

THE FORGOTTEN NEETS

Reaching young people outside the labor market
Evidence for the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

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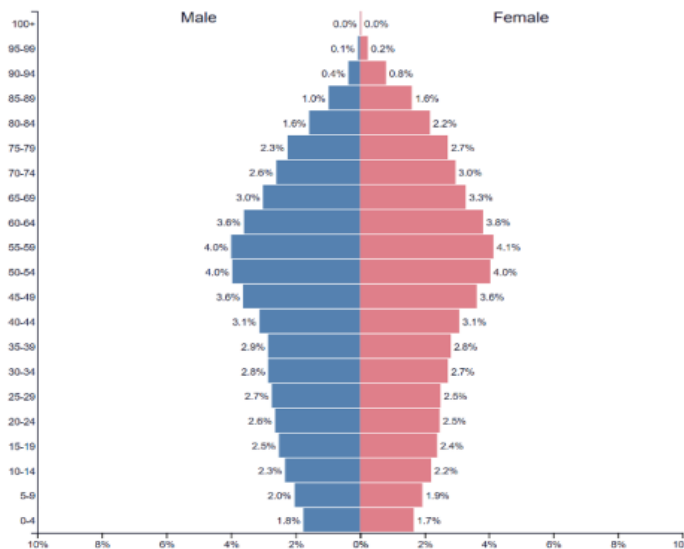
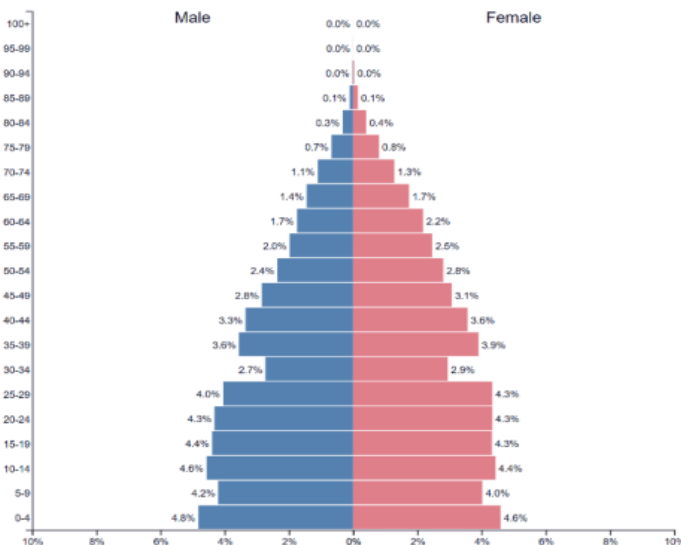
A demographic, not just a social, urgency

Italy ▼
1950

Population: 46,391,673

Italy ▼
2024

Population: 59,342,867



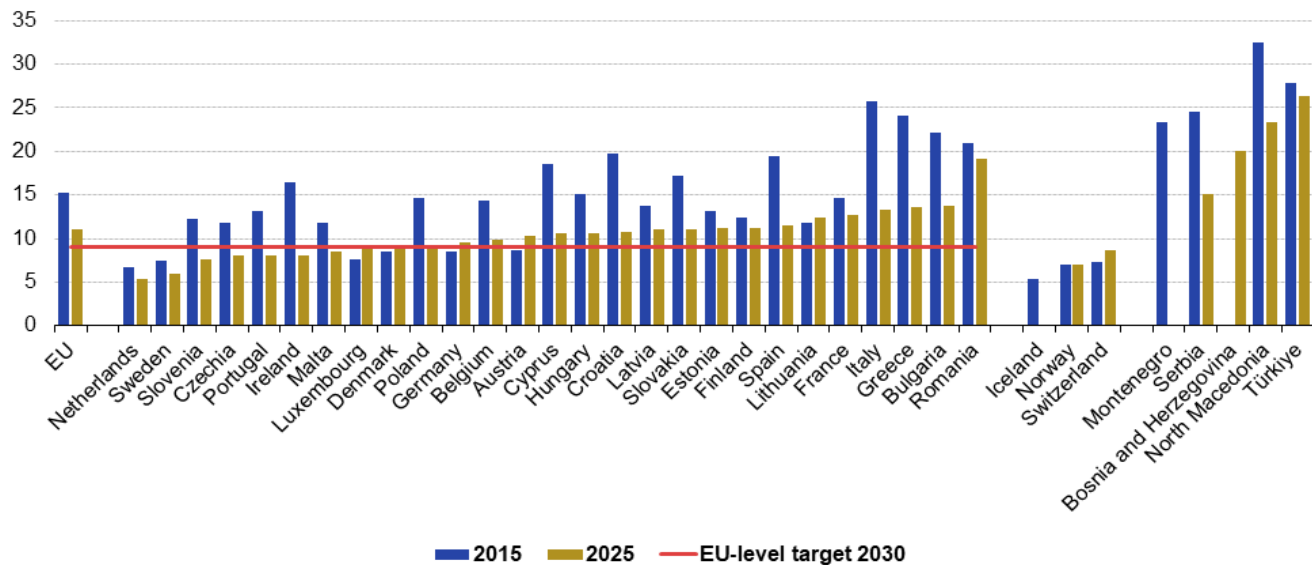
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We cannot keep wasting as a precious resource as young people

