

# NEET YOUTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

An analysis of inequalities  
and opportunities for educational  
and vocational integration



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# **NEET YOUTH IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

*An analysis of inequalities  
and opportunities for educational  
and vocational integration*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

**NEA** - National Employment Agency

**NBS** - National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova

**EUROSTAT** - The Statistical Office of the European Union, responsible for publishing high-quality statistics and indicators at European level.

**VETI** - Vocational Education and Training Institution

**MER** - Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova

**NEET** (Not in Employment, Education or Training) - young people who are not in employment, not in a formal education programme and not participating in non-formal or informal education activities.

**SDGs** - Sustainable Development Goals

**ILO** - International Labour Organisation

**GDP** - Gross Domestic Product

# INTRODUCTION

**A**ccess of young people to education and employment is one of the priorities of governments throughout the world, especially as there are still some difficulties in integrating young people into the education system and the labour market, leading to low levels in the fulfilment of young people's potential. To better capture the situation of young people, in particular their inactivity and vulnerability on the labour market, both international organisations and institutional actors are increasingly making use of the concept of NEET young people.

**NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people are a demographic group in the global socio-economic context of growing concern.** They are young people who are not in employment, formal education or vocational training. The NEET phenomenon is complex and influenced by a number of economic, social and cultural factors which vary from region to region. Large numbers of NEET young people reflect not only individual difficulties but also structural problems in a country's economy, indicating the under-utilisation of young human capital and potentially negative consequences for long-term economic and social development. These young people risk becoming disconnected from the labour market and the education system, which can lead to social exclusion and long-term career difficulties.

## **Law No. 105/2018 on the Promotion of Employment and Unemployment Insurance:**

**NEET youth** - young people aged 15-29, who are not part of the employed population, are not studying/learn in the formal education system and do not participate in any courses or other training outside the formal education system.

## **Law No 215/2016 on Youth:**

**Young person** – person aged between 14 and 35.

**Globally, NEET young people make up a significant proportion of the youth population.** According to a 2023 [report](#) by the International Labour Organization (ILO), around 20% of young people aged 15-24 are classified as NEET. This proportion varies significantly between different regions. In emerging economies, and in developing countries, such as the sub-Saharan region, the proportion of NEET young people can be as high as 30%, while in the developed economies of Western Europe and North America, rates are lower. In the European Union, the percentage of NEET young people was around 11% in 2023, according to [Eurostat](#).

**The NEET indicator is an important concept that captures a wide range of vulnerabilities among young people.** Covering the problems of early school leaving, unemployment and discouragement in the labour market, the NEET status also highlights the problems of young people who are engaged in family work, housework and care work for self-consumption and are therefore unpaid. The consequences of the high NEET rate are twofold. First, at individual level, absence from both education and the labour market increases the risk of poverty and long-term economic inactivity. Second, at country level, a high NEET rate leads to losses in terms of unutilised labour supply, of lower productivity and of lower GDP.

**The crises of recent years have increased inequalities in the labour market.** While development and poverty reduction efforts and shifts in norms of gender have improved over the past two decades, the overall prospects of young women and men, the impact of the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis has diminished these efforts, increasing the vulnerability of young people in the labour market. In addition to the

social consequences such as exclusion, discrimination, deprivation and emigration, the NEET phenomenon among young people leads to significant economic costs. Thus, it is estimated that around 1.2% of GDP is lost in EU countries where the NEET rate does not exceed the average for the region (14.8%), and over 2% of GDP in countries with a NEET rate above 20%. In Moldova, where the share of NEET young people is well above the EU average and the country's economy is in deep crisis, the losses are substantial. Given the potential that exists and the need to strengthen the contribution of young people to future economic and social development, global commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals have emphasised the need for a higher quality of education, greater training opportunities and initiatives to increase youth employment.

**Reducing the rate of NEET youth has become a global goal.** This is reflected in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Goal 8 "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" includes two targets: i) by 2030, to ensure decent and productive work for all women and men, including young people and people with disabilities, as well as equal pay for work of equal value, and eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex or other grounds, ii) by 2030, to substantially reduce the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

**In this context, it is crucial to understand why some young people become NEET and what are the main factors that place them in this category.** This report aims to explore in detail who are the NEET young people in Moldova, to identify the barriers that prevent them from integrating into the labour market or the education system, and to propose solutions to improve their situation. The aim of this analysis is to contribute to the development of effective policies and programmes to support NEET young people in their transition to an active and productive life.

The report was prepared by the Partnership for Development Center to analyse the educational and vocational situation of NEET youth, with a special focus on young women in this category. The report is based on data from a representative survey of the NEET youth population in Moldova, conducted by Magenta Consulting between June and July 2024.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**A**lthough Moldova has the highest rate of NEET young people in the region, this rate has tended to decrease in recent years. According to data from the [National Bureau of Statistics](#) (NBS), the NEET rate for the age-group 15-29 fell from 31.2% in 2020 to 20.3% in 2024. In recent years, the authorities have stepped up efforts to support this group, resulting in an overall improvement in the situation. The implementation of national strategic documents, such as the Moldova 2030 Strategy, the Youth 2030 Strategy and the Education 2030 Strategy, as well as the expansion of NEA programmes have had a significant impact in alleviating the economic inequalities faced by young people.

**The NEET rate among females is higher than that for males.** According to NBS data, the most pronounced gender gap is observed in the 15-34 age-group, where the NEET rate for females is 31.2% compared with 17.8% for males. This disparity can be attributed to social, economic and cultural factors that limit females' access to educational and vocational opportunities. Women tend to remain NEET for longer periods than men. They are also more likely to be involved in caring for the family, while NEET men are more likely to be unemployed.

**More than half (51.8%) of NEET young people found in rural areas.** This can be explained by the limited access to educational and employment opportunities in rural areas, where infrastructure and resources are often insufficient. Lack of investment in these regions contributes to the social and economic exclusion of young people. From an educational perspective, young people who have only completed secondary education are most likely to become NEET, confirms the NEET youth survey data.

**NEET young people's sources of income are dominated by financial support from spouses or other household members.** The survey data show that the most commonly reported source of income is the spouse's salary (50%). This reflects dependence on the partner's income, suggesting economic vulnerability, explained by difficulties in accessing the labour market or further education.

**The majority of NEET young people who have dropped out of education (holding at most a high school education level) do not intend to return to education.** A large proportion of young people who are currently not in employment or education (formal or non-formal) have very low educational attainment. According to data from the [National Bureau of Statistics](#), 36.6% of NEETs aged 15-34 have only completed secondary education.

**Financial capacity, family responsibilities and the relevance of studies are the main barriers preventing NEET young people from pursuing formal specialised education.** Data from the NEET Youth Survey show that, for 40% of NEET youth, the cost of education is beyond their financial means. This situation is most acute in rural areas. Family responsibilities are the main barrier to learning for women while, for men, it is - the relevance of studies. The unequal division of caring tasks places a disproportionate burden on women, who are often forced to forego career and personal and professional development opportunities. Men, on the other hand, drop out of education because of its perceived uselessness and low relevance.

**NEET young people do not consider vocational studies to be useful and adapted to today's reality,** and this trend is more frequently observed among urban, middle-to-high income and highly educated young people. The way vocational studies are organised appears to influence the low interest in learning. According to the survey, more than 6% of NEET young people believe that the current education system is too rigid and does not offer enough flexibility.



**The interest of NEET young people in non-formal studies is higher than for formal studies.** The survey data show that the proportion of young people who are not interested in non-formal education is less than half of that for those who are not interested in formal specialised studies (35.2% compared with 78.6%). However, overall, fewer than 10% of NEET young people have been trained in non-formal education.

**Most young people with NEET status have previous work experience.** The survey data show that 77.5% of the current NEET young people have been employed in the past, of whom 45.4% were formally employed, 23.2% informally employed, and 8.9% both formally and informally employed. Every third NEET young person who was previously employed had worked in the private sector as a skilled or unskilled worker. NEET young people predominantly have work experience in sales/trade, construction and catering. Half of NEET young people cite the size of the salary as a reason for leaving the job. At the same time, 40.2% of NEET young people had to withdraw from the labour market due to family responsibilities.

**The majority of NEET young people intend to get a job in the near future (over 80%).** Young women would prefer to work in feminised professions (considered to be more female-dominated), such as beauty services, sales/trade, education and childcare, catering and cleaning services, which are often low-paid. Young men, on the other hand, would prefer to work in construction, agriculture, transport and logistics, information technology, business and administration, coveting better paid and more male-oriented professions. In order to get into employment, young NEET women consider that they need to develop their communication skills, while young NEET men need to develop their field-specific technical skills.

**NEA services are rarely accessed by NEET young people.** Only one young person in four has ever turned to NEA for employment support. Those who have accessed the Agency's services have benefited most from unemployment benefits and labour market information. Although the rate addressing the NEA was low, the level of satisfaction of young people with the services they received from the Agency shows a positive trend, with all NEA services being considered useful. At the same time, in the survey, young people say that a flexible working schedule is very useful for getting into employment, especially for parents with young children.

# PROFILE OF YOUNG NEET PEOPLE

The rate of NEET youth in Moldova has been steadily decreasing in recent years. Although it experienced some fluctuations over the 2019-2024 period, there is a generally positive trend, according to [NBS](#) data. In 2019, the NEET rate for the 15-29 age-group was 27.4% (19.4% for males and 35.5% for females), falling to 20.3% in the first quarter of 2024 (16.5% for males and 24% for females). The 15-34 age-group shows a similar trend, with the NEET rate decreasing from 30.8% in 2019 to 24.9% in Q1 2024, with a slight increase only in 2020, explained by the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which particularly affected young people. This dynamic suggests the positive effects of the programmes and projects implemented by National Employment Agency (NEA) and development partners. In recent years, the authorities have stepped up their efforts to support this group, contributing to an overall improvement in the situation. The NEET youth rate in Moldova has shown a positive trend due to several factors. The implementation of national strategic documents such as the Moldova 2030 Strategy, Youth 2030 Strategy and Education 2030 Strategy has had a significant impact. These strategies include specific objectives to support NEET youth by increasing their income, alleviating economic inequality and their reintegration into the education system. In addition, the NEA expanded vocational counselling and training programmes, thus facilitating the integration of NEET youth into the labour market.

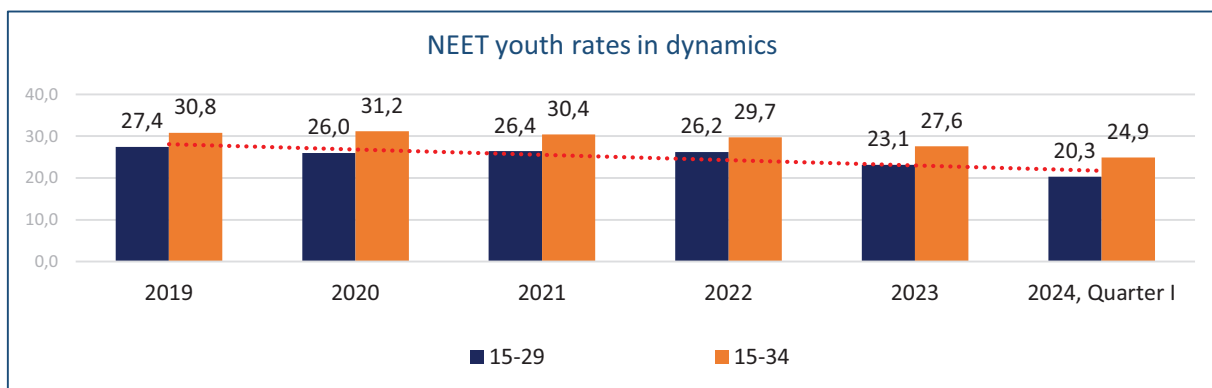


Figure 1. NEET youth rate trend in the Republic of Moldova, %

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

Moldova has the highest NEET youth rate in the region. While countries in Western Europe and Scandinavia, such as Norway Sweden and Switzerland, have low rates of NEET young people, indicating a more effective system of inclusion, countries such as Romania, Italy and Greece continue to have high rates, suggesting persistent difficulties in youth employment ([Eurostat](#)). In Moldova, although progress has been made in recent years thanks to national strategic documents and NEA programmes, the NEET rate remains the highest when compared with other countries.

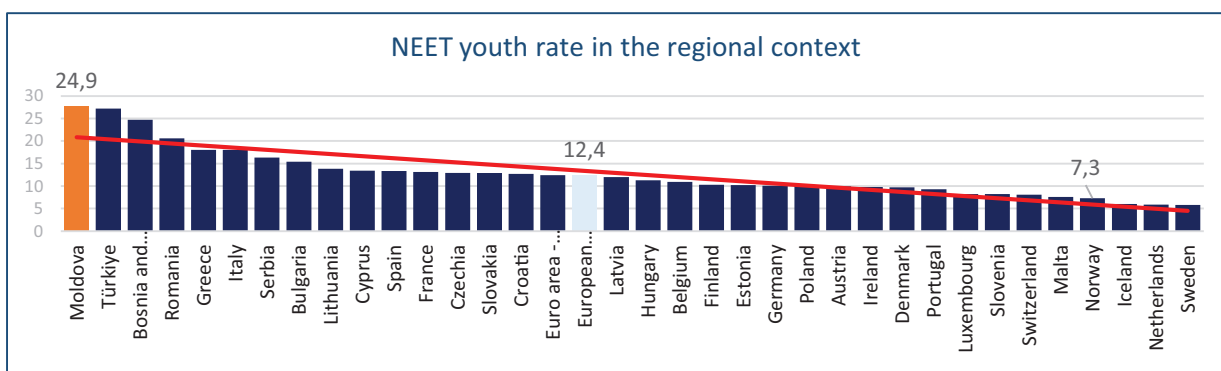


Figure 2. Trend in the rate of NEET 15-34 year olds, in regional context, %

Source: Eurostat

**The rate of NEET young people increases significantly as they grow older.** The figure below gives a detailed insight into the distribution of young people by their participation in education, training and work. According to [NBS](#) data, out of the total number of young people aged 15-34, 24.9% are NEET (74.2 thousand), 30.1% are involved in education or vocational training, while 35.1% are employed in the labour force. Over 6% of young people are abroad working or looking for work. Within the 15-19 age-group, the majority of young people (87.7%) are engaged in education or training, with a very low NEET rate (2.9%). This suggests that, at this age, some young people are in compulsory education (secondary education), while others are focusing on acquiring skills and preparing for the labour market. In the 20-24 age-group, the situation changes fundamentally - the share of young people involved in education/vocational training falls by 50 percentage points (to 36.8%), while the share of NEET young people increases significantly to 21.8%. This indicates a critical transition period in which young people have completed some education (most often relatively low level) and are experiencing difficulties in integrating into the labour market. In the 25-29 and 30-34 age-groups, the NEET rate is over 30%. This points to the persistent problem of integrating young adults into the labour market, which requires strategic interventions and appropriate policies. The biggest concerns are the steady increase in the share of NEET young people as they grow older and the low share of those combining education with work. It is essential to implement policies to support young people in the transition from education to the labour market and to ensure their access to further training opportunities. In addition, particular attention should be paid to young people in older age-groups to prevent their social and economic exclusion.

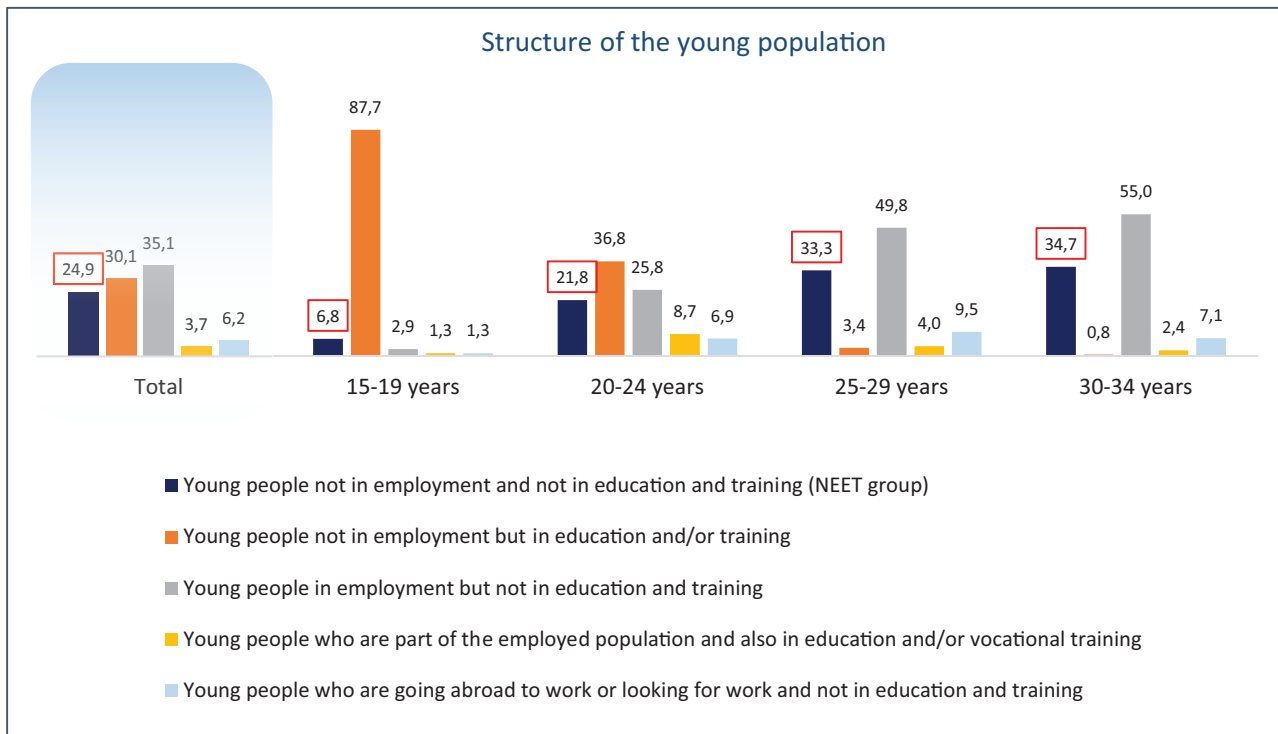


Figure 3. Structure of young people by categories and age-groups, quarter I 2024

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

**Regardless of age, the majority of NEET young people are women.** Analysis of the NEET youth rate by age-group and gender reveals two key trends. The first trend shows that the 15-34 age-group has the highest NEET rate at 24.9% (see Figure 4). This suggests that young people in this age-group face the greatest difficulties in integrating into the labour market and the education system, largely prioritising family and household tasks. The second significant trend is gender disparity, highlighting that the NEET rate is higher among females, regardless of age. The most pronounced gender gap is observed in the 15-34 age-group, where the NEET rate among females is 31.2% compared with 17.8% for males. This disparity can be attributed to social, economic and cultural factors that limit females' access to educational and vocational opportunities.

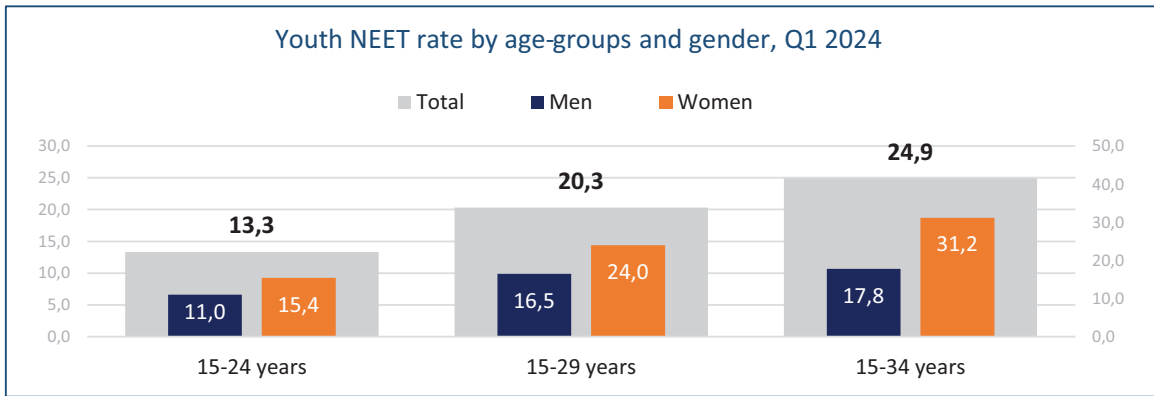


Figure 4. NEET young people by age-groups and gender, Q1 2024, Q1 2024, %

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

**Young people with secondary education are most likely to become NEET, especially young women.**

The figure below shows the structure of NEET young people by age and educational attainment, highlighting the significant differences between men and women. In the 15-24 age-group, men with secondary education account for 38.5%, while those with secondary vocational technical education account for 26.7%. Similar trends are also found in the following age-groups, suggesting that only one third of NEET young people (regardless of age-group) have completed vocational education, which would enable them to enter the labour market in a skilled job. The percentage of NEET males with secondary education is significantly higher in all age-groups. For women, the trends are similar but more pronounced. In the 15-24 age-group, women with secondary education account for 57.9%, while the percentage falls to 38.3% and 37.9% for the 15-29 and 15-34 age-groups respectively. Among females, the share of those with post-secondary non-tertiary technical vocational education and high school education is relatively low compared with other educational levels.

