

# Review of the NEET (neither in employment nor in education or training) rate

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## Abstract:

Young person's not engaged in education, employment or training, expressed as the acronym "NEET", are being used increasingly as a measure of youth marginalization and disengagement. NEETs are of particular interest to policy-maker. It was included as one of the indicators proposed to measure progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): Reduce the number of young people who are "Not in Employment, Education or Training" (NEET).

The proposed indicator addresses youth inactivity and exclusion in a meaningful way, looks beyond the narrow lens of unemployment. However, The NEET rate is the tree that conceals the forest, due to the heterogeneity within the NEET group. The acronym hides subcategories, which represent different realities.

The NEET indicator encompasses a diverse population,: The Job seekers are the short- or long-term unemployed who are actively looking for a job. -The Unavailable are not actively looking for a job because they simply can't, due to their family duties or responsibilities, -The Discouraged young This group is characterized by demotivation and passivity in terms of job search. -The NEET by choice, from wealthy families with a strong social background and strong human capital. -The NEET with health problems or those who have disabling health problems.

From what precedes, we clearly see that there is a group who are unwilling to join the labour market. this category inflates the number of NEETS and misleads policy-makers as most of them can presumably be considered as facing difficulties in finding a job.

According to the Moroccan labour force survey ,In 2021, more than one in four young people aged 15 to 24 (26.0%, or 1.5 million) are not working, not in school and not in training. This rate is 38.8% for women against 13.6% for men. Women make up the majority among NEETs: 73.4% of NEET are women (i.e. 1.1 million), Almost three-quarters of NEETs (73.0%, or 1.1 million) are in situations of inactivity other than studies or training, which means that they do not work not, that they are not looking for work and that they are not about to start work. Young NEET women are more exposed to economic inactivity than young NEET young men. The proportion of inactive women among women in a NEET situation stands at 88.5%, compared to 30.1% for NEET men. Moreover, inactive women aged 15 and over are asked if they would like to work if the opportunity arises, it appears that 90.6% among young inactive NEET women do not wish to work. The main reasons given are the

education of the children and maintaining the home. (51.4%), lack of interest in work (22.4%), don't wish to work.

For this sub-group even if the opportunity arises to join the active life, they will refuse because from their points of views , despite of not being engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit, they are responsible for raising children , they are engaged in one of the most important roles a woman can ever play. Being present in their children's lives, caring for them, loving them, teaching them, and so much more.

With regard to this, the goal of reducing the NEET rate, especially for women aged 20 to 29, who are unwilling to participate in the labour market, particularly those who that give more importance and priority to the education of children cannot be achieved, if it continues to be designed and conceived as it is.

This paper is a call to revise the NEET rate, to add other criteria to this concept such as the willingness and availability of young people to engage in training or in the labour market Therefore, to help focus the efforts of policy makers in persons who have relative strength attachment to the labour market, who were available for work but not seeking work during the reference period, more particularly the discouraged and the infirm. Also, it is an attempt to propose another indicator not in employment, education training, nor in childcare, which is achievable, realistic, and reasonable .

Keywords: NEET, concept, context-sensitive approach

**The opinions and viewpoints presented in this document are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official stance of the High Commission for Planning.**

## *Introduction*

The concept of NEETs (young people not in employment, education, or training) originated in the United Kingdom in the late 1980s as a way to categorize young people aged 16-17 who were not covered by the main categories of labour market status. The term "Status Zer0" or "Status A" was initially used to refer to this group. However, in 1996, the term NEET was coined by a senior Home Office civil servant as a replacement for the previous labels. It gained further recognition with the publication of the UK government's Bridging the Gap report in 1999.

The term NEET gained popularity beyond the United Kingdom and similar definitions were adopted in many European Union (EU) member states, as well as in other economically advanced countries such as Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China. And has since been widely used by policymakers and researchers around the world. The indicator is typically calculated as a percentage of the total population of young people within a specific age range, which varies depending on the country or organization using the indicator.

The NEET indicator aims to identify and monitor the group of young people who may be at risk of social exclusion, economic disadvantage, and limited future prospects. By highlighting those who are not engaged in employment or education, policymakers can better understand the challenges faced by young individuals and develop targeted interventions and policies to address their specific needs.

However, the NEET indicator encompasses a heterogeneous population. It includes two main sub-groups: the unemployed, who are actively seeking work, and the inactive youth, who have different reasons for their inactivity. These reasons may include discouragement, family responsibilities, sickness or disability, or voluntary choices related to self-realization.

