Youth Guarantee

NEETs Census for the Reinforced Youth Guarantee

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CHAPTER 1:
LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0   Review of the Literature

This section offers a comprehensive review of literature related to Youths Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs). It provides an overview of the general statistics related to NEETs both locally and in the other EU member states; the concept of NEETs; and causes and effects of NEETs. It will also provide an introduction to the Youth Guarantee Scheme and its influence on unemployment rates amongst youths.

1.1   Introduction

Youth unemployment has become an increasing socioeconomic problem in many European countries, with rising levels of unemployment resulting in a global loss of income and increased government expenditure, with more spending on social benefits and a reduction in tax revenue (Eurofound, 2014).

The theme of unemployment amongst youths, especially those in the age group of 15 to 29 years, has received global interest since youths in this age group are expected to experience periods of unemployment, given that they are still developing and establishing their skillset in line with their personality attributes and presenting opportunities, therefore they may be uncertain about their future occupation (Higgins 2016). Additionally, youths tend to be more likely to invest time in travelling before settling down into a career, thus resulting in a further complex transition into adulthood (Rodriguez-Modroño 2019). Therefore, short-term youth unemployment may not necessarily have negative connotations but may be associated with experiences and exposure to other occupational realities, which might in turn be beneficial once these youths settle back into formal employment.

However, if these periods of unemployment become very frequent, the youth may risk labour market disengagement and eventually feel socially excluded (OECD 2019). Long-term unemployment is of growing concern as it increases the risk of the continuing exclusion of young people from the labour market and society (Eurofound, 2014). Additionally long-term unemployment is associated with a series of negative health consequences both on physical and psychological domains, which are found to grow disproportionately with the duration of unemployment (Allegretto et al., 2011). Furthermore, the loss of work experience in youth may scar labour force participation and its earnings (Eurostat 2014).

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions states that "the future of Europe depends upon the 94 million Europeans aged between 15 and 29" (as cited in Eurofound, 2012). This inevitably puts increasing pressure on the governments, so as to ensure that youths develop their skills so as to reach their full potential, find employment, and contribute to the country's human capital (NIACE, 2013). This reality has shaped public policy in various countries, resulting in a global investment aimed at targeting and reducing youth unemployment, by adopting a holistic dimension which meets the needs of these youths in a long--term and purposeful manner through the implementation of programs such as the introduction of the Youth Guarantee program amongst the European countries and on a local basis (Stoten 2014).

1.2   The concept of NEETS

The term 'NEETs' emerged within the United Kingdom, in the 1990s, to categorise youths who were not accumulating any human capital through work or learning (Istance et al., 1994). International organisations, such as the European Union (EU), the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and

Development (OECD), and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) continued to develop and modify this term and have confirmed that youths aged between 15 and 29 who are neither registered in formal education or a training programme nor in paid employment are classified as NEETs (Eurofound 2016; OECD 2016; UNESCO 2019).

The term NEETs is sometimes misused to stigmatise young people as being problematic or disadvantaged (Eurofound, 2016). Therefore, Eurofound (2016) emphasizes that NEETs are people who have their own potential. It reiterates that the policy actions of every member state must be tailored to the characteristics of each group for these youths to be re-integrated into the labour market or the education system. This foundation states that as a term, 'NEET' includes youths who may have become disadvantaged as a result of various factors, such as: having low levels of educational attainment, coming from an immigration background, having health issues, coming from a difficult family background, whilst others may have become NEETs because they will be aiming at alternative careers which totally differ from traditional ones. The term NEET may include people who are reluctant to work or study, thus resulting in a state of joblessness and marginalisation (Elder, 2015).

For this reason, different categories of NEETs were formed in order to differentiate between one group and another, and preventive measures and intervention programmes will eventually be applied. The Malta Youths NEET Census Report (2015) refer to three different categories of NEETs: Core, Floating, and Transitional NEETs.

Core NEETs involve youths coming from families where unemployment is the norm and education is not prioritised at all. This category also includes youths with social and behavioural difficulties, especially if they are coming from families with a low socioeconomic status or with a history of crime. If these youths are not rightly guided and supported from a young age, they tend to leave school early and remain unemployed.

Floating NEETs are those youths who wish and attempt to be in education, training, or employment but rarely succeed due to a lack of motivation and direction. Therefore, they require a great deal of guidance and support so as to be engaged effectively in education or employment.

Transitional NEETs involve young people who are progressing to further education or employment; thus, they may be regarded as NEETs for short periods of time, usually for about three to six months. These youths are likely to receive support from their relatives and friends, which leads them to return to education, training, and employment. A sub-category to this group of NEETs is that of young parents when they decide to become NEETs so as to look after their young children (Yates & Payne, 2006).

1.3   Current state of affairs

This section will present the state of affairs in relation to youth unemployment in terms of statistics across the European countries as well as the national perspective. This will help inform policies aimed at addressing specific urgencies.

1.3.1 The Global Perspective

The reduction in unemployment amongst youths is one of the major targets of the European Pillar of Social Rights. For this reason, the European Union has established an EU-level target aimed at lowering the rate of youth unemployment in young people aged 15-29 to 9% by 2030. Over the last decade, a significant decrease in youth unemployment rates has been recorded. In 2012, the EU youth unemployment rate was that of 16%, which peaked later in 2013 with 16.1%, and then started a steady decrease suggesting that more youths were in employment. The only exception recorded was in 2020, when during the COVID pandemic, youth unemployment went up from 12.6% in 2019 to 13.8% in 2020. However, youth unemployment rates continued to drop after the pandemic reaching 11.7% in 2022.

The average youth unemployment rate for young people aged between 15 and 29 years old was 13% across the OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Moreover, half of the youths not in employment or training in OECD countries live with their parents whilst 26% of youths not in employment or training also live with a partner and a child, which could indicate one's cause for being unemployed. The highest rates of unemployment in this OECD report seem to be in the group aged between 25 and 29. This may be attributable to the fact that those in teenage years may be still attending post-secondary or tertiary education. The female unemployment rate in OECD countries exceeds the male one and the highest rates are in Mexico and Turkey.

Within the European Union, more youths aged between 15 and 29 seem to be continuing their studies. In fact, in 2018, 89.7% were furthering their education and training while 12.2% were transitioning from education to work. In the 20-24 age group, 18.5% were transitioning from education to employment, compared to 14.2% within the 25-29 age group.

These findings are consistent with Eurostat 2019 and 2023 reports that suggest a change in trends during the last years. Instead of starting work after completing the highest level of education or training, young people are changing jobs more often. Consequently, this is resulting in a longer time span to establish oneself within the labour market. Other youths may be furthering their education and training while working, such as attending evening classes or following a distance-learning course. This indicates a change from the usual linear transition from education to work.

In 2022, there were wide variations amongst the rates of youths not in employment, education or training, for the age group 15-29 across the EU countries, whereby, 11.7% of young people aged 15 to 29 in the EU were neither in employment nor education or training (NEET), indicating a decrease of 1.4 percentage points compared with 2021 (Eurostat, 2023). Additionally, the proportion of NEET in the EU ranged from 4.2% in the Netherlands to a share almost five times higher in Romania (19.8%) (Eurostat, 2023).

Additionally, data show that in 2022, a third of the EU members were already below the 2030 target of 9%, namely the Netherlands (4.2%), Sweden (5.7%), Malta (7.2%), Luxembourg (7.4%), Denmark (7.9%), Portugal (8.4%), Slovenia (8.5%), Germany (8.6%) and Ireland (8.7%). More young women than men were neither employed nor in education. In most EU member states, there were differences between the shares of NEET young women and men. In 2022, 13.1% of young women aged 15–29 in the EU were NEETs, while the corresponding share among young men was 10.5% (Eurostat, 2023).

Eurostat findings (2023) suggest that unemployment in youths is associated with labour market mismatches, inadequate skills and wage conditions, as well as limited geographical mobility. These findings suggest that youth unemployment is a phenomenon which requires specific attention and policies that take into consideration the needs and the psychosocial realities of this target audience.

1.3.2 The Local Situation

In Malta, the unemployment rate reached a historical low of 2.9% in 2022, while the share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET) rapidly decreased from 9.5% in 2021, to 7.2% in 2022 (vis-à-vis 11.7% in the EU), making Malta a top performer in both areas. Whilst there was a slight increase of 1% in 2022, the long-term unemployment rate remains well below the EU average of 2.4% (Eurostat, 2023).

The gender employment gap is still 'weak but improving' at 13.1 percentage points in 2022, exceeding the EU average of 10.7 percentage points, though having decreased by 3.3 percentage points from 2021 (Eurostat, 2023). Whilst several incentives might be supporting women to return to employment, such as the Free Childcare Scheme, and increased family friendly measures, women may be still be pressured towards a narrow range of occupations which accommodate the needs of the family. Additionally at times, employers may prefer to engage young men rather than women because of childbirth . As a result, women may end up getting low-paid jobs or unstable ones.

When it comes to the educational attainment level, the percentage of NEETs with a low level of education (Level 0-2) seemed to be much higher than that of NEETs with a higher level. At 3.5%, Malta seemed to have the lowest rate of highly educated NEETs in the EU. The number of Maltese NEETs with the lowest level of education "is six times higher than the one for those with a high level of education" (Eurostat 2019). Therefore, low educational attainment, which includes poor literacy and numeracy skills, can be regarded as a potential predictor for low wage (UNESCO, 2017).

A significant study which shed light on the youths not in employment, education nor training here in Malta was the Census study carried out by Jobsplus in 2015. This Census study was carried out between July and September 2015, during which a total of 279 participants were interviewed.

The main findings were the following:

• 90% of NEETs here in Malta were still living with their parents within the same household;
• 11.1% of the participants were parents themselves;
• Most of the participants had some form of qualification namely a School Leaving Certificate, Ordinary Level, or Diploma level;
• A small number of respondents had a tertiary level of education;
• 76% did some kind of odd job at one point or another;
• 41% had experience working in a full-time job;
• 70% agreed that having a full-time job was important;
• 43% stated they had done some form of apprenticeship or training experience;
• More than 50% said that they did not have any plans for the future;
• Only 6% considered to start their own business;
• The majority of the participants preferred to work in traditional sectors;
• 39.5% stated that they suffered psychologically due to being currently unemployed;

• The majority of the participants, 70% of respondents had never heard of the Youth Guarantee Programme.

These findings suggest that NEETs are heavily influenced by their families. This may result in youths not being properly guided and motivated, especially in cases where parents were also unemployed. Additionally, the majority of youth NEETs preferred to work in traditional sectors. This suggests that they were either reluctant or discouraged to work in emerging sectors, or else they did not have the right skillset or have any exposure to the new emerging sectors. Moreover, the participants stated that they 'prefer job opportunities that allow them to express themselves; jobs that provide them with a learning experience and jobs that give them satisfaction and financial rewards' (Maltese Census, 2015).

70% of the participants never heard about the Youth Guarantee Programme (Maltese Census, 2015). This programme is funded by the European Social Fund, and it is implemented in various EU countries in order to support NEETs and guide them towards seeking life-long careers. The census further recommends that more work needs to be done on this programme in order to increase its awareness.

Another characteristic that was noted within the Maltese Census (2015) was that the majority of participants lacked intrinsic motivation to better their life and find a job; they seemed to be helpless in some ways. They expected the support of others or waited for some kind of luck in order to find a job. Participants also mentioned 'fear, lack of trust and confidence, lack of work experience, lack of qualifications and a lacking support structure related to childcare' as factors which hindered them from seeking jobs (Maltese Census, 2015).

1.4 The effects of Youth Unemployment

The negative consequences of youth unemployment are mostly associated with longer durations of unemployment. The short spells of youth unemployment may be an inevitable consequence of job search. Additionally, being on average less settled in both their occupational and personal choices and more inclined to travel, young people tend to experience unemployment more frequently than adults. This is one reason why youth unemployment rates are much higher than that of adults (O'Higgins, 2001). Persistently high levels of youth unemployment results in considerable economic costs. Eurofound estimates these costs to amount to more than €150 billion for NEETs in the EU-27 aged 15 to 29 years in 2011 alone. This figure corresponds to approximately 1.2 percent of the European GDP.

Long term youth unemployment early on in a person's working life is associated with a series of physical and psychosocial consequences, which are found to be associated with a sense of hopelessness and insecurity and has been linked to mental and physical ill-health (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010). Long-term youth unemployment has also been related to crime (Fougere et al., 2009). Crime is found to have serious implications on both the individual and their employment course, as well as society. Moreover, any such effects are likely to have long-term consequences; once a path of marginalization and criminality has been embarked upon, one's prospects and their self-concept; the way they perceive themselves and their potential; are likely to adjust accordingly. Thus, unemployment is detrimental to young people and society as a whole; however, equally important (Fougere et al., 2009).

A number of papers over the years have noted that the effects of unemployment early on in one's 'working' career are likely to have long-term effects unemployment prospects and wages (Gregg, 2001, and Gregg and Tominey, 2005). Furthermore, it needs to be pointed out that young people who are not able to come into employment or training are marked by the "scars" of this experience for their whole working life. The regularity with which such scarring has been found as well as more recent attempts to control for selectivity effects suggest that there really is a scarring effect that goes beyond unobserved individual heterogeneity (Cockx & Picchio, 2013). The implication is that extended difficulties in the search for work early on are likely to have lasting negative consequences.

1.5 Interventions aimed at targeting Youth Unemployment

It is crucial for policy makers to locate the primary causes of youth NEETS, especially where there are social, economic, cultural and individual' factors involved, such as family, migration, disability, gender, or a complex combination of various factors, thus rendering these youths vulnerable and acting as a potential barrier to access education, training and employment. In this way, intervention policies will be tailored according to their proper individual needs (UNESCO 2019).

Intervention Programmes targeting youth unemployment include those which are:
• educational (academic, basic, social skills, guidance, and support)
• vocational (work placements, career planning, volunteering)
• counselling or mentoring
• service-based

Most of these intervention programmes combine education, including academic skills or basic skills, with work placements. For this reason, many countries try to involve and liaise with various employers and industries. Meanwhile, counselling, guidance, and support are provided throughout the programmes, such as psychological support for career advice and life coaching (Mawn et al.,2017).

One of the main intervention programmes across European countries is that of the European Youth Guarantee, which was set up in 2013. Following the economic crisis of 2008, there was a sharp increase in youth unemployment, which lasted till 2012 (Eurofound 2016). For this reason, the Youth Guarantee policy was implemented to help young people re-enter employment, education, or training:
"the aim of this policy is to ensure that all young people under the age of 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving normal education" (European Council 2013: 1).
Another primary aim of this programme was to assist long-term NEETs who may be at risk of suffering lifelong consequences due to long spells of disengagement from employment or education (Eurofound 2016).

1.6 The Introduction of the Youth Guarantee

In December 2012, the European Commission tabled a proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee. The Council of the European Union subsequently adopted this recommendation in April 2013. This marked the launch of the Commission's landmark initiative targeting youths; designed with some urgency as a key policy response to the high cyclical unemployment among the EU's youth in the aftermath of the Great Financial Crisis.

