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Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

FACT SHEET ON “NEETs”

(Persons who are not in employment, education or training)



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Department of Higher Education and Training. 2018. *Fact Sheet on NEETs*. Pretoria. Department of Higher Education and Training

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Date of publication: 31 August 2018



1. BACKGROUND

People who are not employed and who are not in education or training are referred to as NEETs. Information about NEETs is used to monitor the labour market and the social dynamics of the marginalised people in society. It is generally acknowledged, both nationally as well as internationally, that NEETs constitute one of the greatest threats to social stability. Researchers and the media frequently raise the spectre of idle youths as a ticking social time bomb, and there is now heightened awareness of the young people who are NEET to cause serious social disruption. In South Africa, the impact of NEETs is brought to the fore by crime statistics that reveal that the average age of a house robber is between 19 and 25 years and that of all arrested robbers, 90% had not passed Grade 12 and/or were unemployed¹. Consequently, the monitoring of NEET trends and strong interventions to address the challenge of NEETs are key to promoting peace and stability in a society.

This presents the social backdrop against which the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system has to determine its priorities since many South Africans lack the appropriate skills, work-related capabilities and the necessary qualifications required for existing occupations in the workplace. Additionally, on the demand-side, the economy is not growing fast enough to absorb new entrants into the labour market.

2. PURPOSE

This Fact Sheet provides a detailed profile and characteristics of people who are NEET in order to ensure that interventions in the PSET system address the appropriate target groupings. Information about NEETs assist the DHET to make informed decisions about PSET. In particular, NEET data provides us with evidence that we can use to undertake policy, develop strategies, undertake planning, set targets and undertake budgeting.

3. METHODOLOGY

The statistics used in this publication are drawn from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa. More specifically, this Fact Sheet uses annual figures calculated using the average of the four quarters of the year. Internationally, many countries use young people aged 15 to 24 years as the unit of analysis for understanding NEETs, however, this Fact Sheet provides NEET data for a broader age range of people, since the Department of Higher Education and Training’s (DHET) mandate includes adult learners, and not only young people.

¹ Cloete, N and Butler-Adam, J (2012). *Match policy with reality and young people stand a chance*. Mail and Guardian, 10 Aug 2012.



4. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

4.1 Tertiary education

Tertiary education refers to the following qualifications:

- an undergraduate degree
- a post-graduate degree
- a diploma
- a Higher Certificate (upon completion of matric)
- an advanced Diploma or advanced Certificate

4.2 NEET rate

The NEET rate has been calculated by dividing the number of persons in a given age group who are NEET, e.g. persons aged 15-24 years, by the total population of the same age group in a country, e.g. 15-24 year old population.

4.3 Youth

Youth in this publication refers to persons aged 15-34 years.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Between 2013 and 2017, the actual number of people who were NEET (in the age group 15-60 years) increased by 881 000, from about 13.1 million to about 13.9 million. However, the proportion of people who are NEET remained virtually unchanged at around 39% in the same period.
- When looking at the number of NEETs by age group, the number of adults (35-60 years) who were NEET increased by 510 000 from about 5.7 million in 2013 to about 6.2 million in 2017, while youth (15-34 years) increased by 466 000 from about 7.4 million in 2013 to about 7.8 million in 2017.
- The NEET rate for persons aged 15-34 years increased slightly from 38.2% in 2013 to 38.6% in 2017 while the NEET rates for adults aged 35-60 decreased slightly from 39.5% to 38.8% in the same period.
- At the provincial level, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape had the highest number of NEETs recorded in all the age groups over the 5-year period under review.
- The majority of people who were NEET in South Africa had as their highest level of educational attainment, some secondary level schooling, but without a matric.