Nevertheless the indicator prioritizes employment over other aspects, such as childcare and family responsibilities, it fails to acknowledge the legitimate choices made by women who prioritize their children's education and well-being. This situation is more common in countries where traditional social norms assign women a priority role in raising children and maintaining the home. In this article, we explore how this limitation affects the accuracy of the Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) indicator, which is used to measure the level of disengagement of young people from the labour market.

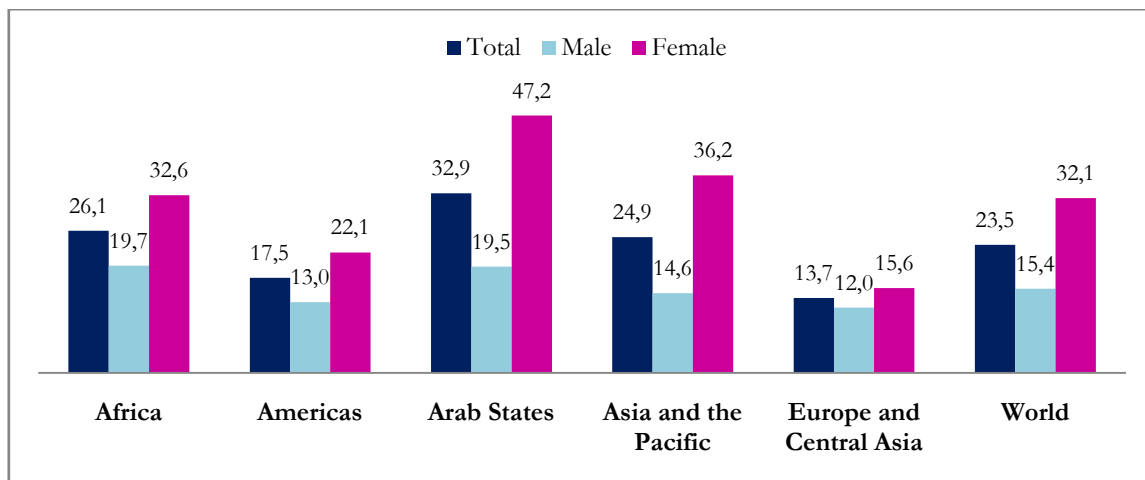
### *Limitation of the NEET indicator*

One potential limitation of the NEET indicator that prompts the production of this present article, which stems from the community from where I belong, the social norms that can have a significant impact on the NEET rate.

In many cultures, family responsibilities are prioritized over work. This can result in higher NEET rates among individuals from those cultures. For example, in Middle Eastern cultures, women are expected to prioritize family responsibilities over their career aspirations, which can result in higher NEET rates among women in those cultures.

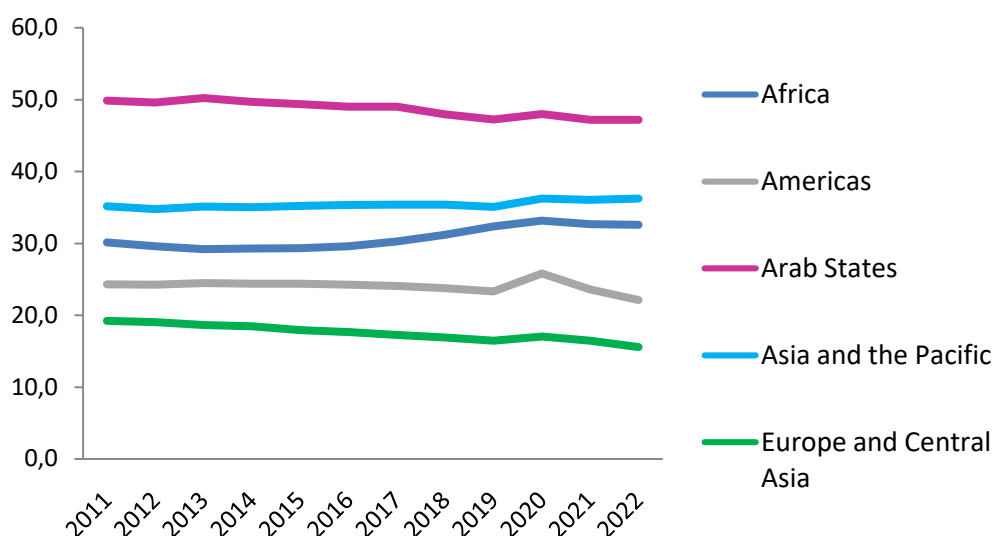
Similarly, in many Asian cultures, there is a strong emphasis on filial piety, which is the idea that children have a moral obligation to care for their parents in old age. As a result, children may choose to forgo educational or career opportunities to stay at home and care for their parents. This can lead to higher NEET rates among individuals from these cultures. In contrast, in many Western cultures, there is a strong emphasis on individualism and personal achievement. This can lead to lower NEET rates among individuals from these cultures who are motivated to pursue education and career opportunities.

