Working papers economics - Youth out of school and out of work: Dynamic and determinants in Colombia

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In Colombia, one in every five young people between the ages of 15 and 24 is neither studying nor working; these individuals are known as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). This paper contributes to the analysis of NEET status in Colombia by adopting a cohort perspective. Using this approach, we show that the rate of NEET youth rises sharply between the ages of 16 and 18, and that NEET status is highly persistent into adulthood.

Publication Date: Friday, 14 of August 2026 **Approach**
In Colombia, one in every five young people between the ages of 15 and 24 is neither studying nor working. These young people, who are not enrolled in the education system and do not participate in the labor market, are known as NEETs (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). This paper examines the evolution of the prevalence of NEETs in Colombia between 1984 and 2024.

Contribution
This paper contributes to the analysis of NEET status in Colombia by adopting a cohort perspective, which makes it possible to identify patterns in the dynamics of NEET rates that would not be observable in aggregate data. By working with cohorts, we identify the critical ages at which young people enter NEET status, allowing policy interventions to be more effectively targeted to mitigate this phenomenon. We also document the degree of persistence of NEET status into adulthood, as well as the community-level and macroeconomic conditions that affect the persistence of NEET status across cohorts.

Results
We find that the rate of young people who are neither studying nor working accelerates sharply between the ages of 16 and 18. In addition, NEET status is highly persistent into adulthood. There are also significant differences in the NEET experience between men and women. We show that most NEET youth belong to low-income households, highlighting the importance of financial constraints both for continuing education and for accessing the labor market.

Furthermore, we show that being in NEET status between the ages of 16 and 22 shapes these individuals' labor market trajectories. As a result, twenty years later they exhibit lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates, particularly among men, as well as lower rates of salaried employment, especially among women.

Fuente: https://www.banrep.gov.co/en/publications-research/working-papers-economics/youth-school-work-dynamic