- Most of the people who were NEET were African/Black and female in the 5-year period under review. The share of the African/Black who were NEET remained high at about 84%, while the share of the females who were NEET remained at about 58% of the total NEETs in the same period.
- Female NEETs had slightly higher levels of education than their male counterparts. About 34.8% of the females who were NEET have achieved educational levels of Grade 12 or tertiary qualification in 2017, whereas the share of the males who have achieved the same level of education was lower by about 2.6 percentage points recording 32.2% in the same year.
- There are many reasons why people are NEET in South Africa and they differ between the youth (15-34 years) and the adults (35-60 years). The highest number of youth were NEET because they were new entrants in the labour market (about 2.0 million) in 2017, followed by those who were discouraged job-seekers (about 1.5 million) and those who were home-makers (about 1.2 million). This shows that about 3.5 million youth in South Africa who were NEET were willing to work but they cannot find work.
- Among the adults (35-60 years), the highest number of people who were NEET were home-makers (1.3 million) in 2017, followed by those who had health reasons for not working (about 1.1 million) and other reasons for being unemployed (including job leavers and job losers).



6. FINDINGS

Table 1: Number and percentage of persons aged 15-60 who are NEET, 2013 to 2017

Period	Number of persons aged 15-60 years who are NEET, in thousands	Total number of persons aged 15-60 years, in thousands	NEET rate (%)
2013	13 053	33 702	38.7
2014	13 242	34 278	38.6
2015	13 239	34 884	38.0
2016	13 721	35 449	38.7
2017	13 934	36 023	38.7

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Table 2: Trends in the number of NEETs by age group, 2013 to 2017

NEET	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Thousand				
15-24 years	3 261	3 212	3 139	3 219	3 213
25-34 years	4 133	4 235	4 203	4 384	4 551
35-60 years	5 659	5 796	5 897	6 118	6 169
Total	13 053	13 242	13 239	13 721	13 934

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals.

Table 3: NEET rates by age group, 2013 to 2017

NEET rate	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	%				
15-24 years	32.0	31.3	30.5	31.2	31.2
25-34 years	45.1	45.4	44.3	45.4	46.4
35-60 years	39.5	39.4	39.0	39.5	38.8
Overall	38.7	38.6	38.0	38.7	38.7

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)



Table 4: Number of NEETs by province and age group, 2013 to 2017

Province	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Thousand				
15-24 years	3 261	3 212	3 139	3 219	3 213
Eastern Cape	471	469	441	429	462
Free State	166	164	160	166	162
Gauteng	664	624	652	672	653
KwaZulu-Natal	655	670	658	701	721
Limpopo	379	346	345	339	307
Mpumalanga	282	273	283	282	270
North West	264	253	222	250	249
Northern Cape	72	80	83	80	86
Western Cape	310	333	296	300	303
25-34 years	4 133	4 235	4 203	4 384	4 551
Eastern Cape	579	580	575	587	610
Free State	246	247	236	241	235
Gauteng	909	908	971	1 021	1 062
KwaZulu-Natal	836	884	866	935	968
Limpopo	466	479	471	460	497
Mpumalanga	339	382	328	354	380
North West	305	295	317	338	322
Northern Cape	89	93	93	93	104
Western Cape	363	365	347	354	373
35-60 years	5 659	5 796	5 897	6 118	6 169
Eastern Cape	730	722	723	733	758
Free State	320	323	310	327	321
Gauteng	1 357	1 446	1 493	1 563	1 604
KwaZulu-Natal	1 068	1 095	1 131	1 174	1 184
Limpopo	535	546	520	538	547
Mpumalanga	382	391	405	429	426
North West	468	464	480	491	479
Northern Cape	140	144	158	162	162
Western Cape	660	664	677	701	689
Total	13 053	13 242	13 239	13 721	13 934

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals.



Table 5: Share of NEETs by highest level of education attainment and age group, 2013 to 2017

Educational level	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Thousand				
15-24 years	25.0	24.3	23.7	23.5	23.1
No Schooling	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.4
Primary and less	11.2	10.7	11.4	11.4	10.3
Secondary less than grade 12	49.1	48.6	47.3	46.9	46.3
Grade 12	33.6	34.6	34.9	35.2	37.4
Tertiary	4.1	3.6	4.0	4.2	4.0
Other and Unspecified	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7
25-34 years	31.7	32.0	31.7	32.0	32.7
No Schooling	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.7
Primary and less	10.8	9.9	10.4	10.0	9.6
Secondary less than grade 12	51.4	50.5	50.4	51.6	49.8
Grade 12	29.5	30.2	29.7	29.3	30.6
Tertiary	5.7	6.9	6.7	6.7	7.6
Other and Unspecified	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.7
35-60 years	43.4	43.8	44.5	44.6	44.3
No Schooling	9.0	8.3	8.0	7.4	6.6
Primary and less	27.1	26.1	25.2	24.2	22.9
Secondary less than grade 12	40.9	40.8	40.9	41.9	42.9
Grade 12	17.3	18.6	19.1	19.7	20.2
Tertiary	4.8	5.1	5.8	5.6	6.2
Other and Unspecified	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, percentages may not add up to totals.