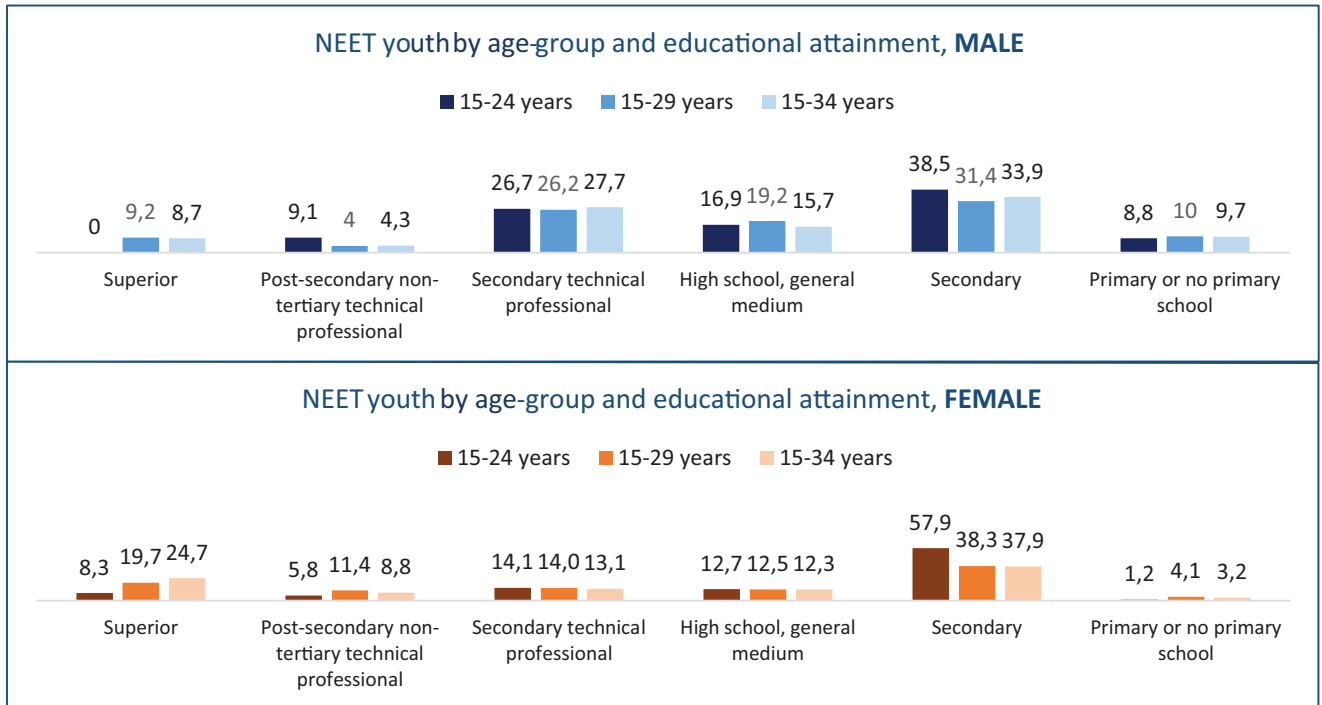


Figure 5. NEET youth by age-groups and educational attainment, Q1 2024, %

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

**NEET young people are mainly found in rural areas and in Chisinau.** The survey of NEET young people shows that the share of those living in rural areas is 51.8% compared with 48.2% in urban areas, suggesting a more pronounced problem in rural areas. This discrepancy can be explained by the limited access to educational and employment opportunities in rural areas, where infrastructure and resources are often insufficient. Lack of investment in these regions contributes to the social and economic exclusion of young people. From a geographical perspective, the highest rate of NEET young people is found in the Centre area (25.7%), especially in the Chisinau region, where the share of NEET young people is 31.8%. These data suggest that although Chisinau is the capital and economic centre of the country, there are still significant challenges in integrating young people into the labour market. Factors such as high competition for jobs, high cost of living and internal migration to the city may contribute to these difficulties. In contrast, the North and South regions, although having lower NEET rates, face problems of infrastructure and access to resources, which limit young people’s opportunities and require specific interventions to improve the situation.

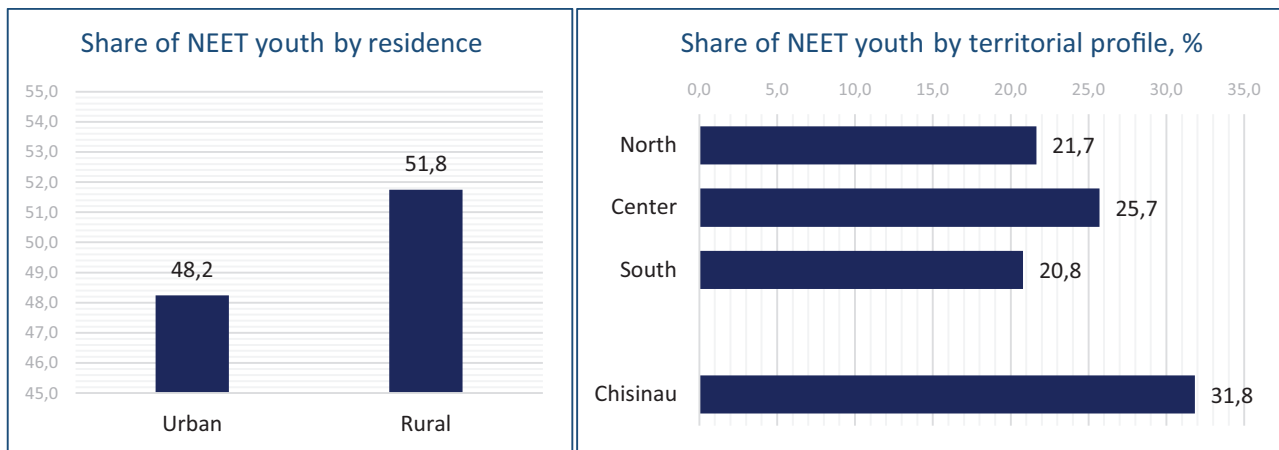


Figure 6. NEET youth by territorial profile, 2024, %

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**NEET women are predominantly involved in family care, while NEET men tend more often to be unemployed.** According to [NBS](#) data, across all age-groups, the majority of NEET women are homemakers, with a more pronounced trend in the 15-29 age-group (71%). This can be attributed to traditional gender roles and family responsibilities falling disproportionately on women. According to the Gender Equality Index 2024<sup>1</sup>, women are expected to be more present in private/family life than in public life. Around 50% of the population say that women should do more housework and over 60% believe that it is the man’s job to bring money into the home. These stereotypes contribute to women’s exclusion from the labour market and education. NEET men, on the other hand, are more likely to be unemployed. Although the percentage is relatively constant across all age-groups, the highest proportion of unemployed men is found in the 15-29 age-group, where 13% are unemployed (see Figure 7). This may be due to specific labour market challenges such as high experience and skill requirements, which may be more difficult for young men to meet. Another significant category is that of young people who have become NEET due to disability, who make up a sizable share among both men and women, with some important discrepancies. For example, according to NBS data, in the 15-24 age-group, 54% of men and 17% of women are in this situation. Causes can include limited access to support services and disability discrimination. In addition, a significant number of NEET young people are planning to work abroad or already have a job abroad. This trend is more evident among men, particularly in the 15-34 age-group.

The reasons may be related to limited economic opportunities at home and the perception that working abroad offers higher wages and better working conditions. These data highlight the need for specific interventions for each group of NEET young people, addressing the needs of men and women differently in order to facilitate their reintegration into the labour market and the education system.

<sup>1</sup> Gender Equality Index 2024, Center for Partnership for Development (CPD), [https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CPD\\_IG-2024.pdf](https://progen.md/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/CPD_IG-2024.pdf)

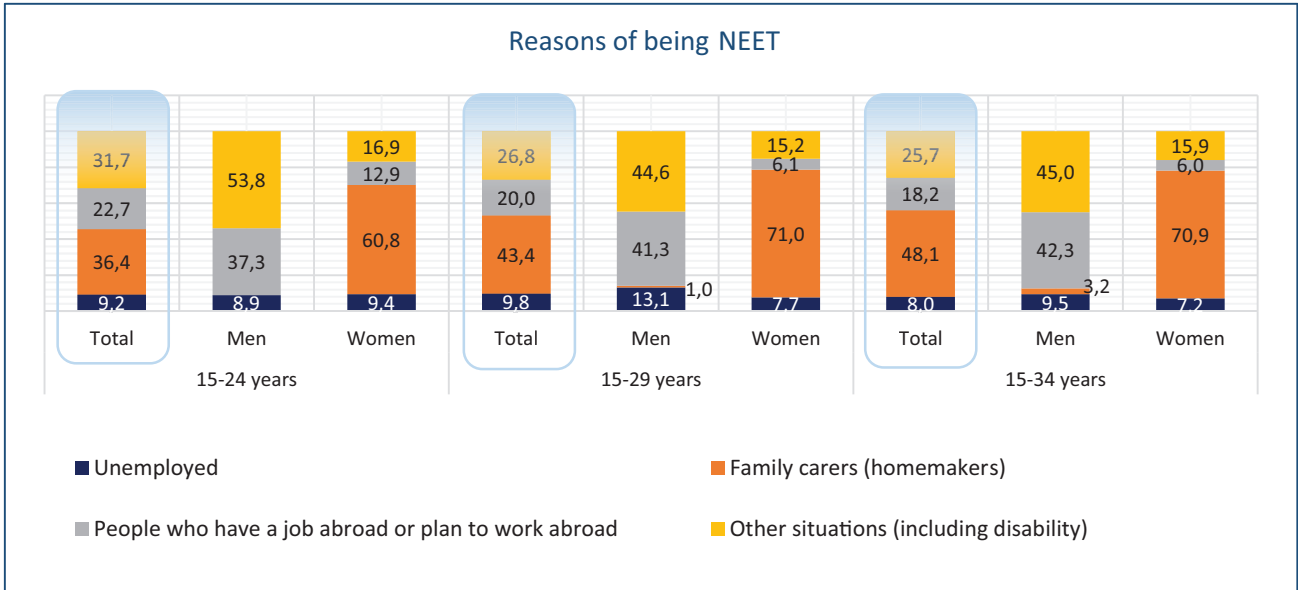


Figure 7. Structure of young people by age, sex, categories, first quarter 2024, %

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

**Women tend to remain NEET for longer periods than men.** Data from the survey of NEET young people show that 49.3% of young NEETs have been NEET for more than two years and around a third for up to 6 months. The gender distribution shows notable differences. Over 80% of young people in NEET status for more than two years are female and only 17.1% are male, while in the 1-2 years range, 56.9% are female and 43.1% male. For young people in NEET for less than 6 months, the situation is reversed: 58.8% are men compared to 41.2% who are women. These data suggest that women tend to remain NEET for longer periods than men (including due to periods associated with caring), highlighting the need for specific policy interventions and programmes to support women’s reintegration into employment and education.

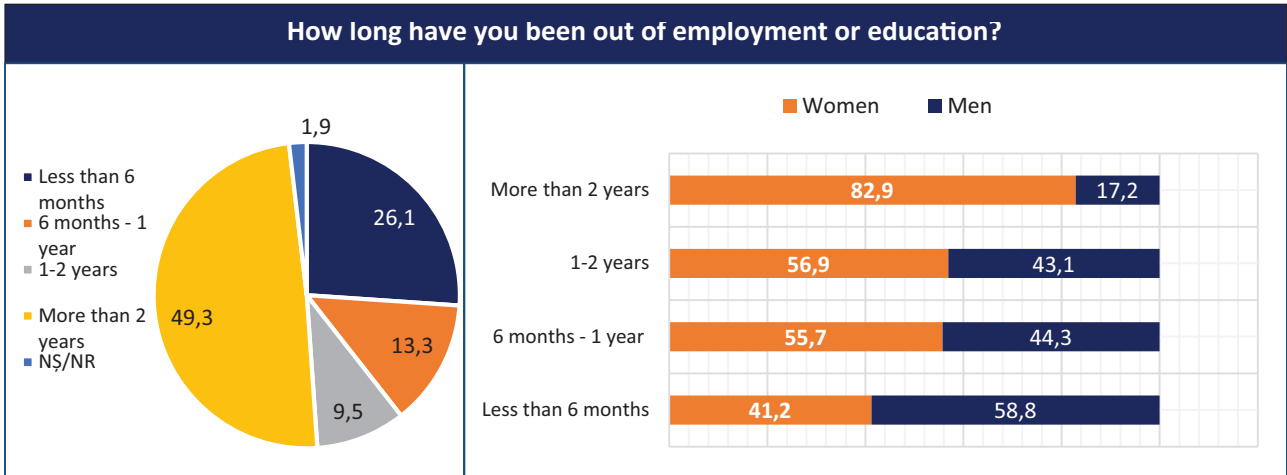


Figure 8. Distribution of NEET youth by length of time out of education and labour market, 2024, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Young people with low levels of education remain out of education and work the longest.** The figure below shows that more than half of young people with secondary education (grade 9) have been NEET for more than 2 years (56.2%), indicating significant difficulties in continuing education or finding a job due to lack of necessary skills and qualifications. The situation is similar for young people with vocational education, where 55.6% have been out of education and work for more than 2 years. Although these young people have acquired some vocational skills, limited access to suitable jobs and high labour market requirements may lead to this situation. In the case of young people who have completed general secondary education (grades 10-11), although they have a higher level of education, the lack of a clear specialisation, as well as insufficient guidance and counselling services, may be a barrier to finding a job. The rate of NEET young people falls significantly among those with tertiary education, especially post-graduates, where only 20.5% have been NEET for more than 2 years. This suggests that a higher level of education provides young people with the skills and knowledge needed to integrate more easily into the labour market or to continue their studies at more advanced levels.

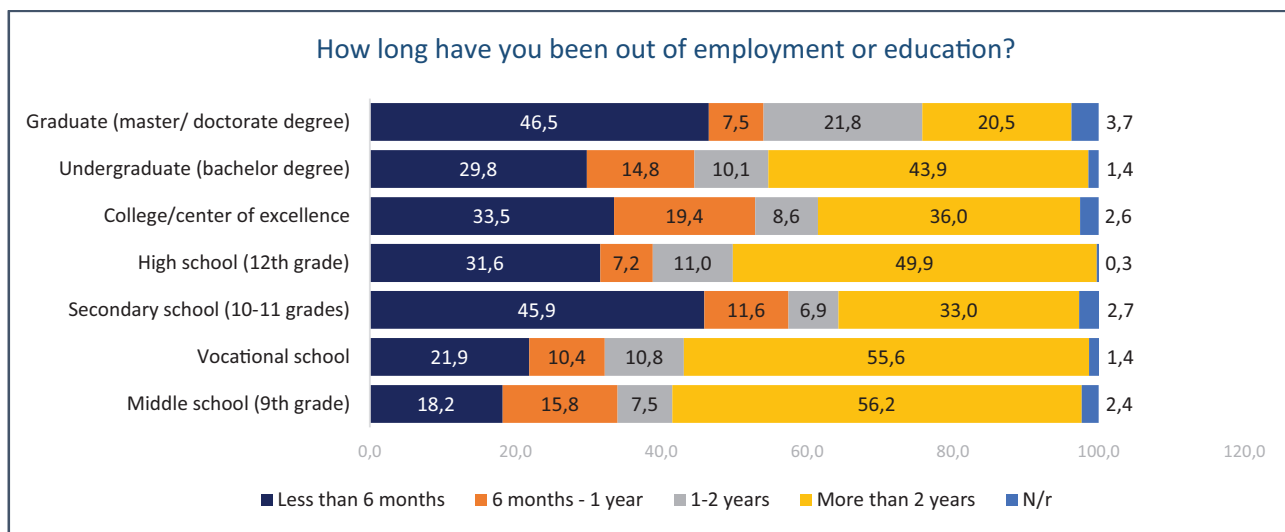


Figure 9. Time spent in NEET status, by educational attainment, 2024, %

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Young homemakers and young people with health problems, likewise, tend to be in NEET status for longer.** Young people caring for their family and household (62.2%) and those who are unemployed due to health problems or disabilities (63.3%) have a greater tendency to be NEET for more than 2 years. The care crisis, manifested by low access to care services (including from a financial perspective), the low level of accessibility of institutions (educational or employment), as well as discriminatory attitudes, limit the possibilities for these young people to (re)integrate into the education system or the labour market. There is a particular trend for young people planning to work abroad. More than 40% of them are in NEET status for less than 6 months, which indicates that they are engaged in long-term migration processes with a negative impact on the country's economic development. More attention should be paid to young people who neither have a job nor intend to look for a job, since 59.9% of them have had this status for more than two years. This category needs to be analysed and addressed through targeted support measures to facilitate their socio-economic integration (see Figure 10).

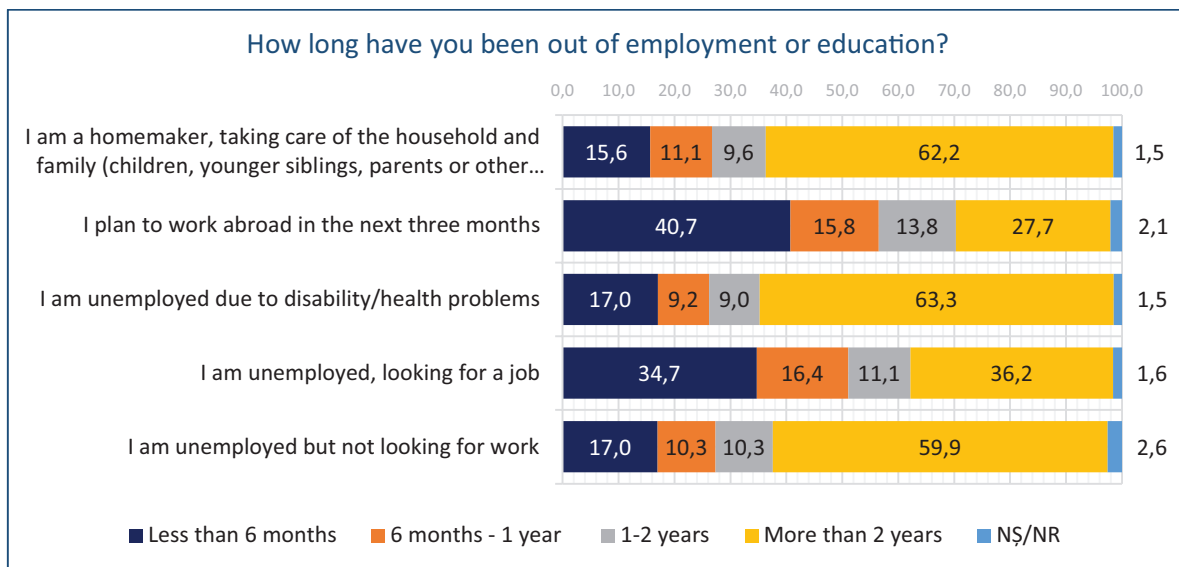


Figure 10. Time spent in NEET status, by cause type, 2024, %

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**NEET young people's sources of income are dominated by financial support from spouses or other household members.** The most commonly reported source of income is a spouse's salary, indicated by 50% of young people. This reflects a significant dependence on partner's income, suggesting increased economic vulnerability. The next major source of income is the salary of other household members (26.7%), indicating that NEET young people depend on the financial support of the extended family, which may be explained by their difficulties in accessing the labour market or further education. Child benefit (13.1%) and disability or old-age pension of a household member (10.4%) are other important sources of income. Less common sources of income include financial help from acquaintances/relatives, bank loans and unemployment benefits of a household member. These sources suggest that, in the absence of a stable income, NEET young people turn to informal support networks or loans to cover their needs. Other sources of income, such as financial support from organisations/institutions and selling goods/services, are reported by a very small proportion of NEET young people.

