

Statistical bulletin

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), UK: November 2020

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

- There were an estimated 757,000 young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the UK who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in July to September 2020; this was a record low, decreasing by 43,000 compared with July to September 2019 and down by 12,000 compared with April to June 2020.
- The percentage of all young people in the UK who were NEET in July to September 2020 was estimated at 11.0%; the proportion was down by 0.6 percentage points compared with July to September 2019 and down by 0.2 percentage points compared with April to June 2020.
- There was a record quarterly increase in the total number of unemployed men aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET, up by 53,000 compared with April to June 2020.
- Of all young people in the UK who were NEET in July to September 2020, an estimated 45.5% 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.
- The proportion of NEETs who were unemployed has risen from 39.6% in July to September 2019.

2 . Coronavirus and measuring the labour market

The latest Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates are based on interviews that took place from the start of July to the end of September 2020. Interviews during July, August and September relate to the period when a number of the government lockdown measures aimed at restricting the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) started to be eased.

Because of COVID-19 and the suspension of face-to-face interviewing on 17 March, we had to make operational changes to the LFS, particularly in the way that we contact households for initial interview, which moved to a “by telephone” approach. These changes resulted in a response where certain characteristics have not been as well represented as previously. This is evidenced in a change in the balance of type of household that we are reaching. In particular, the proportion of households where people own their homes in the sample has increased and rented accommodation households has decreased.

To mitigate the impact of this non-response bias, in October 2020 we introduced housing tenure into the LFS weighting methodology for periods from January to March 2020 onwards. While not providing a perfect solution, this redressed some of the issues that had previously been noted in the survey results. More information can be found in [Coronavirus and its impact on the Labour Force Survey](#) and in a [blog](#).

The change in weighting methodology has resulted in revisions to these not in education, employment or training (NEET) estimates for the periods January to March 2020 and April to June 2020.

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

There were an estimated 757,000 young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the UK who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) in July to September 2020. This was the lowest level since records began in 2001. This is partially because there has been a large increase in the proportion of [young people in full-time education](#) in recent quarters. The total number of NEETs was down by 43,000 when compared with July to September 2019 and down by 12,000 on the quarter.

The total number of people aged 18 to 24 years who were NEET was 711,000.

Of the 757,000 people aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET in July to September 2020, 424,000 were men and 333,000 were women (a record low).

In July to September 2020, an estimated 11.0% of all people aged 16 to 24 years were NEET. The proportion was down by 0.6 percentage points from July to September 2019 and decreased on the quarter by 0.2 percentage points. An estimated 12.1% of men aged 16 to 24 years were NEET, and for women the proportion was at a record low of 9.9%.

The percentage of those aged 18 to 24 years who were NEET was 13.1%.

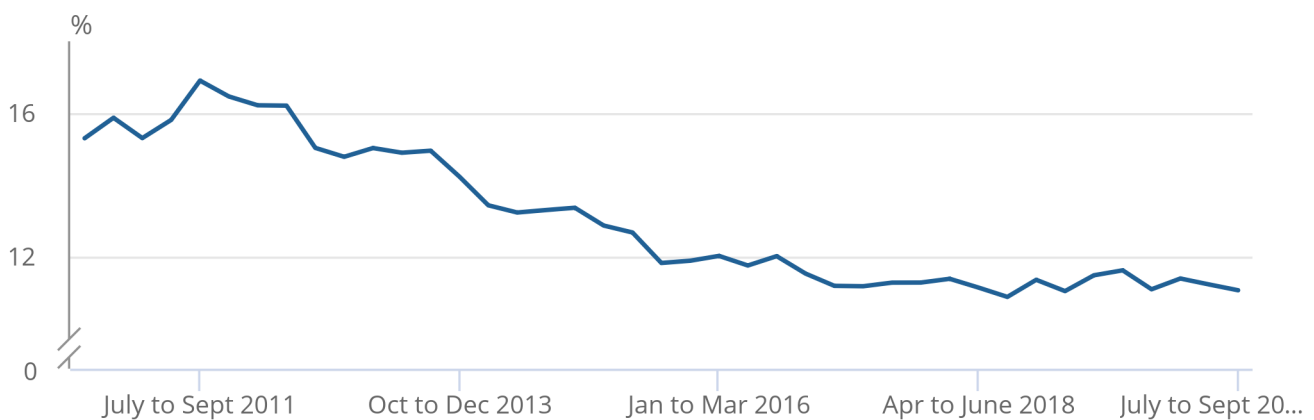
Figure 1 shows the percentage of people aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET over the last 10 years. The percentage had been gradually decreasing since the peak of 16.9% in July to September 2011 but has been relatively flat since the beginning of 2017, averaging 11.2%.

