

Characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) who did not receive benefits, England: March 2021

Sociodemographic, health and labour market characteristics of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) on Census Day 2021 and were not recorded as receiving benefits in England in March 2021.

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1 . Main points

- Nearly one-third of young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) (32.8%) in England on Census Day, 21 March 2021, were not recorded as receiving benefits in March 2021; this percentage was higher among males (37.9%) than females (27.1%).
- After accounting for age differences among the population of young people who were NEET on Census Day, a higher percentage of those who did not receive benefits than those who did receive benefits reported: being in very good health (61.0% compared with 39.1%), living in the least deprived areas (7.7% compared with 3.8%) and holding a degree-level or above qualification (47.1% compared with 20.6%).
- After accounting for age differences among the population of young people who were NEET on Census Day, a higher percentage of those who did not receive benefits than those who did receive benefits reported living with family (90.4% compared with 86.2%), or others (7.1% compared with 6.1%); as such, a lower percentage lived alone (2.5% compared with 7.7%).
- Average household employee earnings in the year leading up to Census Day were higher for young people who were NEET on Census Day with no recorded benefit receipt in March 2021 (£44,600), compared with household employee earnings for those receiving benefits (£24,253).
- Nearly three in four (74.1%) young people who were NEET on Census Day and receiving benefits in March 2021 were also receiving benefits in the financial year ending March 2025; this compares with around one in five (21.2%) young people who were NEET and not receiving benefits, and just under one in six (16.3%) young people who were not NEET on Census Day.
- In the financial year ending March 2025, 67.0% of young people who were NEET on Census Day and had no recorded benefit receipt in March 2021 had recorded employment, compared with 46.2% of those receiving benefits in March 2021, and 83.8% of young people who were not NEET on Census Day.

This work has been commissioned from the Office for National Statistics by the Department for Work and Pensions.

Please note these estimates are derived from Census 2021 data and are not comparable with our official headline UK estimates of young people who were NEET using Labour Force Survey data. The estimates are also not comparable with the official estimates of young people who were NEET in England produced by the Department for Education.

2 . Data on the characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) who did not receive benefits

[Characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\) who did not receive benefits, England](#)

Dataset | Released 2 September 2026

Sociodemographic, health, and labour market characteristics of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) on Census Day 2021 and were not recorded as receiving benefits in England in March 2021.

3 . Glossary

Age-standardised percentage

Age-standardised percentages allow us to make comparisons between populations that contain different proportions of people of different ages.

They are calculated as the weighted sum of age-specific percentages in discrete age bands (from 16 to 17 years, and each single year of age thereafter), multiplied by 100.

Families and households

A "household" is one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address who share cooking facilities and share a living room, sitting room or dining area. A household can consist of a single family, more than one family or no families in the case of a group of unrelated people. For more information, please see our [Families and households statistics explained article](#).

Household employee earnings

To calculate this experimental measure, we joined the entire census population via the Demographic Index to Pay As You Earn – Real Time Information (PAYE-RTI) records. We then summed individual pay for the year leading up to Census 2021 (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021) for everyone in the census that could be linked to PAYE-RTI records. We then summed the employee earnings of everyone with the same census household ID to derive a household employee earnings value, which could be joined to the final study population using census household IDs. Please note this measure does not include income from self-employment, as this was not available at the time of analysis. Additionally, other sources of income, such as pensions and investments, are not included.

Not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Not in education, employment or training (NEET) refers to young people aged 16 to 24 years who are not in education or training and are either unemployed or economically inactive. In this analysis, NEET status was derived from Census 2021 responses about full-time education and economic activity. For more information on how the measure was derived, see our previous [Characteristics of young people not in education, employment, or training \(NEET\). England: March 2021 bulletin](#).

Not in education, employment or training (NEET) and not receiving benefits

Young people who were NEET on Census Day and were not recorded as receiving benefits during March 2021. Although they were not in receipt of benefits, they may have contact with other services, including those delivered locally or by voluntary and community sector, which cannot be identified through the data sources used in this analysis.

4 . Data sources and quality

Linked datasets

Census 2021, health, births, deaths, and employee earnings datasets were linked together for this analysis; as described in our [Characteristics of young people not in education, employment, or training \(NEET\). England: March 2021 bulletin](#). However, there are some important differences in the approach we have taken in this analysis; we have:

- included young people resident in university accommodation (such as halls of residence)
- filtered the linked data for all analyses and then weighted the data using inverse probability weights (IPWs)
- equivalised Pay As You Earn – Real Time Information (PAYE-RTI) data to 2025 instead of 2023
- Winsorised earnings data; this is a technique that limits the impact of extreme values in the data on the estimates by replacing these values with the 99th percentile
- joined Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefit records to the linked datasets

Department for Work and Pensions benefits data

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits data cover the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2025 and is calendarised into year-month records for individuals. Benefit receipt was flagged if an individual was recorded as receiving benefit in:

- the month of March 2021, to align with Census Day, 21 March 2021
- any point between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2021
- for each financial year following March 2021

Where an individual had a Census ID linking to multiple monthly DWP master keys, we flagged benefits across all matching records for each month.