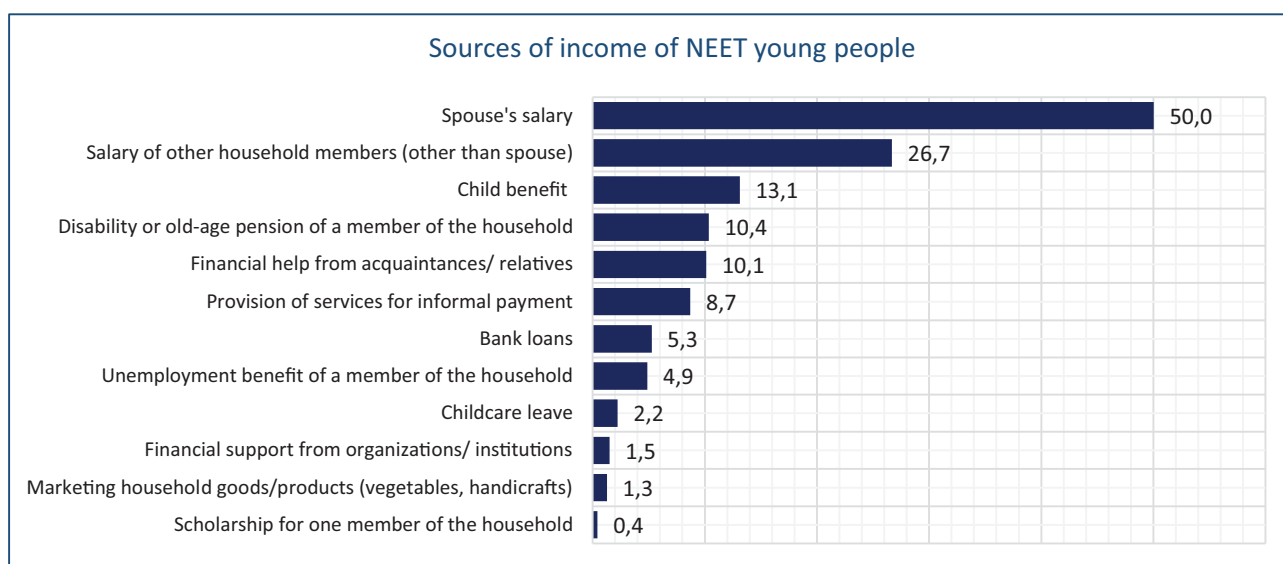


Figure 11. Sources of income of NEET young people, 2024, %

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting



**The majority of NEET young people are married, which explains their significant dependence on financial support from their partners.** This is also reflected in their sources of income. This dependence underlines economic vulnerability, particularly among women, who often rely on the financial support of their husbands while taking on household tasks. Young people in Moldova tend to marry early, with the average age at first marriage being one of the lowest among European countries. On average, women in Moldova tend to get married at the age of 26, while in other countries, such as Spain, Sweden, France, Italy and elsewhere, the age of women when they first marry is around 35. Men, whatever the context, tend to marry later than women. These data suggest that support policies and programmes need to take into account the fact that many NEET young people are married and dependent on their partners' income, which calls for support measures to guarantee their financial independence and reduce their economic vulnerability.

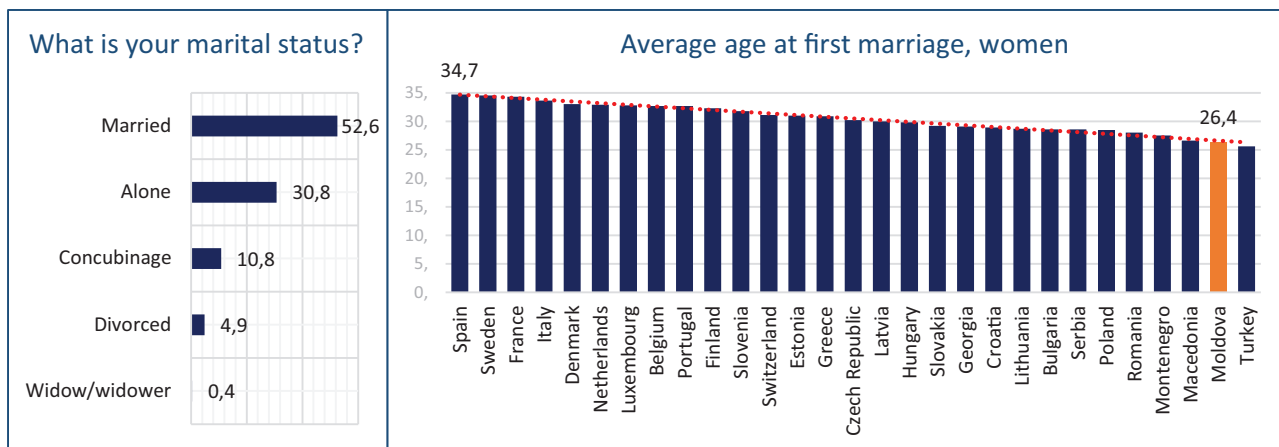


Figure 12. Marital status of NEET young people, 2024, %

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

# ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR NEET YOUTH

## GENERAL PARTICIPATION IN STUDIES

Only 60% of Moldova's adult population has received an education with a professional specialisation, which includes vocational-technical and higher education<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, one third of the population only has secondary education (general and incomplete), indicating a relatively low level of access to specialised education. This suggests that there are social, economic and regional disparities which limit access to advanced education. Analysis of the data shows that a higher proportion of women tend to complete tertiary education, while men opt for vocational-technical studies. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics, in 2023, women constituted about 63% of all graduates from higher education institutions.

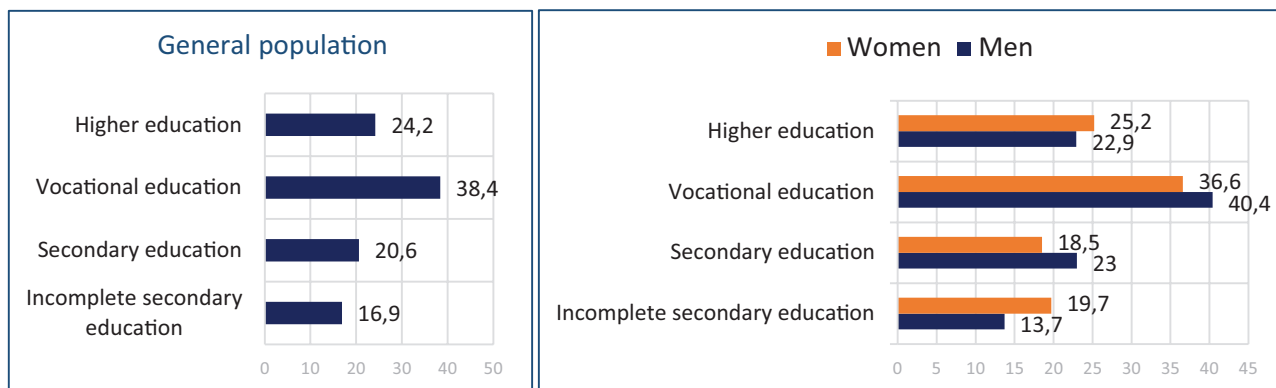


Figure 13. Structure of the adult population (18+) by educational attainment, %, 2023

Source: "Unequal Moldova" report, Center Partnership for Development (CPD), 2023

The share of the population with vocational education has tended to fall in recent years. The most noticeable change is seen in the population with medium level of education (vocational-technical), whose share fell from 48.5% in 2019 to 45.4% in 2022, according to NBS data. This decrease is due to the increase in the number of people with a low level of education (secondary school). The trends can be explained by multiple factors: (i) the labour market increasingly demands transversal skills, which makes vocational training seem less relevant, (ii) the quality and attractiveness of vocational-technical studies may be compromised due to a lack of human resources or insufficient infrastructure, (iii) the demand for certain trades is decreasing in the context of technological progress, etc.

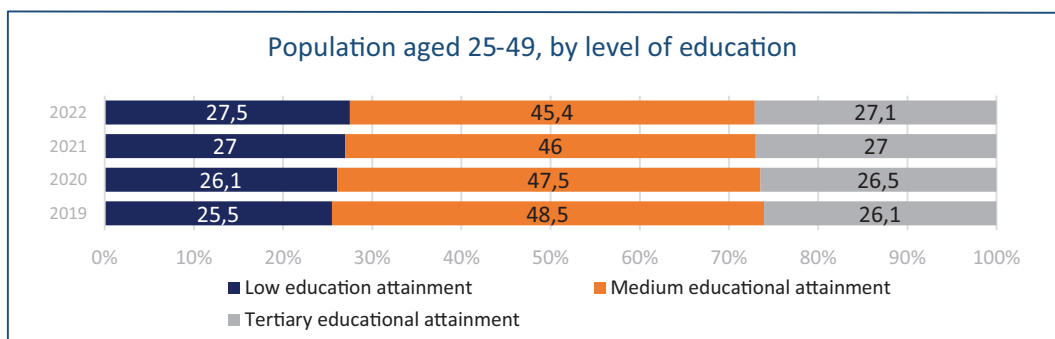


Figure 14. Population structure by educational level, in dynamics, %

Source: National Bureau of Statistics<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Report "Unequal Moldova", Center Partnership for Development (CPD), 2023

<sup>3</sup> Low educational attainment - at most secondary education; medium educational attainment - at least secondary/secondary education and at most college education; tertiary educational attainment - at least higher education (first cycle)

**Access to education among vulnerable groups is relatively low.** The analysis of the educational profile by group shows that people with disabilities are disadvantaged in obtaining vocational qualifications within the formal education system (see Figure 15). Thus, the share of those with tertiary education is about 9 percentage points lower compared with the general population<sup>4</sup>. Difficulties of access to educational institutions, inadequate infrastructure and legislative loopholes lead people with disabilities to drop out of further education.

**Around 40% of the Roma population have no education** and 15% have only a primary education. The figure below emphasises the vulnerability and level of marginalisation - about 65% of the Roma population has the lowest level of formal education (no education, primary and secondary education). This situation calls for structural, feasible measures to increase access to education, on the one hand, and their motivation, on the other. At the same time, we note that only 15% of Roma people have a vocational education<sup>5</sup>.

**Men from vulnerable groups are more involved in education than women.** In the case of people with disabilities, although there are no significant differences between women and men, there is still a slightly higher propensity for men to pursue vocational studies (Figure 15). In the case of Roma, however, learning inequalities are very evident: only half as many women (11.8%) as men (20%) have vocational studies. The figure below underlines the double inequality faced by vulnerable groups: on the one hand, they are more disadvantaged than the general population in terms of access to learning opportunities; on the other hand, inequalities also occur within the vulnerable group, with women being more marginalised in educational attainment.



Figure 15. Access to education for vulnerable groups, %, 2023

Source: "Unequal Moldova" report, Center Partnership for Development (CPD), 2023

<sup>4</sup> Report "Unequal Moldova", Partnership for Development Center (CPD), 2023

<sup>5</sup> The number of Roma having completed tertiary education is statistically insignificant; thus, this variable was excluded from the analysis.

## FORMAL EDUCATION

**The importance of formal education is recognised by most NEET young people, with the exception of certain groups.** Specifically, we refer to specialised studies (vocational-technical and higher education), which are considered by most NEET young people as important for developing a career or getting a well-paid job. Although this perception is shared by over 80% of NEET young people, according to the survey, certain groups have reservations about the importance of formal vocational studies (Figure 16). These include young people with low educational attainment (incomplete and general secondary education) in the 15-19 age cohort, as well as those who do not intend to look for a job or are planning to move abroad. These groups are the most vulnerable in terms of benefiting from educational opportunities, both in terms of actual access and their levels of motivation and interest in learning. At the same time, there are also important gender differences. Men, to a lesser extent, recognise the importance of formal specialised studies, which also explains their propensity to drop out early. Any policy to develop the specialist education system needs to take these disparities into account and target groups with low access to learning.

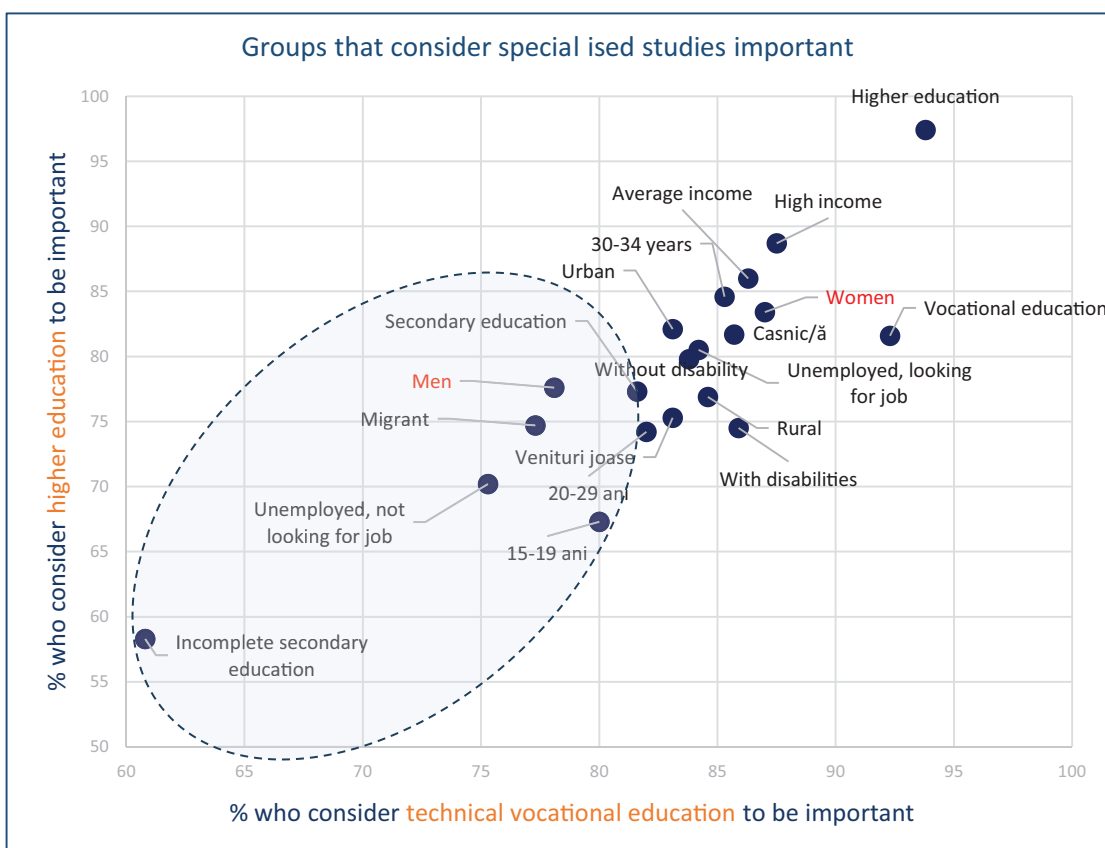


Figure 16. Chart of NEET young people who consider specialised studies to be important for career/ well-paid job, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Despite a general understanding of the importance of schooling, the rate of early school leavers from the formal education system remains consistently high.** According to data from the [National Bureau of Statistics](#), in 2022, more than 21% of young people aged 18-24 left school early (with a low level of education)<sup>6</sup>, with this trend being more pronounced among young men (24.5%, compared with 18.7% for young women). This trend can be explained by educational, socio-economic or institutional factors. A rigid education system that fails to provide relevant, interesting and relevant education tailored to pupils/students' individual needs contributes to demotivation and early drop-out rates. From a socio-

<sup>6</sup> The early school leaver rate is the share of the population aged 18-24 with elementary (low) education not attending any form of education in the last four weeks preceding the interview in the total population aged 18-24.

economic perspective, young men are often driven to take on family or economic responsibilities earlier, predominantly providing the family income, which again can lead to early drop-out. At the same time, males from disadvantaged backgrounds may be more likely to drop out of school to look for a job, as they may have difficulty meeting the costs of education. Individual factors, too, may determine the propensity to leave school early. Males may be less attracted to certain forms of traditional learning that do not offer practical or applied stimulation, and which can lead to decreased motivation and thus to dropping out. Males may have preferences for active and hands-on learning, and education systems that do not integrate these learning styles fail to keep young people in education.

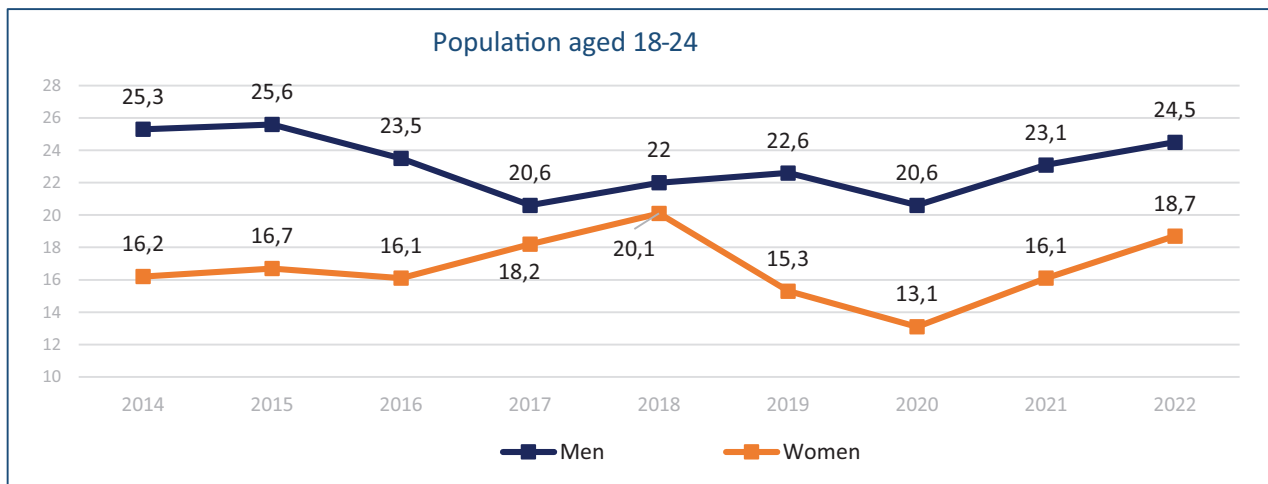


Figure 17. Early school leaving rate, %

Source: National Bureau of Statistics

**The majority of NEET young people who have dropped out of education (with at most a high school education) do not intend to return to education, although this trend is less pronounced among females.** The survey of NEET young people shows that a large proportion of those who are currently not in the labour market or in education (formal or non-formal) have a very low level of education. According to [NBS](#) data, 36.6% of NEET young people aged 15-34 have only completed secondary education. The propensity to continue formal specialised studies is very low - 78.6% of NEET young people with at most upper secondary education do not intend to return to the education system (see Figure 18).

**Financial capacity, family responsibilities and the relevance of studies are the main barriers preventing NEET young people from pursuing formal further education.** Financial possibilities are an extremely important factor that can influence learning decisions. According to the data, 40% of NEET young people, the cost of education is beyond their financial means, and this is the main reason for dropping out of vocational studies. This situation is most clearly felt in rural areas, where the proportion of women who give up further education due to lack of financial resources is twice as high as in urban areas (50% in contrast to 26%). Socio-economic inequalities highlight the degree of marginalisation of young people on low incomes, whose access to learning opportunities is often limited. Family responsibilities are another factor preventing NEET young people from continuing their studies, as they arrive at reproductive age and are at the family formation stage. Consequently, studies lose their relevance and importance in the face of family-related priorities (see Figure 18).

**Family responsibilities are females' main barrier to learning while, for males, it is the relevance of studies.** Some 47% of NEET young females, who have completed at most upper secondary education, point to family responsibilities as the main impediment to pursuing further studies, compared with only 14% of young men (Figure 18). The unequal division of childcare and household chores places a disproportionate burden on women, who are often forced to forgo careers and opportunities for personal and professional development in favour of family commitments. On the other hand, men drop

out of education because of its perceived uselessness and low relevance. The proportion of those who consider that they do not need to study is twice as high as that of women (31.1% compared to 14.7%), thus showing the differences in priorities. At the same time, men are more likely to give up studies for migration purposes, as this is one of the potential sources of income. These trends can be explained by social norms on gender roles, which require men to assume early on the role of breadwinner and women the role of caregivers.

**The way vocational studies are organised determines the low interest in learning.** The figure below shows that more than 6% of NEET young people believe that the current education system is too rigid and does not offer enough flexibility. Vocational curricula are predetermined (in terms of duration, organisation), which leaves insufficient room for manoeuvre for young people who do not have the possibility to follow a traditional study cycle. A conservative and non-flexible education system risks failing to meet the changing educational needs of young people. Digitisation, social and behavioural transformations lead to a continuous increase in the need for flexibility and continuous adaptation of the education system to the individual needs of pupils/students.

