

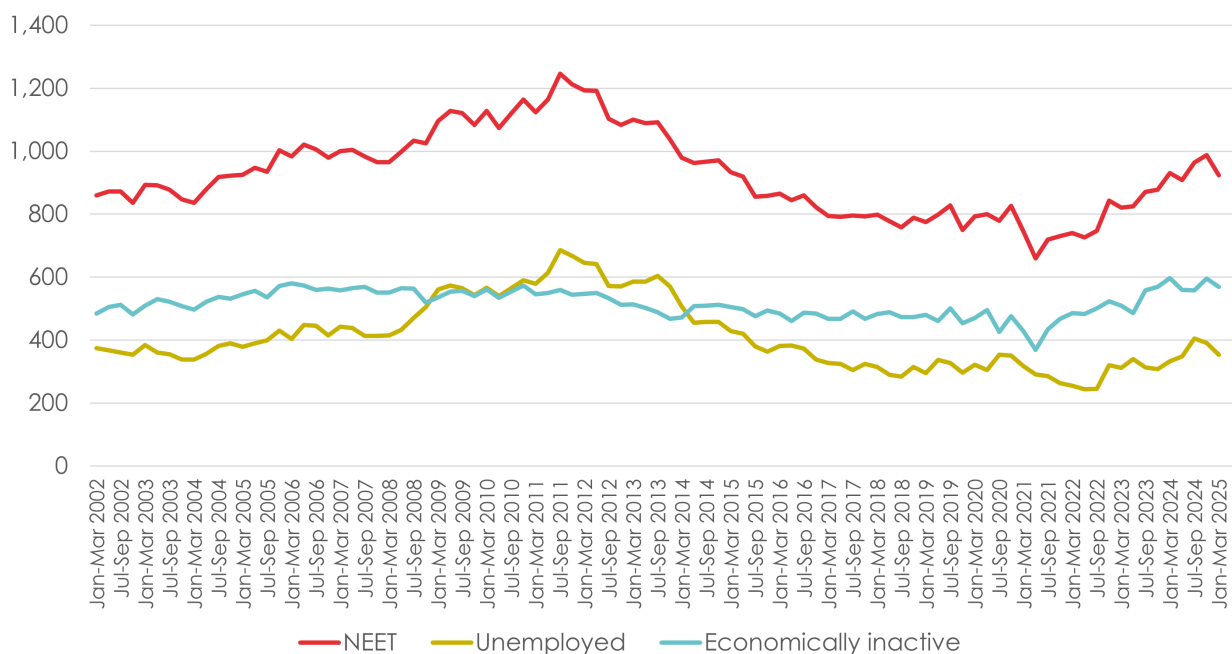
Trends in young people not in education, employment or training

January – March 2025

The latest ONS data shows that around 1 in 8 (12.5%) young people aged 16–24 are NEET (not in education, employment, or training). While the number has fallen slightly from 930,000 to 923,000 over the past year, this change is not statistically significant and may reflect sampling variation rather than a real trend¹. NEET levels remain stubbornly high, particularly compared to the recent low of 9.5% in April–June 2021, when 264,000 fewer young people were NEET. Ongoing quality issues with the Labour Force Survey also mean further data is needed to confirm whether any real progress is being made.

Figure 1: NEET levels have risen considerably since 2021

Trends in NEET, unemployment and economic inactivity levels from 2002 to 2025, in thousands, ages 16 to 24, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Since NEET levels started to rise in 2021, both unemployment and economic inactivity have contributed to the increase. The rise in economic inactivity is mostly due to ill health, which is mostly driven by ill mental health².

