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Labour Statistics at a Glance

Young people not in employment, education or training: What did they do in the past 12 months?

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Young people not in employment, education or training: What did they do in the past 12 months?

by **Emmanuelle Bourbeau** and **Rachelle Pelletier**

Highlights

- In September 2018, 779,000 young people aged 15 to 29 were not in employment, education or training (NEET). This represented 11.3% of those in this age category.
- Slightly more than half of these young people had actually gone to school or worked as a main activity in the past 12 months—some of whom may have been in-between jobs in September, or in a transition stage between school and work. Almost 4 in 10 young NEET Canadians that had worked during the past 12 months had held a temporary, rather than permanent, job.
- Women who were NEET commonly reported caring for children. This was especially true of women aged 25 to 29, who also had the highest NEET rate in September 2018.
- A little more than 1 in 10 NEET individuals said that a physical or mental health concern or disability had kept them from doing something else as a main activity.
- Few NEET individuals volunteered for a group or organization as their main activity in the previous 12 months, although about 3 in 10 had volunteered to some extent during this period.

Introduction

Young people (aged 15 to 29) who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) are often considered to be more vulnerable than their peers, as they may face a risk of becoming disengaged or socially excluded, and could miss out on gaining skills or experience in the labour market.

While Statistics Canada has previously examined the characteristics of the NEET population,¹ this is the first study to examine the main activities of NEET 15- to 29-year-olds over a 12-month period using Labour Force Survey (LFS) data.² Among the activities to be analyzed are going to school, working, caring for children, and volunteering both as a main and secondary activity.

Who was NEET in September?

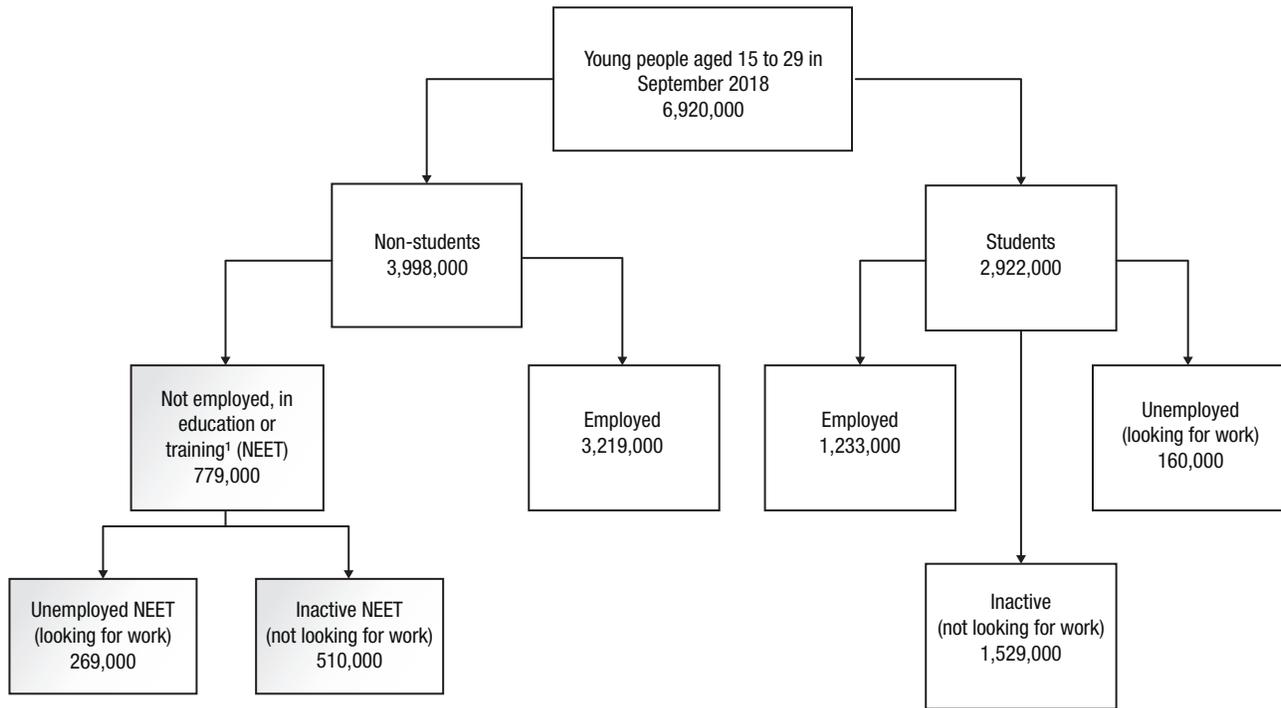
Overall, there were 6.9 million young people aged 15 to 29 in Canada in September 2018 (Figure 1). Of those, 4.0 million were non-students (57.8%), while 2.9 million were students³ (42.4%). Both categories (students and non-students) are then divided into the employed and the not employed. The NEET population consists of all non-students who are not employed: in September 2018, 779,000 people were in this category (11.3% of the total population aged 15 to 29).