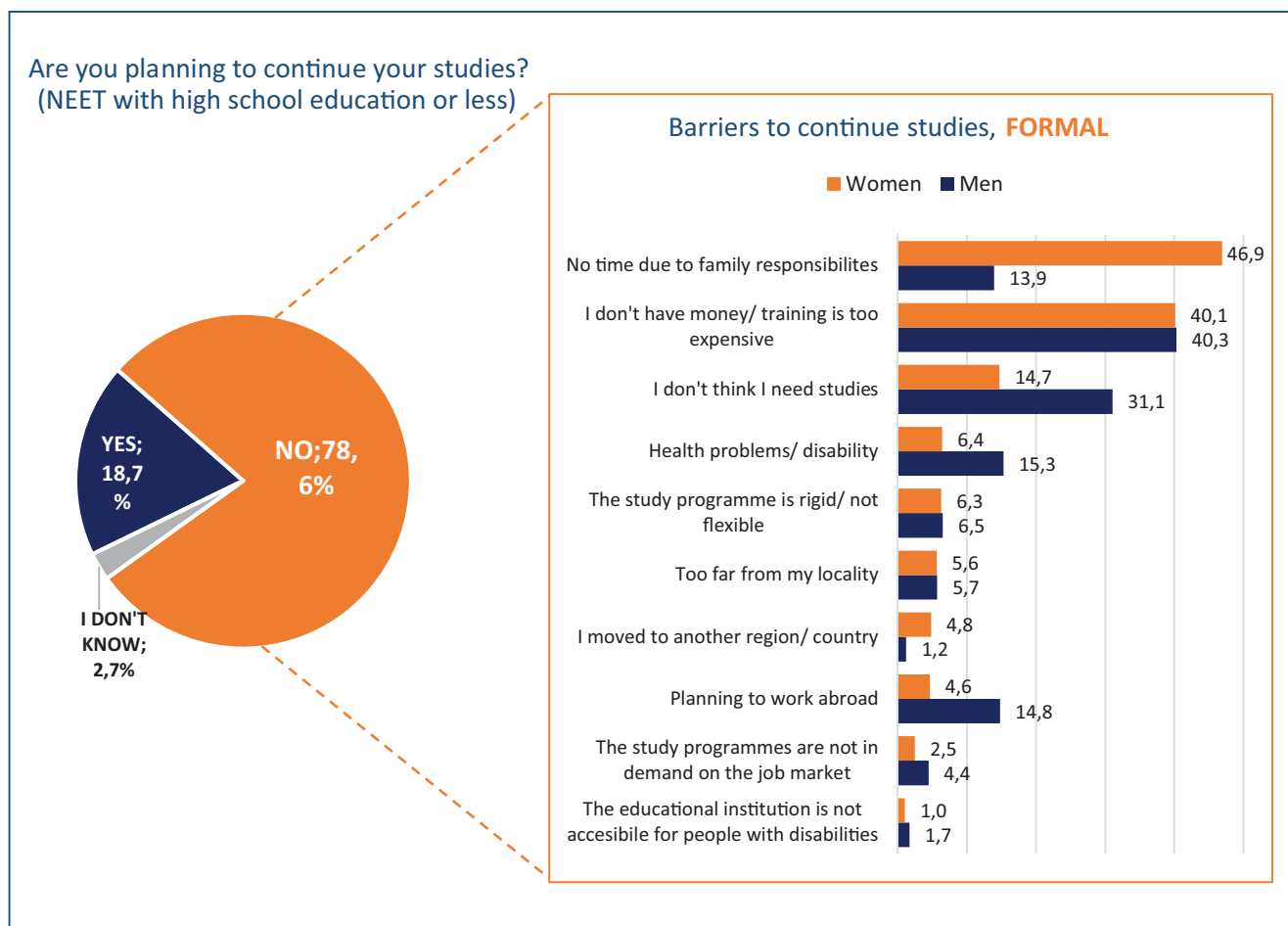


Figure 18. Barriers for NEET young people to access formal vocational education, %

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**NEET young people, especially young women, do not consider vocational education to be useful and adapted to today's realities, and this trend is more observed among young urban, middle- to high-income and highly educated young people (Figure 19).** Rapid changes in technology and labour market demands are making educational programmes obsolete or irrelevant, and the curricula do not develop the practical skills and competences that young people need to get a job. The focus on theory at the expense of practical experience can lead young people to skip the vocational education process. At the same time, low and unequal access to vocational guidance/career guidance places young people in a zone of uncertainty, without a clear direction for the future, and they end up being disillusioned by the options available.

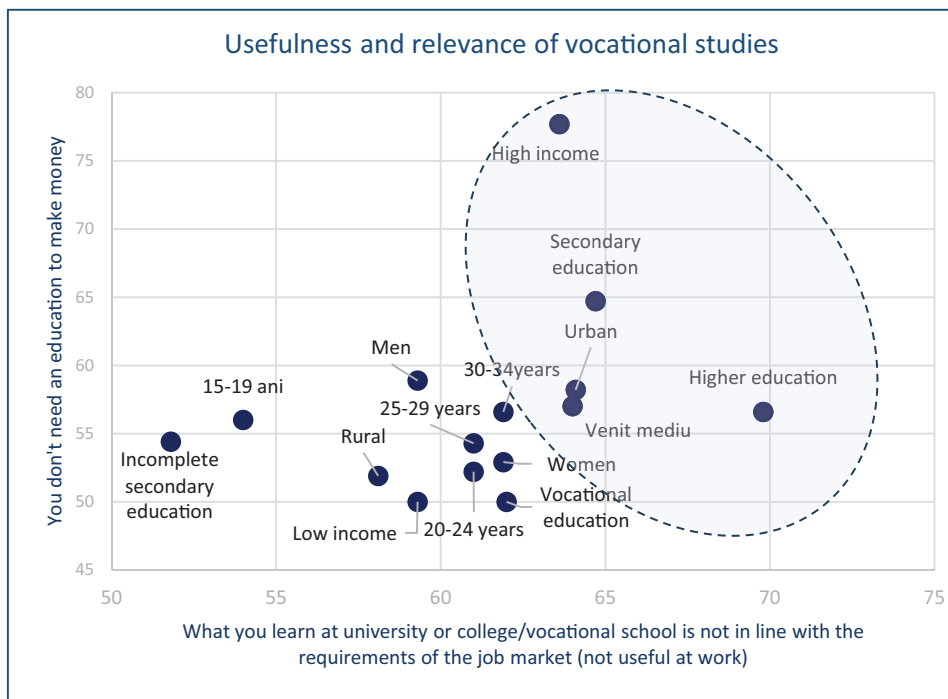


Figure 19. Map of NEET young people who consider specialised studies unnecessary and irrelevant, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men are another impediment to learning.** Survey data suggest that men mostly believe that it is women's duty to take on caring responsibilities and household chores, while financial maintenance responsibilities are to be assumed by men. Over 60% of NEET young people say that women often have to give up their studies or careers to cope with family responsibilities.

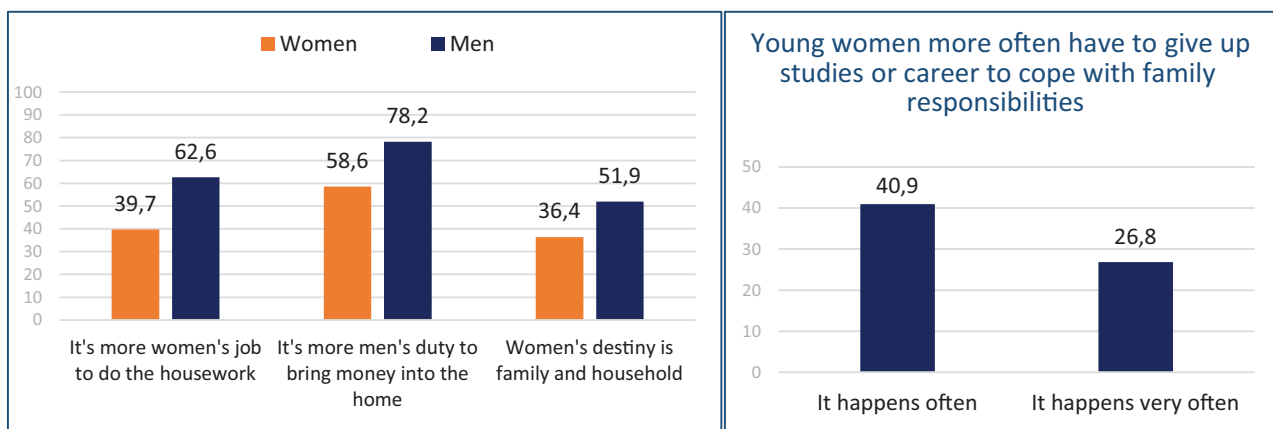


Figure 20. Share of NEET young people who share gender role stereotypes, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Social norms influence young people’s educational aspirations, which are quite low.** The [PISA 2022](#) test measures the level of education students hope to complete. According to the results, only 55% of Moldovan students aspire to higher education. There are significant differences in educational aspirations between disadvantaged and socio-economically advantaged pupils. For example, the difference between socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged pupils in terms of expectations of obtaining tertiary education is about 42 percentage points, and among those who said they expect to complete secondary education is about 33 percentage points (in favour of socio-economically advantaged pupils). At the same time, PISA 2022 data show that females have higher aspirations for educational attainment: the proportion of those who aspire to obtain a bachelor’s degree is 12 percentage points higher than that of males. The pressure of social norms and gender roles shaped in Moldovan society determine the level of educational aspirations of young people.

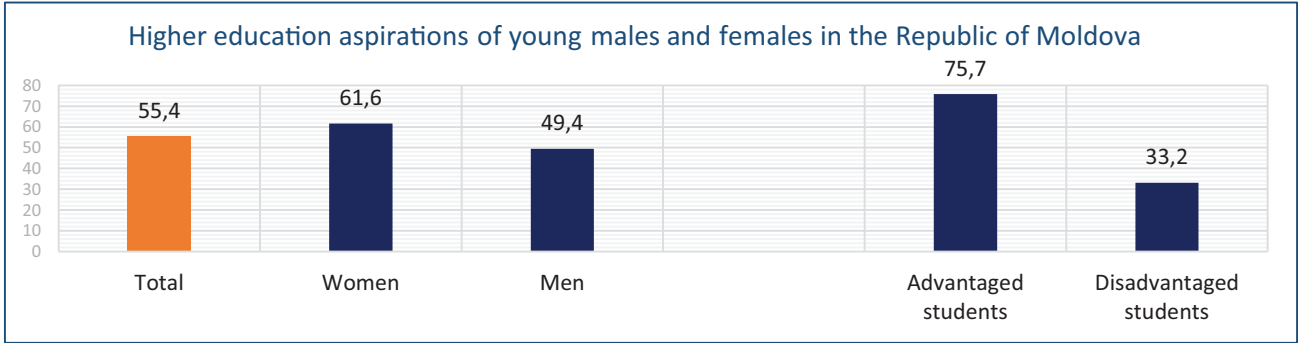


Figure 21. Share of pupils aspiring to tertiary education, %, 2022

Source: PISA 2022



## NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

**Under 10% of NEET young people have been involved in non-formal education, with females more frequently involved.** Non-formal education refers to learning that takes place outside the traditional education system and includes activities such as training courses, workshops, volunteering programmes and other experiences that develop practical and personal skills. Low participation rates in non-formal education may be influenced by multiple factors, including: (i) many young people do not know about the opportunities available or how to access these resources; (ii) non-formal education may be less accessible geographically or financially, which limits the participation of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; (iii) achievements in non-formal education are not sufficiently recognised or appreciated by employers or the mainstream education system, which may dampen young people’s motivation to participate.

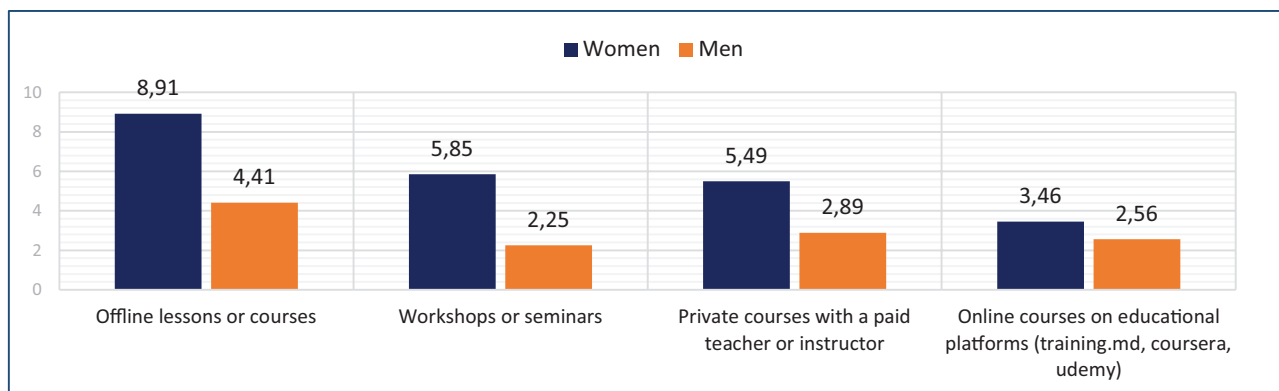


Figure 22. Participation rate of NEET young people in non-formal education, by form of education, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**The reasons for NEET females and males to participate in non-formal education vary significantly.** Intentions for personal and professional development, as well as the acquisition of new knowledge, are the main reasons behind the decision to take non-formal courses or training. However, data analysis suggests certain there are differences and predilections among young women and men. Women are driven by the desire for personal development (31%) so that they can find a job or secure an income. Men, on the other hand, are more oriented towards developing their professional skills (30%), thus becoming more competitive in the labour market and more likely to advance in their careers.

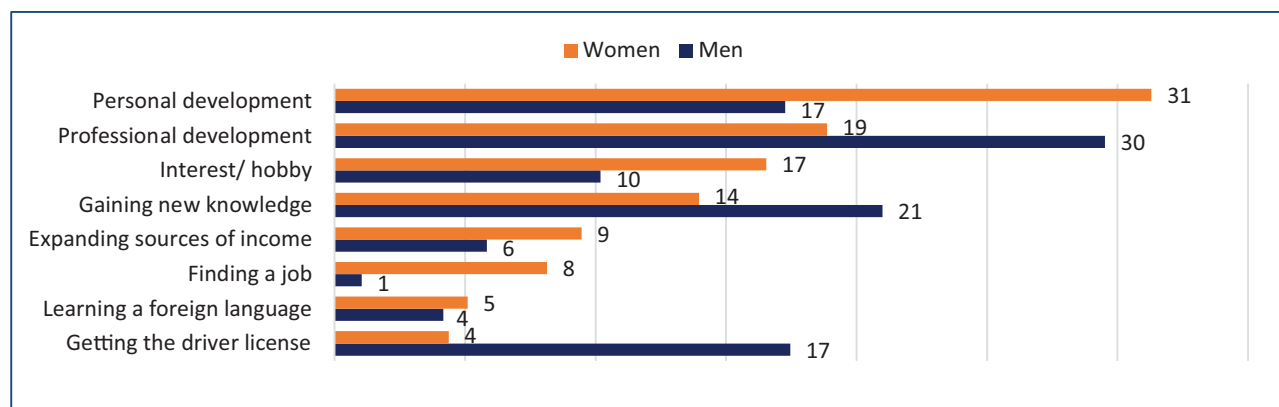


Figure 23. Reasons for NEET young people to participate in various forms of non-formal education, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**NEET young people, especially females, are more interested in non-formal education than in formal education.** The share of young people who are not interested in non-formal education is less than half that for those who are not interested in formal further education (35.2% compared with 78.6%). As in the case of formal education, the low relevance of courses, financial costs and family responsibilities are among the top barriers to learning. It is important to note that around 8% of NEET young people do not intend to take up employment and education, making them the most vulnerable group in this respect.

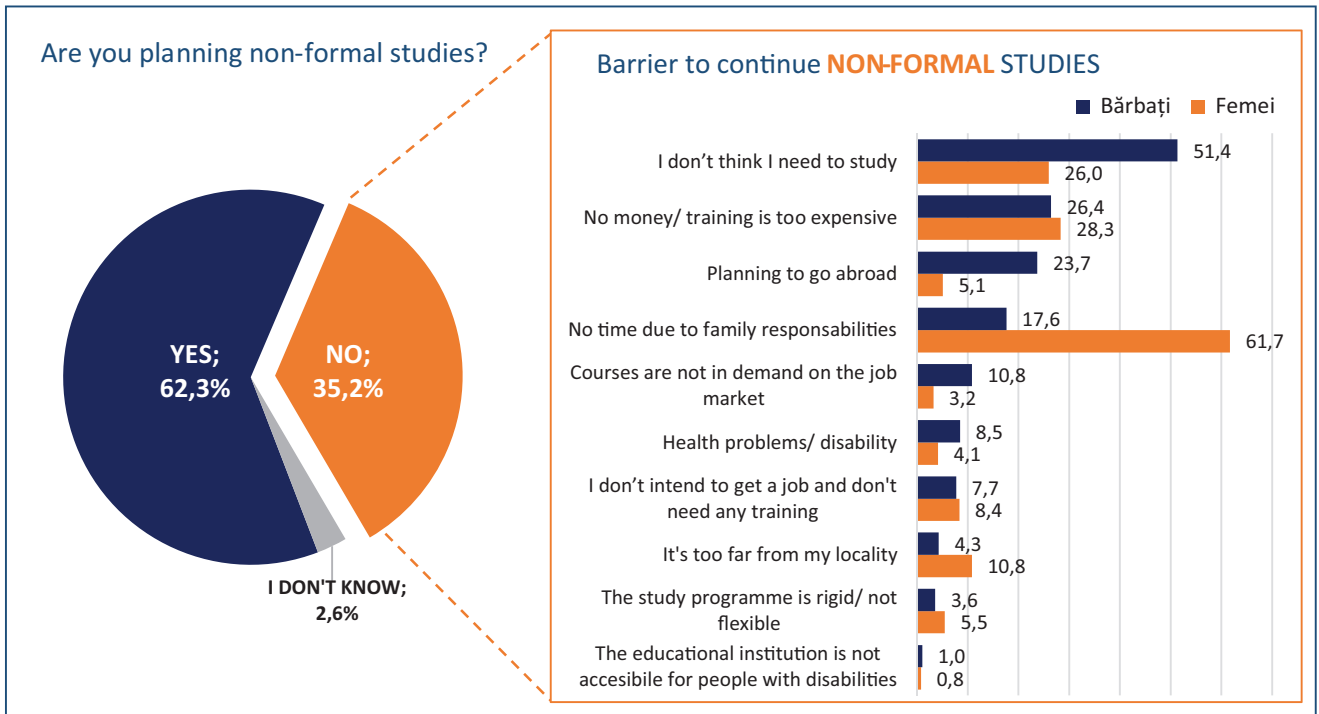


Figure 24. Barriers for NEET young people to access non-formal learning opportunities, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

## LEARNING ASPIRATIONS

**About one in five NEET young people with a low educational attainment intends to continue formal further education in the future, with females more likely to do so.** They are mostly oriented towards higher education (over 30%), followed by vocational studies – vocational school – (over 25%). Although their intentions are relatively similar, there are some differences between NEET young men and young women. Men’s intentions are more oriented towards technical studies (in college, centres of excellence), while those of women are towards other forms of education. As for informal studies, differences in future intentions are more pronounced. Over 60% of NEET young people plan to pursue some form of education in non-formal contexts. This trend is predominantly female, with a share of around 70%, compared with a rate of only 49% among men. Any effort to get NEET young people into education (formal or non-formal) must start by creating favourable conditions tailored to the individual interests, needs and requirements of each person, especially among groups with low access to and low motivation for learning.