Table 6: Number of NEETs by gender and age group, 2013 to 2017

Gender	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Thousand				
15-24 years	3 261	3 212	3 139	3 219	3 213
Male	1 500	1 482	1 444	1 479	1 478
Female	1 761	1 730	1 695	1 740	1 736
25-34 years	4 133	4 235	4 203	4 384	4 551
Male	1 759	1 818	1 802	1 874	2 011
Female	2 374	2 417	2 401	2 510	2 540
35-60 years	5 659	5 796	5 897	6 118	6 169
Male	2 131	2 192	2 248	2 375	2 403
Female	3 528	3 604	3 649	3 743	3 766
Total	13 053	13 242	13 239	13 721	13 934

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals.

Table 7: Number of NEETs by highest level of education attainment, gender and age group, 2017

Educational level	15-24 years		25-34 years		35-60 years	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	Thousand					
No Schooling	24	20	41	37	149	256
Primary and less	192	138	242	193	564	851
Secondary less than grade 12	677	809	993	1 275	1 045	1 604
Grade 12	520	682	588	803	482	761
Tertiary	52	75	131	214	124	262
Other and Unspecified	13	10	16	18	40	32
Total	1 478	1 736	2 011	2 540	2 403	3 766

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals.



Table 8: Number of NEETs by race and age group, 2013 to 2017

Race	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Thousand				
15-24 years	3 261	3 212	3 139	3 219	3 213
African/Black	2 835	2 764	2 719	2 817	2 801
Coloured	294	309	283	286	302
Indian/Asian	41	53	52	43	44
White	92	87	84	73	66
25-34 years	4 133	4 235	4 203	4 384	4 551
African/Black	3 676	3 765	3 756	3 924	4 087
Coloured	292	287	290	284	297
Indian/Asian	67	66	70	76	68
White	98	116	88	100	99
35-60 years	5 659	5 796	5 897	6 118	6 169
African/Black	4 475	4 596	4 673	4 897	4 951
Coloured	586	582	610	633	644
Indian/Asian	175	188	193	188	188
White	424	430	421	400	385
Total	13 053	13 242	13 239	13 721	13 934

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals.



Table 9: Number of NEETs by reason and age group, 2013 to 2017

Reason	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	Thousand				
15-24 years	3 261	3 212	3 139	3 219	3 213
Job losers	244	271	270	273	284
New entrants	937	891	918	1 002	1 017
Re-entrants	47	44	45	46	47
Other unemployed ²	69	71	75	74	73
Home maker	491	486	433	468	430
Health reasons	134	133	140	131	136
Too young/old/retired	40	53	55	53	62
Discouraged job-seekers	669	662	608	634	622
Other not economically active	629	599	594	539	544
25-34 years	4 133	4 235	4 203	4 384	4 551
Job losers	646	703	781	771	823
New entrants	787	797	793	907	957
Re-entrants	95	113	102	124	124
Other unemployed	379	402	414	430	469
Home maker	810	804	718	753	745
Health reasons	302	280	271	265	272
Too young/old/retired	2	3	4	4	4
Discouraged job-seekers	825	862	849	872	886
Other not economically active	284	270	273	258	271
35-60 years	5 659	5 796	5 897	6 118	6 169
Job losers	616	648	709	751	842
New entrants	228	205	280	295	312
Re-entrants	64	92	87	119	122
Other unemployed	662	729	727	836	924
Home maker	1 458	1 473	1 380	1 401	1 344
Health reasons	1 196	1 147	1 184	1 175	1 103
Too young/old/retired	439	429	488	484	472
Discouraged job-seekers	770	825	808	811	823
Other not economically active	225	247	233	245	227
Total	13 053	13 242	13 239	13 721	13 934

Source: Statistics SA, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals.

² Other unemployed includes job leavers and other – other last worked > 5 years ago.