By 2014, the Youth Guarantee was being rolled out across the EU. Despite some variations at national level, this Scheme broadly aimed to provide young people aged between 15 and 25, who were not in employment, education, or training (NEETs), with access to a good quality offer of employment, training, or education within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education.

In 2017, and in the run-up to 2021 to 2027 multiannual financial framework, the European Commission launched an in-depth review of the Youth Guarantee. In addition to a comprehensive evaluation of its outcomes, this also looked ahead to reinventing and reinforcing the Youth Guarantee in line with the developments in the global economy and in the world of work that had emerged in the years following its introduction in 2014, not least the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital and green transitions, both of which are increasingly shaping the EU's sustainable growth strategy, were also factored into this recalibration process.

These efforts resulted in the Council recommendation of 2020 which set out a blueprint for a 'reinforced' Youth Guarantee and replaced the Council Recommendation of April 2013. The 2020 Recommendation, referred to as 'A Bridge to Jobs,' reaffirms the commitment of Member States to implement the Youth Guarantee, retaining its basic elements in parallel with the introduction of several key features aimed at optimizing the Scheme's effectiveness and extending its reach to more vulnerable groups. Member States are now expected to reinforce their Youth Guarantee implementation at national level.

1.6.1 A review of the main policy drivers of the reinforced Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee was one of the EU's most significant active labour market policies of the last decade. Targeting youths aged between 15 and 24, it was launched in 2013 as an urgent and innovative response to the social and economic disruptions caused by the 2009 Global Financial Crisis. Although EU economies had slowly started to recover, unemployment remained persistently higher than pre-recession levels, with youths more likely to be unemployed or inactive compared to older workers.

At the time, the EU recognized this to be a 'youth employment crisis' which, if unchecked, could have serious and long-term social and economic consequences. Through the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013, this led to the development of the Youth Guarantee which aimed to co-ordinate a consistent, structural reform in youth employment policy and action across the EU. Public employment services (PESs) were identified as the key institutional partners and service-providers in this effort, and, while provisions were made for some flexibility in the delivery of the Scheme based on national realities and priorities, Member States were expected to align with a number of key policy features as detailed below.

- *A blended approach*: The Scheme covered both prevention (early intervention and activation) and curative (labor market integration measures) approaches accompanied by strategies to reach out to disengaged young people facing multiple disadvantages.
- *Integration and consistency*: the broad framework provided by the Youth Guarantee facilitated the integration of previously fragmented policies, measures, and services with the aim of promoting better efficiency and coordination.
- *Universal reach*: The Youth Guarantee obliged institutions to provide all young people aged 15 to 24 years with a good quality offer of employment, continued education or training,

apprenticeship, or traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving school.

- *Strengthened PES capacity*: Public Employment Services were to be provided with the tools and resources to provide personalized guidance and individual action planning at an early stage to ensure the progression towards education, training, or employment.
- *Continuous monitoring of* Youth Guarantee *design, implementation, and results*: This was provided through the European Semester process, as well as via the multilateral surveillance system of the Employment Committee (EMCO).

1.6.2 The foundations of the Youth Guarantee Programme

The European Council (2013) recommends that the policy and its framework are implemented and tailored according to the country's national, regional and local circumstances. In this way, every Member State can take into account its institutional set-ups, unemployment rates, labour market, and structural frameworks, including those which are political, legal, and financial (Eurofound 2016). Whilst some states took a more holistic approach linking the labour market, VET measures, education, youth, and social policies, other states focused solely on employment policies and others targeted youths who were job ready. However, over time, disadvantaged youths started to be included in the Youth Guarantee as well.

The Youth Guarantee Programme is made up of these three core elements:

• *Early activation:* This element focusses on enrolling young people in employment or education with a four-month limit in order to make sure that they are not stranded in long-term disengagement.

• *Short- and long-term interventions*: These interventions target both short and long-term NEETs, who will both benefit from "partnerships among key stakeholders: educational providers, labour market actors, social partners, and youth organisations, to re-align education, training (including VET) and Public Employment Services (PES) provisions to the long-term needs of young people" (Eurofound 2016).

• *Personalised and integrated support*: The programme aims to provide personalised and integrated support by offering tailored opportunities for every individual's needs, through the provision of jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships, or further education.

These are some of the policies which are being implemented in the Youth Guarantee Scheme:

• Information, guidance, and counselling - To provide personalised support and guide the young person to their preferred job or training programme.

• Assisting school-to-work transitions – These transitions help prevent early dropouts and reintegrate early school-leavers while promoting employability.

• Training and work experiences – Work placements, apprenticeships, and training opportunities are being provided, while employers gain wage subsidies and financial incentives.

• Outreach programmes – Online tools are being provided as a means of information and support for various youths, especially those who are hard-to reach.

• Youth entrepreneurship – New programmes were initiated to enhance youth entrepreneurship

• VET and apprenticeships – Through apprenticeship, youths gain dual learning pathways.

Other Initiatives

Since the introduction of the Youth Guarantee, a number of policies were put into place through the introduction of various MEDE policies namely; Alternative Learning Programmes, the Prince's Trust, SEC revision classes, MCAST preventive classes, and MCAST work-based learning, amongst other programmes (Youth Guarantee, Implementation Plan, MEDE 2014). The Youth Guarantee Programme was continuously promoted and, according to the Malta National Statistics Office, the unemployment rate eventually continued to decrease.

In line with the preventative measures, the reform 'My Journey' (Framework for the Education Strategy 2014-2024, MEDE), was set up to offer various vocational subjects in secondary schools. The aim of this reform was to decrease the number of low achievers, reduce the number of school leavers, and raise the levels of student retention and attainment in vocational education and training. Furthermore, in secondary state schools, 15-year-old students experience a week of job shadowing in a workplace, thus creating more vocational-oriented courses that facilitate the transition from formal education to employment.

1.7 The Impact of the Youth Guarantee Programme

Following the Council Recommendation of the 22nd April 2013, all the Member States submitted a Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, and at country level the respective stakeholders improved and expanded their services for young people to deliver the Scheme effectively. Ten years on, it is generally considered to be a successful measure.

According to data issued by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL), youth unemployment had dropped to a record low of 14.9% in the EU by February 2020, while there were approximately 1.7 million fewer NEETs at that point compared to 2014. Over the same period, it was also estimated that approximately 24 million young people registered in the Scheme had started an offer of employment, education, apprenticeships, and traineeships.

This was the generally positive youth employment situation across the EU prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Youth Guarantee credited with having had a major 'transformational effect' in achieving these results. A systematic review of Youth Guarantee implementation across the Member States carried out by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2018 in fact hailed the Scheme as "one of the most innovative labour market policies of the last few decades, not only in terms of its design, but also of the institutional courage needed to adopt such a forceful response and the commitment made by all stakeholders to reach agreements."

However, even as this success was acknowledged, and even before the unforeseen impacts of a global pandemic were on the horizon, the European Commission launched an in-depth review of the Youth Guarantee as part of its preparatory work for the 2021 to 2027 multiannual financial framework.

This review kicked off in 2017 with the aim of strengthening the Youth Guarantee and updating its core aims and objectives in line with global economic and labour market trends. In addition,

lessons learned from the implementation of the first iteration of the Scheme were factored into this review to increase its reach and effectiveness.

At that point it was clear that the digital and green economic transitions were fast gaining traction, with an inevitable impact on the employment landscape and the demand skills that would increasingly drive employability. These were all elements that had a significant impact on youths transitioning from education to further training/education, from education to employment or in their early job-to-job mobility. They were also further barriers for disadvantaged youths at high risk of falling into the NEETs trap.

Against this backdrop, the Commission developed a plan for a reinforced Youth Guarantee that provide an EU-wide youth employment strategic framework after 2021, looking ahead to 2027.

This process gained even greater urgency with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, and culminated in the Council Recommendation of 30 October 2020 entitled 'A bridge to Jobs: Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee.' This effectively replaced the Council Recommendation 22 April 2013 and established a new way forward for the Scheme across the Union.

1.8   General findings from the review

The following section presented a review of literature on youth unemployment. The following conclusions were drawn up. The percentage of NEETs has improved steadily amongst most of the EU member states resulting in most countries reaching the established EU-level target aimed at lowering the rate of youth unemployment in young people aged 15-29 to 9%, by the 2030. Malta placed itself as a top performer with a remarkable decrease in the percentage of NEETs to 7.2% in 2022. The youths classified as NEETs are a heterogenous population marked by different reasons as to why they are currently neither in employment, training nor formal education. Hence a clear definition of these youths who are currently not in employment, education or training may be warranted when describing interventions and programmes for support. Long-term unemployment is found to have detrimental effects on one's physical and psychosocial wellbeing, and is found to have harmful socioeconomic effects. Most of the intervention programmes adopt a holistic approach by combining education, academic skills or basic skills, with work placements. These work placements need to be more tailored to the youth's personality and expectations so as to ensure a better long-term fit. Following the implementation of the Youth Guarantee in 2014, youth unemployment in the EU steadily declined by nearly ten percentage points thus further emphasizing the positive contribution of this Programme to our youths and to the economy across all EU member states.

CHAPTER 2:
METHODOLOGY

2.1   Introduction

This section offers a description of the methodology applied throughout this research project. It focuses on the sampling methodology adopted, the data collection procedures, the research instrument used, and the data analysis procedure.

2.2   Research instrument

The aim of this project was to provide a clear picture of Maltese youths aged between 16 and 29 who are not engaged in any formal employment, education or training (NEET). For the purposes of this project, special care was taken to develop a questionnaire that drew from instruments which had been successfully applied in similar research exercises abroad. The instrument was designed and tailored for the particularities of the local Maltese context and more specifically for the NEET group. Some of the variables which the instrument included were:

A.   Demographics of the respondents including information about their family
B.   Education and training of the respondents, including educational attainment and plans for the futureWork experience and interests
C.   Digital skills and awareness of the green transition
D.   Additional Section – Other interests of this cohort

2.3   Sample Frame

The accuracy and credibility of quantitative research strongly depends on the sample design. The target population for this research was the domestic NEET group aged between 16 and 29. Since every effort was taken to ensure that the questionnaire was distributed across the entire target population, the final sample is highly representative of the actual population, as attested by Figure 1 which compares the age distribution across both the population and sample.
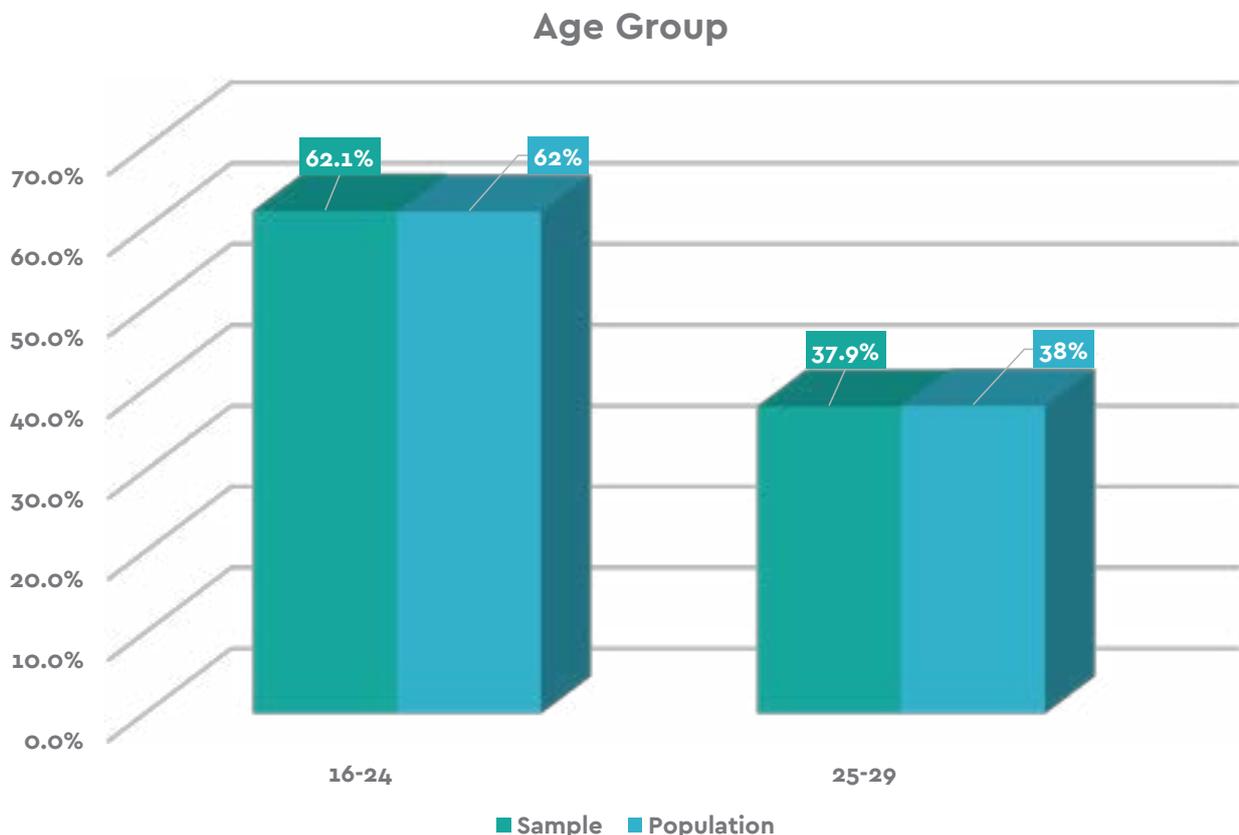
Figure 1 – Bar chart: Age distribution

Initially, Jobsplus provided details of 6,701 that met the NEET conditions in August 2023. These individuals were classified within two age groups: the 16-24 age group and 25-29 age group. This differs from the previous 2015 report, which only included an analysis of the 16-24 age group. The inclusion of this additional age group is due to the fact that since then, the EU expanded the age group relevant to NEET youth from 16-24 to 16-29. As a result, this time around a larger sample size was collected.

Table 1 below shows the collected sample of 754 individuals. From the total number of NEET youth provided by Jobsplus (6,701), 780 were found to be ineligible to participate (Not NEET). In addition, another 3,626 were without contact numbers and hence we tried to communicate with them via traditional mail and email. Through our correspondence we encouraged the individuals to participate in this research by providing us with their contact details; only 214 replied to our request. Hence, we did not have any contact numbers for 3,412 individuals. Another 800 refused to participate in this research and 741 were not reachable after five attempts at trying to make contact. Based on the above statistics we ended up with a sample size of 754 individuals, which translates to a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of +/- 3.33%

Table 1 - The target population

	Number of individuals
Participated in this research	754
Ineligible (Not NEET participant)	781
Contacts without contact number	3,626
Contact numbers received after communicating (by traditional mail and email) with the 3,626	214
Remained without contact numbers	3,412
Refused to answer	800
Unable to make contact after 5 attempts	741
Total	**6,701**

2.4 Data Collection Approach

During the initial stages we tried to communicate with 500 individuals to carry out face-to-face interviews. However,

a. Only 3% accepted to participate through face-to-face interviews. For those individuals who did not answer the telephone, five attempted calls were made.
b. Following this, a face-to-face appointment with those individuals who accepted was scheduled.
c. On the day of the appointment, we only managed to interview almost half of the individuals that accepted to participate initially, hence bringing the response rate only to 1.4%. Almost half of the above did not turn up for the interview at the agreed place (we offered to meet at their preferred location). Following a number of calls we still did not manage to get in touch with them.

d. With the above results we would have only managed to collect a maximum sample of 100 individuals, a far cry from the desired results which would have jeopardised the accuracy of the analysis. Indeed, this sample size would constitute a high margin of error (+/- 9.7%).

e. During the telephone calls most respondents stated that, "***We are ready to reply by telephone/online but not a face-to-face interview'***.