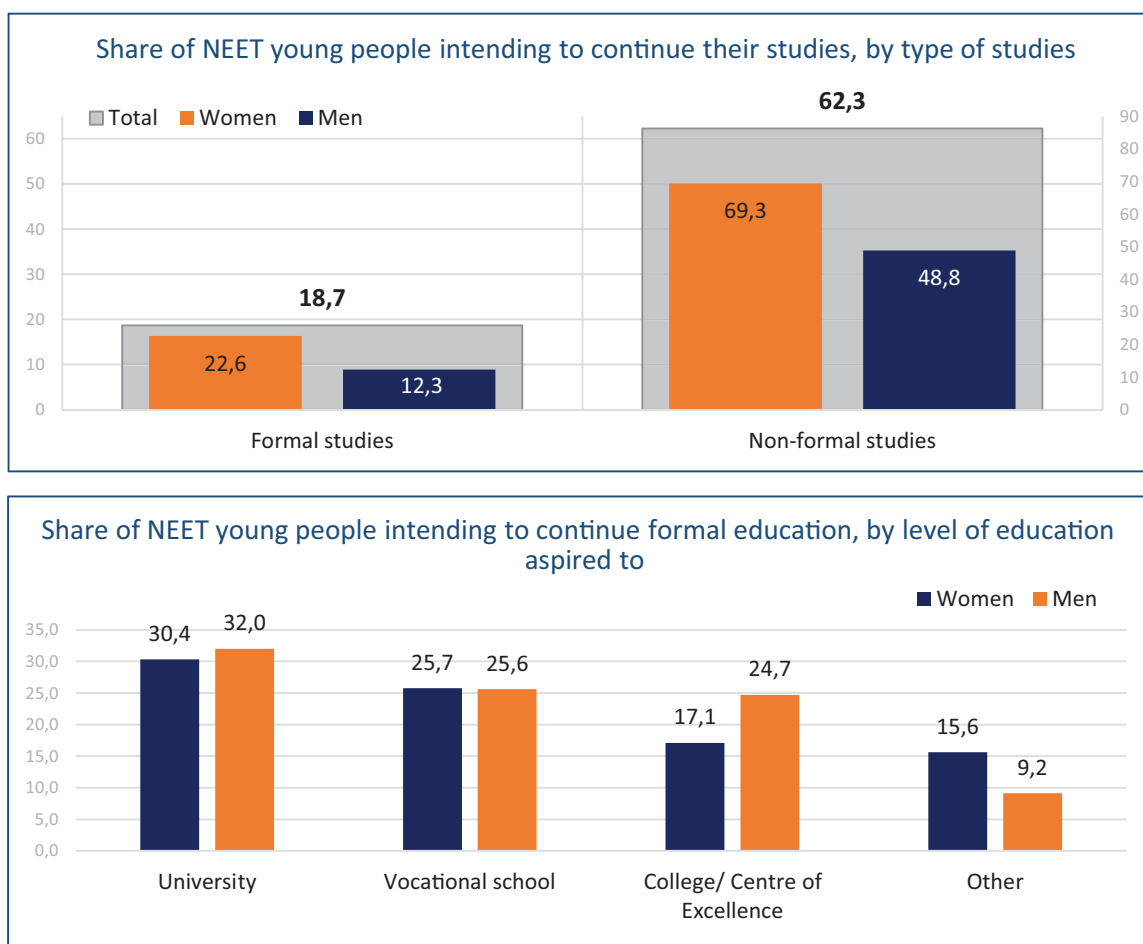


Figure 25. NEET young people’s future intentions regarding further education, by forms and levels of education, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

# ACCESS TO WORK FOR NEET YOUNG PEOPLE

## WORK EXPERIENCE OF NEET YOUNG PEOPLE

**Most NEET young people have been previously employed.** Data from the survey of NEET young people show that 77.5% of them have been employed in the past. 45.4% have been formally employed, 23.2% have been informally employed and 8.9% have had the experience of being both formally and informally employed. From a gender perspective, the trends among NEET young people are similar to those for the general population, where informal work is more characteristic of men, while women tend to be more likely to be formally employed. As a result, almost 50% of NEET women had been formally employed in the past, whereas the figure for men was 12 percentage points lower. The high share of inactive people with past work experience can also be explained by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the economic crisis in Moldova, which obliged many entrepreneurs to stop their businesses, leading to the loss of many jobs.

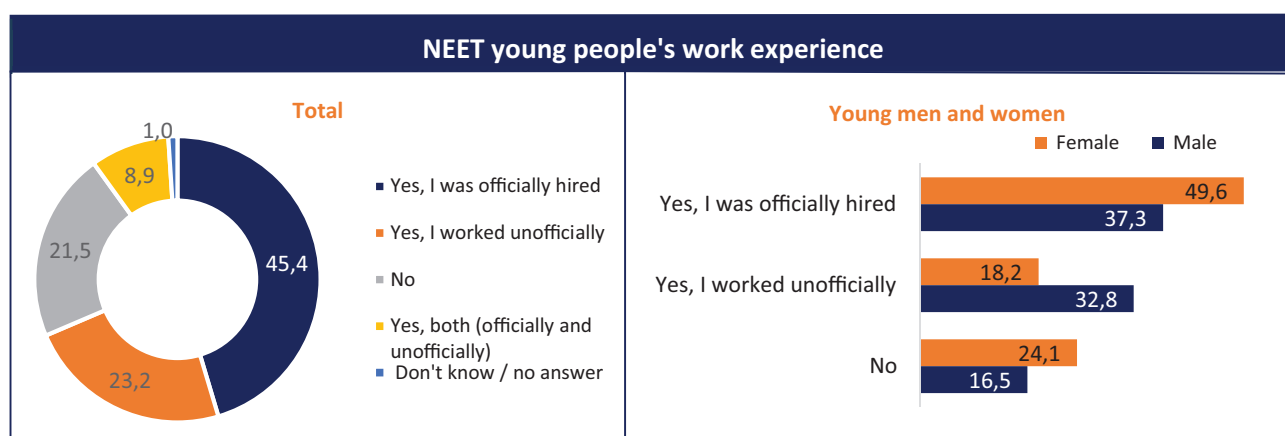


Figure 26. Work experience of NEET youth, by gender, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Every third NEET young person with work experience has worked in the private sector as a skilled or unskilled worker.** According to the survey, 73% of NEET young people had previously worked in the private sector and 24.4% in the public sector. Half of the young people with work experience have held positions such as skilled worker (e.g. sales assistant, driver, postman, electrician, etc.), or unskilled worker (e.g. tiller, security guard, day laborer in the field or orchards, etc.), which is more typical of men.

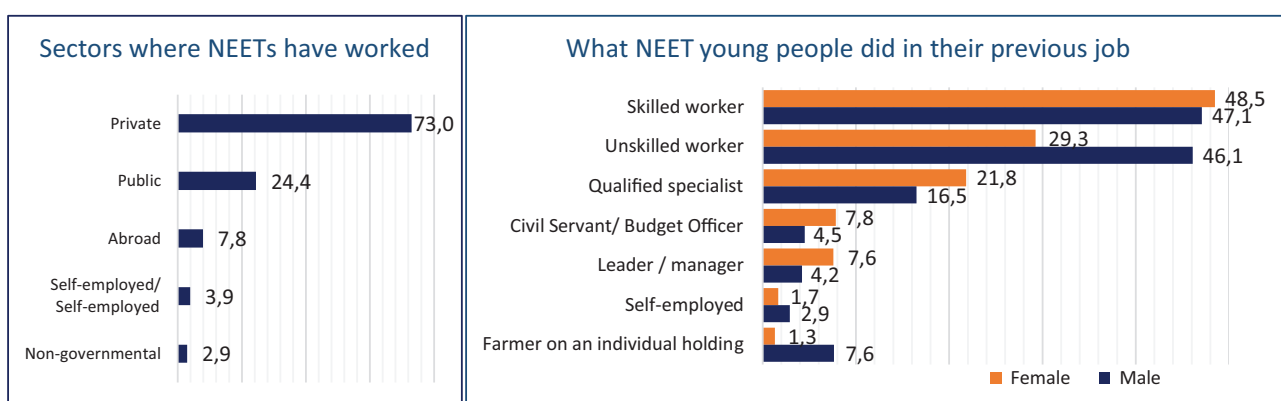


Figure 27. Sectors and jobs held by young NEETs in their last job, by gender, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**NEET young people have predominantly work experience in sales/trade, construction and catering.**

Out of all fields of work, 19.7% of young NEETs said that their last job was in sales/trade, marketing and purchasing (including retail). Construction (manual labour, such as painting, finishing work, etc.) employed 16% of the current NEET young people, and food services (food preparation and catering) employed 12.4% of them. Recognising that these sectors were the most affected by the crisis arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, the data below show once again the negative impact on the labour market, amplifying inactivity.

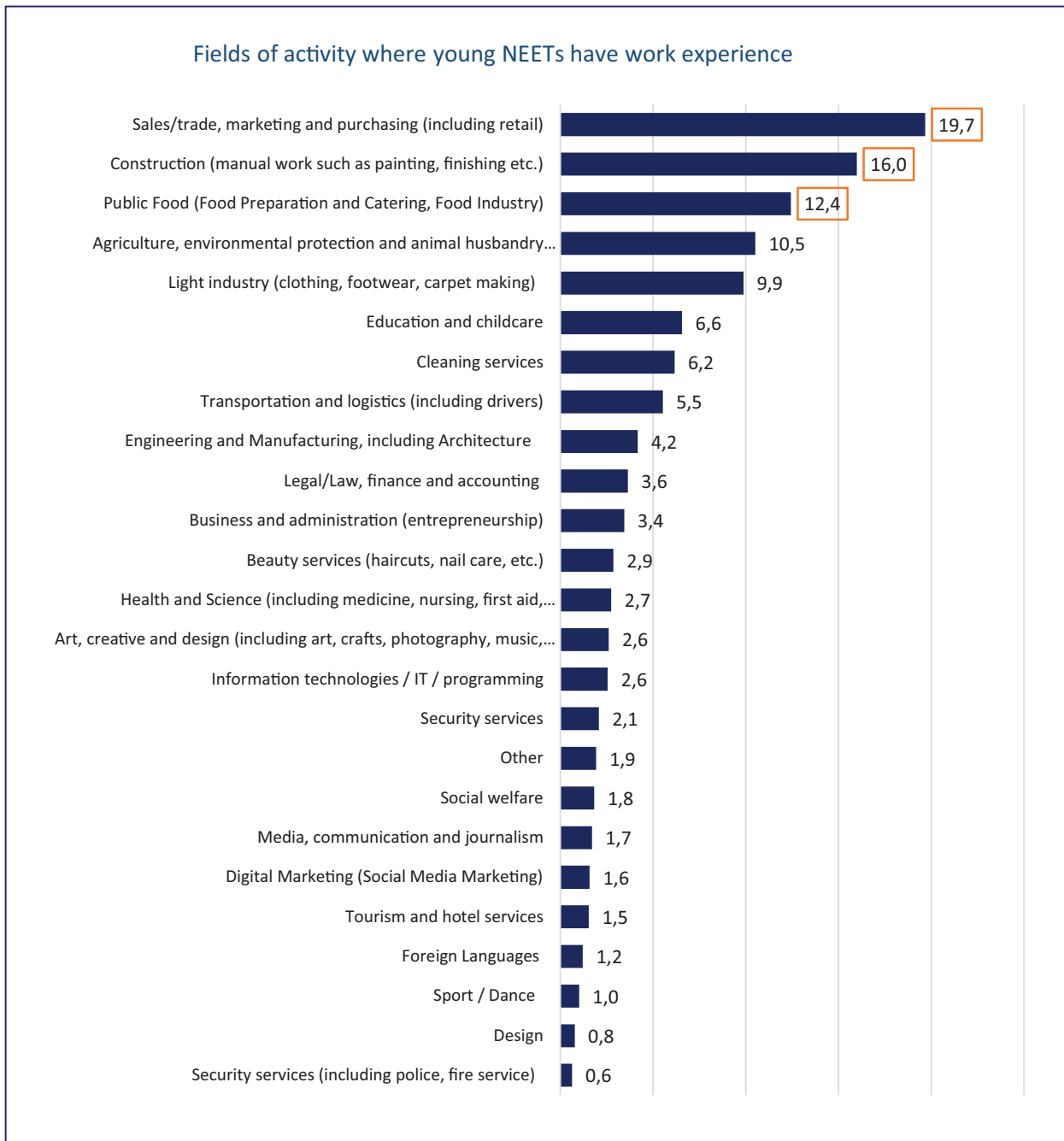


Figure 28. Areas in which NEET young people have work experience, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Low pay was the main reason for young NEETs quitting, and family responsibilities in the case of young women NEETs.** Half of young NEETs quit their previous job because they were dissatisfied with the size of their salary. At the same time, 40.2% of young NEETs had to withdraw from the labour market because of family responsibilities. The other common causes for young people reaching the decision to quit were dissatisfaction with working conditions, an overly heavy workload and health problems. In addition, 16.6% of them wanted to change the field in which they worked.

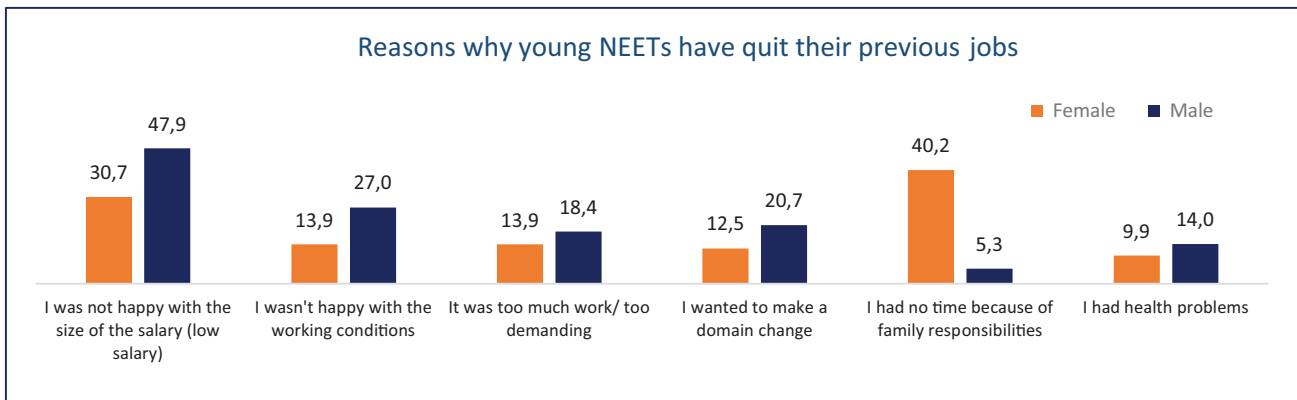


Figure 29. Reasons why young NEETs quit their previous job, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Perceptions of the usefulness and relevance of studies to the workplace are widely scattered.** About half of NEET young people say that their studies were very or mostly useful in their previous jobs. On the other hand, the same proportion of young people say that their studies were of little, very little or no use to them in the labour market. The reasons why the NEET young people do not consider studies to be useful vary: 30.9% did not work in their specialisation and 17.8% claim that their studies did not match the job requirements. The reasons provided tend to confirm that there is a problem of the mismatch between the supply of studies and the demand for specialisations on the labour market.

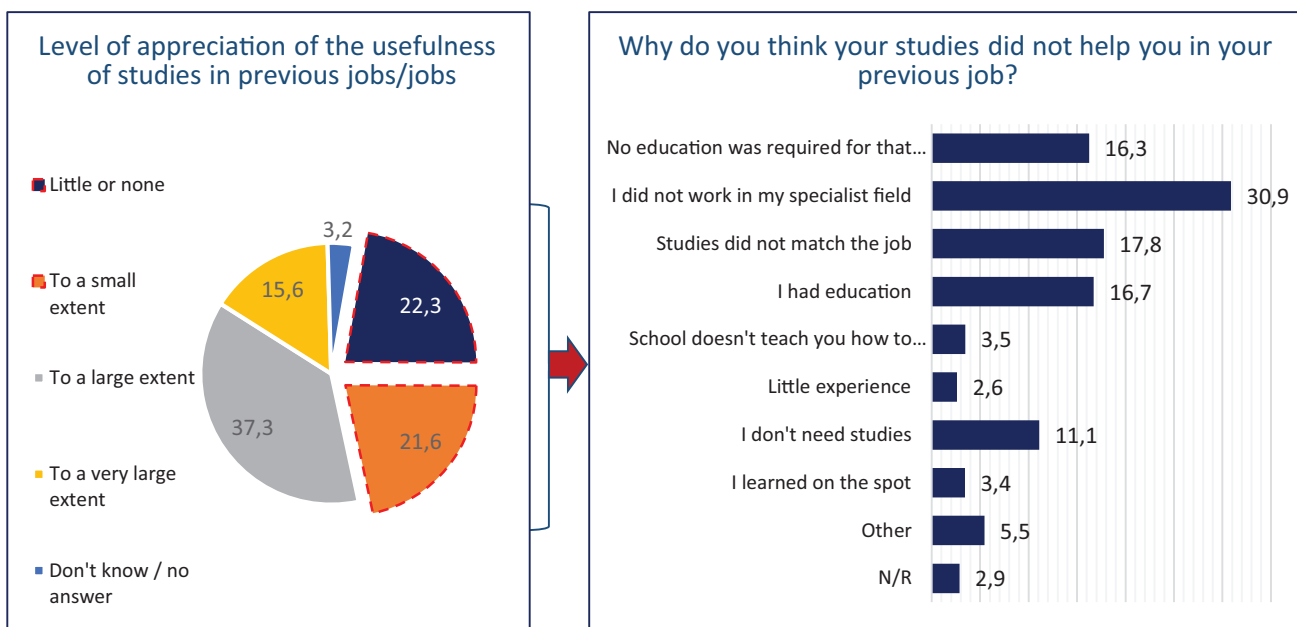


Figure 30. Level of appreciation of the usefulness of studies for previous job/jobs and reasons for those who considered studies unnecessary, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

## JOB PROSPECTS

**The majority of NEET young people plan to get a job in the near future.** More than 80% of NEET young men and women intend to start a job in the near future. However, almost 20% of NEET females and 17% of NEET males do not see themselves in employment, at least in the near future. The reasons for not wanting to work are different for NEET males and females. For males, the most important factors discouraging them from working are low wages (28.8%), the desire to work abroad (27.2%) and health problems (21.9%). For females, the biggest barrier to integrating into the labour market is childcare responsibilities (44.4%). These inequalities are largely due to stereotypes regarding the demarcation of household responsibilities: women are assigned housework and childcare, while men are assigned family maintenance.

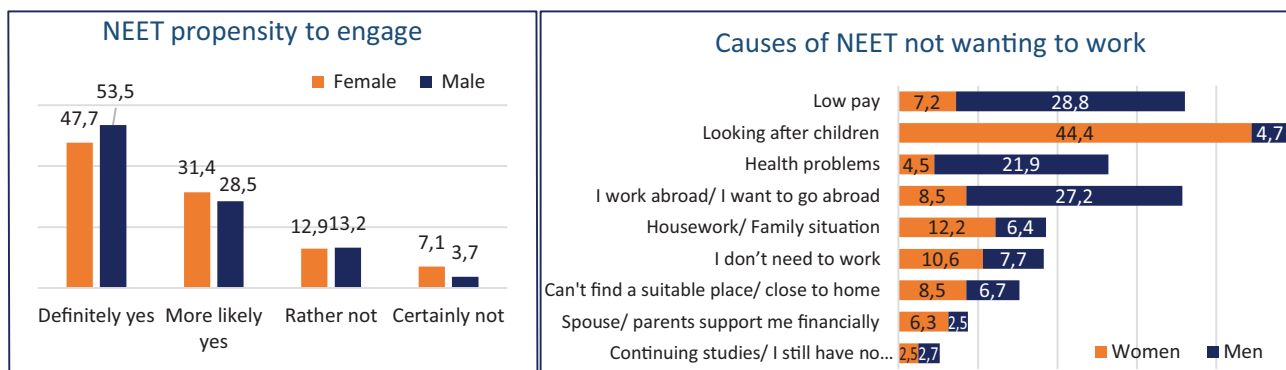


Figure 31. NEET young people's propensity to be in employment and reasons for not wanting to work, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**NEET women's preferences regarding the professions they would prefer vary significantly from those of men.** Young women would still prefer feminised professions (more typical of women), such as beauty services, sales/trade, education and childcare, catering and cleaning services, most of which are low-paid professions. Young NEET men, on the other hand, would prefer to work in construction, agriculture, transport and logistics, information technology, business and administration, aspiring to better paid and more male-oriented professions.

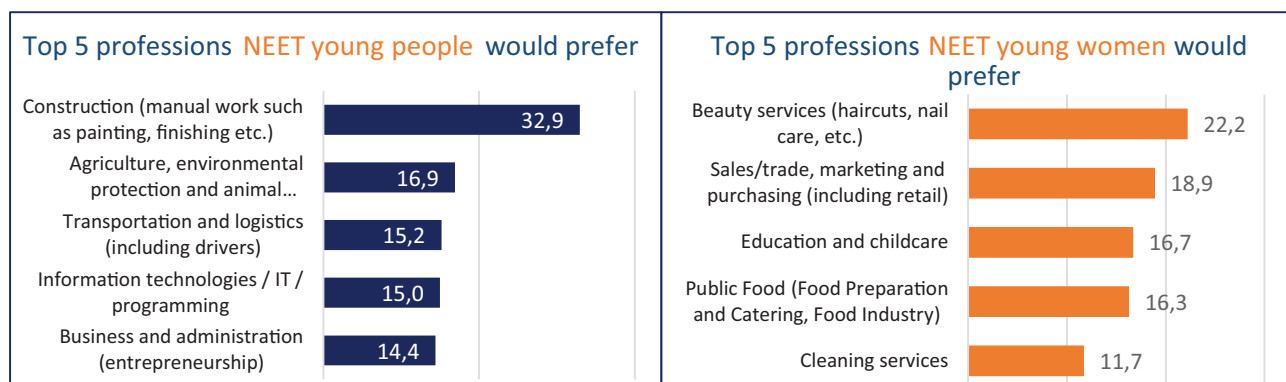


Figure 32. Top 5 professions NEET young people would prefer, by gender, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Communication skills are a must for NEET young people to get engaged.** Survey data shows that NEET females need to develop their communication skills, including language skills, and the next most common need is to develop teamwork skills. NEET males, on the other hand, cite professional development as their greatest need- the acquisition of domain-specific technical skills, e.g. IT or mechanics, along with communication skills. The need to develop communication skills, including language skills, is explained by the fact that these are requirements for the jobs market. The service sector is also growing, and communication is one of the most important professional skills in this field. At the same time, NEET males

more frequently cite the need to develop technical skills, arising from the areas that are of interest to them as a profession.