Focus on NEETs

Young people (aged 15-29) neither in employment nor in education and training, 2015 and 2025
(%)



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A well-known urgency in the EU

Focus on NEETS

- **Youth Guarantee (2014-2021)**
- **Reinforced Youth Guarantee (2020-)**
- **Anti-poverty-strategy**



Supporting young people to thrive

Today, young people in the EU face a significantly higher risk of poverty or social exclusion. In 2025, 24% of young people under 29 years old were at risk of poverty and social exclusion, 3 percentage points higher than the total population. This is driven largely by youth unemployment, early school leaving and disengagement from education or the labour market.

Key challenges facing vulnerable young people concern mostly their transition between education or training and employment and access to key services. Young people face increasingly complex challenges in a rapidly evolving labour market, including a higher exposure to short-term contracts and unpaid traineeships, among others. The Youth Guarantee ⁽¹⁰⁾ aims to ensure that all young people under 29 years receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education. Since its creation in 2013, it has helped more than 63 million young Europeans.

Looking ahead, the Commission will work with Member States to reinforce the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, particularly by intensifying outreach to young people in need, namely in areas with high unemployment rates. In this regard, it is important to establish and support **adequate, safe and inclusive out-of-school spaces at the local level**, which may serve as hubs providing comprehensive, coordinated advice and mentoring to young people, as well as ensuring an integrated approach and stronger links with other services.



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Who are NEETs though?

A person aged 15–29 who has no job and took part in neither formal nor non-formal education or training in the preceding four weeks.

Actively looking for work

Unemployed graduate seeking a first job

Worker searching after job loss

Outside active job search

Discouraged after repeated rejection

Caring for a child or relative

Illness, disability or mental distress



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A common label hides different constraints and calls for different support.

Our study: combine 3 datasets answer different questions

Istat Labour Force Survey

12-month longitudinal panels;
young people aged 15–29.

**Who moves between work,
education, active NEET and
inactive NEET?**

Istituto Toniolo panel

2015–16; 6,172 respondents
followed up from 9,358 at
baseline.

**Do prior distress and a new
child predict later labour
market status?**

INAPP PLUS survey

2016; 11,891 under 30,
including 3,252 NEETs.

**Who registers for Garanzia
Giovani and who receives
an offer?**



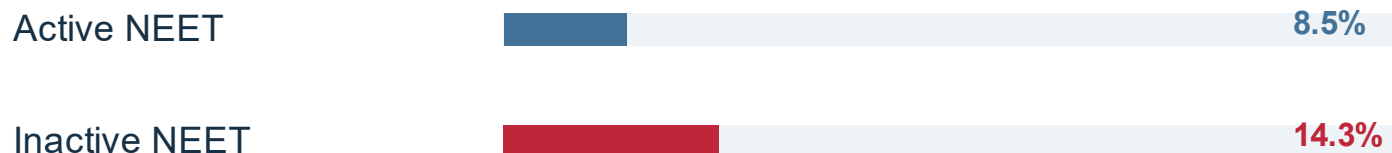
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Focused on the years 2014-2019, when Italy had the highest NEET rates in the EU

Most NEETs in the Italy sample were inactive

Share of all young people, %



Group	Young people (000s)	Women (%)
Active NEET	740	43.6
Inactive NEET	1,240	58.5



Inactive NEETs are most likely to not change status

Group	All genders	Men	Women
Active NEET	35%	36%	33%
Inactive NEET	57%	46%	65%

Group	North	Center	South
Active NEET	29%	21%	42%
Inactive NEET	52%	49%	62%



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Mental health issues increase inactive NEET switch

	All	Male	Female
	(1)	(2)	(3)
VARIABLES	Neet in 2016	Neet in 2016	Neet in 2016
Depressed	0.0570*** (0.0206)	0.0867*** (0.0319)	0.0278* (0.0161)
Observations	2,635	1,076	1,557
R-squared	0.059	0.101	0.111
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES
Family controls	YES	YES	YES
Dwelling controls	YES	YES	YES
Region FE	YES	YES	YES