As mentioned earlier, during the initial call we offered the respondents to meet at a place which was comfortable to them, namely:

a. At their home
b. Another place of their preference, E.g., cafeteria
c. At our offices
d. Or at another public place of their preference

Furthermore, in order to encourage participation a campaign directly targeting the individuals was planned. We prepared a letter to be sent to individuals at their home to encourage their participation, emphasising the importance of this research. Furthermore, for those individuals that did not have their contact details (telephone/mobile number) we prepared a letter together with a form to provide us with the necessary information.

In order to enhance the response rates, a number of campaigns were organized during the project:

a. **Email Campaign through direct communication with the respective population:** A letter to all respondents was sent by email, aiming to encourage respondents to participate in the research study, hence improving the response rate.

b. **Direct campaign through traditional postal communication - letter attached:** This involved sending a letter by traditional mail to the respective population to encourage a higher response rate.

c. Moreover, a number of online campaigns through professionally designed posts were used to promote the same research on the social media platforms.

However, since almost all respondents were refusing to meet in person, we had to proceed with telephone interviews. This proved to be very successful as the sample size increased from a prospective 100 individuals to 754 complete replies. Hence, this impacted the accuracy and reliability of the results.

It is imperative to note that the chosen method, namely Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI), is a validated, credible and reliable research approach, used globally to collect large-scale high-quality quantitative data. The data collection was carried out during September - November 2023.

Before starting with the final data collection, a pilot study was carried out amongst 50 youth NEETS in order to determine whether all questions are:

a. Clear and understandable;
b. Eliciting reliable responses;

c.   No options are missing from responses, and that the

d.   Terminology used is clear by everyone.

2.5   Data collectors

Interviewers were selected on the basis of:

a.   Having a minimum of baccalaureate standard of education in management, marketing or related fields; or

b.   Having a minimum experience of two years in marketing, marketing research, communications or related areas; or

c.   Having relevant experience to communicate clearly with different respondents who had different levels of education and came from different walks of life.

Furthermore, a specific training programme for this project was provided to the data collectors, consisting of the following modules:

a.   **Module 1: Introduction to the initiative and the target group (NEETs aged 15-24 and 25 – 29 years) (2 hours)**

b.   **Module 2: Interviewing skills (4 hours)**

c.   **Module 3: Soft Skills for interviews (4 hours)**

d.   **Module 4: Role-Play (2 hours)**

Further details are found in 'Appendix 3'.

2.6   Data Analysis & Reporting

In reporting observations, the following notes relate to how observations were validated and reported.

Summary Statistics:

The analysis of respondent characteristics involved conducting a series of exploratory routines based on the:

a.   Classification of groups of respondents;

b.   Counting of frequencies of ordinal and/or nominal responses;

c.   Categorisation and analysis of frequencies of nominal responses relating to open ended questions;

d.   Overall mean of scalar responses observed for Likert-type measures.

Analysis of frequencies:

In assessing differences among activity groups, ordinal or nominal responses were cross-tabulated against the different respondent groups as characterised by their classificatory properties.

Analysis of means:

In estimating variations in responses among respondents, means and variation of scalar responses were estimated for different respondent groups as characterised by their classificatory properties.

2.7   Data collectors

This section provided the required information with regards to the methodology to ensure that this study can be easily replicated in the future. Information with regards to the data collection, sampling techniques, design of questionnaire, data collections and data analysis procedures was provided.

CHAPTER 3:
RESULTS

3.1 Results of the Youths NEET Secondary Data

This section investigates several factors related to the unemployment rates and inactivity status among the 16-29 age demographic. This data can be considered as secondary data as it was provided by Jobsplus. This dataset relates to the entire population under investigation and which is our main target for the scope of this research study. It explores various factors, including the individuals' district of residence, disability status, and employment history, and how these factors correlate with unemployment in this age group. These latter variables were obtained from the Department of the Social Security (DSS) and linked with the Jobsplus data to ensure that we have a full picture of the Youths NEET cohort.

As specified in the methodology, 5,920 individuals are considered to be the target population of our research study[1]. Hence, these 5,920 individuals are all youths and in the NEET category. First, we shall look at the full cohort (16-29 age group), followed by an analysis of the 16-24 and 25-29 age subgroups. This is an addition from the previous report (2015), since as stated above the previous report only analysed the 16-24 age group.

3.2 SOCIAL BENEFITS RECEIVED BY THE 16-29 AGE GROUP

The data indicates that a total of 1,271 individuals, or 21.5% of the total target population, are currently receiving some form of benefits. The most popular benefits are seen in Table 2, with the leading benefit being Severe Disability Assistance (314 individuals).

Table 2 - Social benefits received by the 16-29 age group

	Percentage	Count
Severe Disability Assistance	24.7%	314
Increased Severe Disability Assistance	9.5%	121
Social Assistance	1.7%	22
Increased Carers Allowance	1.4%	18
Unemployment Benefit	0.9%	11
Others	61.8%	785
Total	100.0%	1271

It is important to note that 710 individuals are receiving more than one benefit. Moreover, 522 individuals are receiving children related benefits, including the Children's Allowance, the Children's Allowance Flat Rate, and the Children's Allowance Supplement.

3.3 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 16-24 AGE GROUP

This section will take a look at the 16-24 age subgroup, which consists of **3,642 individuals** (data provided by Jobsplus), representing 61.5% of the 16-29 age group as a whole.

3.3.1 The 16-24 age group across districts

When analysing the six different districts across the 16-24 age group, we see that the highest number of individuals are located in the northern harbour (28.0%) district, followed by those located in the southern harbour (19.9%). However, this is in line with the general demographics of the Maltese population.

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1   This includes the entire population of NEETs as recorded by Jobsplus (6,701 individuals), excluding those who were found to have been incorrectly classified as NEETs (781).

Table 3 - The 16-24 age group across districts

	Percentage	Count
Gozo and Comino	7.0%	255
Northern	15.1%	549
Northern Harbour	28.1%	1023
South Eastern	15.1%	552
Southern Harbour	21.4%	778
Western	13.3%	485
Total	**100.00%**	**3642**

3.3.2 Disability status in the 16-24 age group

When assessing the level of disability across the 16-24 age group, we see that the majority (87.4%) are not persons with disability, with the remaining 12.6% having some form of disability.

Table 4 - Disability status in the 16-24 age group

	Percentages	Count
Not disabled	86.2%	3141
Disabled	13.8%	501
Total	**100.0%**	**3642**

3.3.3 Social benefits received by the 16-24 age group

A total of 749 individuals, or 20.6% of the 16-24 age group, are receiving social benefits. The most popular benefits are listed in Table 5, with the leading form of benefits received being Severe Disability Assistance (233 individuals).

Table 5 - Social benefits received by the 16-24 age group

	Percentage	Count
Severe Disability Assistance	31.1%	233
Increased Severe Disability Assistance	11.3%	85
Social Assistance	2.1%	16
Increased Carers Allowance	1.2%	9
Disability Assistance	1.5%	11
Others	52.7%	395
Total	100.0%	749

Note that 358 individuals from the 16-24 age group benefit from more than one social benefit. In addition, 258 individuals are receiving benefits relating to their children, including Children's Allowance, the Children's Allowance Flat Rate, and the Children's Allowance Supplement.

3.4 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE 25-29 AGE GROUP

We now turn to the 25-29 age subgroup. This group consists of **2,278 individuals**, which is 38.5% of the 16-29 age group as a whole.

3.4.1 The 25-29 age group across districts

When analysing the six different districts across the 25-29 age group, we see that the largest number of individuals is located in the northern harbour (30.4%), followed by those located in the southern harbour (17.5%), once again in line with the general demographics of the Maltese population.

Table 6 - The 25-29 age group across districts

	Percentage	Count
Gozo and Comino	8.3%	190
Northern	16.7%	380
Northern Harbour	30.4%	692
South Eastern	13.9%	317
Southern Harbour	17.5%	398
Western	13.2%	301
Total	**100.00%**	**2278**

3.4.2 Disability status in the 25-29 age group

When assessing the level of disability across the 25-29 age group, it appears that the majority (90%) are not persons with disability, with the remaining 10% having some form of disability.

Table 7 - Disability status in the 25-29 age group

	Percentages	Count
Not disabled	90.0%	2050
Disabled	10.0%	228
Total	**100.0%**	**2278**

3.4.3 Social benefits received by the 25-29 age group

A total of 522 individuals, which is 22.9% of the 25-29 age group, are receiving social benefits. The most popular benefits are seen in Table 8 below, with the leading form of benefits received being the Severe Disability Assistance (81 individuals).

Table 8 - Social benefits received by the 25-29 age group

	Percentage	Count
Severe Disability Assistance	15.5%	81
Increased Severe Disability Assistance	6.9%	36
Increased Carers Allowance	1.7%	9
Social Assistance	1.7%	9
Unemployment Benefit	1.1%	6
Others	73.0%	381
Total	100.0%	522

Note that 352 individuals from the 25-29 age group benefit from more than one social benefit. In addition, 264 individuals stated that they receive benefits relating to their children, including the Children's Allowance, the Children's Allowance Flat Rate, and the Children's Allowance Supplement.

3.5 RESULTS OF THE YOUTHS NEET CENSUS

This section presents the main findings of the Youths NEET Census, which as mentioned earlier was conducted across a representative sample of 754 respondents.

3.6 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS
Demographic information
62.1% (468 individuals) of the 754 respondents that participated in this research are within the 16-24 age group while 37.9% are in the 25-29 group (286 individuals). This is similar to the actual population data reported earlier, underscoring the representativeness of the sample.

Figure 2 – Pie Chart: Sample distribution by age groups

In turn, 52.0% of the total respondents that participated in this survey are males (392 individuals), while 48.0% are females (362 individuals).
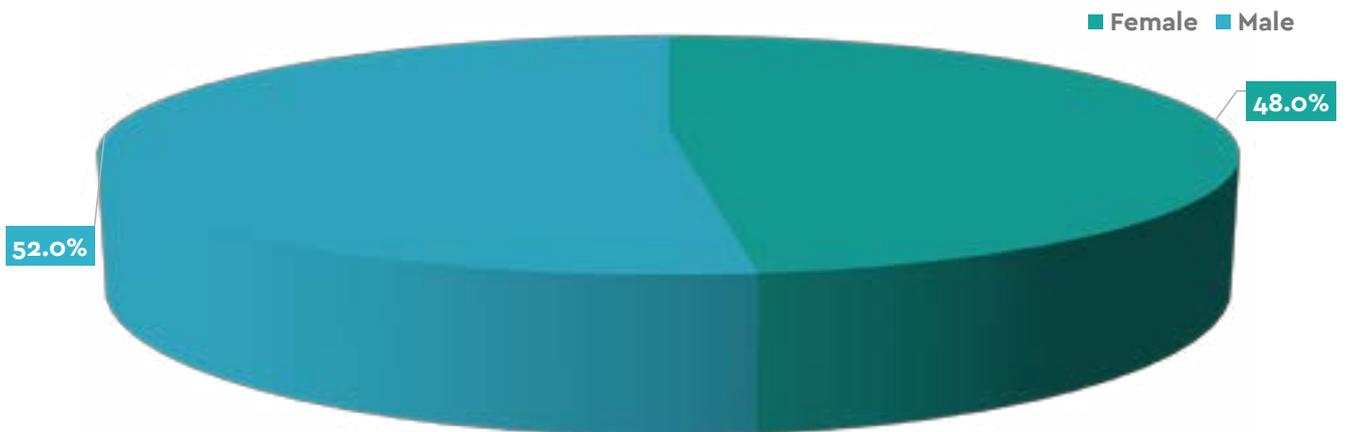
Figure 3 – Pie Chart: Sample distribution by gender

3.7 Family members
The participants were asked to state where they lived when they were growing up. The bar chart below shows that the majority lived with their biological parents (77.0%), followed by those who lived with just one parent (15.2%). 4.4% with their grandparents and 3.3% lived in some other household (adoptive families, orphanages or with other relatives). This is an important consideration, since

studies have shown that growing up in a single-parent household, or being from a divorced/separated family, increase the likelihood of NEET status (e.g., Luthra, 2019, Zhang et al., 2020). The results thus suggest that such family dynamics may not be as prevalent in the Maltese Islands given that the vast majority of respondents hail from two-parent households, who are their biological parents.
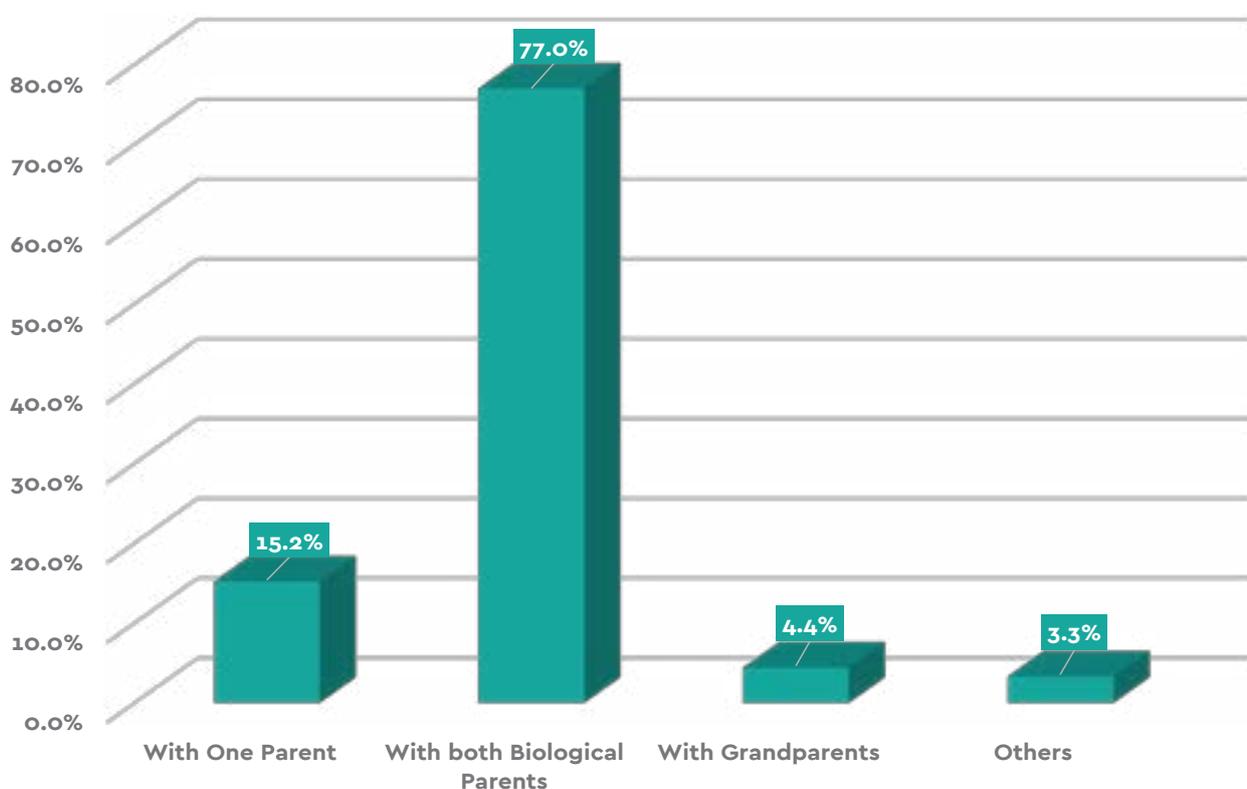
Figure 4 - Bar Chart: Who did you grow up with?

