

Key data

Trends in youth employment and inactivity

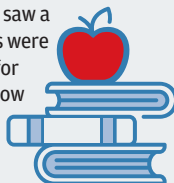
FALL IN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

There were 3.7 million young people in work in September to November 2024, representing half of all 16- to 24-year-olds in England. This was a fall of around 40,000 compared to the same period in 2023 when the rate was 51.8%. The rate has steadily fallen over the past 30 years due to the rise in economically inactive young people – in 1992, youth employment rates were 62%. Employment rates are similar for young men and women.



APPRENTICESHIPS MIXED BAG

Although the number of apprenticeships overall rose 1.3% to 132,560 in August to October 2024, the proportion undertaken by young people declined. Apprenticeship starts for under-19s rose by 1.8% to 41,800 compared to the same quarter in 2023. However, starts for 19-24-year-olds saw a 9.6% decline, while starts for adults were largely unchanged. Annual figures for apprenticeship starts in 2023/24 show under-19s accounted for 23.2% compared to 28.3% for 19-24-year-olds and 48.5% for the 25+ group.



LEVELS OF INACTIVITY

Just over three million young people were economically inactive (not in work or looking for work) in September to November 2024, a rise of 75,000 for the year. This is the highest recorded level since data began being collected in 1992 and represents 41% of all young people. Since the pandemic, 16-24-year-olds economically inactive due to long-term illness has risen. The number of economically inactive young people with mental health conditions rose by 24% from 2019 to 2022.



ENTRY-LEVEL PLACEMENTS

There has been a significant decline over the past decade in the number of people undertaking intermediate level apprenticeships. In 2015/16, there were 513,000 intermediate level apprentices but by 2023/24 the figure had dropped to 142,000. Over the same period, higher level (273,000) and advanced level (324,000) apprenticeships have grown significantly. In August to October 2024, there were 70,840 intermediate level starts, a fall of 7% from the year before. Intermediate level apprentices tend to be younger.



RIISING NEET RATES

Since 2021, the number of young people not in education, employment or training (Neet) has been rising. In July to September 2024, 946,000 young people aged 16 to 24 were Neet, a rise of 76,000 from the year before. The proportion of young people who are Neet rose from 12.3% to 13.2% of all young people. Some 42% of young Neets were unemployed in July to September 2024 and 58% were economically inactive, meaning they were not working, not seeking work and/or not available to start work. Over the same period, 11.2% of women and 15.1% of men aged 16 to 24 were Neet.



YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

In September to November 2024, the unemployment rate for 18-24-year-olds was 12.8%, up from 11.3% the year before. The unemployment rate for men aged 16 to 24 was 16.3% (4.7% for all men) and for women 12.5% (4.2% for all women). There were 495,000 unemployed 18-24-year-olds in September to November 2024, while 1.89 million were economically inactive. In December 2024, 301,500 people aged 18 to 24 claimed unemployment related benefits. This was around the same as the previous month and an increase of 21,400 from a year before.



Source: ONS Labour Market data 2024; DfE Apprenticeships data 2024/25. Picture: Alder/Adobe Stock