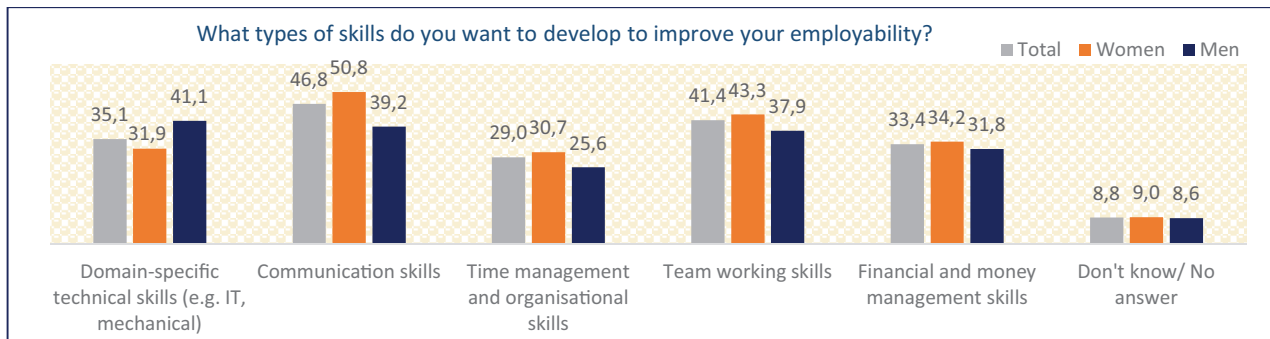


Figure 33. Skills NEET young men/young women need to improve their employability, by gender, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**The biggest barrier preventing NEET young people from looking for a job and getting a job is low pay.**

The data in the figure below shows that more than 30% of young NEETs cite low wages as a barrier to finding a job, and this is also considered as an impediment to employment by every second young NEET. At the same time, there are discrepancies in the other barriers cited by NEET females, on the one hand, and NEET males, on the other. For NEET females, in addition to low wages, domestic responsibilities and working arrangements are two of the most significant barriers cited.

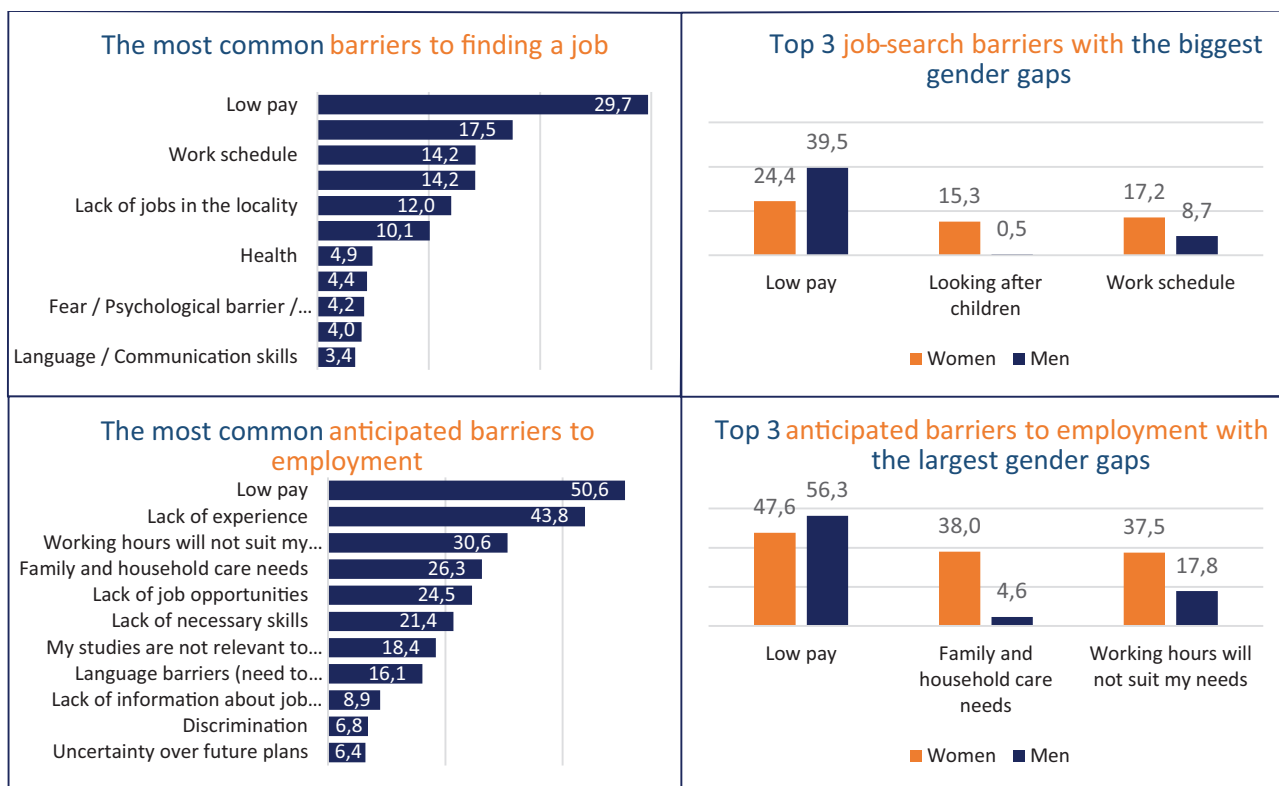


Figure 34. Barriers faced by young NEETs in job search and employment, by gender, %, 2024

Source: Survey by Magenta Consulting



**NEET youth aged 15-24 and those with tertiary education are the most likely to be employed.** An analysis of the data disaggregated by age reveals that more than half of young people aged 15-19 and 20-24 have looked for a job in the last 12 months. At the same time, NEET women aged 25-29 have made little effort to look for a job recently. This discrepancy can be explained by the fact that this is the reproductive age, therefore women most often withdraw from the labour market in favour of caring responsibilities. In terms of educational attainment, we observe that the highly educated are the most interested in finding a job. An exception to this trend is the group of young NEETs with a general education (10-11 grades), which can be explained by the increase in early school dropouts in order to find a job, a phenomenon more characteristic of males. This conclusion can also be seen from the graph on the bottom left, which shows that NEET young people aged 15-19 are the most likely to enter the labour market.

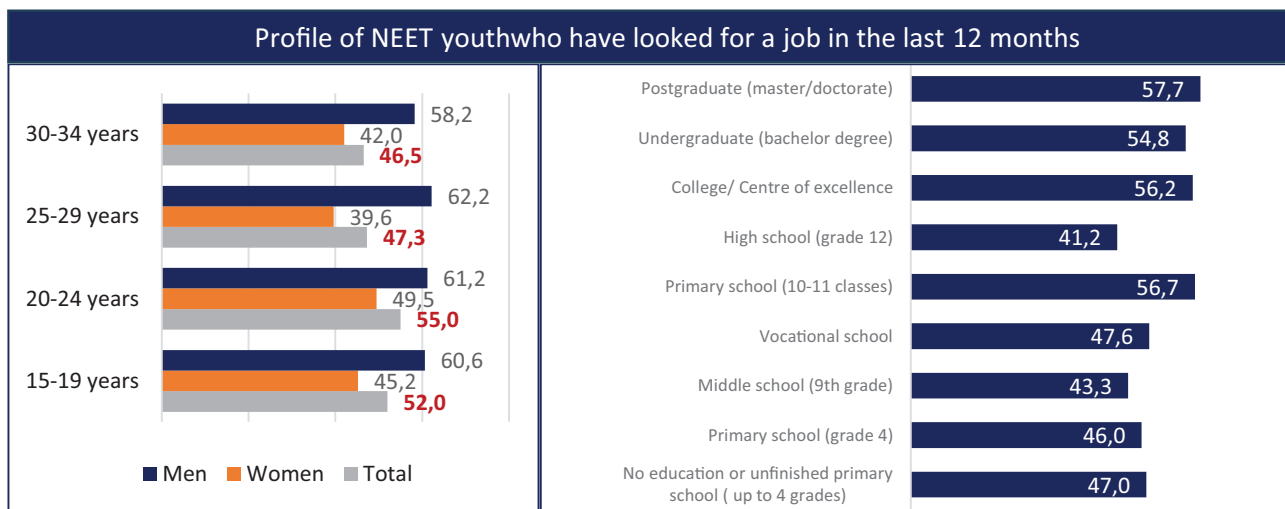


Figure 35. Profile of NEET young people who have looked for a job in the last 12 months, by age, gender, type of education, %, 2024  
Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Social networks are the most commonly used source of information about job opportunities.** Over half of NEET young people would use social networks as a source for finding a job. Platforms dedicated to job advertisements and consulting with friends/relatives are also important sources of information. At the same time, there are differentiated preferences by area of residence: for example, those in urban areas would access specialised platforms, while those in rural areas would prefer to consult their neighbours. However, in both cases, the NEA is not popular, so only one in five young people would turn to the Agency for employment support.

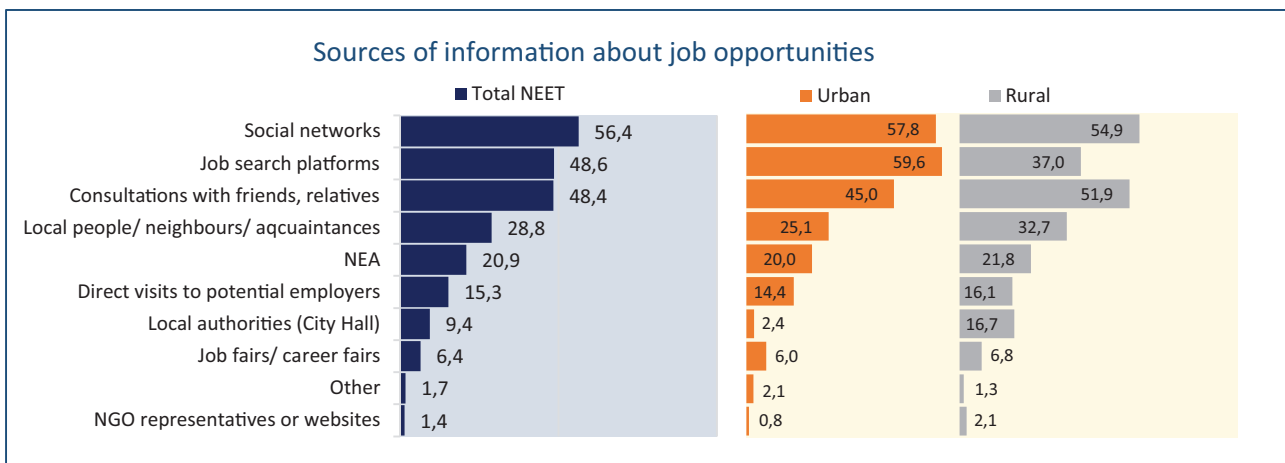


Figure 36. Information sources NEET young people use to search for job opportunities, %, 2024  
Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

## ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

**Only one NEET young person in four has ever turned to the NEA for employment support.** More than 75% of NEET young men and women have not used the Agency’s services for a job search and/or employment support. The level of addressability differs according to the age of the NEET young person: the younger the age, the lower the addressability rate. Thus, 30.8% of young NEETs aged 30-34 have used NEA services, while only 14.7% of those aged 15-19 have used them. 36.6% of young people give unwillingness or the perception that they do not need such services as the reasons for their reluctance to turn to the NEA. At the same time, the figure below highlights some worrying findings: 22.3% of NEET young people do not know about the NEA and the services it provides. In addition, 7.3% of young people said that the services provided by the NEA are not of use to them and 5.9% said that they did not trust the NEA.

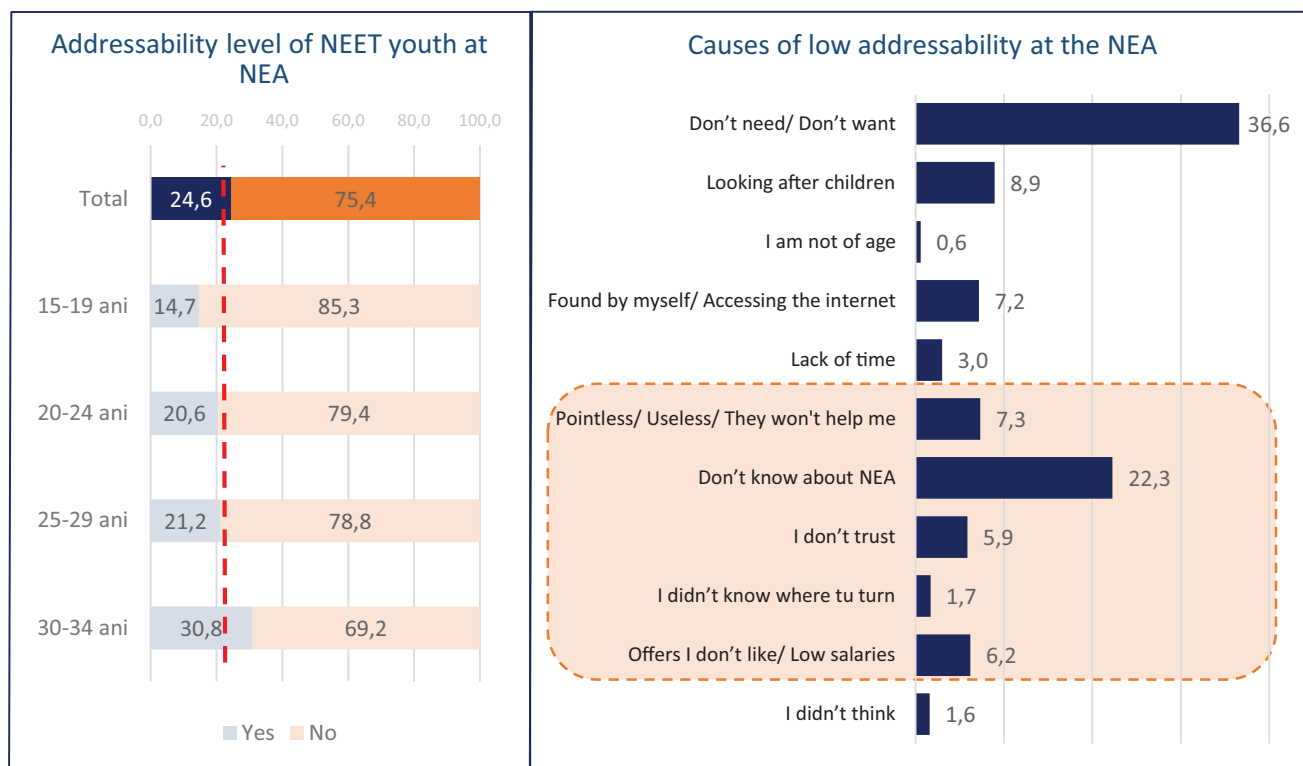


Figure 37. Level of addressability of NEET young people to NEA and causes of low addressability,%, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**Information about unemployment benefits and labour market are the services most frequently used by NEET young people.** Around 40% of young people say they have benefited from the unemployment benefit offered by NEA. More than 60% also claim to have benefited from information services about labour market offers and requirements. However, the graph below shows that only NEET males have benefited from these services. Another service provided by the NEA, from which NEET young people benefited, is the career guidance service. However, only 30.9% of young people and 22.1% of young women had benefited from this service. The other services (voucher-based vocational training, on-the-job training in the unit, work placements and certification of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal education contexts) are not very popular. This is also explained by the low level of awareness of NEA services, which is a very important finding given that NEA has recently introduced several new services.

**NEET young people are quite satisfied with the services they have received from NEA.** Although the addressability rate was low, young people’s satisfaction with the services they received from the Agency shows a positive trend. When asked to rate the satisfaction rate from very dissatisfied to very satisfied, half of the young people said that they were satisfied with NEA’s support. At the same time, over 20% of young people said that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the services provided. Analysing the data from a gender perspective, we observe that the level of absolute satisfaction (very satisfied) is 12 percentage points higher among NEET young women than among NEET young men.

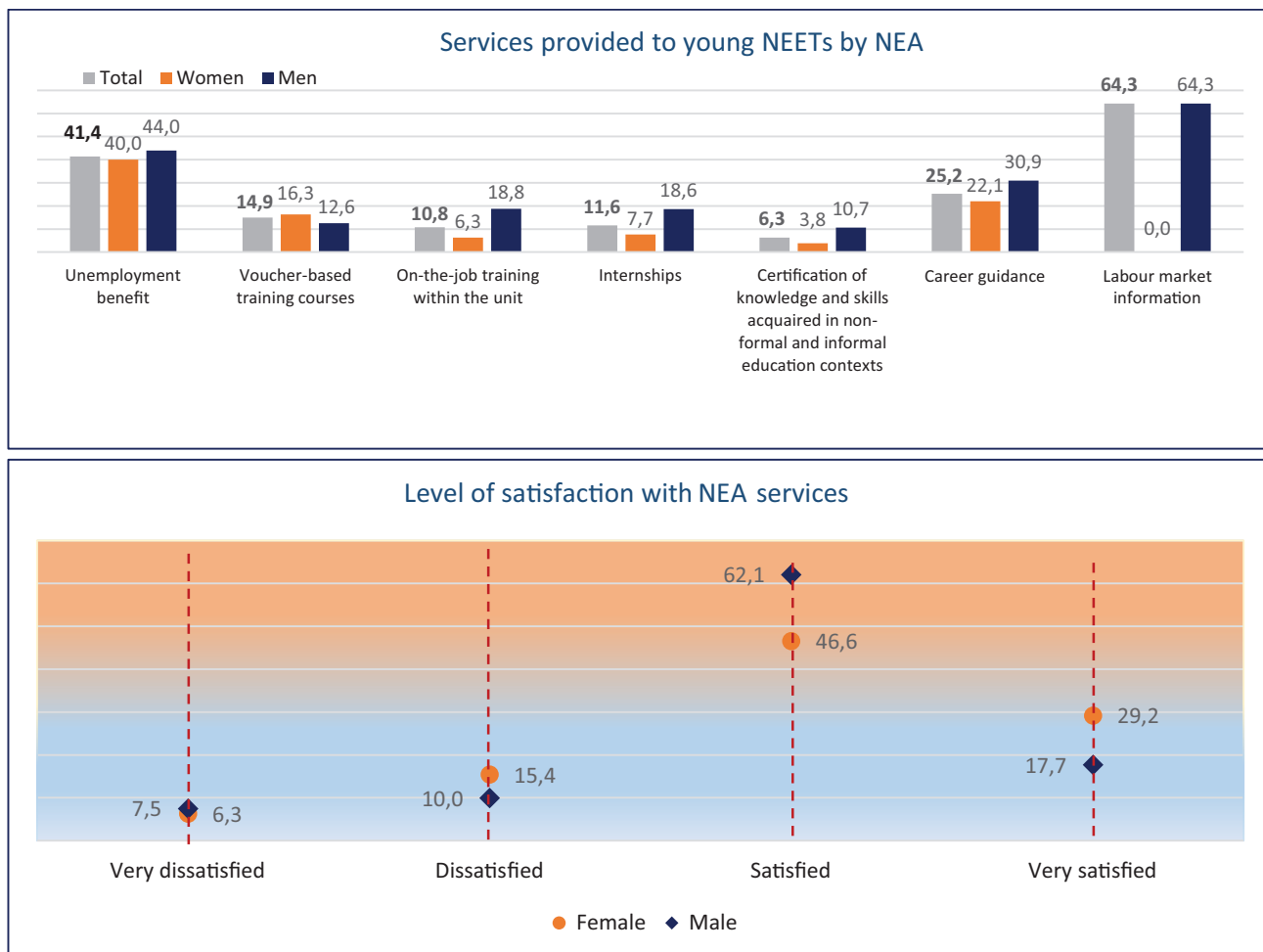


Figure 38 Services received by young NEETs from NEA and level of satisfaction with the services received, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

**All the services offered by NEA are appreciated as being very useful when in the process of entering the labour market.** More than 80% of young people consider the Agency’s services to be very useful in the employment process. These services include: free vocational training courses, on-the-job training, internships, information on the labour market, career guidance and certification of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal and informal education contexts. In addition to the services provided by the NEA, young people consider that flexible working hours are a great help in finding a job, especially for those with children. Although this legislative provision exists in Moldova, employers remain reluctant to apply it and employees are unaware of this right<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> <https://progen.md/munca-inegala-o-analiza-a-decalajelor-de-gen-pe-piata-muncii-din-perspectiva-angajatorilor-persoanelor-angajate-si-ale-celor-neangajate/>

**Although the issue of household responsibilities is the most glaring, daycare for one-year-olds is not seen as a supportive solution to finding a job more easily.** Only 33% of young people said they would find having childcare very helpful. This situation is explained by the reluctance that exists in Moldova to place children in early education, considering that at this age they are too fragile and the experience can be traumatising, despite the fact that international practice shows that placing children in day-care centres has a positive impact on both children, through early cognitive development, and parents, by increasing the reconciliation of family life with work, and reducing anxiety, especially among women<sup>8</sup>.

