2010

The Department for Education funded a [Report on students who are NEET](#) by the **Institute of Education** which was published in September 2014 and which included a section on risk factors. Their conclusions were that:

- The most significant educational risk factor was low educational attainment at GCSE. Reasons cited for low GCSE attainment included a lack of motivation, poor health (physical and mental) and having Special Educational Needs.
- A range of personal risk factors were identified including health problems, caring responsibilities and difficult family circumstances (such as being in care or experiencing a breakdown in relationship with parents).
- Structural risk factors were also identified which included difficult labour market conditions, a lack of training and apprenticeship opportunities and welfare support providing a higher income than potential wages.

4. Policies to reduce the number of people who are NEET

This section outlines the policies that are in place to reduce the number of young people who are NEET.

4.1 Policies to encourage young people to continue in education or training

Statutory duties on local authorities relating to participation

Whilst the Government provides the framework and funding to increase the number of young people participating in education or training, responsibility and accountability lies with local authorities. Local authorities have a statutory duty to “encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training”. They need to ensure there is sufficient education and training provision within their area, and appropriate support for those with special educational needs and disabilities.⁷

The Department for Education monitors the performance of local authorities in delivering these duties, and specifically in their tracking and supporting of 16 and 17 year olds. All 16 and 17 year olds are entitled to an offer of a suitable place in education or training under the ‘September Guarantee’ regardless of what qualifications they had gained when they left school.⁸

Raising the Participation Age

The participation age was raised in 2013 and young people are now required to continue in education or training until at least their 18th birthday. Young people can choose to participate through full-time education, a job or volunteering combined with part time study, or by undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship.⁹

Technical Education Reforms

The 2015-17 Government’s Post-16 Skills Plan, published in July 2016, set out proposed reforms to the technical education system in England which looked to create a more skilled workforce. Under the proposals there will be two education routes from age 16: a technical option and an academic option.¹⁰

The technical option consists of 15 routes across all technical education, with each of these grouping occupations together “to reflect where there are shared training requirements”. Technical qualifications will be

⁷ Department for Education, [Participation of young people in education, employment or training](#), pgs 5-6

⁸ Department for Education, [September Guarantee: education and training for young people](#), January 2017

⁹ Cabinet Office/Department for Education, [Increasing opportunities for young people and helping them to achieve their potential](#), 5 September 2014

¹⁰ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills/Department for Education, [Technical education overhaul unveiled by Skills Minister](#), 8 July 2016

streamlined and standards will be set by employers, and the Institute for Apprenticeships will regulate quality across all technical education.¹¹

Further details on the reforms to technical education can be found in the Library briefing note [Technical Education Reforms](#).

16 to 19 Bursary Fund¹²

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides targeted funding support to help young people aged 16, 17 or 18 with the costs of staying on in post-16 education. This can help with the costs of books, transport, equipment or other education-related costs. The most vulnerable young people receive yearly bursaries of up to £1,200.

Schools, colleges and training providers are also given a discretionary fund, and they decide how this is allocated. Young people over the age of 18 may be eligible for this funding.

4.2 Policies to improve the employability of young people

Youth Engagement Fund

The Youth Engagement Fund was launched in May 2014 with an aim of improving the education outcomes of disadvantaged young people aged 14 to 17, and therefore improve their employability. It is being funded through social impact bonds, with service providers running projects aimed at preventing young people from becoming NEET. The government will only provide funding for successful projects that lead to positive outcomes.¹³

Fair Chance Fund

The Fair Chance Fund was announced in December 2014 and provides sustained housing, employment and educational support for homeless 18 to 24 year olds. This is also funded through social impact bonds, and the government only provides funding if positive outcomes are achieved.¹⁴

New Careers and Enterprise Company

In December 2014 the New Careers and Enterprise Company was created by the Department for Education to provide improved careers education and advice to school pupils aged 12 to 18. The company is employer-led and independent of government.¹⁵

The company set up the Careers and Enterprise Fund which is allocated to organisations who have “a proven understanding of how to increase the number of encounters young people have with employers”. In