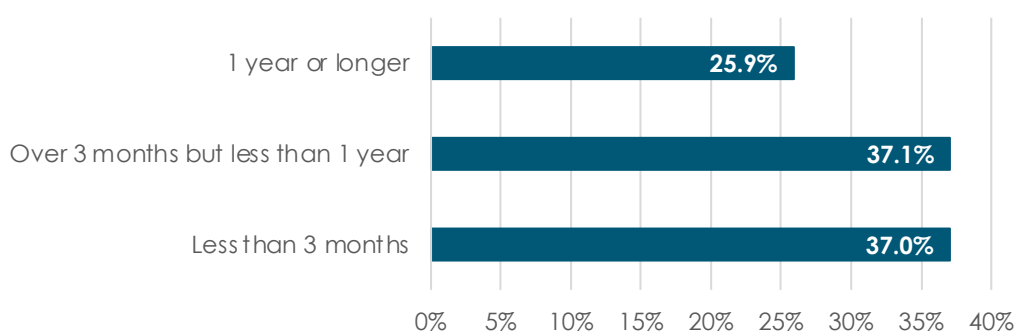
Over the past year, there have been some encouraging signs of progress among young men, with a 22% drop in those economically inactive due to ill health. A substantial amount of this decline (38.1%) is attributable to those who reported their main health condition as mental health. In contrast, economic inactivity among young women has increased slightly, both overall and specifically due to ill health, with a noticeable rise in cases linked to mental health conditions.

1. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/unemployment/datasets/youngpeoplenotineducationemploymentortrainingneet-table2samplingvariabilities>

2. For further information see <https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/publication/trends-in-young-people-not-in-education-employment-or-training-2021-2024/>

Figure 2: A quarter of young jobseekers have been looking for over a year

Unemployed young people by duration of unemployment, ages 16 to 24, January to March 2025, UK

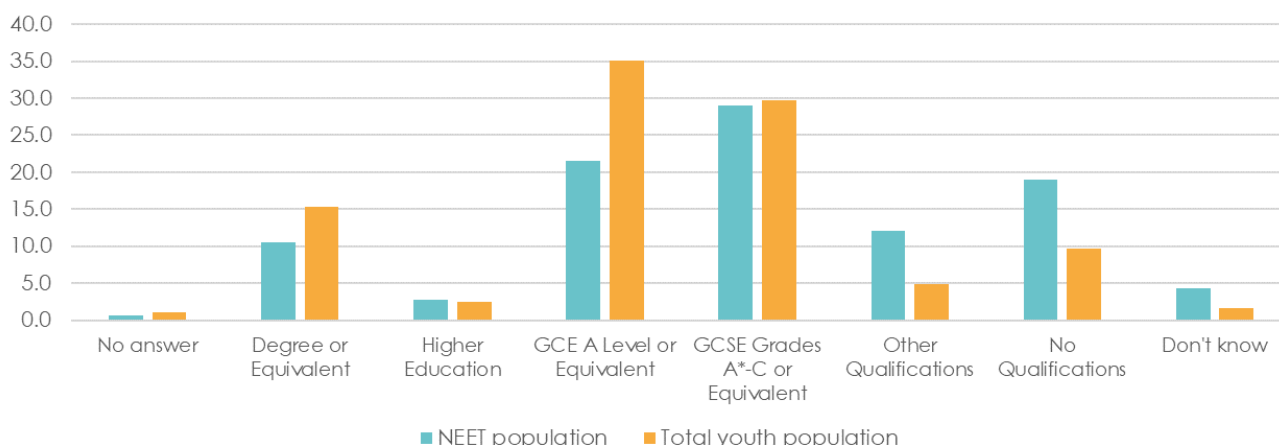


Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Around one in four (25.9%) unemployed young people not in education or training have been looking for work for over a year — equivalent to 86,000 individuals facing persistent, long-term barriers to employment. A further 123,000 have been unemployed for between three months and a year, highlighting the broader challenges young people face in entering the workforce.

Figure 3: A fifth of NEETs have no qualifications

Proportion of NEET and all young people by highest qualification level, ages 16 to 24, January to March 2025, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Approximately 10% of all young people have no qualifications, but this rises to 1 in 5 among NEET youth. This means that young people with no qualifications are disproportionately overrepresented in the NEET population and thus face higher barriers to employment, while those with GCE A Level or Equivalent and those with Degree or Equivalent are underrepresented. These figures highlight the link between educational attainment and a young person's likelihood of being NEET.