The table below breaks down respondents' living situation growing up on the basis of their age group and gender. As seen below, one can conclude that results are rather similar across the two different age groups and genders.

Table 9 - Respondents' living situation by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
With one parent	15.6%	14.7%	15.2%	115
With both biological parents	76.9%	77.3%	77.0%	581
With grandparents	5.0%	3.5%	4.4%	33
Others	2.6%	4.5%	3.3%	25
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

Table 10 - Respondents' living situation by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
With one parent	20.9%	10.0%	15.2%	**115**
With both biological parents	72.1%	81.6%	77.0%	**581**
With grandparents	4.7%	4.1%	4.4%	**33**
Others	2.2%	4.3%	3.3%	**25**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

We now turn to the respondents' current living situation. As shown in Figure 5, the absolute majority of respondents (73.3%) stated that they currently live with two parents, while 24.8% state that they currently live with one parent in their household. Only 1.9% live in a household without a parent. This is also noteworthy since this indicates that youth NEETs in Malta typically live with their parents or at least one parent, who in turn would provide a safety net of sorts to temper the risk of poverty or other issues, and which the evidence suggests are extremely prevalent within such cohorts (e.g., Buheji, 2019).
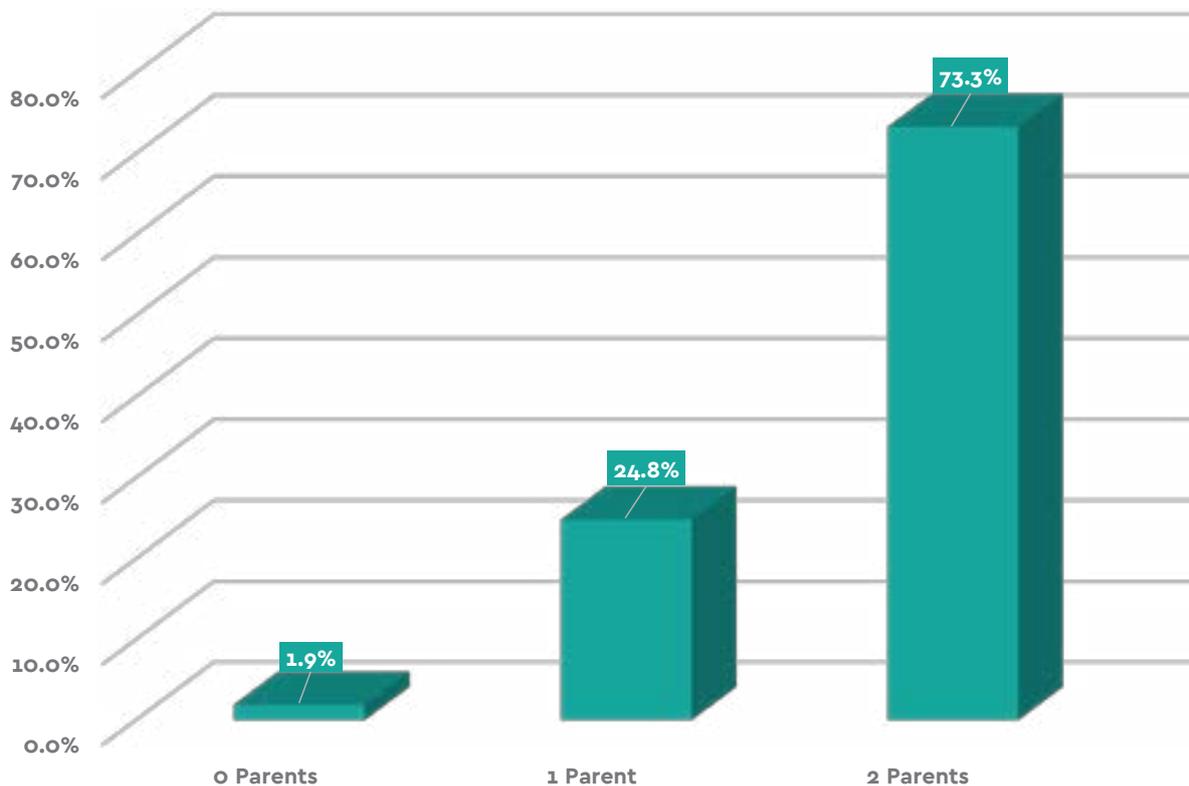
Figure 5 - Bar Chart: Current households

Once again, similar aggregate results are obtained when comparing age groups and genders.

Table 11 - Current households by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
0 parents	1.4%	3.4%	1.9%	14
1 parent	24.4%	25.7%	24.8%	187
2 parents	74.2%	70.9%	73.3%	553
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

Table 12 - Current households by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
0 parents	1.8%	2.1%	1.9%	14
1 parent	28.5%	21.7%	24.8%	187
2 parents	69.8%	76.2%	73.3%	553
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

The majority of respondents (50.2%) stated that they currently live in a household with one sibling, followed by those who live with two siblings (24.1). 10.6% stated that they do not have any siblings, and 1.3% stated that they have more than six siblings.
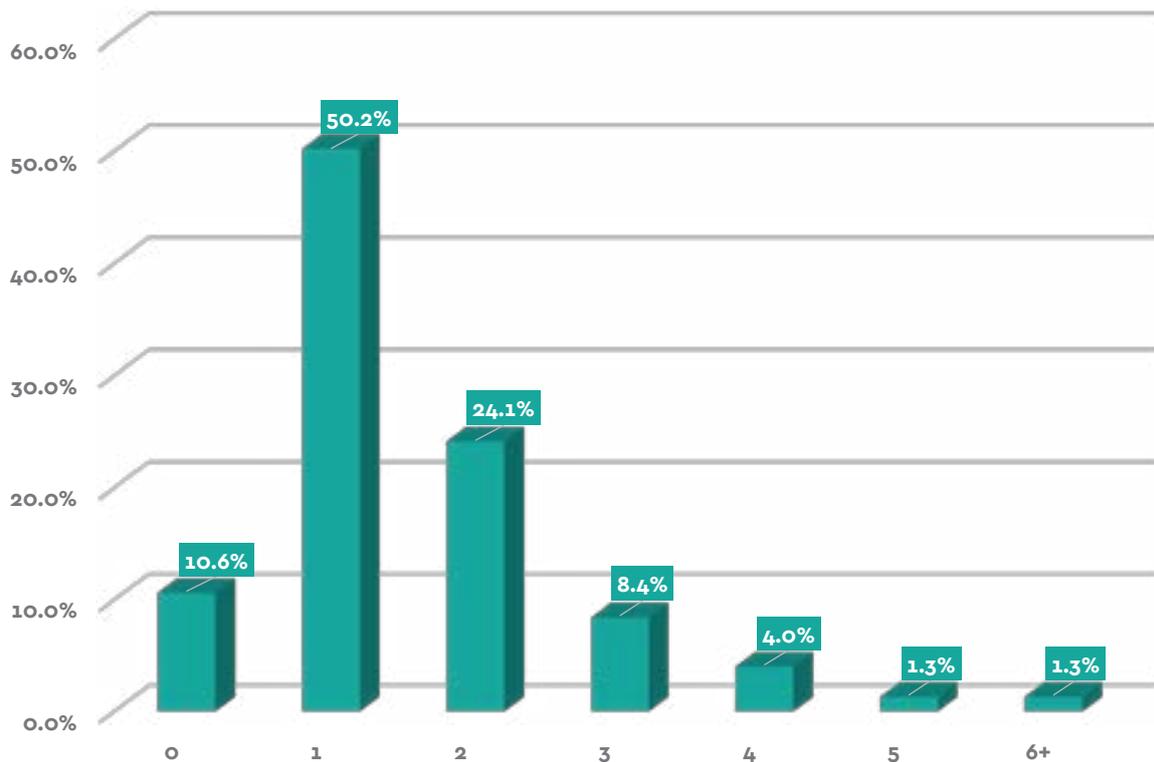
Figure 6 - Bar Chart: Number of Siblings

Results are also consistent across both gender and age groups.

Table 13 - Number of siblings by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
0 siblings	9.2%	12.5%	10.6%	**80**
1 sibling	49.2%	52.9%	50.2%	**379**
2 siblings	24.6%	22.8%	24.1%	**182**
3 siblings	9.2%	5.9%	8.4%	**57**
4 siblings	3.9%	4.4%	4.0%	**30**
5 siblings	1.8%	0.0%	1.3%	**13**
6+ siblings	1.3%	1.5%	1.3%	**13**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 14 - Number of siblings by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
0 siblings	8.2%	11.9%	10.6%	**80**
1 sibling	53.2%	48.1%	50.2%	**379**
2 siblings	20.3%	27.1%	24.1%	**182**
3 siblings	8.7%	8.1%	8.4%	**57**
4 siblings	5.6%	2.7%	4.0%	**30**
5 siblings	2.2%	0.7%	1.3%	**13**
6+ siblings	1.3%	1.4%	1.3%	**13**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

All 754 respondents were asked to state if they have children or not. The majority (86.8%, 654 individuals) replied 'No' to this question, while 13.2% stated that they have children. Having children has been identified within the socioeconomic literature as being an important risk factor for NEETs in terms of their likelihood of poverty, particularly among men (Vancea and Utzet, 2018).

13.2%

Yes No

86.8%
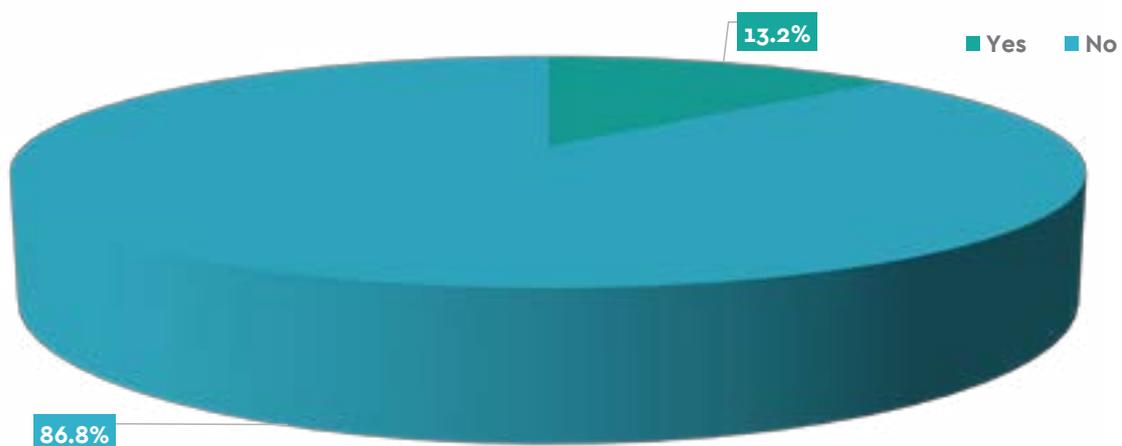
Figure 7 - Pie Chart: Do you have children?

Comparing the above questions across both demographics one can conclude that the older age group (24.6% vs. 6.1%) and females (22.4% vs. 4.7%) are more likely to have children.

Table 15 - "Do you have children?" by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
I have children	6.1%	24.6%	86.8%	654
I do not have children	93.9%	75.4%	13.2%	100
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

Table 16 - "Do you have children?" by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
I have children	22.4%	4.7%	86.8%	654
I do not have children	77.6%	95.3%	13.2%	100
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

Those who have children were asked to specify how many children they have. The majority (64.2%) claimed that they have one child, while 23.2% said two children, 8.4% said three children, and 3.2% said four children.
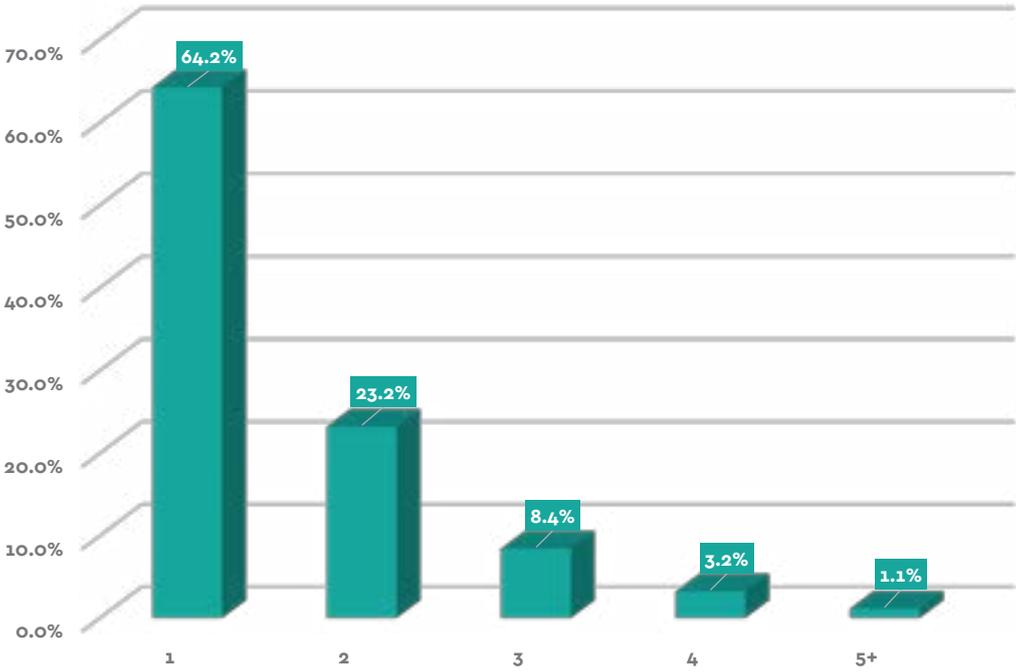
Figure 8 - Bar Chart: How many children do you have?

As expected, the older age group and females are more likely to have two children when compared against the 16-24 age group and males.