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

People aged 16 to 24 years NEET as a percentage of all people aged 16 to 24 years, seasonally adjusted, UK, July to September 2010 to July to September 2020

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

People aged 16 to 24 years NEET as a percentage of all people aged 16 to 24 years, seasonally adjusted, UK, July to September 2010 to July to September 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics – Labour Force Survey

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

Unemployment measures people without a job who have been actively seeking work within the last four weeks and are available to start work in the next two weeks. In July to September 2020, there were an estimated 344,000 unemployed young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET), up by 27,000 from July to September 2019 and up by 46,000 from April to June 2020.

In July to September 2020, there were an estimated 232,000 unemployed men aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET, up by a record 53,000 on the quarter, and 112,000 unemployed women aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET, down by 7,000 on the quarter.

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

Economic inactivity measures people not in employment who have not been seeking work within the last four weeks and/or are unable to start work within the next two weeks. In July to September 2020, there were an estimated 413,000 economically inactive young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). This was a record low, down by a record 70,000 from July to September 2019 and down by a record 58,000 from April to June 2020.

In July to September 2020, there were an estimated 192,000 economically inactive men aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET, down by a record 33,000 on the quarter, and 221,000 economically inactive women aged 16 to 24 years who were NEET, down by 26,000 on the quarter, a record low.

6 . Young people not in education, employment or training data

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

Dataset | Released 19 November 2020

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](#)

Dataset | Released 19 November 2020

Labour Force Survey (LFS) sampling quarterly variability estimates for young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who are NEET in the UK.

7 . 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 before and not in employment is considered to be not in education, employment or training (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 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.

8 . Measuring the data

This statistical bulletin contains estimates for young people 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 \(PDF, 88.6KB\)](#) providing background information is available. The article explains how missing information for identifying someone as NEET is appropriated based on individual characteristics.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is responsible for 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 at the web pages in [Section 10: Related links](#).

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.

Our latest data and analysis on the impact of the coronavirus on the UK economy and population are available on our dedicated [coronavirus web page](#). This is the hub for all special coronavirus-related publications, drawing on all available data. In response to the developing coronavirus pandemic, we are working to ensure that we continue to publish economic statistics. For more information, please see [COVID-19 and the production of statistics](#).

Impact of the coronavirus on data collection

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) design is based on interviewing households over five consecutive quarters. Generally, the first of these interviews, called wave 1, takes place face-to-face, with most subsequent interviews, for waves 2 to 5, conducted by telephone.

During March, we stopped conducting face-to-face interviews, instead switching to using telephone interviewing exclusively for all waves. This initially caused a significant drop in response.

New measures have been introduced to improve this, which have increased sample sizes during April, May and June, although they are still below normal LFS sample sizes.

Impact of the coronavirus on survey weighting methodology

Because of the impact on data collection, different weeks throughout the quarter have different achieved sample sizes. To mitigate this impact on estimates, the weighting methodology was enhanced to include weekly calibration to ensure that samples from each week had roughly equal representation within the overall three-month estimate. This meant that any impacts seen from changes in the labour market in those weeks would be fully represented within the estimates. For more information, see [Section 2: Coronavirus and measuring the labour market](#).

Impact of government measures to protect businesses on the Labour Force Survey estimates

During late March, the government announced a number of measures to protect UK businesses. This included the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), also referred to as furloughing, and the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS).