Figure 4: High NEET rates for Black young people is driven by high unemployment

NEET rates and NEET unemployment and economic inactivity rates by ethnicity, ages 16 to 24, January to December 2024, UK

Ethnicity	NEET Rate	Unemployment Rate	Economic Inactivity Rate
Black/African/Caribbean	15.2%	9.1%	6.7%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic group	13.2%	5.7%	8.0%
White	13.2%	4.9%	8.7%
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	12.6%	5.2%	7.8%
Indian	11.8%	5.1%	7.1%
Other ethnic group	11.7%	7.1%	4.9%
Any other Asian background	10.3%	3.0%	7.5%
Chinese	8.7%	4.6%	4.3%
Total	13.1%	5.2%	8.4%

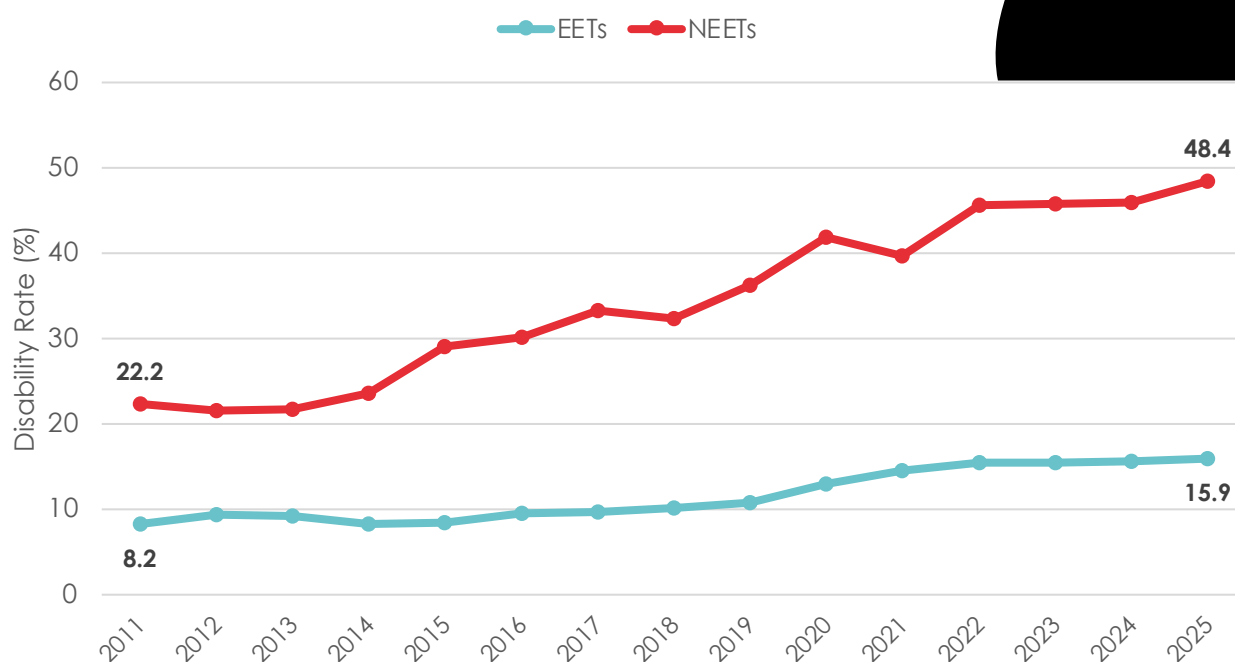
Source: Annual Population Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Black/African/Caribbean young people have the highest NEET rate at 15.2%, largely due to a high unemployment rate of 9.1%, even though their economic inactivity rate is relatively low at 6.7%. In contrast, White young people not in education, employment or training have one of the lowest unemployment rates at 4.9% but the highest rate of economic inactivity at 8.7%. This results in a NEET rate that sits around the average for all young people. These patterns highlight how different NEET rates across ethnic groups can be driven by distinct underlying factors.



Figure 5: Around half of NEET young people have a disability

Disability rate by NEET status trends, ages 16 to 24, Quarter 1 (January to March) 2011 to 2025, UK