1. More information on the NEET population can be found in *Education Indicators in Canada: Fact Sheet (81-599-X)*.

2. In September 2018, several questions were added to the LFS on a one-time basis in order to gather more information on the main activities of Canadians over the previous 12 months.

3. Based on the OECD definition of student used for the NEET indicator: A person who attends any regular educational institution, public or private, for systematic instruction at any level of education.

Figure 1
In September 2018, 779,000 young Canadians were NEET



¹Based on the OECD definition of NEET.

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, September 2018.

Those aged 25 to 29 comprised the largest proportion (46.8%) of young people who were NEET during the LFS reference week, followed by 20 to 24 (36.9%), and 15 to 19 (16.2%). While NEET individuals were slightly more likely to be female (52.1%) than male (47.9%) overall, those aged 15 to 19 were a few percentage points more likely to be male, and those aged 25 to 29 were similarly likely to be female.

Of young people who were NEET in September 2018, 34.5% were unemployed (looking for work and available for work), and 65.5% were inactive (not looking for work). While each of these groups may be at risk of falling behind their peers on work experience, this concern is generally greater for those who are inactive, as they may face challenges entering or re-entering the labour force.

Both male and female NEET individuals were more likely to be inactive than unemployed, though the share of women that were out of the labour force (72.2%) was greater than the share of men (58.2%).

Overall, young people who were NEET had a wide range of main activities in the past 12 months

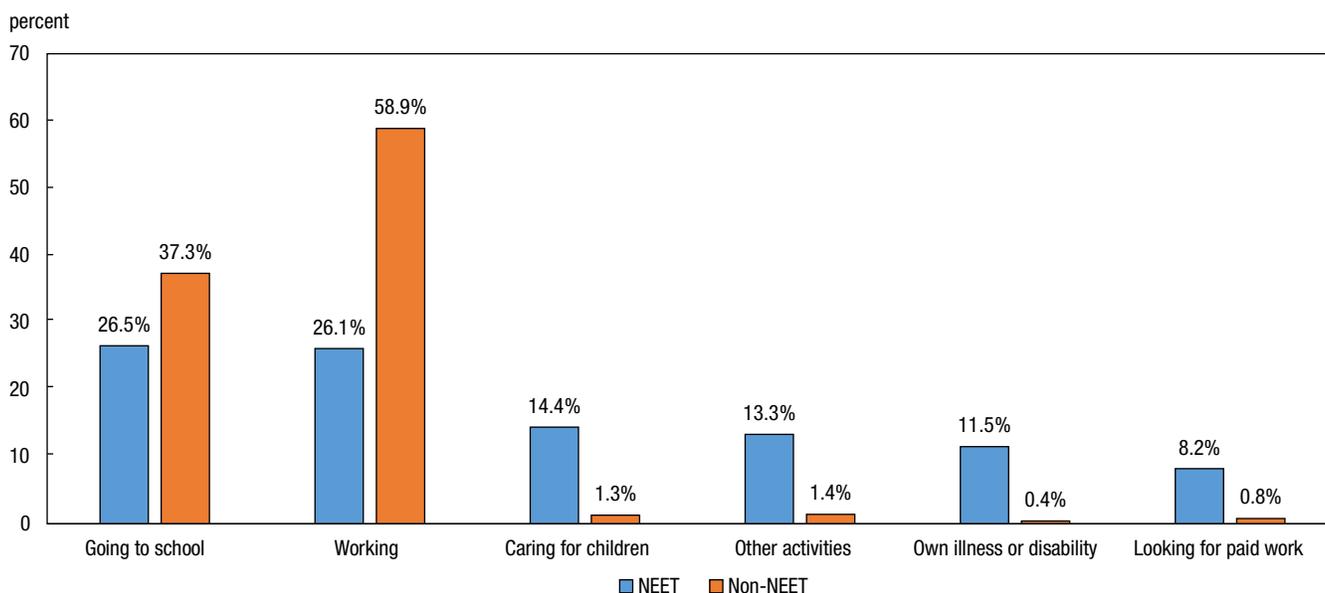
Over the previous 12 months, the NEET population reported a variety of main activities. A little more than a quarter (26.5%) reported that they had been in school, while a similar percentage (26.1%) said they had been working⁴ (Chart 1). The main activities of the remaining NEET included caring for children,⁵ being ill or having a disability, looking for paid work, or other activities.⁶ In comparison, almost all of the non-NEET population either worked or had been in school.