The ONS classifies people within the labour market in line with International Labour Organization (ILO) definitions. Under the ILO definition, employment includes employed persons “at work” (that is, who worked in a job for at least one hour) and employed persons “not in work” because of temporary absence from a job or working time arrangements.

Under the current schemes, it is likely that workers would expect to return to that job and would consider the absence from work as temporary. Therefore, those people absent from work under the current schemes would generally be classified as employed under ILO definitions.

Relationship to other labour market statistics for young people

Our monthly [Labour market overview statistical bulletin](#) includes the dataset [A06: Educational status and labour market status for people aged from 16 to 24 \(not seasonally adjusted\)](#). 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, as listed previously. 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.

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

Further information about the LFS is available from:

- [LFS – user guidance](#)
- [LFS performance and quality monitoring reports](#)

After EU withdrawal

As the UK leaves the EU, it is important that our statistics continue to be of high quality and are internationally comparable. During the transition period, those UK statistics that align with EU practice and rules will continue to do so in the same way as before 31 January 2020.

After the transition period, we will continue to produce our labour market statistics in line with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Statistics and in accordance with ILO definitions and agreed international statistical guidance.

9 . Strengths and limitations

Accuracy of the statistics: estimating and reporting uncertainty

The figures in this statistical bulletin come from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), a survey of UK households. Surveys gather information from a sample rather than from the whole population. The sample is designed carefully to allow for this and to be as accurate as possible given practical limitations such as time and cost constraints, but results from sample surveys are always estimates, not precise figures. This means that they are subject to some [uncertainty](#). This can have an impact on how changes in the estimates should be interpreted, especially for short-term comparisons.

We can calculate the level of uncertainty (also called “sampling variability”) around a survey estimate by exploring how that estimate would change if we were to draw many survey samples for the same time period instead of just one. This allows us to define a range around the estimate (known as a [confidence interval](#)) and to state how likely it is in practice that the real value the survey is trying to measure lies within that range. Confidence intervals are typically set up so that we can be 95% sure that the true value lies within the range – in which case, we refer to a “95% confidence interval”.

The total number of people not in education, employment or training (NEET) aged 16 to 24 years for July to September 2020 was estimated at 757,000. This figure had a stated 95% confidence interval of plus or minus 66,000. This means that we can be 95% confident that the true total number of people NEET aged 16 to 24 years for July to September 2020 was between 691,000 and 823,000. However, the best estimate from the survey was that the total number of people NEET aged 16 to 24 years was 757,000.

The percentage of people NEET aged 16 to 24 years for the same period was estimated at 11.0%, with a stated 95% confidence interval of plus or minus 1.0 percentage points. This means that we can be 95% confident that the percentage of people NEET was between 10.0% and 12.0%. Again, the best estimate from the survey was that the percentage of people NEET aged 16 to 24 years was 11.0%.

Working with uncertain estimates

In general, changes in the numbers (and especially the rates) reported in this statistical bulletin between three-month periods are small and are not usually greater than the level that is explainable by sampling variability. In practice, this means that small, short-term movements in reported rates (for example, within plus or minus 0.3 percentage points) should be treated as indicative and considered alongside medium- and long-term patterns in the series and corresponding movements in administrative sources, where available, to give a fuller picture.

Seasonal adjustment and uncertainty

Like many economic indicators, the labour market is affected by factors that tend to occur at around the same time every year; for example, school leavers entering the labour market in July and whether Easter falls in March or April. To compare movements other than annual changes in labour market statistics, such as since the previous quarter or since the previous month, the data are seasonally adjusted to remove the effects of seasonal factors and the arrangement of the calendar. Estimates discussed in this statistical bulletin are presented seasonally adjusted. While seasonal adjustment is essential to allow for robust comparisons through time, it is not possible to estimate uncertainty measures for the seasonally adjusted series.

[Dataset table NEET 2](#) shows sampling variabilities for estimates of young people who are NEET derived from the LFS.

10 . Related links

[NEET estimates for England](#)

Collection | Last updated 25 June 2020

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 October 2020

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

[NEET estimates for Northern Ireland](#)

Tables | Last updated 10 November 2020

Tables from the labour market report, including NEET.