**NEET rate for youth aged 15 to 24 by gender and by region in 2022 (ILO)**



According to data from the International Labour Organization (ILO), it appears that the NEET rate among women in the Arab states is higher than the global average for women. Specifically, the NEET rate among women in the Arab states is approximately 47.2%, it is 2 times higher than men 19, 5%, while the NEET rate among all women worldwide is around 32.1%.

NEET rate for youth aged 15 to 24 by region over the year (ILO)



The disproportionate representation of women in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) category may create the perception that these women are vulnerable and marginalized. Or they are disengaged from the labour market due to a lack of opportunity or skills,. It is important to recognize that such an interpretation can lead to erroneous policy prescriptions.

While interpreting the higher NEET rates among women, it is imperative to avoid a simplistic assumption that all women in this category are solely victims of external circumstances. This perspective fails to recognize the diverse aspirations that individual women possess. It is essential to consider that personal choices, such as the prioritization of family responsibilities or the pursuit of alternative paths, can significantly influence women's decisions to be NEET.

Women's choices to prioritize care giving responsibilities or engage in community work should be respected and valued. These choices not only reflect individual aspirations but also contribute to the well-being and functioning of society as a whole. Care giving, whether for children, elderly family members, or individuals with special needs, plays a vital role in maintaining the social fabric and fostering a nurturing environment. By doing so, we promote a more inclusive society that recognizes **the diverse range of aspirations and contributions women make beyond traditional employment. By acknowledging and valuing these choices, we acknowledge the multifaceted roles women play and the importance of their contributions in various domains of society.**

The observation made at the regional level for the Arab region is confirmed at the national level. The Moroccan Labour Force Survey of 2021 indicates that, more than one in four young people aged 15 to 24, which is approximately 26.0% or 1.5 million individuals, are classified as NEETs.

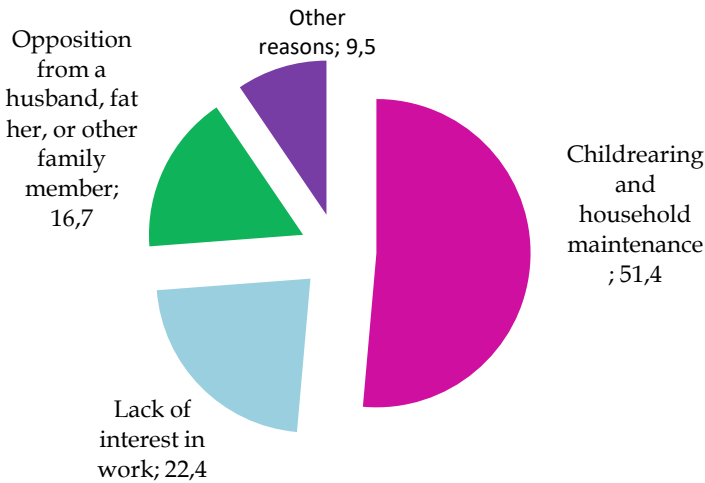
Furthermore, there is a significant gender disparity within the NEET population. Among young women aged 15 to 24, the NEET rate is notably higher 38.8%, which accounts for approximately 1.1 million individuals. In comparison, the NEET rate for young men in the same age group is 13.6%, representing a lower proportion.

NEETs, as a group, exhibit heterogeneity in term of labour market status, with some being unemployed while others are economically inactive.. Unemployment affects 27.0% of NEETs in Morocco. There is a notable gender difference within the NEET population when it comes to unemployment. Among male NEETs, the majority, accounting for 69.9%, are classified as unemployed. In contrast, a significantly lower proportion of female NEETs, around 11.5%, are categorized as unemployed.

Furthermore, the data indicates that NEET women in Morocco are predominantly inactive rather than unemployed. In contrast, NEET men are predominantly unemployed rather than economically inactive nearly three-quarters of NEETs (73.0%, or 1.1 million) are in inactive situations other than education or training, which means they are not working, not looking for work.

Young women NEETs are more likely to be economically inactive than young men NEETs. The share of inactivity among women NEETs is 88.5%, compared to 30.1% for men NEETs. In rural areas, economic inactivity among NEET women is (96.8%).