4. Working refers to those who worked at a paid job (25.5%) and those who were self-employed (0.6%).

5. The "caring for children" category also includes "maternity, paternity or parental leave".

6. The "other activities" category includes: "other", "household work", "volunteering or care-giving other than for children", and "unpaid internship".

Chart 1
Main activity in the previous 12 months for people aged 15 to 29 by NEET status, September 2018



Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, September 2018.

Most NEET individuals had either been going to school or working as a main activity in the past 12 months

More than half of the NEET population in September 2018 indicated that their main activity in the last 12 months had actually been either going to school or working (52.6%). Though a bit counter-intuitive, this simply means that some NEET individuals in September 2018 could have been in-between jobs, or perhaps transitioning from school to the labour force. In addition, most people in the group that had been either working or going to school as a main activity reported that they were unemployed (available and looking for work), rather than inactive (not looking for work).

NEET population more likely to have held a temporary job

NEET individuals that had been in paid employment were more likely to have held a temporary position (37.9%) in the past 12 months than the non-NEET population (19.0%). A little less than 1 in 5 NEET individuals in this group said that they had worked in a temporary job because they could not find a permanent job. This further reinforces the suggestion that some NEET individuals were in-between jobs, and also highlights the precarious work or income situations that some of these young people may experience. Holding a temporary position may make it harder to gain long-term work experience, as well as financial stability.

Caring for children a common main activity for NEET women aged 25 to 29

Among the NEET population, 14.4% indicated that their main activity in the past 12 months was caring for children. This answer was much more common among women (26.4%) than men (1.3%⁷). Women aged 25 to 29 were the most likely to have cared for children (38.8%), followed by women aged 20 to 24 (17.7%).

Interestingly, among the entire Canadian population aged 15 to 29, women aged 25 to 29 were the most likely to be NEET (16.4%) in September 2018. Additionally, this group was more likely to have been inactive than

7. Coefficient of variation of 25.1%, use with caution.

unemployed. Another recent study noted this higher inactive rate for 25- to 29-year-old women as well, and tied it to motherhood (Brunet, 2018).

Some young Canadians were NEET due to a physical or mental health concern or disability

A little more than 1 in 10 NEET individuals (11.5%) said that a physical or mental health concern or disability had kept them from doing something else as a main activity in the past 12 months. This category is important to consider in the context of the NEET population, as some studies, such as Brunet (2018) point out that these youth may face a greater risk of social exclusion and depression. A greater share of men than women indicated “own illness or disability” (13.8% compared with 9.3%), especially among those aged 25 to 29. People who were NEET and inactive had a larger proportion that had stated they had an illness or a disability (15.4%) compared with the unemployed (4.0%).

Other activities and looking for paid work

The 13.3% of NEET people in the “other activities” category can be broken down further. Specifically, 4.4% of the NEET population said they had done household work as their main activity, while 1.0%⁸ stated volunteering or care-giving other than for children. The activities of the remaining NEET included things such as unpaid family work, travelling, learning a language, or “nothing”.

Looking for paid work as a main activity was indicated by 8.2% of those who were NEET, with a greater share of men reporting this answer than women (12.6% compared with 4.2%). The unemployed NEET population was more likely to have looked for paid work than their inactive counterparts (15.8% and 4.2% respectively).

Differences between the Canadian born and immigrants

In September 2018, the 15 to 29 NEET rate for landed immigrants (14.8%) was higher than the rate for those born in Canada (10.4%). This was due to the higher NEET rate for the 25- to 29-year-old immigrant group (20.0% compared with 12.8% for the Canadian born).

Time since landing had an impact on the NEET rates for immigrants. Very recent immigrants (5 years or less) had a NEET rate of 18.3% in September, compared with a rate of 13.2% for immigrants who landed more than 5 years ago.

Looking at the main activity in the previous 12 months, the proportion of NEET individuals that had been working or going to school was similar for both immigrants and people born in Canada. The immigrant NEET group was more likely to have cared for children compared with those born in Canada (19.3% and 13.3% respectively). Among very recent immigrants who were NEET, 30.6% indicated that caring for children was their main activity in the previous 12 months, while the share was 12.5% among immigrants who had landed in Canada more than 5 years ago.

NEET individuals who were born in Canada were more likely to have indicated an illness or a disability compared with their immigrant counterparts (13.7% and 6.8% respectively).