Table 17 - Number of children by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
1	84.0%	57.1%	**64.2%**	**484**
2	4.0%	30.0%	**23.2%**	**175**
3	8.0%	8.6%	**8.4%**	**63**
4	4.0%	2.9%	**3.2%**	**24**
5+	0.0%	1.4%	**1.1%**	**8**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 18 - Number of children by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
1	59.5%	87.5%	**64.2%**	**484**
2	26.6%	6.3%	**23.2%**	**175**
3	10.1%	0.0%	**8.4%**	**63**
4	3.8%	0.0%	**3.2%**	**24**
5+	0.0%	6.3%	**1.1%**	**8**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

When asked to state whether their children live with them or not, 82.9% of those that have children (543 respondents) stated that they still live with them. 17.1% replied in the contrary.
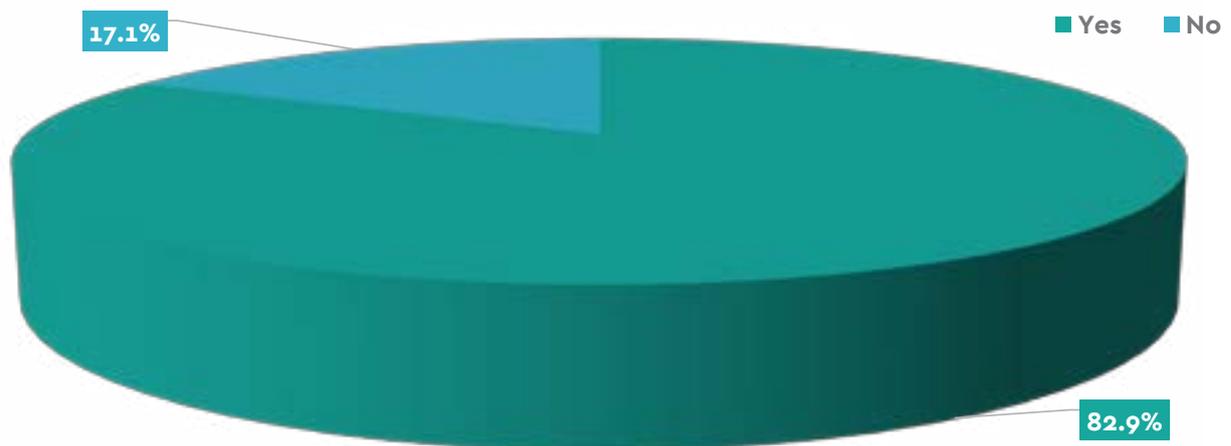
Figure 9 - Pie Chart: Do your children live with you?

92.9% of females who stated that they have children said that their children live with them, with this figure dropping significantly to 42.9% among male respondents that have children.

Table 19 - "Do your children live with you?" by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
My children live with me	77.4%	85.1%	**82.9%**	**673**
My children do not live with me	22.6%	14.9%	**17.1%**	**81**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 20 - "Do your children live with you?" by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
My children live with me	92.9%	42.9%	**82.9%**	**673**
My children do not live with me	7.1%	57.1%	**17.1%**	**81**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Participants were then asked to state the age of their father. Based on the responses provided, the average age of NEETs' fathers is 53 years, with ages ranging from 35 to 80. When asked to state their father's employment type, the majority (59.4%) stated that they are in full-time employment, followed by 17.1% that stated that they are self-employed. In turn, 6.5% stated that their father is unemployed, 2.5% stated that their father is in part-time employment, and 0.6% stated that their father is a casual worker. 13.9% chose the 'Others' category, denoting that their father is either a pensioner, deceased, or they do not know what their occupation is.
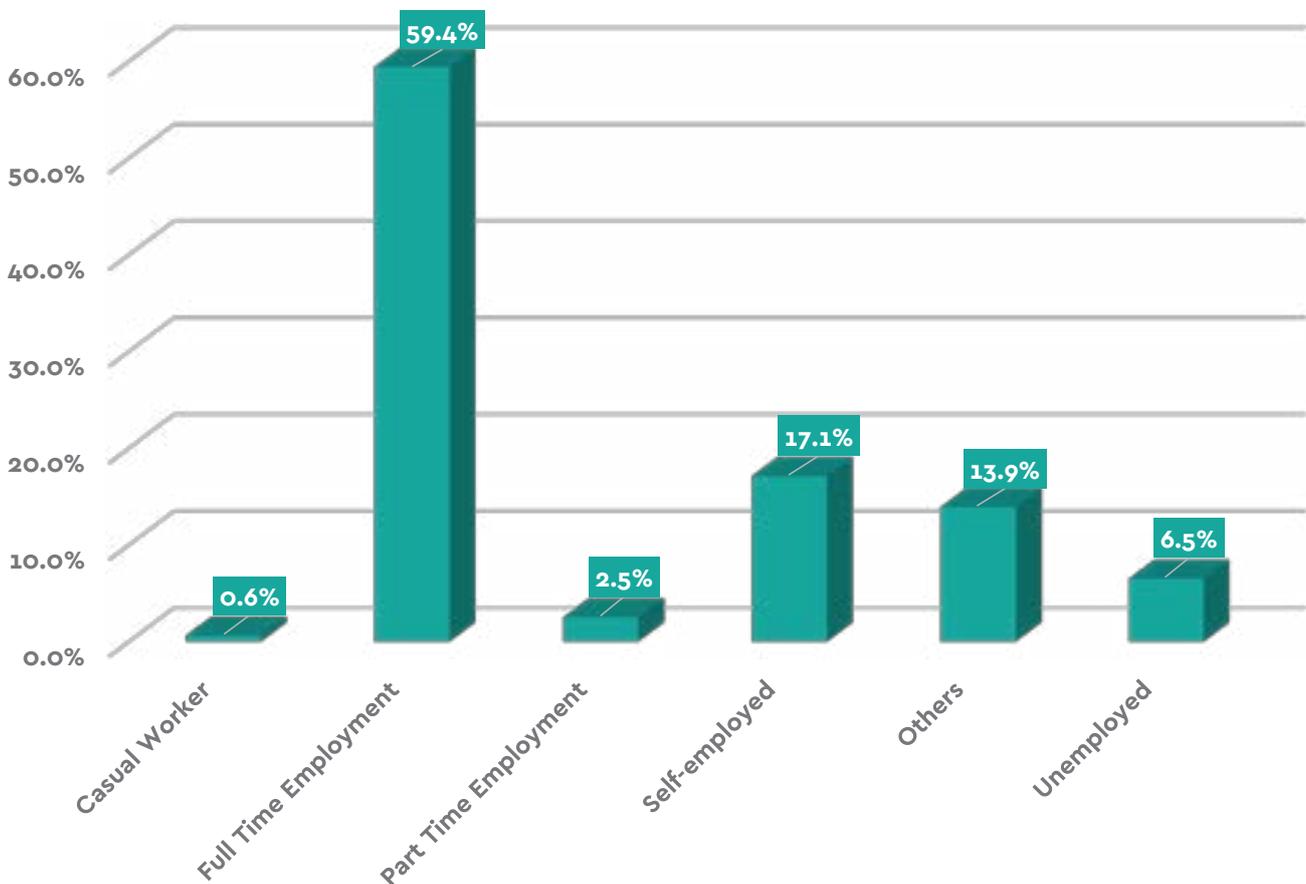
Figure 10 - Bar Chart: Father's Employment type

The younger cohort are more likely to have their father in full-time employment (65.0% vs. 50.2%). On the other hand, there is no difference between male and female respondents.

Table 21 - Father's employment type by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Casual Worker	1.0%	0.0%	**0.6%**	**5**
Full-time employment	65.0%	50.2%	**59.4%**	**448**
Part-time employment	3.0%	1.6%	**2.5%**	**19**
Self-employed	14.9%	20.8%	**17.1%**	**129**
Others	9.2%	21.6%	**13.9%**	**105**
Unemployed	6.9%	5.7%	**6.5%**	**48**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 22 - Father's employment type by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
Casual Worker	0.6%	0.6%	**0.6%**	**5**
Full-time employment	60.6%	58.3%	**59.4%**	**448**
Part-time employment	2.6%	2.4%	**2.5%**	**19**
Self-employed	17.0%	17.3%	**17.1%**	**129**
Others	12.8%	14.9%	**13.9%**	**105**
Unemployed	6.4%	6.5%	**6.5%**	**48**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Respondents were also asked to state the age of their respective mothers. In this instance, the average age reported is 50 years of age, ranging from 32 to 74. When asked to state their mother's employment type, the majority (45.3%) stated that they are in full-time employment, followed by 34.1% who stated that they are unemployed. 8.6% stated that their mother works part-time and 5.4% self-employed. In turn, 0.4% of the mothers are casual workers, and 6.1% chose the 'Others' category, who then stated that their mother is either a housewife, pensioner, deceased, or they do not know what her occupation is.
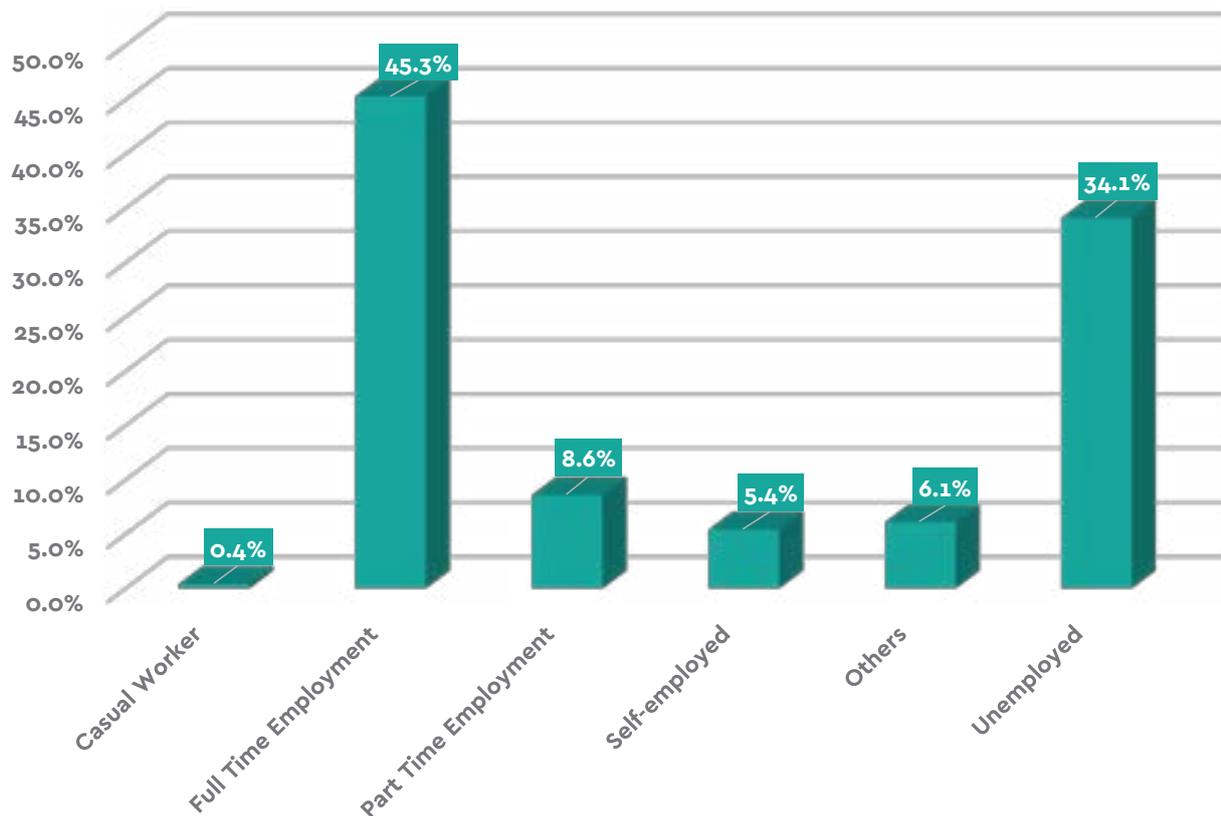
Figure 11 - Bar Chart: Mothers' Employment type

Similarly, as above, the younger cohort are more likely to have their mother in full-time employment (48.2% vs. 40.7%).

Table 23 - Mothers' employment type by age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Casual Worker	0.4%	0.4%	**0.4%**	3
Full-time employment	48.2%	40.7%	**45.3%**	342
Part-time employment	8.3%	9.2%	**8.6%**	65
Self-employed	7.0%	2.9%	**5.4%**	41
Others	5.4%	7.3%	**6.1%**	46
Unemployed	30.7%	39.6%	**34.1%**	257
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 24 - Mothers' employment type by gender

	Female	Male	Total	Count
Casual Worker	0.3%	0.5%	**0.4%**	3
Full-time employment	44.4%	46.2%	**45.3%**	342
Part-time employment	8.5%	8.7%	**8.6%**	65
Self-employed	5.1%	5.7%	**5.4%**	41
Others	6.0%	6.3%	**6.1%**	46
Unemployed	35.6%	32.6%	**34.1%**	257
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

These findings broadly reflect Malta's buoyant labour market in recent years with near full employment and high levels of labour force participation, although the relatively high unemployment rate among respondents' mothers requires further examination, since in all likelihood this also includes stay-at-home parents or homemakers who do not form part of the labour force and would be classified separately to the unemployed. In any case, these findings are important to note since having unemployed parents is typically one of the main risk factors leading to youth NEET across the world (e.g., Duckworth and Schoon, 2012). Once again, as with the family composition variable, this risk factor does not appear to exert any significant pressure in Malta when it comes to youth NEETs.

3.8 Social Life

The respondents were asked to state the time that they spend with their families per week. The majority (74.6%) stated that they spend two or more hours per day with their families. Comparing these responses with the age and gender, we can conclude that those aged between 16 and 24 are more likely to spend '2 or more hours per day'. Furthermore, the results are quite similar between males and females.

Table 25 - Time spent with Family by Age

Time with their family	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
1-4 hours per week	5.6%	11.2%	**7.7%**	**58**
I hardly ever see them	5.6%	13.6%	**8.6%**	**65**
2 or more hours per day	80.5%	65.0%	**74.6%**	**563**
An hour per day	8.4%	10.1%	**9.0%**	**68**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 26 - Time Spent with Family by Gender

Time with their family	Females	Males	Total	Count
1-4 hours per week	8.0%	7.4%	**7.7%**	**58**
I hardly ever see them	8.6%	8.7%	**8.6%**	**65**
2 or more hours per day	74.3%	74.9%	**74.6%**	**563**
An hour per day	9.1%	9.0%	**9.0%**	**68**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were asked to state how often they spend time with their friends per week. The most popular response was that they spend two or more hours per day with their friends (37.1%). Comparing these responses with the age and gender demographics, we see that for the most popular response (spending two or more hours per day with friends), the majority are individuals aged between 16 and 24.

Both sets of findings are noteworthy. Firstly, evidence indicates that a lack of family support can increase the likelihood of falling into NEET status (Alfieri et al., 2015). In turn, having a robust network of support from both family and friends can soften the blow of NEET status and assist in mitigating the social and economic risks associated with this reality (Balan, 2016). Thus, the results indicate that youth NEETs in Malta at least seem to have a reasonable support structure around

them as provided by family and friends, which also tallies with the earlier findings regarding their family structure.