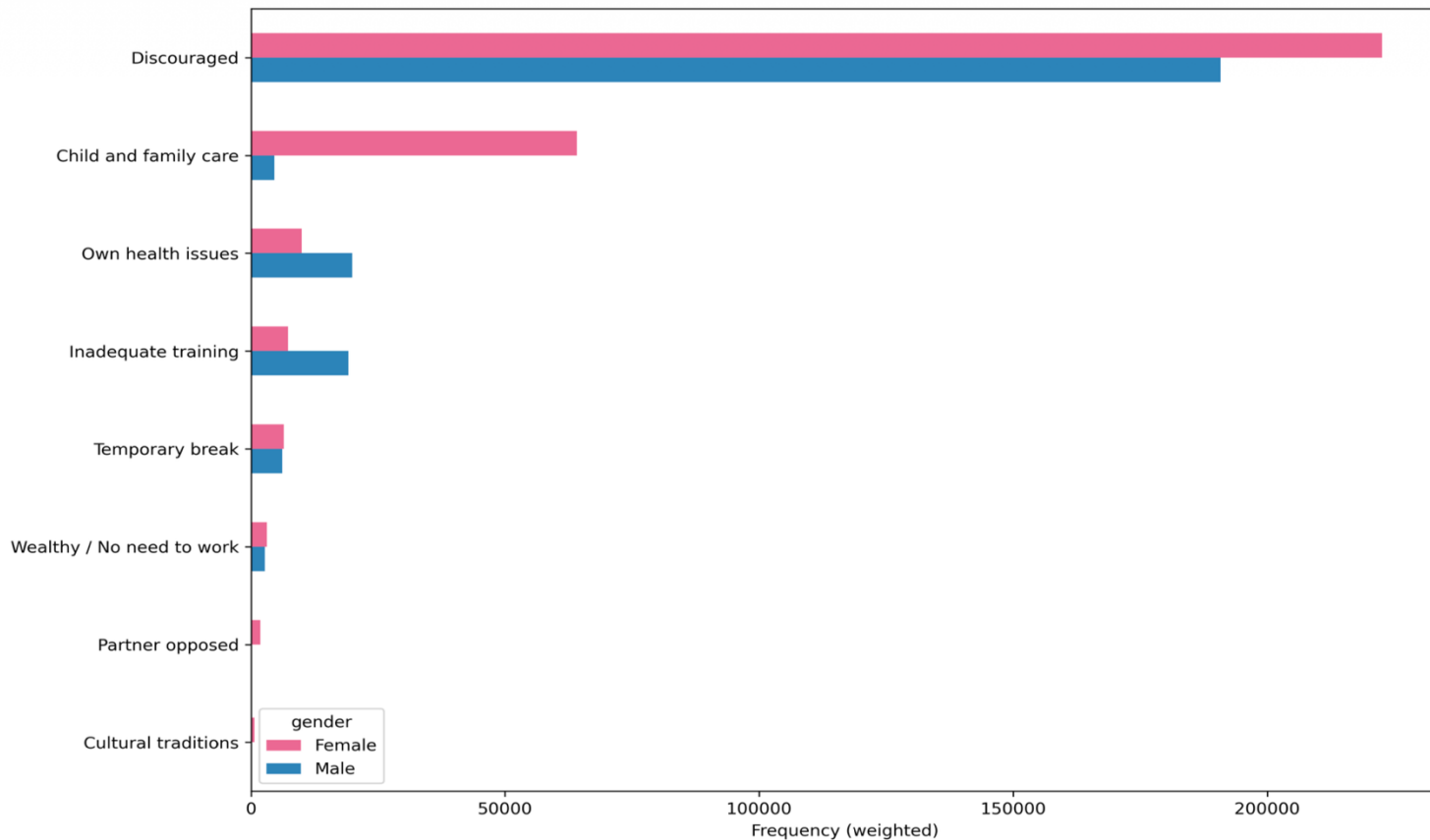


Having a newborn increases NEET probability (for women)

	All	Male	Female
	(1)	(2)	(3)
VARIABLES	Inactive in 2016	Inactive in 2016	Inactive in 2016
Newborn in 2016	0.0609** (0.0282)	0.0166 (0.0208)	0.0920** (0.0424)
Observations	5,576	2,052	3,523
R-squared	0.129	0.037	0.199
Demographic controls	YES	YES	YES
Family controls	YES	YES	YES
Dwelling controls	YES	YES	YES
Baseline NEET status	YES	YES	YES
Region FE	YES	YES	YES



PLUS: why respondents report not working



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Garanzia Giovani reached fewer inactive NEETs

Probability of receiving a Garanzia Giovani offer

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Young children	-0.039* (0.023)	-0.041* (0.023)		
Mental health distress			-0.159*** (0.052)	-0.175*** (0.052)
Controls & FE	No	Yes	No	Yes
Intercept	0.037 (0.029)	0.036 (0.029)	0.086*** (0.008)	0.084*** (0.012)
R-squared	0.002	0.019	0.003	0.019
R-squared Adj.	0.000	0.011	0.003	0.013
F-statistic	1.370	2.488	9.458	3.069
No. Observations	2957	2957	3252	3252



Youth Guarantee offers often overlook barriers

Types of offer received



This does not address:

Young children: -4.1 points

Predicted distress: -17.5 points

Service packages without care and mental health support hardly result in job offers.



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What to fund, monitor and evaluate

Delivery	Measure that matters
Find inactive youth	Contacts and enrolment by activity status, sex and region
Understand reason for inactivity	Proactively find those most distant and pinpoint NEET reason
Address participation barriers	E.g. childcare support, mental health referral and offer receipt
Test the bundle	Pilots with credible comparison groups and cost measures



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Paper, pp. 8–9, 23–24; European Commission, EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (2026).

Thank you!



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