Most of the NEET population had not volunteered as a main activity in the past 12 months

Another way to stay active and engaged is to help others. In September, young people aged 15 to 29 were asked two questions⁹ about their volunteer work for a group or organization, and any other assistance provided to others

8. Coefficient of variation of 29.6%, use with caution.

9. The questions on volunteering and helping others were not asked to respondents who reported “own illness or disability” as their main activity over the past 12 months.

of their own initiative without pay. As mentioned above, only 1.0%¹⁰ of the NEET population reported that they had been volunteering or care-giving other than for children as their main activity.

A small share of the NEET population volunteered for a group or organization

Though not as a main activity, about 29.1% of NEET individuals had volunteered for a group or organization to some extent over the period, compared with 37.0% of the non-NEET population. Among those who had volunteered, having done so “a few times in the past 12 months” was the most common answer (Table 1).

Table 1
Frequency of volunteering for a group or organization in the past 12 months

	NEET	Non-NEET
	percent	
At least once a week	8.9	7.9
At least once a month	5.1	7.1
A few times in the past 12 months	15.2	22.0
Not at all in the past 12 months	70.9	63.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, September 2018.

Close to half of young NEET people provided help to others without pay

Looking at assistance provided to others of their own initiative and without pay,¹¹ 48.0% of the NEET population provided this type of help in the past 12 months (Table 2), compared with 53.4% of the non-NEET population. “A few times in the past 12 months” was the most common frequency for providing this help, followed by “at least once a week”.

Table 2
Frequency of providing unpaid help in the past 12 months

	NEET	Non-NEET
	percent	
At least once a week	16.7	13.8
At least once a month	11.2	13.9
A few times in the past 12 months	20.1	25.7
Not at all in the past 12 months	52.0	46.6
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, September 2018.

Conclusion

This study considered the 11.3% of young Canadians (aged 15 to 29) who were NEET in September 2018, and their activities over the previous 12 months. While most had previously been going to school or working, caring for children was also a common answer among women who were NEET. In September 2018, women aged 25 to 29 had the highest NEET rate, and most commonly reported caring for children.

Overall, very few NEET individuals had volunteered as their main activity, though a little less than a third had volunteered to some extent. Slightly over 1 in 10 NEET individuals said that a physical or mental health concern or disability had prevented them from doing something else as a main activity in the previous 12 months.

10. Coefficient of variation of 29.6%, use with caution.

11. Examples include unpaid work at someone's home (cooking, cleaning, gardening, shovelling snow or car repairs), helping someone with paperwork tasks (writing letters, doing taxes, banking, filling out forms), providing someone with health-related or personal care (emotional support, counselling and providing advice) and unpaid teaching, tutoring or assisting with reading.

Data sources and definitions

This analysis uses data from the September 2018 Labour Force Survey (LFS) in order to examine youth aged 15 to 29. These youth may be:

- In education—including both full- and part-time students at primary and secondary educational institutions, colleges and universities. For the purpose of this analysis, young people attending “other schools” are not considered in education or training.
- Employed—youth who, during the LFS reference week, were working, or had a job but were temporarily absent from work (for reasons such as illness, vacation, labour dispute or personal or family responsibilities).
- Unemployed (available and looking for work)—youth who had looked for work in the past four weeks ending with the reference period and were available for work.
- Inactive (not looking for work)—youth who were neither employed nor unemployed. These youth may be doing productive activities, such as travelling, volunteering, or caring for a family member, or activities that are a cause for concern, such as dropping out of school or abandoning a job search.
- This report uses data that were derived from questions added to the September 2018 LFS to determine, among other topics, the main activity of respondents in the past 12 months, and specifically for people aged 15 to 29, the frequency of volunteering activities over that period.
- These voluntary questions, specifically asked to the population aged 15 to 29 were:
 - a. During the past 12 months, was your main activity working at a paid job, self-employed or something else?
 - b. During the past 12 months, was your main job permanent, or is there some way that it was not permanent? (for example, seasonal, temporary, term or casual)
 - c. What was the main reason you were in a non-permanent job?
 - d. In the past 12 months, what was your main activity?
 - e. Did you work at a job or business at any time in the past 12 months?
 - f. In the past 12 months, how often did you volunteer for a group or organization?
 - g. Now think about helping people on your own, not on behalf of an organization. For example, caring for someone’s home, driving someone to an appointment, visiting the elderly, shovelling snow or unpaid babysitting. In the past 12 months, how often did you carry out any of these types of activities without pay?

For more information see the *Guide to the Labour Force Survey* ([71-543-G](#)).

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