Table 27 - Time spent with Friend by Age

Time with their friends	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
1-4 hours per week	20.4%	49.6%	**31.5%**	**238**
I hardly ever see them	15.5%	35.2%	**22.9%**	**173**
2 or more hours per day	54.1%	9.2%	**37.1%**	**280**
An hour per day	10.1%	6.0%	**8.5%**	**63**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 28 - Time spent with Friends by Gender

Time with their friends	Females	Males	Total	Count
1-4 hours per week	29.5%	33.2%	**31.5%**	**238**
I hardly ever see them	26.7%	19.4%	**22.9%**	**173**
2 or more hours per day	37.0%	37.1%	**37.1%**	**280**
An hour per day	6.7%	10.2%	**8.5%**	**63**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they are with their life right now. The majority stated that they are highly satisfied with their life at the moment (58%), with females being more satisfied with their life than males. Nonetheless, this life satisfaction figure is somewhat below the national average of 66.6%, as reported in the latest State of the Nation survey (Marmara, 2023), in line with research across the world that indicates how NEET status can negatively impact on individual wellbeing and life satisfaction (Felaco and Parola, 2022).

Table 29 - Satisfaction with life by Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Highly satisfied	57.5%	58.7%	**58.0%**	**437**
So and so	36.9%	35.3%	**36.3%**	**274**
Not satisfied at all	5.6%	5.9%	**5.8%**	**43**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 30 - Satisfaction with life by Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Highly satisfied	60.9%	55.3%	**58.0%**	**437**
So and so	35.2%	37.3%	**36.3%**	**274**
Not satisfied at all	3.9%	7.5%	**5.8%**	**43**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

3.9   EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.9.1 Level of Education

The respondents were asked to state how old they were when they left school. The average school-leaving age of the respondents is 17.8 years. The ages range from 11 to 28, with the most popular response being 16 years old (35.0%), followed by those that are over 22 years old (16.8%).
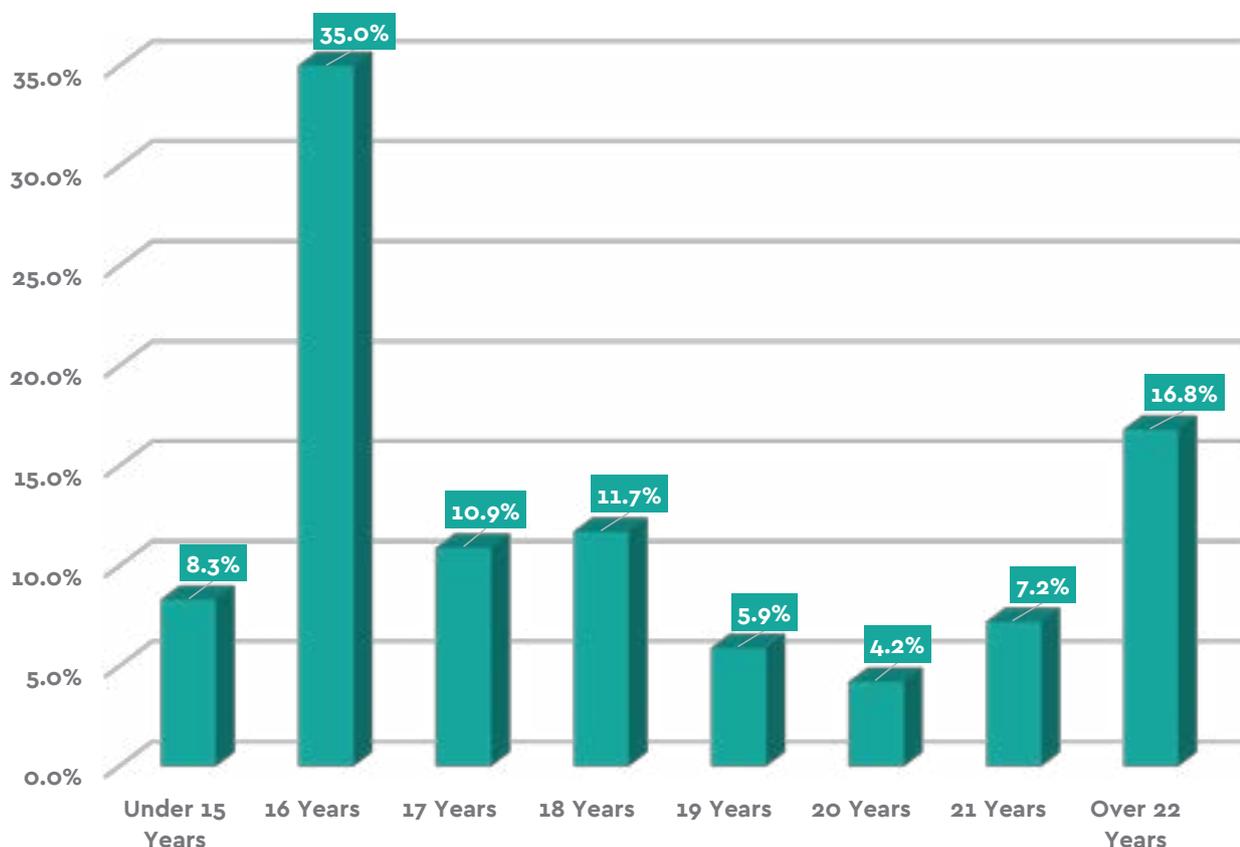
Figure 12 – Bar Chart: How old were you when you left school?

When asked to state their highest level of education, the most popular response was that they have attained up to O-level education (30.8%), followed by those who only obtained the School Leaving Certificate (21.8%). Note that the category 'Others', which is 20.3% of the responses, includes undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Thus, the results show that educational attainment among youth NEET is below the national average, since according to the latest data the proportion of people with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education is 33.1% (Eurostat, 2023), whereas in this survey that figure is just under 53%, with several studies underscoring the importance of education as a key predictor of NEET status and crucially, the ability or otherwise of youths to shed this status and return to formal employment, education or training (Ghignoni et al., 2019).
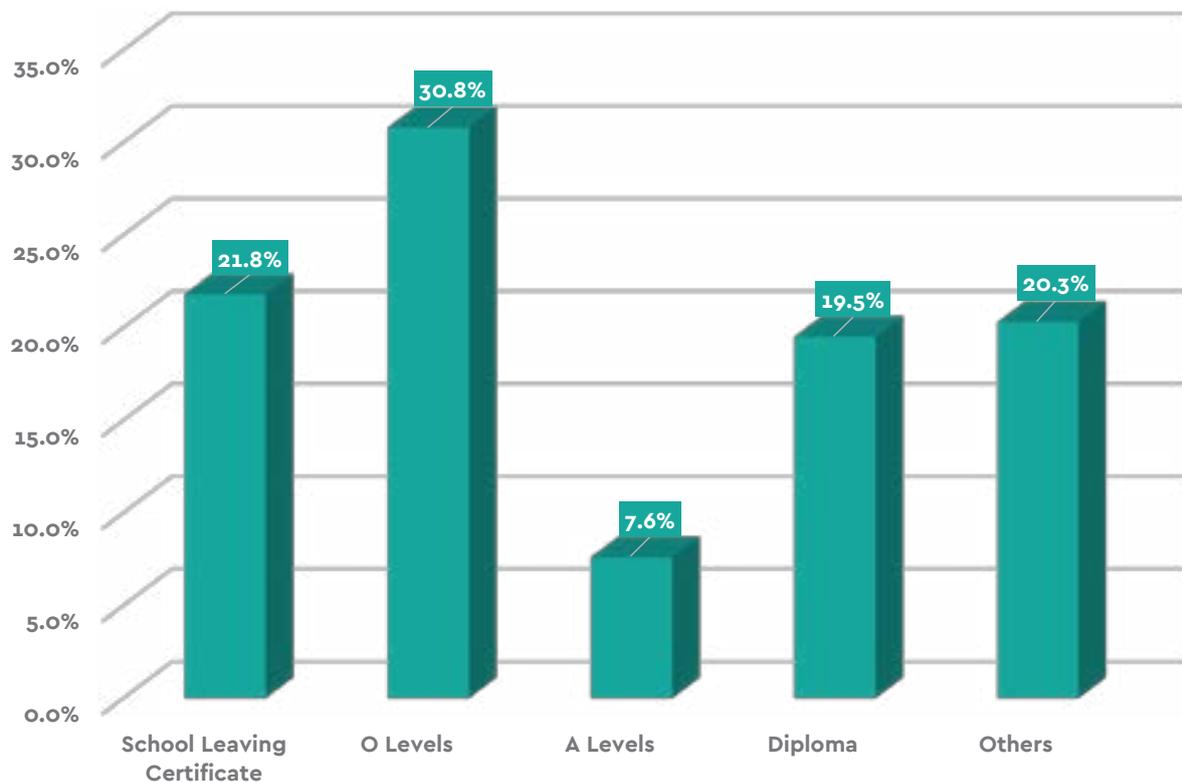
Figure 13 - Bar Chart: Highest level of education

When respondents were asked if they have any learning difficulties, the majority (80.7%) stated that they do not have any difficulties (608 individuals), while 19.3% stated that they have learning difficulties (146 individuals). Comparing with the age and gender demographics, those that stated they have learning difficulties the most (19.3%) are males and individuals aged between 16 and 24.

Table 31 - Learning difficulties by Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	21.7%	15.4%	19.3%	146
No	78.3%	84.6%	80.7%	608
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

Table 32 - Learning Difficulties by Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	16.3%	22.1%	19.3%	146
No	83.7%	77.9%	80.7%	608
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	754

It is to be noted that the most mentioned learning difficulties are ADHD (51 individuals) and Dyslexia (38 individuals).
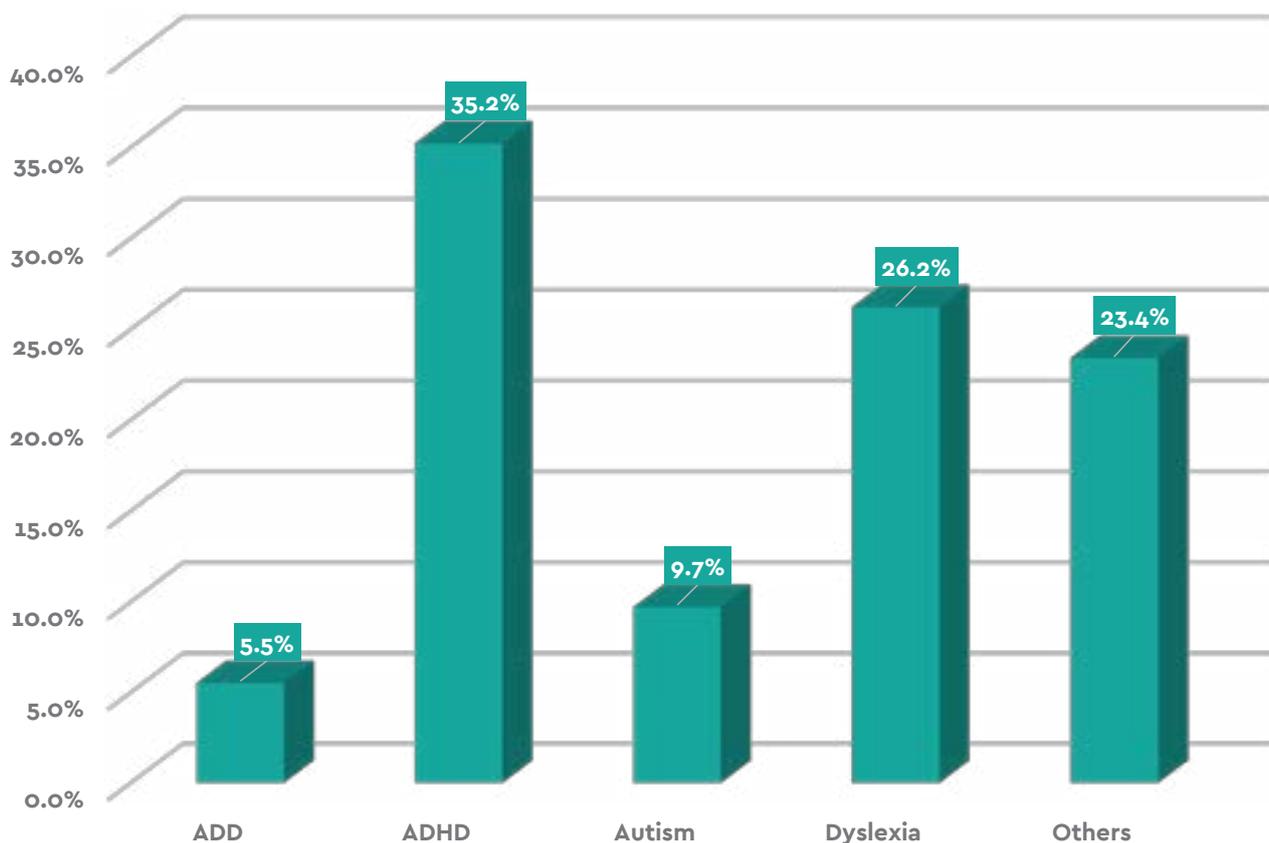
Figure 14 - Bar Chart: Learning difficulties

Those who responded that they have learning difficulties (146 individuals) were asked to state if they had adequate support at school. The majority responded to this question with a yes (64.6%). Males and individuals aged between 16 and 24 were more likely to have support at school. These findings merit further attention, given that learning difficulties both increase the likelihood of NEET status and entrench this status by making it more difficult for impacted cohorts to find work or indeed pursue further educational opportunities unless there is a formal support structure in place to facilitate the transition (Simmons and Thompson, 2011; Hakkarainen et al., 2016).