Study population

The study population was derived from those who responded to the 2021 Census and people were included if they were:

- usually resident in a household or university accommodation (for example, halls of residence) in England on Census Day, 21 March 2021
- aged 16 to 24 years on Census Day

For inclusion in all analyses, we also required individuals to have a census record in 2021 that could be linked to the NHS Personal Demographics Service (PDS) and the Demographic Index (DI). The DI was used to link census records to a DWP master key and an encrypted National Insurance number (NINo). The final study population included 4,625,910 young people (linkage rate: 83.3%). The linkage rate was low for residents in university accommodation (20.9%).

To address the issue of non-linkage, we applied IPWs to weight data back to population level, created with logistic regression using the following sociodemographic variables from the census:

- age
- sex
- interaction between age and sex
- interaction between age, sex, and NEET status
- interaction between age, sex, and country of birth
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile
- ethnic group
- living arrangements
- general health
- highest level of qualification

This resulted in a final weighted study population of 5,527,685. Full counts of the study population at each stage of data cleaning are available in Table 1 in our [accompanying dataset](#).

Estimates

We present crude and age-standardised percentages of young people who were NEET on Census Day, and who were not receiving benefits in March 2021, by characteristics (sociodemographic factors, chronic health conditions, births, deaths, benefit receipt, and labour market outcomes). We present the prevalence of young people who were NEET and not receiving benefits as a percentage of the young person population and of the NEET population. We also present crude and age-standardised percentages of characteristic prevalence by NEET and benefit receipt status.

We present estimates of average household employee earnings for the year leading up to Census Day 2021. Household employee earnings were included as an additional measure of socio-economic circumstances. They provide insight into potential financial support from the household, which could reduce the need for the young person to claim benefits. Finally, we present estimates of average employee earnings from PAYE-RTI and benefit receipt by NEET status in the four financial years following the 2021 Census.

The underlying dataset provides both crude rates, which reflect the true scale of the young NEET population who did not receive benefits, and age-standardised rates, which enable comparisons between groups while accounting for differences in age structure. More information, including the full set of crude percentages, age-standardised percentages, and sample summaries are available in our [accompanying dataset](#).

The UK Statistics Authority's [National Statistician's Data Ethics Advisory Committee](#) provided ethical approval for this work.

Quality

Census 2021 falls within the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic period. We urge users to consider the impact of the pandemic when interpreting the estimates produced in this analysis.

There is incomplete linkage between the census and other data sources, which may introduce bias, especially if linkage varies by benefit receipt, and linkage was especially low for residents in university accommodation; we have addressed this issue by applying inverse probability weighting.

In our analysis of future employee earnings, employment, and benefit receipt, although we account for people who died subsequent to Census Day by removing them from analyses, we cannot do the same for people who migrate out of the UK.

Not all benefits data were available (Child Benefit (CB) and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (IIDB)). Instead, we have used records of a birth on or before Census Day as a proxy for child benefit as uptake is high; this approach may include some people who do not claim child benefit or whose child died before Census Day and may miss some people who have a child but did not link to the births data.

5 . Related links

[Geographical variation in the prevalence of young people not in education, employment, or training \(NEET\). England: March 2021](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 2 September 2026

Characteristics of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in England in 2021, adjusted for individual and geographical differences.

[Characteristics of young people not in education, employment, or training \(NEET\). England: March 2021](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 27 March 2026

Characteristics of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in England in 2021, adjusted for individual and geographical differences.

[Young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\). UK: August 2026](#)

Statistical bulletin | Released 27 August 2026

Estimates of young people (aged 16 to 24 years) who are not in education, employment, or training, by age and sex.

[NEET age 16 to 24, calendar year 2025](#)

Statistics | Released 12 March 2026

UK government's Department for Education annual estimates from the Labour Force Survey of young people aged 16 to 24 years not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in England.

[Comparing Census 2021 and Labour Force Survey estimates of the labour market. England and Wales: 13 March 2023](#)

Article | Released 13 March 2023

Comparing the percentages of adults in employment and other labour market data between Census 2021 and the Labour Force Survey, and reasons why they differ.

6 . Cite this statistical bulletin

Office for National Statistics (ONS), released 2 September 2026, ONS website, statistical bulletin, [Characteristics of young people not in education, employment or training \(NEET\) who did not receive benefits. England: March 2021](#).