**Reasons given by inactive NEET women for not wanting to work in 2021 (%)**



Source: Moroccan labour force survey of 2021, HCP

Among young NEET women who are inactive, it appears that a significant majority, approximately 90.6%, **expressed that they do not wish to work if a job opportunity arises. a survey asked them if they would be willing to work if a job opportunity arose.** The survey revealed that 90.6% of the respondents expressed a lack of desire to work. The main reasons provided were childrearing and household maintenance (51.4%), lack of interest in work (22.4%), and opposition from a husband, father, or other family member (16.7%).

With regard to this, the goal of reducing the NEET rate, especially for women aged 20 to 29, who are unwilling to participate in the labour market, that gives more importance and priority to the education of children cannot be achieved, if it continues to be designed and conceived as it is.

### *Discussion and alternative approaches*

Measuring indicators is an essential part of policy-making, as it helps in identifying the areas of concern and evaluating the effectiveness of policies.

**The point is, what is the purpose of measuring an indicator, when two-thirds of the concerned population expresses no interest in employment,** even if opportunities were to arise. Would they incline towards state intervention policies? This conundrum raises doubts about the relevance and effectiveness of such measurements in informing policy decisions.

The current NEET rate does not adequately capture the willingness and availability of young individuals to engage in training or employment, thus hindering efforts to reduce the rate effectively. Revision of the NEET rate is necessary to encompass the willingness and availability of young people to participate in training or employment

We suggest incorporating additional criteria that reflect the willingness and availability of young individuals to engage in training or employment. By considering these factors, policy makers can better align their efforts and resources to target individuals who want to engage in training or education, also who possess a relative attachment to the labour market. Specifically, addressing the needs of the discourage and the infirm, who may have the desire and capacity to work but are not actively seeking employment.

Moreover, there is a need for a more nuanced and localized approach to address the problem of NEET. We should think creatively about solutions that take into account the specific needs and circumstances of women, those who prioritize childrearing because they consider their responsibility of raising children to be one of the most significant roles a woman can fulfill. Their role in preparing and raising future generations surpasses all other social engagements. They believe that by being actively present in their children's lives, providing care, love, and imparting important life lessons, they are making **a substantial contribution to society and fulfilling their utmost duty.**

The acknowledgment and appreciation of women's voluntary engagement in childrearing and childcare roles are fundamental to fully comprehend their choices. Consequently, there is a pressing need to reconceptualize and redefine the existing indicator. It is crucial to propose an alternative measure that goes beyond the narrow focus on employment and education, and instead recognizes and values the invaluable contributions women make. This proposed indicator is defined as "Not in Employment, Education, Training, or Childcare/Childrearing" (NEET-CCR) for women aged 20 to 29 (or other targeted age groups). This indicator aims to provide a realistic, attainable, and reasonable assessment while still acknowledging and valuing the significant role women willingly embrace in childrearing and childcare.

By giving equal importance and priority to the education of children alongside employment, the NEET indicator can be transformed to better capture the realities faced by women in balancing their family responsibilities and participation in the labour market. This requires a shift in mindset and policies that support women's choices, provide flexible work arrangements, and create an inclusive environment where women are not penalized for prioritizing their family obligations.



## *Conclusion*

The NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) indicator has gained prominence as a measure of youth marginalization and disengagement. However, it fails to capture the heterogeneity within the NEET group, concealing different realities.

This paper argues that the current NEET rate misleads policymakers, particularly due to the inclusion of a group unwilling to join the labor market. To a large extent women, who are inactive and uninterested in work due to their responsibilities in childcare and household duties. Consequently, efforts to reduce the NEET rate for women who prioritize childcare and childrearing, cannot be achieved without revising the indicator.

This paper calls for the inclusion of criteria such as willingness and availability to participate in training or the labour market, to better target policy efforts towards those with a stronger attachment to work. It also proposes an alternative indicator that considers employment, education, training, and childcare to provide a more realistic and reasonable measurement.

The NEET indicator focuses on employment, education, and training status, which may not adequately account for the unique circumstances faced by women who opt for family responsibilities over paid work.

As a result, the NEET indicator may underestimate the actual level of engagement of these women. It fails to capture their valuable contribution to society through unpaid care work and may overlook the challenges they face in balancing work and family responsibilities.

To address this limitation, **it is important to adopt a more comprehensive approach that recognizes and values the different forms of work**, including unpaid care work. Additionally, policymakers should strive to create supportive environments that enable women to participate in the labour market if they choose to do so, while also recognizing and respecting their decisions regarding family responsibilities.

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