Table 33 - Support to learning difficulties at school by Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	67.0%	59.6%	**64.6%**	**94**
No	33.0%	40.4%	**35.4%**	**52**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**146**

Table 34 - Support to learning difficulties at school by Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	61.7%	66.7%	**64.6%**	**94**
No	38.3%	33.3%	**35.4%**	**52**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**146**

When asked to state reasons for deciding to stop schooling, the most popular responses from all the respondents were that they were not interested in school (30.0%), followed by personal

reasons (9.9%). There was a high percentage of respondents that chose others (46.8%). The most popular responses were that they felt that they had done enough studying and that they wanted to go out to work. Once again, these findings merit their own separate analysis given that across the world, NEET status is often characterised as a choice driven by factors such as family pressures, financial reasons, and personal issues (e.g., Pesquera-Alonso et al., 2022; Reiter and Schlimbach, 2015), all of which seem to exert limited influence over youth NEETs in Malta, based on the survey results obtained. Rather, the most prevalent response seems to revolve around the desire to cease attending formal education due to lack of interest and/or to pursue job opportunities. This suggests that the educational system in Malta may lack the necessary flexibility to cater for the diverse interests and skills of Maltese youth, and that more can be done to ensure further inclusivity.
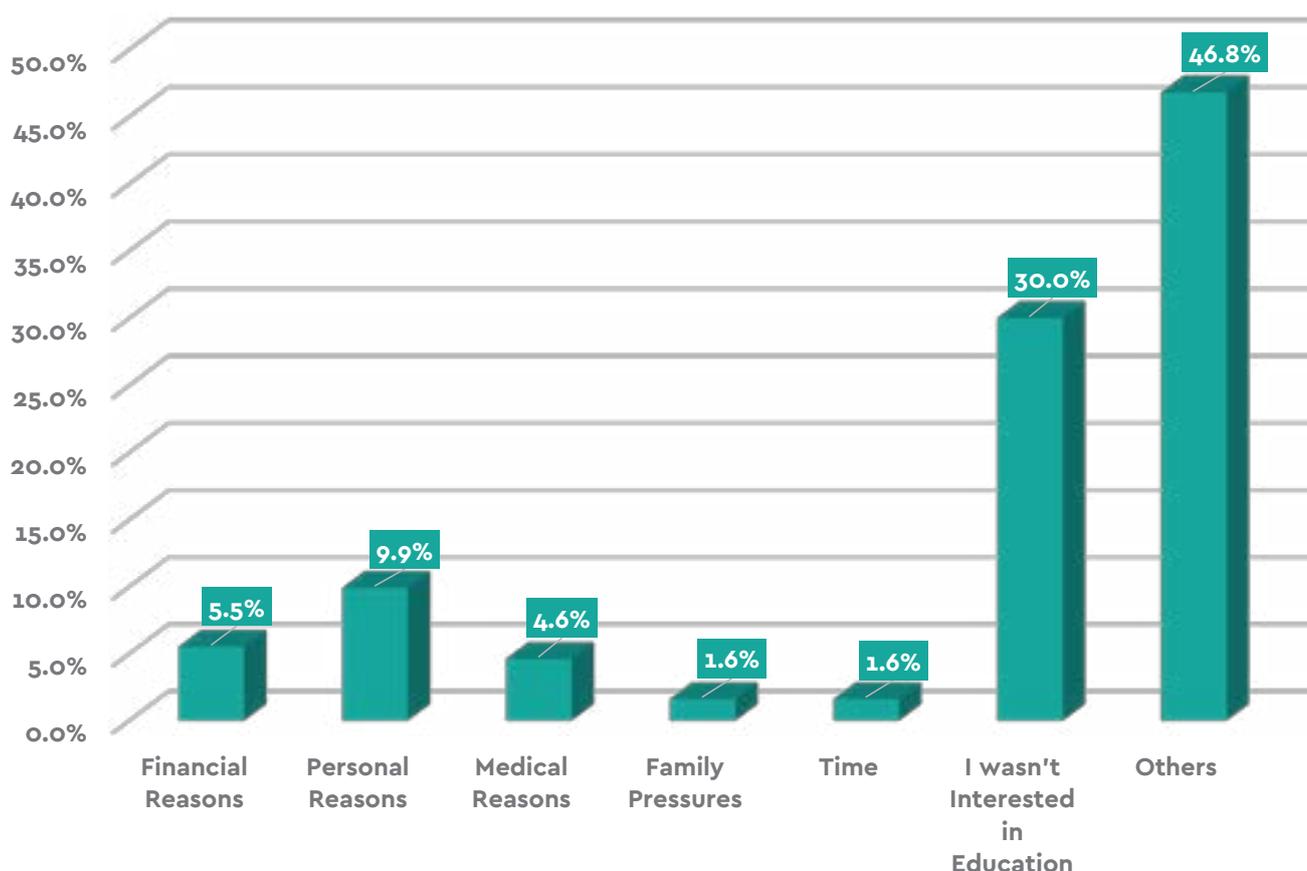
Figure 15 – Bar Chart: Reasons why they stopped attending school

Through comparing by age and gender demographics one can conclude that the older cohort are more likely to claim that they feel 'that they did enough of studies and that they wanted to go out to work'. On the other hand, the younger cohort are more like to claim that it is due to 'Personal reasons' (12.4% vs. 6.7%).

Table 35 - Reasons why they stopped attending school by age and gender

	16-24	25-29		Female	Male	Total
Financial Reasons	5.3%	5.7%		4.8%	6.1%	5.5%
Personal Reasons	12.4%	6.7%		10.5%	9.4%	9.9%
Medical Reasons	5.3%	3.7%		4.2%	5.0%	4.6%
Family Pressures	0.8%	2.7%		2.7%	0.6%	1.6%
Time	2.0%	1.0%		2.1%	1.1%	1.6%
I wasn't interested in Education	31.7%	27.7%		27.4%	32.3%	30.0%
Others	42.4%	52.7%		48.2%	45.6%	46.8%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**		**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

The respondents were then asked if they have been involved in any further learning since they have left school. The majority (69.6%, or 525 individuals) stated that they have not while 30.4% stated that they had engaged in further learning (229 individuals). When comparing to the age and gender demographics, the majority of those who stated that they have been involved in further learning are more likely to be individuals aged between 25 and 29. Note that amongst the 229 individuals who indicated that they were engaged in further education, most of them said that they did a short course at MCAST or an ECDL course.

Table 36 – Involvement in further learning by Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	27.4%	35.3%	**30.4%**	**229**
No	72.6%	64.7%	**69.6%**	**525**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 37 – Involvement in further learning by Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	31.5%	29.3%	**30.4%**	**229**
No	68.5%	70.7%	**69.6%**	**525**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

3.9.2 Future Plans

The respondents were asked whether they have any plans to engage in any further education or training courses. The majority (69.9% of the total respondents, 527 individuals) stated that they do not have any plans to engage in any educational or training courses. 30.1% stated that they are interested, which is approximately 227 individuals. Individuals ages between 16 and 24 are more interested to engage in further education. Given the results obtained earlier in relation to the reasons for ceasing formal education, these responses should come as no surprise and further underscore the youth NEETs' entrenched perceptions regarding formal education or training, which are typically commonplace across the world (Mawn et al., 2017).

It is to be noted that the majority that responded 'yes' to this question stated that they would like to enrol for a course at MCAST, followed by pursuing a diploma or degree. Thus, this represents a potential opportunity to leverage such preferences and cultivate the role of MCAST as a key player in elevating the status of youth NEETs and encouraging further educational opportunities.

Table 38 – Plans to engage in further education by Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	34.2%	23.4%	**30.1%**	**227**
No	65.8%	76.6%	**69.9%**	527
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 39 – Plans to engage in further education by Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	31.5%	28.8%	**30.1%**	**227**
No	68.5%	71.2%	**69.9%**	527
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were then asked to state if they are interested to study in Malta, abroad, or both. The majority (62.2%, 469 individuals) stated that they would prefer to study in Malta. Females and individuals aged between 16 and 24 are more likely to study in Malta than those aged between 25 and 29.

Table 40 – Place of study vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Malta	67.2%	49.3%	**62.2%**	**469**
Abroad	9.6%	29.0%	**15.0%**	113
Both	23.2%	21.7%	**22.8%**	172
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 41 – Place of study vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Malta	64.8%	59.7%	**62.2%**	**469**
Abroad	14.8%	15.3%	**15.0%**	113
Both	20.5%	25.0%	**22.8%**	172
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were asked to indicate their preferred mode of learning. The most popular responses were part-time courses (28.8%), followed by online courses (17.6%), full-time courses (16.3%), and classroom-based courses (14.7%). 11.6% prefer day classes while 6.2% prefer evening classes. 4.8% prefer individual attention style classes.
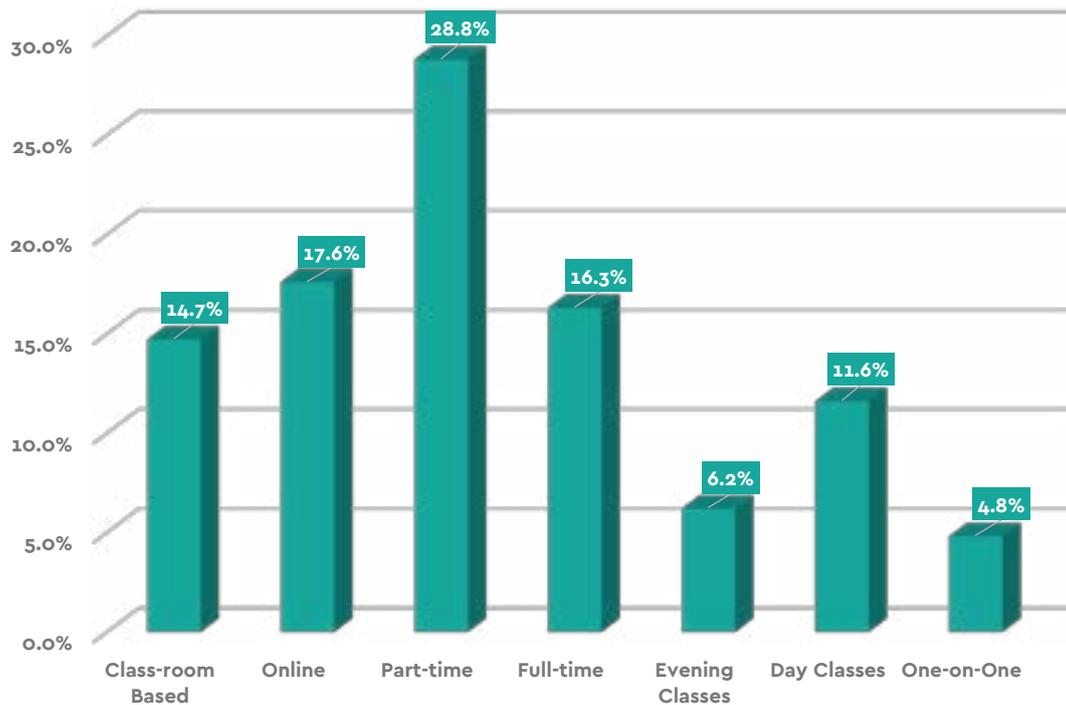
Figure 16 – Bar Chart: Preferred mode of learning

The older age cohort are more likely to attend 'Part-time' course. In fact, 53.9% of the 25-29 age cohort claimed that they prefer part-time courses, while only 16.5% of the 16-24 age cohort claimed that they prefer 'Part-time' courses. Amongst the 16-24 age group the percentages are more dispersed amongst the various categories of the mode of learning. Comparing the same results between males and females the results are fairly similar. This shows that the most differences are more likely be found when comparing the two age groups against each other.

Table 42 - Preferred mode of learning by age and gender

	16-24	25-29		Female	Male	Total
Classroom based	17.1%	9.7%		14.6%	14.8%	14.7%
Online	16.8%	19.2%		18.0%	17.1%	17.6%
Part-time	16.5%	53.9%		29.3%	28.4%	28.8%
Full-time	21.5%	5.8%		15.7%	17.0%	16.3%
Evening classes	6.6%	5.6%		5.4%	7.0%	6.2%
Day classes	15.4%	3.7%		12.3%	10.8%	11.6%
One-on-one	6.1%	2.1%		4.7%	4.8%	4.8%
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**		**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

The respondents were then asked to read six statements and state if they believe that these factors would help them to get them back into education. The table below gives us the results of those who stated 'yes' to these statements. Those that are aged between 16 and 24 stated that the most helpful would be "Clear information about education and training opportunities that suit my career ambitions", while those aged between 25 and 29 stated that the most helpful statement would be "The opportunity to work whilst studying". Both males and females stated that the most helpful

would be "The opportunity to work whilst studying". Thus, it appears that the survey participants highly value flexible learning opportunities that would also afford them the time to pursue their career goals, tallying with the previously stated preference for part-time courses, in line with other findings from similar studies (e.g., Inui, 2009).

Table 43 – Help getting back in education vs Age and Gender

	Clear information about education and training opportunities that suit my career ambitions	Better English, Maths, or Computer skills	Boosting my self-confidence	Financial Incentives	Guaranteed employment upon completion of course	The opportunity to work whilst studying
16-24	87.2%	78.4%	78.0%	85.0%	86.5%	84.2%
25-29	31.1%	23.4%	26.9%	63.3%	65.4%	74.1%
Female	65.5%	60.8%	60.2%	80.1%	81.5%	82.6%
Male	66.3%	54.6%	57.1%	73.7%	75.8%	78.3%

In the last question of this section, respondents were then asked whether the majority of their friends are currently in education or training. The responses between 'yes' and 'no' are almost perfectly split. Individuals aged between 16 and 24 years are most likely to have friends engaged in education or training. On the other hand, only 8.4% of the individuals aged between 25 and 29 claimed that they have their friends in education. These results are important since peer and cohort effects are highly influential in terms of both the likelihood of NEET status and the transition (or otherwise) away into formal education or employment (van As, 2014).

Table 44 – Friends in Education vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	60.9%	8.4%	**41.0%**	**309**
No	24.8%	67.8%	**41.1%**	**310**
I don't know	14.3%	23.8%	**17.9%**	**135**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 45 – Friends in Education vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	40.1%	41.8%	**41.0%**	**309**
No	41.4%	40.8%	**41.1%**	**310**
I don't know	18.5%	17.3%	**17.9%**	**135**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

3.10 WORK EXPERIENCE AND INTERESTS

Out of 754 respondents, 78.9% stated that they have some form of work experience. This is equivalent to approximately 595 individuals from the whole sample. 21.1%, which is around 159 individuals, stated that they have never worked. Individuals aged between 25 and 29 have more work experience when compared to the younger cohort. Interestingly, studies overseas have found that early work experiences are associated with a lower risk of NEET status (Ballo et al., 2022), which is somewhat in contrast with the findings from our study given that the majority of respondents, across both age cohorts, have some form of work experience.