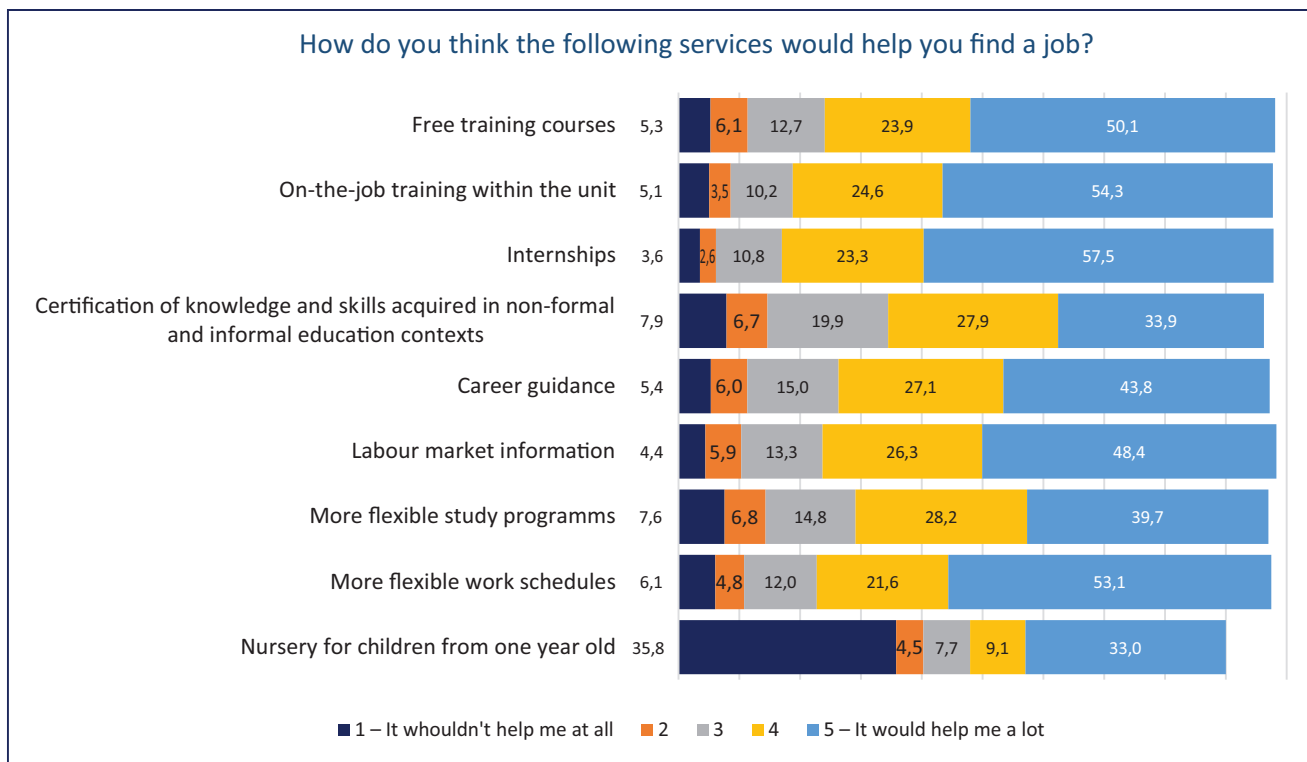


Figure 39. Level of addressability of NEET young people to NEA and causes of low addressability, %, 2024

Source: Survey conducted by Magenta Consulting

<sup>8</sup> <https://progen.md/cum-contribuim-la-crearea-locurilor-de-munca-prietenose-parintilor-4-optiuni-de-servicii-alternative-pentru-ingrijirea-copilului-ce-pot-fi-oferite-de-angajatori/>

# RECOMMENDATIONS

If the socio-economic integration of NEET youth in Moldova is to be addressed, it is essential to implement a series of strategic measures. These measures must be well integrated and tailored to the specific needs of different groups of NEET young people. Based on the analytical findings and trends identified in the report, the following recommendations are proposed:

## REVISING THE EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM TO MAKE STUDY PROGRAMMES MORE FLEXIBLE

Data from the survey of NEET young people reveal that females are at a higher risk of dropping out of education due to household and childcare responsibilities. In a rigid education system, females (who make up the majority of NEET young people) are faced with a choice between staying in education or caring for the family, often to the detriment of education. To overcome this dichotomy, curricula must be more flexible. Education's regulatory environment currently leads to there being limited choices for the duration and forms of study. The issues include the number of credits awarded for each level of study, the length of time allowed to complete studies, the manner in which study can be followed, and the type of attendance. This kind of rigidity makes it difficult for anyone who has to combine family life, work, or other activities with their studies to be integrated into education. For this reason, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education and Research initiate a wide-ranging review of the educational curriculum to make it more flexible and adapted to student needs. Curricula should be more flexible in technical vocational education institutions and at the university level and could include:

- (i) dividing curricula into units or modules to allow for easy migration within the education system;
- (ii) credit transfer opportunities and the recognition of prior learning;
- (iii) offering the possibility to attend evening/weekend courses or offering part-time courses;
- (iv) being able to choose the length of time during which the required study credits can be accumulated;
- (v) access to alternative or individualised teaching methods, such as distance learning and hybrid formats. These options would also be relevant for people who migrate, including for work purposes.

To ensure study programmes are flexible, the Ministry of Education and Research should intervene in a number of areas including:

- (i) an analysis of international practices to identify optimal education system models for greater flexibility;
- (ii) an exhaustive analysis of the national normative education framework to summarise current regulations and identify possible changes;
- (iii) creating an institutionalised working group responsible for making changes in the normative framework to include a broad spectrum of specialists from MER and other relevant public institutions, education service providers, academics, and representatives from civil society;
- (iv) developing a national plan to reform the education system with a view to making curricula more flexible to include the set of actions, policies and legislative acts to be amended or developed, the necessary resources, and those who will be responsible for achieving this;
- (v) approving legislative changes to integrate flexible models of education, allowing at this stage, for a transition period for educational institutions to adapt to new regulations and to integrate flexible models of education into the curriculum.

## FLEXIBILITY MEASURES IN VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Technical vocational education institutions may implement specific measures to make curricula more flexible and attractive to young people, in particular NEET young people, who are more likely to drop out after secondary education. These measures may include, but are not limited to:

- introducing short modules and certification courses into the curriculum, which can be completed in a relatively short time, so that young people can obtain certifications or diplomas that allow them to enter the workforce;
- introducing the possibility of following courses online, to ensure access to learning opportunities for young people who, due to family responsibilities or other activities, cannot follow a traditional form of education;
- introducing courses outside normal daytime hours (evening or weekend courses) to facilitate access to education for young people who have other commitments during the day;
- developing apprenticeship programmes in collaboration with local employers, offering young people practical and applicable experience and a more relevant curriculum;
- using modern technologies and well-equipped laboratories to make studies more attractive and efficient.

## CREATING AN ONLINE PLATFORM OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION PROVIDERS

As part of making study opportunities more flexible and to respond to the challenges of limited access to formal education and the particular needs of NEET young people, caregivers, and persons with disabilities, it is recommended that the Moldovan Ministry of Education and Research develop an online platform dedicated to non-formal education providers. The [National Qualifications Register \(NQR\)](#) is the current online platform introduced under [GD No. 1199/2018 on the National Qualifications Register](#) and amended by GD [No. 3/2024](#) to ensure the NQR is interoperable with the European Union Member State qualifications registers and databases ([Council Recommendation of 22 May 2017 on the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning](#)). The platform is a Ministry of Education and Research information resource recording, systematising, publishing, and updating data on national qualifications, NQFs and VET providers. The platform contains separate modules on educational service providers and their offers, but which include only basic information such as lists of mainly formal education providers, their educational programmes and specialties covered, and their contact details. This makes it important to develop an online platform specifically dedicated to non-formal educational service providers in an initiative to provide accessible and adaptable learning opportunities for all citizens, regardless of age or educational attainment.

The platform would be centrally managed by the Ministry of Education and Research and function as an online database where education providers, including universities, NGOs, vocational training centres, and other accredited organisations are able to upload and manage online courses. The courses would be accredited by the Ministry and cover a wide range of areas and skills, from personal and professional development to technical and soft skills. Interested individuals would be able to access the platform at any time, with the freedom to choose the courses that best suit their needs and interests. A key aspect of the platform would be flexibility, allowing users to follow courses at their own pace, organising their study time to fit in with their daily schedule. A principal objective of the platform is to make integration into the labour market easier for people who want to improve their skills or retrain. Making study more flexible is a long-term process, however, and the platform has the potential to be extended in the future to include bachelor's, master's or doctoral courses, thus responding to an even wider spectrum of educational and professional needs. Implementation of this national platform would have a significant impact on the accessibility of education in Moldova, contributing to raising the workforce's educational attainment and skills levels, and promoting a culture of lifelong learning.

Examples of online learning platforms set up by public organisations, including government institutions and international organisations:

- **EU Academy:** the European Union’s online learning platform, developed by the European Parliament and other EU institutions. It offers free courses and educational resources for citizens, civil servants and professionals, covering topics related to EU policy, law, economics and foreign affairs.
- **Coursera:** A global online learning platform offering access to courses and degree programmes from leading universities and institutions around the world. Coursera allows users to learn at their own pace, offering options for internationally recognised certificates.
- **FutureLearn:** An online learning platform operated by the Open University in the United Kingdom in collaboration with various international universities and organisations. FutureLearn offers short courses, specialist programmes and degrees on a wide range of subjects from science and technology to arts and health.
- **edX:** Founded by Harvard and MIT, edX offers free online courses and paid certificate, master’s, and micro-master’s programmes. The platform partners with globally-renowned universities to offer courses in a variety of fields, including engineering, science and business.
- **LinkedIn Learning:** Part of the LinkedIn professional network, this platform offers access to thousands of video courses created by industry experts. LinkedIn Learning focuses on developing professional skills in areas such as information technology, business, creativity, and leadership, offering certifications that can be added directly to the user’s LinkedIn profile.

Courses of this nature are offered by numerous state educational institutions in various countries, as well as vocational education and training (VET) institutions. In Germany, for example, VET institutions such as the **Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung (DIE)** and the **Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB)** offer online courses covering both formal and informal education, focusing on developing professional and personal skills. In Finland, the **Omnia** platform offers online courses developing digital competences and other skills relevant to the labour market. In the UK, VET institutions such as **City & Guilds** and the **Open University** offer a wide range of online courses, both formal and informal, supporting the continuous development of professional skills in areas such as business, technology and health. These programmes support continuous development and adaptability in the job market, providing access to quality education for a wide range of learners.

## IMPLEMENTING MEASURES TO PREVENT EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

**I. Developing a national dropout prevention programme focussing on school dropout.** According to the World Bank<sup>9</sup>, a national programme or strategic framework could help scale up programmes to address this symptom of inequality. This kind of programme could be developed by an expert working group set up by the Ministry of Education and Research, involving specialists from all relevant fields, such as education, psychology, social work and health, and include representatives from every level of education to directly and effectively address the drop-out phenomenon. The programme would include prevention, intervention and remedial measures and be structured to allow the continuous monitoring of pupils at risk and prompt intervention where there are warning signs. The programme would also include support strategies for vulnerable pupils, creating partnerships with educational institutions, non-governmental organisations and the local community, as well as developing educational policies to support the retention of pupils in the education system.

How approval works in the programme may vary depending on the context and available resources. The programme could be approved by government decree, which would imply a more extensive and complex adoption process, but would ensure the allocation of funds from the national public budget for its implementation. Alternatively, the programme could be approved by an order of the Minister of Education, in which case implementation could be achieved in conjunction with external partners who have included dropout prevention in their strategies for Moldova. In either scenario, the programme would benefit from

<sup>9</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/111041644611110155/pdf/Educational-Underachievement-Among-Boys-and-Men.pdf>

close coordination between the institutions and organisations involved, so that implementation is coherent and effective, thus contributing to a significant reduction in dropout rates, with a particular focus on school drop-out, in Moldova.

**II. Establishing a national mechanism to identify young people at high risk of dropping out of the education system.** To prevent the NEET phenomenon, it is crucial to identify and address the issue of young people at risk of dropping out of education or experiencing difficulties integrating into the labour market. To achieve this, the Ministry of Education and Research should develop a mechanism to identify young people at risk by:

- (i) analysing international practices implementing risk assessment tools among students;
- (ii) developing a tool to assess the risk of becoming NEET, which would include a series of indicators on individual, social, economic and educational factors, through which the overall degree of risk is estimated;
- (iii) developing a centralised electronic system to systematise the data collected from the assessment process;
- (iv) providing support to educational institutions to implement the risk assessment tool —with the assessment carried out on pupils in the graduating classes;
- (v) developing a general framework for intervening where young people at risk are identified, to be taken up and adapted by each educational institution, implicating additional educational effort, referral to support services and counselling, etc.);
- (vi) periodically reviewing indicators for assessing the risk of becoming NEET and adjusting the tool appropriately.

**III. Developing a set of individualised interventions aimed at young people in the NEET risk group to increase their participation in education, particularly in technical vocational education.** To provide individualised support for every young person, the following interventions are recommended for approval:

- (i) Financial support for young people - a non-reimbursable payment for young people in vulnerable situations. This would include school students, who are prone to drop out due to the financial burden of not being able to afford school supplies, clothes, or transportation, and young people wanting to study in colleges or vocational schools, usually involving additional accommodation costs. This financial support would be allocated and disbursed by the local public authorities (LPAs), in collaboration with the Social Assistance Department, providing support to identify young people in vulnerable situations. The extent of the financial support would be an amount estimated to cover the above-mentioned expenses, based on current market prices and determined individually by each LPA. This would depend on factors such as the age of the beneficiaries and the location of the institution (the greater the distance, the higher the transportation costs) and would be disbursed in instalments at the beginning of each semester of study.

[Chisinau City Hall](#) annually allocates financial support for children from socially vulnerable families attending school. 8 000 pupils from socially-vulnerable families receive 700 Moldovan lei (MDL) every year to prepare for the new school year.

Material aid is available to every student who is a member of an eligible family, with documents submitted to the educational institution where the child is studying. The following families are eligible:

- families with three or more children;
- single-parent families;
- families in which one parent is disabled;
- families with guardianship status.

- (ii) Financial supplement for teachers - once young people in the at-risk group are identified, it is important they receive individualised support. To achieve this, it is recommended that each young person at risk of dropping out be counselled by a teacher which will include guidance, motivation and monitoring. To compensate teachers for the additional time involved, they would receive an addition to the basic



salary, to be covered by educational institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Research.

(iii) Developing communications platforms with parents - since parental attitudes are an important factor affecting children's participation in education, it is imperative that educational institutions ensure a permanent dialogue with parents and, in particular, parents of young people identified as being in the group at high risk of dropout. This effort would pursue two main objectives:

- a) continuous information on the child's progress and vocational interests, and
- b) motivating parents to stimulate their child to get involved in education.

The following are recommended to accomplish these objectives:

- The Ministry of Education and Research would create a digital platform through which parents may obtain a range of information about their child, such as grades received, class attendance, teachers' observations, and progress, as well as providing parents with recommendations on their child's performance. The platform would also provide time-efficient, open and confidential communication between parents and teachers on a child's performance and other issues.
- Based on international best practice (see below), the platform would be a mobile application systematically providing relevant information for parents on the curriculum, as well as individualised information and the ability for parents to communicate with teachers. Since almost all Moldovan schools currently use communication apps, such as Viber or WhatsApp, the need for a digital system of communication between parents and teachers is already obvious, and if the MER could develop a single platform to include various useful information about the educational process, this would considerably improve collaboration between parents and teachers.

In the United Kingdom, effective communication between schools and parents is seen as key to supporting pupils' academic performance and personal development. In this context, dedicated digital platforms, such as [IRIS Parentmail](#) and [SIMS Parent](#), have been developed to facilitate constant interaction and communication between teachers, pupils and parents. These software platforms allow teachers and school management to transmit important information about absences, grades, student behaviour and school events in real time, thus ensuring greater transparency.

The apps offer a wide range of functionality, including in-app instant messaging with no character limit and read receipt for sent messages. Teachers can send attachments directly to parents' phones and manage, collect and track digital forms. The platforms also allow for organising and scheduling parent meetings, offering solutions for booking and collecting feedback. Integrated online payment solutions simplify the management of school fees for meals, field trips and other activities, including automated payment notifications.

SIMS Parent is distinguished by the fact that it is designed not only for schools and parents, but also for students, giving them access to relevant academic and administrative information. IRIS, on the other hand, is exclusively geared towards facilitating communication between schools and parents. Both platforms support communication with over four million parents daily, providing a flexible and easy-to-use parental engagement system, reducing costs and workload for school staff, while improving relationships with parents. Free mobile apps centralise all school-parent interactions into one simple app, helping busy parents stay on top of their children's school life.

- Because developing a digital platform takes time, it is recommended that each educational institution develop an internal regulation to set out the conditions, frequency and types of activities to be carried out in order to establish constructive communication, especially with parents of children who are at risk of becoming NEET young people in the near future. The MER could issue guidelines and benchmarks to achieve this.

## INTEGRATING CAREER GUIDANCE INTO THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

In order to support students' harmonious development and their orientation towards a suitable career, we recommend that career guidance be integrated into the Moldovan educational process through a comprehensive approach based on three pillars:

**(i) Dedicated programme in schools** - A formal career guidance programme, structured into the school curriculum and based on a clear set of standards, would contribute to the development of students' skills and interests. Currently, the *Reading for Career Guidance* curriculum is available only as an optional subject for Grades 5 to 9. It is recommended that this programme be extended through grade XII, providing students with ongoing support in understanding and adapting to the demands of the job market and academic opportunities. Such a programme, inspired by the UK model that includes the *Gatsby Benchmarks*, can provide a coherent framework for long-term career guidance activities.

**(ii) Specialised counsellors in schools** - A network of certified career counsellors available in schools to provide individualised career counselling is essential to support students in making informed career-related decisions. These counsellors could work with students to assess their abilities and interests, recommending educational and career paths that match their aspirations. Specialist counsellors would ensure that all students have access to personalised guidance services and facilitate the integration of career guidance into the culture of educational institutions;

**(iii) Career exploration and collaboration with the professional environment** - Career exploration activities, such as meetings with professionals, job visits, and practical workshops, would help familiarise students with a range of fields and professions, leading to informed choices. The *Gatsby Benchmarks* model<sup>10</sup>, applied in the UK, emphasises the importance of students' interaction with employers and higher education institutions for relevant career guidance. In Moldova, a guidance programme based on these standards would ensure that students benefit from career-related learning experiences and are actively supported in identifying their own interests and aptitudes.

The implementation of these three perspectives would lead to an educational process that prepares students not only for examinations but also for life, supporting them in reaching their vocational potential.

## INCREASING YOUNG PEOPLE'S AWARENESS OF DUAL EDUCATION

Dual education is highly valued in European countries, focusing on the needs of both students and employers. As an alternative form of the technical vocational education system, it provides theoretical and practical training in the technical vocational education institution as well as at the employer's where knowledge, skills and competences can be acquired. Around 30% of the normative duration of the training programme takes place in the educational institution, while the remaining 70% is in the enterprise, thus emphasising practical training in conditions similar to real working conditions. On graduating from dual vocational studies, young specialists have much better job prospects. Although dual vocational education offers a number of advantages and employment opportunities for young people, many are unaware of it. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the Ministry of Education and Research's communication and information efforts on dual education by setting up regular information campaigns. This can be achieved by:

- (i) the MER developing informational materials on how to organise dual education, its benefits and other relevant information, and distributing it to young people through educational institutions, as well as the MER's online channels;
- (ii) organising information sessions in educational institutions, with the participation of representatives of the territorial education directorates, to deliver relevant and comprehensive information directly to the beneficiaries.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/careers-leaders/gatsby-benchmarks/>

The legislative framework currently allows educational institutions to set up childcare services at the place of study. At the end of 2022, the authorities approved, through a special law, an initiative to regulate alternative childcare services for children up to three years of age, including:

- a) alternative childcare services organised by the employer at the workplace;
- b) alternative individualised childcare services; and
- c) alternative family-type childcare services.