¹¹ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills/Department for Education, [Post-16 Skills Plan](#), July 2016

¹² Gov.uk, [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#)

¹³ Cabinet Office, [Youth Engagement Fund: prospectus](#), October 2014

¹⁴ Cabinet Office, Department for Communities and Local Government, [£23 million to help homeless turn around their lives](#), December 2014

¹⁵ Department for Education, [New careers and enterprise company for schools](#), December 2014

2016, £5 million was invested in 50 careers and enterprise programmes.¹⁶

National Careers Service

The National Careers Service provides free careers information advice and guidance online, by phone and face-to-face, and is co-located in Jobcentre Plus offices.¹⁷

Adult Education Budget¹⁸

The Adult Education Budget (AEB) funds:

- a range of 'second chance' further education provision: 19-23 year-olds receive free training to attain their first full qualifications at level 2 (GCSE equivalent) or 3 ('A' level equivalent).
- free training for unemployed people aged 19+ up to and including Level 2, which helps those with few or no qualifications get into work. Jobcentre Plus refers claimants to this training, which includes Traineeships, Licences to Practice, the Prince's Trust's Team programme and a range of other pre-employment support, including Sector-Based Work Academies, which combine AEB-funded training and Jobcentre Plus-arranged work experience and interviews for existing vacancies.
- free English and maths training up to Level 2 for anyone who has not achieved that level.

European Social Fund

The European Social Fund provides funding for projects to increase employment levels, in particular among young people and those struggling to get a job. It focuses on disadvantaged groups, including disabled people, and aims to provide skills training and support to transition from unemployment into work.¹⁹

Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Apprenticeships are paid jobs that incorporate on and off the job training. The Government has committed to reaching 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020, with the aim of ensuring the apprentices gain job specific skills that will improve the chances of them finding long term employment.²⁰

People aged under 24 who are unemployed and have little work experience, but can be prepared for employment or an apprenticeship within six months, are able to start traineeships. Traineeships provide education, training and work experience.²¹

Further information on apprenticeships and traineeships are available in the Commons Briefing Papers, [Apprenticeship Policy](#) and [Traineeships](#).

¹⁶ Careers and Enterprise Company, [Careers and Enterprise Fund](#)

¹⁷ Gov.uk, [National Careers Service](#)

¹⁸ Skills Funding Agency, [Adult education budget funding and performance-management rules](#), July 2016

¹⁹ European Social Fund, [The ESF in the United Kingdom](#)

²⁰ Department for Education, [Apprenticeship reform programme: benefits realisation strategy](#), March 2017, pg 6

²¹ Skills Funding Agency, [Traineeships](#), December 2016

Supported Internships

Young people with learning difficulties and disabilities have access to Supported Internships. These are structured study programmes based primarily at an employer which normally last for a year and include unpaid work of at least six months. Where possible, they will then support the young person to move into employment at the end of the programme.²²

Destination Measures

Destination Measures statistics show, for each school, college and local authority in England, the number of young people going into education, employment or training the year after finishing Key Stage 4 or Key Stage 5. They also show the number of young people who were NEET in this year.²³

Experimental statistics were also published in October 2016 which showed the employment and continued education of adults finishing funded further education between 2011 and 2014. The headline measure of these statistics is the Standard Sustained Positive Destination measure which shows the proportion of all adult learners who progress to a sustained destination into learning or employment (or both) following completion of their FE learning. Comparison of this measure across different providers and qualifications show which courses have led to sustained employment or sustained learning.²⁴

Employer National Insurance Contributions

Employer National Insurance Contributions for those under the age of 21 were abolished in April 2015 (with the exception of those earning more than the Upper Earnings Limit). They were abolished for apprentices aged under 25 on earnings up to the upper earnings limit from April 2016.²⁵