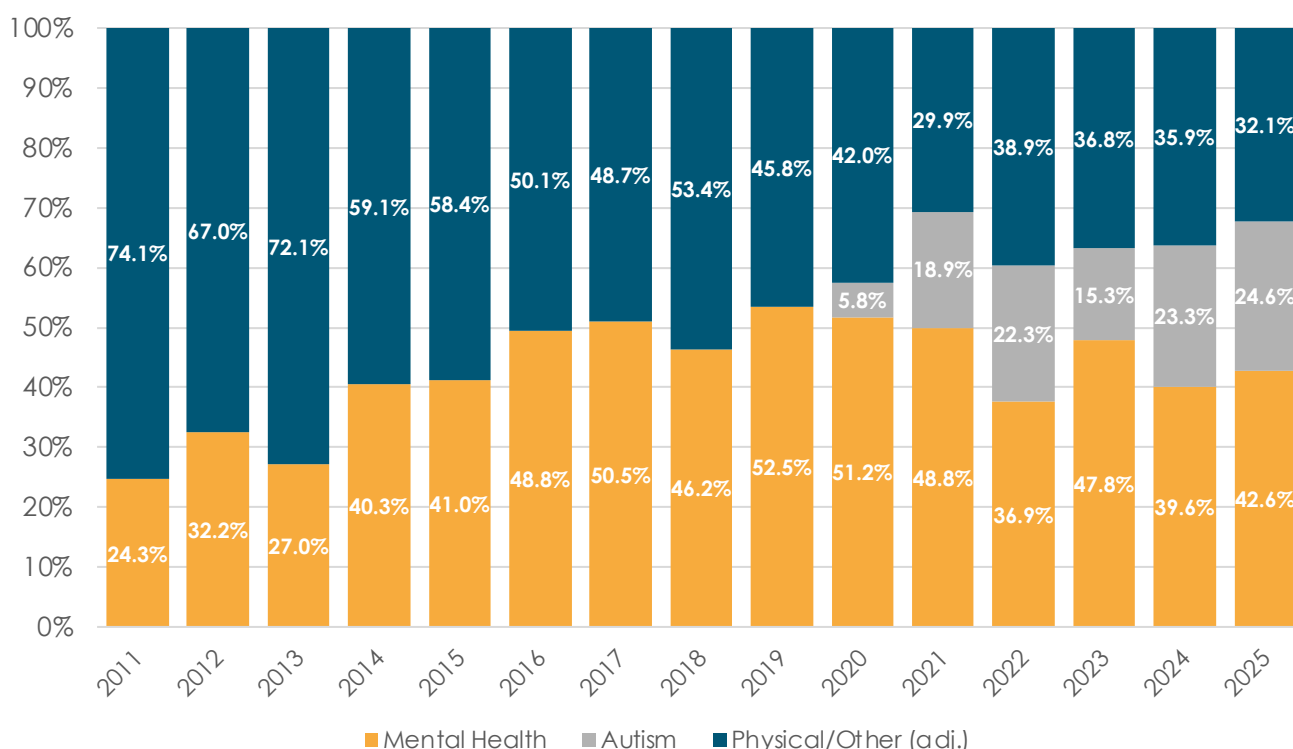


Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Disability rates among NEET young people have more than doubled over the past 15 years. In 2025, nearly half (48.4%) of young people not in education, employment or training reported having a disability, compared to around one in five (22.2%) in 2011. While disability rates have also increased among young people who are in education, employment or training, the rise has been less pronounced — from 8.2% in 2011 to 15.9% in 2025. This growing disparity suggests that young people with disabilities are becoming increasingly overrepresented in the NEET population, underlining the need for targeted support and inclusive policy responses.

Figure 6: Physical health now makes up a smaller share of main health issues for disabled NEETs

Proportion of cited main health problems among disabled NEETs, ages 16 to 24, Quarter 1 (January to March) 2011 to 2025, UK



Source: Labour Force Survey from the Office for National Statistics

Note(s): 'Mental health' includes those reporting depression, bad nerves or anxiety, and mental illness, phobias, or panic disorders. 'Physical/Other' includes all other health conditions.

'Autism' was introduced as a separate response option in the Labour Force Survey from 2020 onwards.

There has been a notable shift in the health profile of disabled NEETs aged 16 to 24. Over the past 15 years, the proportion citing mental health as their main health problem has nearly doubled – rising from 24.3% in 2011 to 42.6% in 2025. At the same time, the share reporting physical or other health problems has more than halved, falling from 74.1% to just 32.1%. These trends show that there has been a noticeable shift toward mental health conditions becoming the leading health problem for disabled NEET young people.

Definitions

- **Unemployed:** Individuals who are not in employment and have been actively seeking work.
- **Economically Inactive:** Individuals who are not in employment and have not been actively seeking work.

Note: In this report, economic inactivity excludes those who are in education or training.