Under the original provisions, alternative childcare services could be set up at the workplace only for employed persons. Subsequently, these provisions were extended so that the children of students enrolled in studies in an educational institution may also benefit from these services. This provision was introduced to ensure access to education for NEET women caring for pre-school children. Although the legislative regulations allow educational institutions to provide facilities for the young children of their employees, as well as for students enrolled in the education system, additional measures are needed to encourage and support educational institutions, as follows:

**I. Allocating financial resources to adapt educational institutions to the needs of persons with disabilities and to set up alternative childcare services in the workplace**, as required by Law No 367/2022. This recommendation can be implemented in several ways:

**(i) Setting up a national fund for accessibility and adaptation.** A special national fund to which educational institutions can apply to fund accessibility and adaptations to accommodate people with disabilities, as well as to provide spaces dedicated to caring for young children. This fund could be administered by the Ministry of Education and Research, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, to ensure an integrated approach to social and educational needs. Funding should come from both the national public budget, with dedicated annual allocations, and from external resources provided by international partners and non-governmental organisations. To increase the resources allocated from the national public budget, the possibility of allocating 5% of the income tax amount to the national fund for accessibility is recommended. To achieve this, a mechanism similar to that designating 2% of income tax, adopted in 2016, could be implemented to support the work of non-commercial organisations.

The current legal framework requires employers with 20 employees or more to reserve at least 5% of posts for persons with disabilities (Law No. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities, Art. 34), with failure to comply punishable by a fine of between 240 and 300 conventional units (Contravention Code, Art. 56<sup>1</sup>, para 3). It is therefore recommended that the resources accrued from the fines be redistributed to the national fund for accessibility enabling educational institutions and other employers to receive support for reasonable accommodation. The funds could cover costs for physical adaptations of infrastructure, such as ramps, lifts and accessible toilets, and to set up childcare facilities, including breastfeeding rooms, safe playgrounds and other services to support parents studying or working in educational institutions.

**(ii) Through the European Village Express Programme**, initiated by the Moldovan Government, which aims to rapidly modernise rural infrastructure through projects with a maximum completion period of six months and with funding of up to 450 000 MDL. The programme is aimed at local public authorities and comprises several financing measures, including measures 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4, identified in cooperation with local authorities. Since the accessibility and adaptation of educational institution premises fall under these measures, it is feasible to organise a separate competition within the European

Village Express Programme dedicated to these objectives. There was a similar initiative in 2023, when a European Village Express call was launched for the expansion of public crèches, with the aim of addressing the urgent needs of parents in rural areas and supporting families with young children.

In 2024, the European Village Express Programme continued in this direction, allocating a budget of 20 million MDL to set up new public crèches for children up to three years of age, with a maximum value of funded projects of 1.5 million MDL, thus encouraging municipalities to apply for funding. The project to refurbish sanitary blocks in schools, carried out through a partnership between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, demonstrated the importance of collaboration between ministries to modernise educational infrastructure, with 25 projects selected and funded. To implement a call for the accessibility and adaptation of educational institutions, agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, and the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development is essential. An implementation guide must also be developed and approved by decision of the National Coordination Council for Regional and Local Development, and the necessary budget must be established and allocated by the Government. Once these conditions are met, the call can be launched, providing practical opportunities for the accessibility and adaptation of educational institutions for the benefit of people with disabilities and parents with young children.

**(iii) Through mini-grants from the Ministry of Education and Research**, which could be a starting point for a call for grants for accessibility and adaptation work in educational institutions to meet the needs of people with disabilities and parents with young children. This approach could follow the existing Ministry model, which has demonstrated experience and success in managing grant programmes, such as those for youth centres and youth organisations. By launching a similar call for grants, the Ministry of Education could provide funding to educational institutions wishing to improve accessibility and set up childcare facilities, thus contributing to wider inclusion and creating a child-friendly educational environment for all groups.

**II. Support for Teaching Support Staff (TSS).** The inclusion of persons with disabilities in the educational system depends on the degree of adaptation of the physical conditions and infrastructure, as well as on the programmes and support services within educational institutions. Different types of support services have been developed in Moldova, such as Teaching Support Staff (TSS), Resource Centres for Inclusive Education (RCIE), Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service (PAS), and Republican Center for Psychopedagogical Assistance (RCPA). Experience over the years shows that the educational assistance provided through TSS is insufficient to meet the individual developmental needs of all children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. There is the problem of the shortage and high turnover of support teachers, which also leads to the problem of insufficient TSS training, especially in the area of organising individualised assistance to children with complex needs. To design a package of support measures for this type of service, it is necessary to carry out a comprehensive analysis, which would elucidate the main barriers and challenges to the work of support teachers, as well as the factors influencing the high turnover, low motivation, and other issues.

The analysis would include a review of the legal framework governing TSS identifying, among other issues, existing gaps, staff working conditions, financial/salary aspects, access to development opportunities, and qualifications. This analysis will allow a clear understanding of the current barriers and the measures to be taken to improve the way the service is organised, remuneration, non-financial incentives, and other issues.

**III. Establishing the obligation for educational institutions to create care services at the place of study.** This measure stipulates that educational institutions with at least 5% of the total number of students in the country enrolled in their courses should be obliged by law to set up childcare facilities for the children of students who are studying in the institution. In consulting the Education Code, creating on-site care services would most appropriately be under Article 20 - Organisation of General Education, where the responsibilities of educational institutions to provide quality education, care and support for all pupils and students are already mentioned. A new provision could be added, as follows: Article 20, Paragraph 8: "Technical Vocational

Education and Training (VET) institutions and universities enrolling a number of students equal to at least 5% of the total number of students in the country shall be obliged to set up and maintain adequate facilities for the care of students' children. These spaces must be properly equipped and managed by qualified staff, ensuring a safe and stimulating environment for children's development. To implement this measure, institutions can access government funds and establish public-private partnerships." To assure effective transition to this new obligation, there could be a transition period of two to three years before the obligation comes into force. During this period, educational institutions would have the opportunity to access funds through grant calls launched by the Ministry of Education, gradually implement the necessary measures, and identify other external sources of funding allowing institutions to adapt and develop the necessary capacities to meet the new legislative requirements.

### CHILDCARE VOUCHERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE UNEMPLOYED, ENTERING THE JOB MARKET, OR STUDYING

Financial support to access childcare services is recommended to address, as a priority, the increasing proportion of NEET young people who drop out of education or the labour market due to caring responsibilities. Lack of access to childcare services for children up to the age of three is a major barrier to entry to employment or education for all parents who take on childcare responsibilities in the early years, since there are very few public childcare facilities. For young NEET women, the transition from childcare to work or education is even more difficult, due to the fact that they do not have a stable job, or the assured opportunity of integrating into education. Consequently, providing support by improving access to childcare services for this group of young women for children up to three years of age is indispensable. Therefore, financial support allocated exclusively to cover the costs of childcare services is recommended where services are not already provided by the state, i.e. there are no available nursery group places. Services to be covered by this supplement could be provided by a private care institution or alternative individualised or family-type care services. It is recommended that the beneficiaries of this supplement be exclusively young NEET women with at least one child up to three years of age, who enrol in and complete accredited study programmes or are engaged in the workplace. So, as a back-up, it is recommended that the authorities partially cover the costs of childcare services if the educational institution or employer does not provide such services on their premises. This practice is also widespread in other countries for childcare services, including care services that are organised by the employer.

The disbursement mechanism for this financial support could be similar to that for the Cultural Voucher system (see below), implemented under the aegis of the Ministry of Education and Research, in partnership with the e-Government Agency. This financial support, in the form of a voucher, is to be allocated upon request to the personal accounts of the young women eligible for this allowance. The voucher would be issued electronically, on a monthly basis, for a period of up to six months, valid for up to 80% of the cost of services, but not for more than 5 000 MDL per month. The legislative framework to regulate the whole mechanism is to be developed. Paid electronically, this recommendation should also boost the rate of registration of care service providers, reducing the rate of undeclared work, and improving transparency, which is currently a major problem in this sector.

[The national Cultural Voucher](#) Programme was approved by GD No. 774 in 2022, a Moldovan Government instrument implemented by the Ministry of Culture, through which young people who have reached the age of 18 are granted a cultural voucher with a virtual balance of 1 000 MDL, which can be used for 12 months from the date of registration to purchase cultural services and goods only through online payments. The Cultural Voucher is in the Register of personal accounts and is accessed through MPAY.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVE MEASURES IMPLEMENTED BY NEA BY INCREASING BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

To support the active employment measures implemented by the National Agency for Employment (NEA) in an effective manner, an additional budget allocation is recommended. The insufficient budget in 2023 led to the temporary suspension of active measures, limiting access to essential services for unemployed people and employers. Budget allocations have not been increased for 2024, despite the growing demand from society for these services, which include vocational training, employer subsidies and support for entrepreneurship. Increased funding would ensure the continuity of active measures, avoiding unforeseen suspensions and allowing employment programmes to adapt to current labour market requirements. In this way, the NEA would be able to seamlessly support the integration of vulnerable people into the labour market, contributing to a reduction in unemployment and having a positive impact on the economy and employment.

## VOUCHER FOR VOCATIONAL TRAINING FOR WOMEN WITH CHILDREN UP TO THREE YEARS OF AGE AND WITHOUT A COMPLETED SPECIALTY

To support the transition of women who have young children and have not completed vocational training, a system of vouchers for vocational training is proposed. These vouchers will be targeted at women on childcare leave who want to develop their skills to facilitate their return to the labour market. To support women with young children in the transition from childcare leave to reintegration into the labour market, it is proposed to extend the vocational training voucher scheme implemented by the National Agency for Employment (NEA). This programme, established by amending Law No. 105/2018 on the promotion of employment and unemployment insurance, was launched on 14 January 2023, introducing job seekers' vouchers, paper or electronic, issued by the NEA, covering the value of vocational training services from authorised providers. Under the programme, unemployed people benefit from these vouchers after receiving career guidance and a vocational training recommendation. During the training, the unemployed person remains registered with the NEA as unemployed. The draft provides that unemployed people can also opt for courses that cost more than the nominal value of the voucher, with the possibility of paying the difference.

To also make these vouchers accessible to women on childcare leave who have not have completed vocational training, it is proposed to introduce a new group of beneficiaries under the programme. Since the current programme allows only persons with registered unemployed status with the NEA to benefit from the vouchers, and mothers on childcare leave cannot obtain this status, a derogation in Article 32 of [Law No. 105/2018](#), and the corresponding adaptation of Annex No. 2 of [HG 1276/2018](#), is necessary to specify that, in addition to registered unemployed persons, mothers on childcare leave without having completed vocational training can also benefit from these vouchers. Extending this scheme would enable women to access a wide range of qualifications, retraining, or specialist courses, giving them the opportunity to acquire relevant skills and prepare for their return to the workforce. To increase the efficiency and accessibility of the programme, the list of occupations eligible for training should be extended, as well as the number of training institutions where vouchers can be used. Mothers could also benefit from a grant or coverage of accommodation and transportation costs during the courses, similar to the facilities offered to unemployed people.

## DIVERSIFICATION OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES OFFERED BY NEA

Data from the survey of NEET young people indicate that some do not consider current vocational training programmes to be in demand in the labour market. At the same time, according to NEA activity reports, vocational training services are little accessed, even in the context of a low addressability rate at the Agency. Therefore, as a remedial measure, and also to attract NEET young people into education, it is necessary for NEA to diversify vocational training programmes so that they provide skills and knowledge in demand on the labour market. This can be achieved through two interventions:

- (i) expanding the list of training providers contracted by the NEA;
- (ii) expanding the list of specialised courses offered by the NEA for training.

Currently, the Agency cooperates with a number of technical vocational education institutions (mostly vocational schools), which offer traditional trades and specialties, including in construction, the food industry, and light industry. In the context of digitalisation and developments on the labour market, these specialties are becoming less attractive for the younger generation. For this reason, it is recommended that the NEA cooperate with various service providers, including non-formal education providers, which could offer training and qualification courses in various fields, especially those where there is demand in the labour market and which have a high growth potential or are emerging, such as information technology, renewable energies, cyber security, biotechnology and genetics, and health care services.

## DEVELOPING FLEXIBLE AND INCLUSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMMES WITHIN NEA

For young people, NEETs in particular, traditional training may be inappropriate in aspects such as organisation, content and delivery. The NEA may consider developing flexible training programmes, relevant to current labour market requirements, to suit the diverse needs and life situations of these young people. This can be achieved in several ways:

- (i) the Agency can negotiate flexible curricula with educational service providers which may benefit, for example, parents with young children;
- (ii) educational support modules such as tutorials, remedial classes and exam preparation courses, can be included in the curricula to support life skills development including budget management skills and decision making, as well as civic and community engagement, which would incorporate programmes to encourage young people to get involved in their community, engage in volunteering activities or join community organisations.

All of these forms of support, when combined, can help young people become adults who are well-prepared to take constructive roles in society.

## MEASURES TO MAKE PREMISES ACCESSIBLE

Young people with disabilities are at increased risk of becoming NEET, due to limited opportunities and accessibility challenges. The level of inclusion of young people with disabilities is directly proportional to the extent to which they are able to travel from home to an educational institution or to a workplace on their own, can carry out their work using appropriate assistive technologies, or have access to other public services provided by the authorities, among other issues. To improve conditions, targeted measures are required:

- I. Modification of the regulatory framework to make central and local public authorities responsible for assessing accessibility conditions.** The new rules in the Urban Planning and Building Code, included in Article 46, require LPAs to assess at least once a year the accessibility situation of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility to social infrastructure within the limits of the administrative territory. This assessment identifies and records potential obstacles and barriers to the full and equal exercise of accessibility of persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility to the social infrastructure in the administrative territory. The act based on the respective assessment must be drawn up in such a way as to enable the provision of practical solutions of any kind to remove the obstacles and barriers within a reasonable period of time. As a result of these new provisions, local public authorities become responsible for assessing public institutions under their jurisdiction within the limits of their administrative territory. However,

institutions under the umbrella of other structures remain outside the evaluation process, a fact that limits the effectiveness of the accessibility measures. In this context, at least two additional interventions would be needed:

- (i) Adjusting the regulatory framework to broaden the powers of all central public authorities to assess the social infrastructure they manage or which is on their balance sheet. This ensures that all public institutions, regardless of managing authority, are adapted to meet accessibility standards for people with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility. Thus, both central and local authorities (represented by LPAs) will be responsible for assessing accessibility. In this process, it is recommended that the authorities cooperate with the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development (MIDR), which is the central specialist body promoting state policy on infrastructure and regional development. In view of its structure and mission, MIDR could contribute to developing or adapting the technical assessment questionnaire evaluating the accessibility of infrastructure for disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility. This kind of technical questionnaire, previously approved by MIDR Order No. 64 of 18 April 2022, could provide methodological support to the assessors and an efficient assessment framework for collecting data on the accessibility of institutions. Ensuring the interoperability of the authorities' available information systems, together with the setting up of joint working groups, could be the most viable way for ensuring an objective accessibility assessment process.
  - (ii) Designating the institution responsible for centralising information relevant to the accessibility assessment process. Given that LPAs, along with the competent authorities, would be responsible for assessing social infrastructure, they could set up their own databases in the territories under their administration, in accordance with the new Urban Planning and Building Code regulations coming into force on 30 January 2025. Taking into account that the results of the assessment will be approved by the decisions of the local/district/municipal councils, it is proposed that they be subject to administrative control by the *State Chancellery or its territorial offices*, this being the institution recommended for centralising all information, both from the LPAs and from the central authorities carrying out the assessment process.
- II. Adjusting the legal framework to designate an inspecting officer for cases of non-compliance with the building laws and regulations.** The Moldovan Contravention Code<sup>11</sup> provides for a series of sanctions for failure to comply with accessibility requirements, as follows: (i) **Art. 71 (1) Discrimination regarding access to services and goods available to the public:** *Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, based on the criterion of [...] disability, [...] or any other criterion, manifested in the field of access of persons to services provided by public authorities, to health care, medical rehabilitation and other health services, to social welfare, banking and financial services, transport, cultural and leisure services, to the sale or rental of movable or immovable property, and to other services and goods available to the public, if the act does not constitute an offence, shall be punishable [...];* (ii) **Art. 177 (2) Violation of building legislation and normative documents manifested by:** *g) failure to ensure that adequate arrangements, in line with the regulations in force, of buildings, installations and rooms, [...] to ensure their access and use by persons with disabilities; shall be penalised [...].* Although, according to the legal framework, failure to comply with accessibility requirements is punishable by fines, it is not clear who is the official responsible for cases of non-compliance with the building laws and regulations. As the National Inspectorate for Technical Supervision is an administrative authority under the umbrella of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, responsible for implementing state policy in the areas of activity entrusted to it. The Minister would be designated as the inspecting officer for contraventions of administrative authorisation or approval procedures within the Inspectorate, related to the breaching standards concerning the provision of social infrastructure for disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility.

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=133257&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133257&lang=ro#)



**III. Developing a national plan for public institution accessibility.** Although, according to Law No. 121 of 25 May 2012 on Ensuring Equality<sup>12</sup> and Law No. 60 of 30 March 2012 on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities<sup>13</sup> (Art. 8), it is forbidden to discriminate in any way against persons with disabilities taking into account all aspects of life, young people with disabilities continue to have fewer opportunities than young people with no disabilities in terms of access to education, employment and social life. Poor accessibility in buildings and public transportation, and the lack of support services, limit the chances of young people with disabilities to integrate into socio-economic life. According to the general report on the inventory of existing public and social institutions, out of the 5 137 objects assessed for accessibility, 3 440 were not adapted or did not meet the standards<sup>14</sup>. According to the data published by the Motivatie Association, through its [Accessibility Map](#), out of the 3 763 institutions assessed, the majority are either inaccessible or only partially accessible. It is therefore recommended that a national accessibility plan be drawn up, beginning with the obligation for every institution to carry out an audit of accessibility conditions, this being linked to the extension of the powers of all central authorities to assess the accessibility of the institutions they manage.

Each institution would draw up an internal accessibility plan for the two to three years ahead, as well as reporting annually on progress on accessibility. This will allow the necessary financial resources to make all public institutions accessible to be identified.

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<sup>12</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=106454&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=106454&lang=ro#)

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=133226&lang=ro#](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133226&lang=ro#)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.parliament.md/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=EuMfL%2F8dN4o%3D&tabid=202&language=ro-RO>

# METHODOLOGY

The data for this analysis were collected in a representative survey of the NEET youth population in Moldova, conducted by Magenta Consulting, within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova 2021-2024 and the project “Enhancing Employment Rights in the Republic of Moldova” which is co-funded by the Austrian Development Agency and the Council of Europe.

**Sample:** Data were collected from a sample of 857 NEET young people in Moldova (312 males and 545 females), aged 15-34.

**Data collection period:** 20 June – 10 July 2024.

**Sample type:** proportional to NEET young people in Moldova, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

**Data collection method:** TAPI - Tablet Assisted Personal Interview. Average interview duration: 26 minutes and 37 seconds.

**Pilot:** Pilot interviews were conducted on 13 and 14 June 2024. Six pilot interviews were conducted with urban (4) and rural (2) individuals of different ages and educational levels. The pilot interviews were conducted in Romanian (3) and Russian (3).

## Sampling steps:

Stage 1: Stratification by PPS administrative units, all districts in Moldova were selected.

Stage 2: PPS stratification by urban/rural (except Dubăsari - rural only).

Step 3: Random selection of collection point (settlements).

Step 4: Identifying NEET young people.

**Informing the relevant institutions about the study to identify NEET young people:** Before starting the collection process in a territory, Magenta Consulting informed the relevant institutions in all the districts by sending them a confirmation document about the study. All the district centres received an email defining what is meant by NEET and requesting their support in identifying NEET young people in the target area, while providing additional information about the project’s purpose, the project’s duration and ways in which they might provide support. The following were contacted for support: the district centres, the town halls in the sampled localities, social workers, and the National Employment Agency. In the course of data collection, we also contacted institutions that could help in identifying NEET young people - non-governmental organisations, youth centres across the country, and mayors, as well as other city hall officials who might be in contact with NEET young people in the course of their work and might be able to help in the project.

Table 1. Samples planned and collected

Criteria	Statistic,	% distribution	Quote	% distribution	Quote
	2023, term III				
Men	59477	36%	285	36%	312
Women	107659	64%	515	64%	545
Urban	83245	50%	398	49%	416
Rural	83890	50%	402	51%	441

<b>15-19 years</b>	8745	5%	42	18%	150
<b>20-24 years</b>	29772	18%	143	21%	180
<b>25-29 years</b>	61815	37%	296	28%	241
<b>30-34 years</b>	66803	40%	320	33%	286
<b>North</b>	31260	19%	150	21%	184
<b>Center</b>	46284	28%	222	27%	233
<b>Chisinau</b>	54868	33%	263	31%	263
<b>South</b>	34724	21%	166	21%	177
<b>Total</b>	<b>167136</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>857</b>



Council of Europe project  
"Enhancing employment rights in the Republic of Moldova"

ENG

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 46 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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