4.3 Jobcentre Plus Support

Jobcentre Plus support for young people in school

In January 2016 the Jobcentre Plus support for schools initiative was launched. As part of this initiative, local Jobcentre Plus advisers offered school pupils aged 12 to 18 advice on the labour market and advice on some of the job options available to them (such as apprenticeships and traineeships). Each school decides on the level of support that they get from the advisors, but this could include work experience schemes or one-to-one advice.²⁶

²² Department for Education, [Supported Internships](#), June 2017

²³ Department for Education, [Destinations of key stage 4 and key stage 5 pupils](#)

²⁴ Department for Education, [Adult further education: outcome-based success measures](#), December 2016

²⁵ HM Revenue and Customs, [Rates and allowances: National Insurance contributions](#), April 2017

²⁶ Department for Work and Pensions, [Jobcentre Plus support rolled out to schools](#), January 2016

Work Coaches

Work Coaches are front-line DWP staff based in Jobcentres who support unemployed people into work by “challenging, motivating, providing personalised advice and using knowledge of local labour markets”.²⁷

They also provide support to those who are working and still claiming Universal Credit (known as ‘in-work claimants’) with the aim of encouraging these claimants to increase their earnings through taking on extra work or gaining higher wages.²⁸

Work Experience and volunteering

The Government has a number of schemes involving work experience placements as part of its wider welfare-to-work policies. These will be set up by a Jobcentre Plus work coach.²⁹

Work Experience, the largest of these programmes, is targeted at young people who are getting Jobseeker’s Allowance and are aged between 16 and 24. The placements will last between two and eight weeks.

Work Trials give someone on Jobseeker’s Allowance the opportunity to try a job for up to 30 working days, and they may be offered the job at the end of the trial.

Work Together provides an opportunity for someone who is seeking work to volunteer with a local organisation.

Welfare to Work Programmes

Support to help unemployed people find a job has been provided through the Work Programme although referrals to the scheme ended at the end of March 2017. It will be provided through the Work and Health Programme after it is launched at some point between November 2017 and March 2018.

The Work Programme was run by providers who introduced and implemented their own ideas and schemes to help unemployed participants find work. Providers are paid if participants spend a sustained amount of time in employment.

Unemployed individuals were referred onto the programme by their local Jobcentre Plus after they had been receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for a minimum amount of time. JSA claimants aged 18-24 were referred after nine months unless they faced significant disadvantage. However 18 year old NEET JSA claimants were referred after only three months.³⁰

The Work and Health Programme will target people who with specialist support are likely to be able to find work within 12 months. It takes the place of both the Work Programme (see below) and Work Choice (a voluntary support programme for people who are disabled), although

²⁷ Work and Pensions Committee, [A personalised in-work service](#), 6 May 2016

²⁸ Work and Pensions Committee, [In-work progression: potentially greatest welfare reform in decades](#), 11 May 2016

²⁹ Gov.uk, [Help with moving from benefits to work](#)

³⁰ Department for Work and Pensions, [Work Programme Claimant Groups](#), July 2017

many jobseekers who would previously have been supported by the Work Programme will now receive support directly through Jobcentre Plus rather than the Work and Health Programme.

Further information on these programmes is available in the Briefing Papers, [Work Programme](#) and [Work and Health Programme](#).

Youth Obligation

In April 2017 Youth Obligation was introduced in Universal Credit [full service](#) areas. Through this scheme, intensive support is provided for those 18 to 21 year olds who are expected to be looking for work within 6 months of making a Universal Credit claim. After 6 months they are expected to apply for an apprenticeship, traineeship, gain work-based skills or take up a work placement.³¹

New Enterprise Allowance

The New Enterprise Allowance scheme provides money and support to help JSA or ESA claimants start or expand their own business. If someone has a business idea and is accepted onto the scheme, then they will get a business mentor and a weekly allowance for up to 26 weeks. They can also apply for a loan to help with start-up costs.³²

Further details on the reforms to technical education can be found in the Library briefing note [New Enterprise Allowance](#).

³¹ Department for Work and Pensions, [DWP single departmental plan: 2015 to 2020](#), April 2017

³² Gov.uk, [New Enterprise Allowance](#)

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