Table 46 – Work Experience vs Age

	16-24	**25-29**	**Total**	**Count**
Yes	69.7%	94.1%	**78.9%**	**595**
No	30.3%	5.9%	**21.1%**	**159**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 47 – Work Experience vs Gender

	Females	**Males**	**Total**	**Count**
Yes	77.9%	79.8%	**78.9%**	**595**
No	22.1%	20.2%	**21.1%**	**159**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Amongst the individuals that have work experience (595 individuals), when asked to state their past employment type, the following emerged: 73.6% were in full time employment, 63.0% in part time employed, followed by voluntary work (5.0%), casual work (4.7%), and apprenticeships (3.2%). It is worth noting that individuals were allowed to choose more than one option, since some of them had more than one work experience.
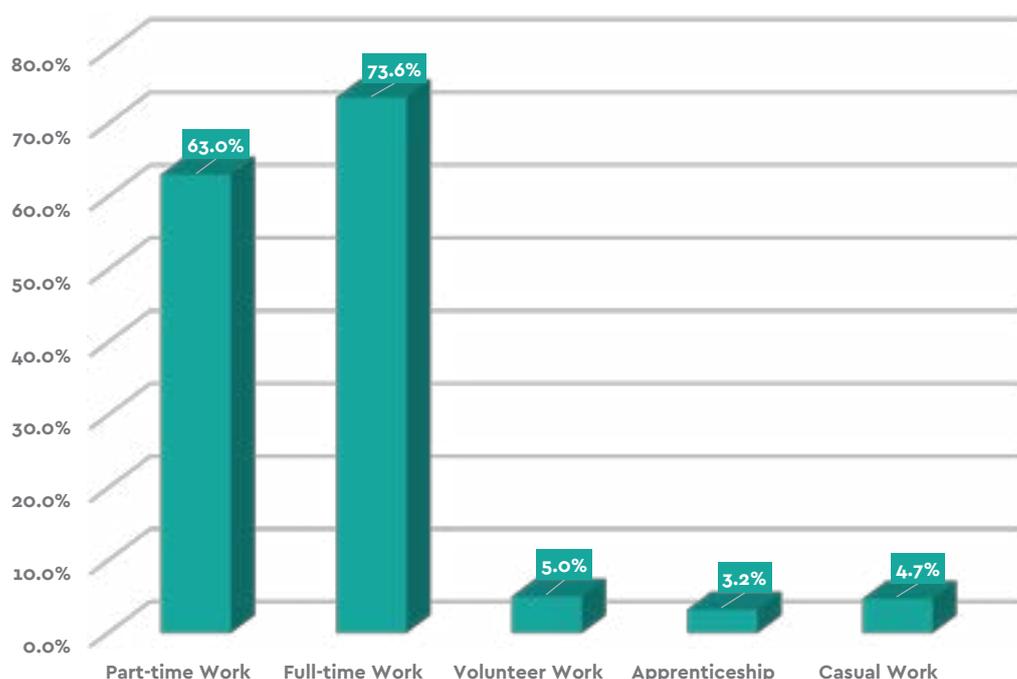
Figure 17 – Bar Chart: Past employment type

Those who responded that they worked in the past (595 individuals), were asked to state how their experience was. Here the respondents had to choose any of the statements that apply. The most chosen statement was that the "Job was OK" (78.3%), followed by the statement "Great, I was treated fairly and really enjoyed working" (54.5%). 6.9% stated that they hated the job experience and 7.7% stated that they were not treated fairly at the place of work. 10.6% claimed that they did not like the type of work that they were doing. Once again, this finding is in direct contrast to the evidence from other studies within the literature, who highlight how youth NEETs often have had negative experiences at their prior place of employment which contributes towards their current NEET status (e.g., Bynner and Parsons, 2002).
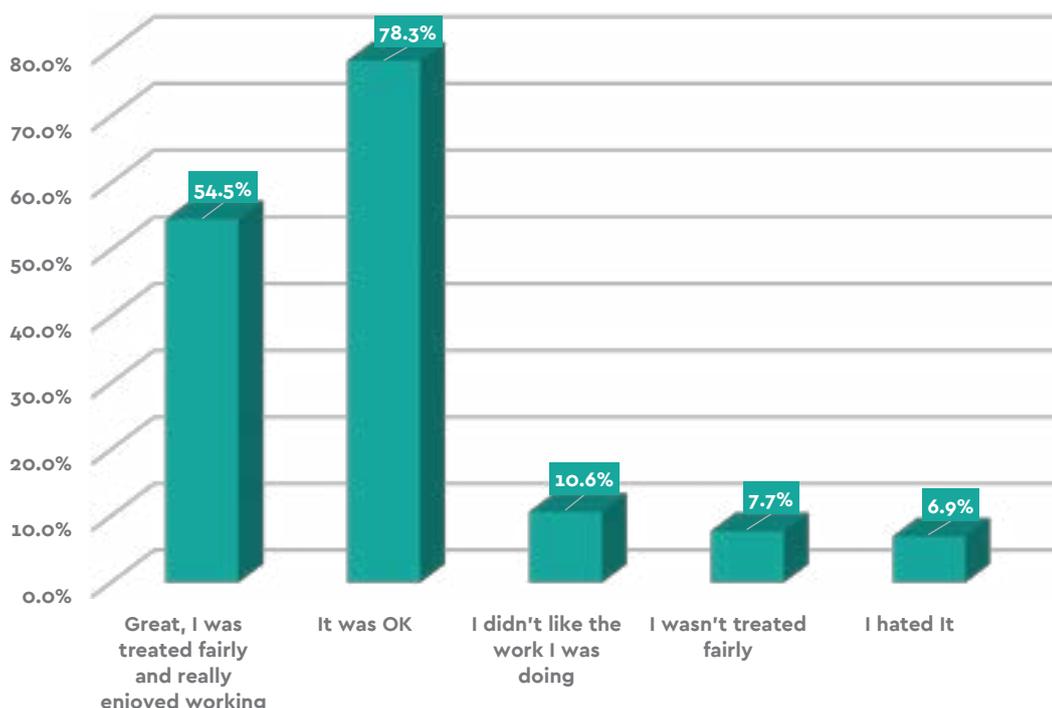
Figure 18 – Bar Chart: Past work experience

Focusing on individuals that have some work experience, we can analyse the last engagement date of these young individuals. Results show that the majority of those who belong in the 25-29 age group have last worked over three years ago (70.5%). Furthermore, one can see that those aged between 16 and 24 their last engagement in employment was one to two years ago (29.9%) followed by 29.7%, over 3 years ago. The minority in both age groups have their last engagement in employment in the last three months, with only 0.3% stating this in the 16-24 age group and 0.1% stating this in the 25-29 age group. From the total target population, the majority were last employed three years ago or more (48.2%).

Table 48 - Past Work Experience By Age

	16-24	25-29	16-29
In the last 3 months	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%
3 to 6 months ago	7.5%	1.9%	4.9%
6 months to 1 year ago	11.6%	4.0%	8.2%
1 to 2 years ago	29.9%	11.6%	21.6%
2 to 3 years ago	21.1%	12.0%	17.0%
3+ years ago	29.7%	70.5%	48.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The respondents were asked to state why they are currently inactive. The most chosen response was 'Others', where the majority of these stated that they are planning to start a course soon, followed by individuals who claimed that they are taking care of their children. Those who did not choose 'Others' stated that they have not found a job that they like (32.5%), followed by personal reasons (20.4%). To some extent, the diversity of responses reflects the complexity of the NEET issue, with different individuals having idiosyncratic reasons for their NEET status, although from the results obtained, job interest mismatches appear to be the most prevalent reasons.
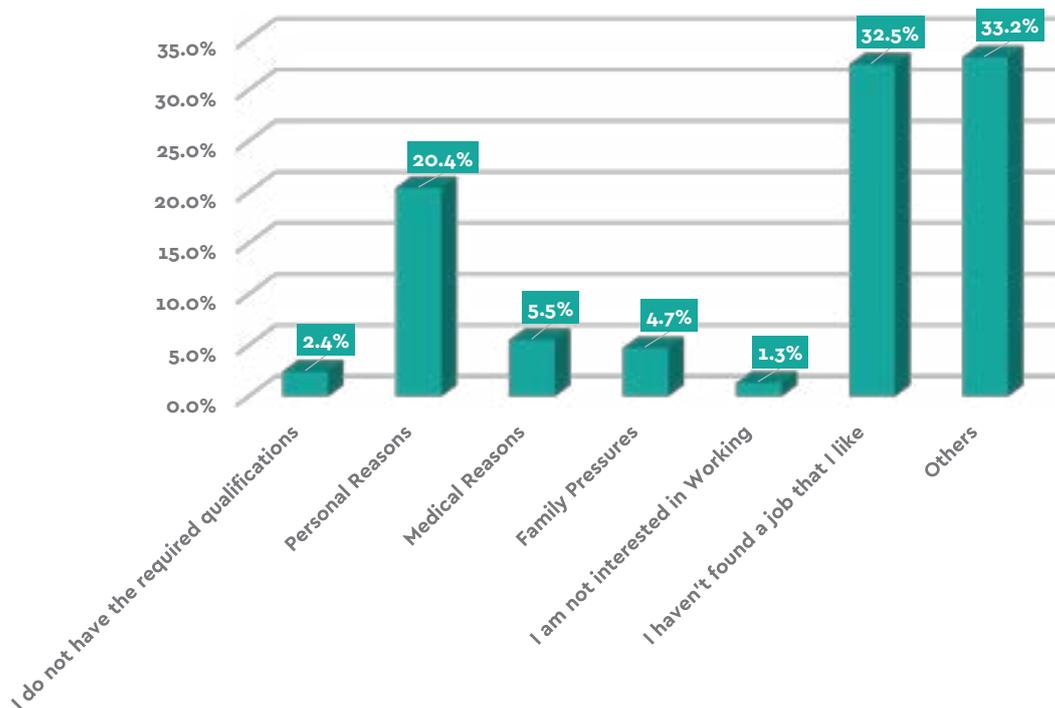
Figure 19 – Bar Chart: Why are you currently inactive?

When asked to state if they would like to be employed, the majority (94.2%) responded with a yes. This is approximately 710 individuals. Only 5.8% (approximately 44 individuals) stated that they are not interested in being employed. Comparing these statistics with age and gender demographics one can note that there are no major differences between the different reported demographics.

Table 49 – Interest in Employment vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	94.4%	93.7%	**94.2%**	**710**
No	5.6%	6.3%	**5.8%**	**44**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 50 – Interest in Employment vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	93.9%	94.4%	**94.2%**	**710**
No	6.1%	5.6%	**5.8%**	**44**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

All respondents were asked to state their career plans for the future. The majority (82.2%) stated that they would like to have full-time employment (620 individuals), followed by 10.1% that would like to engage in part-time employment (76 individuals). Only 7.7% (58 individuals) stated that they do not have any plans. Males and individuals aged between 25 and 29 are more interested to engage in full-time employment. Thus, collectively these results indicate that youth NEET have a desire to elevate themselves beyond their current status and find a suitable job.

Table 51 – Career plans vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
To gain full-time employment	78.0%	89.2%	**82.2%**	**620**
To gain part-time employment	13.5%	4.5%	**10.1%**	**76**
I don't have plans	8.5%	6.3%	**7.7%**	**58**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 52 – Career plans vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
To gain full-time employment	78.5%	85.7%	**82.2%**	**620**
To gain part-time employment	13.5%	6.9%	**10.1%**	**76**
I don't have plans	8.0%	7.4%	**7.7%**	**58**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

When asked to state if they know how to achieve these plans, the majority (73.3%) stated that they know how they will achieve these plans (553 individuals) while 19.8% responded that they do not know how they will achieve these plans (149 individuals). Individuals aged between 25 and 29 are more likely to have clear plans. It is also interesting to contrast these results with those from the education questions, since it is clear that while future plans related to the pursuance of further education or training are limited at best, the opposite seems to be true for employment opportunities, despite the fact that further education may assist these youths in finding a more suitable job that fits their interests and skills.

Table 53 – Achieving the plans vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	66.5%	84.6%	**73.3%**	**553**
No	26.3%	9.1%	**19.8%**	**149**
Not applicable	7.26%	6.29%	**6.90%**	**52**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 54 – Achieving these plans vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	72.9%	73.7%	**73.3%**	**553**
No	19.9%	19.6%	**19.8%**	**149**
Not applicable	7.18%	6.63%	**6.90%**	**52**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were then asked if they believe that they have a support structure to achieve their plans. The majority (76.3%) responded positively to this question (575 individuals) while 16.7% stated that they do not have any support (126 individuals). Similarly as above, individuals aged between 25 and 29 are more likely to have a support structure. Once again, this tallies with our earlier findings regarding family background and time spent with family and friends, further emphasising the existence of strong social support structures in place for youth NEETs in Malta.

Table 55 – Support to achieve the plans vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	70.9%	85.0%	**76.3%**	**575**
No	21.6%	8.7%	**16.7%**	126
Not applicable	7.5%	6.3%	**7.0%**	53
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 56 – Support to achieve the plans vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	74.3%	78.1%	**76.3%**	**575**
No	18.5%	15.1%	**16.7%**	126
Not applicable	7.2%	6.9%	**7.0%**	53
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were then asked to state the industries that they are mostly interested in. They had the option to choose any of the below industries. The most chosen option was 'other' industries. The most popular industries that were mentioned from the latter option were business, education, care, finance, gaming, and IT.

The most popular industries from those listed were retail (8.5%), followed by beauty (8.3%) and the public sector (7.1%).

Table 57 – Industries the respondents are interested in

Retail (Shops)	8.50%
Beauty	8.30%
Public Sector	7.10%
Healthcare	5.90%
Catering (Restaurants)	5.50%
Manufacturing	5.20%
Hospitality (Hotels)	3.80%
Construction	3.10%
Others	52.5%
Total	**100.0%**

When asked to state whether being out of work has affected their wellbeing, the respondents were provided with seven statements, and they were asked to state if it affected them or not. They had the option to state other effects. Furthermore, the respondents had the option to choose more than

one effect, meaning that they were asked to choose all that apply to them. The most chosen options were stress (16.5%), followed by depression (6.0%) and smoking too much (5.9%). Note that 58.4% stated that they do not experience any of the effects that were mentioned to them. As mentioned earlier, NEET status can have a significant deleterious impact on individual wellbeing, particularly in relation to mental health (Rodwell et al., 2018). Although a large proportion of respondents have indeed experienced such negative impacts, it is nonetheless noteworthy that the majority have not experienced any negative physical or mental impacts as a result of their NEET status, which is also broadly in line with the strong family and social support structures reported earlier.

Table 58 – Effects of unemployment

Stress	16.5%
Depression	6.0%
I rarely leave the house	3.1%
Smoking too much	5.9%
Eating unhealthy foods	2.7%
Drinking too much alcohol	0.5%
Self-harming	0.7%
Feeling physically ill	3.2%
None of the above	58.4%
Others	3.1%
Total	100.0%

The 754 respondents were then asked to state where they would like to see themselves in a year's time. The majority stated that they see themselves working in full-time or part-time employment (45.8%), followed by those who see themselves in full- or part-time education or training (20.6%). (17.6%) stated that they see themselves being the same as today and (5.5%) would like to open their own business. 49.2% of the Individuals aged between 16 and 24 would like to be 'working full- or part-time' employment a year's time, while 29.7% would like to be 'In full- or part-time education or training'. On the other hand, amongst those aged 25-29, 40.3% would like to be 'Working full- or part-time' followed by 36.3% that would like to be 'The same as today'. Once again, the preference for future employment as opposed to education and training is apparent from these responses, as is the relatively high proportion of respondents who are either uncertain of their future situation or indeed believe that it will remain unchanged a year from now (collectively 28.2%).

Table 59 – Where they see themselves in one year

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Working full- or part-time	49.2%	40.3%	**45.8%**	**345**
In full- or part-time education or training	29.7%	5.9%	**20.6%**	**155**
The same as today	5.9%	36.3%	**17.6%**	**133**
Owning my own business	5.7%	5.1%	**5.5%**	**41**
I don't know	9.4%	12.5%	**10.6%**	**80**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

The respondents were then asked to read three statements by the data collectors and state if these initiatives would help them to find employment. When looking at each statement compared to the two age groups, we see that those aged between 16 and 24 are more likely to find a job if they had to boost their self-confidence. Those that are aged between 25 and 29 stated that receiving advice about applying for jobs will help them find employment the most. These findings point towards two factors. Firstly, there is a clear need to focus on soft skills and personal development, since such tools would assist in boosting self-confidence at an early stage and reduce the likelihood of NEET status – an observation that has been corroborated across various studies in this field (e.g., Robertson, 2018). Secondly, there is also a need for more practical, targeted information and advice related to the job application process, which would assist youth NEET in identifying appropriate job opportunities that match their skills and interests (Russell, 2014).
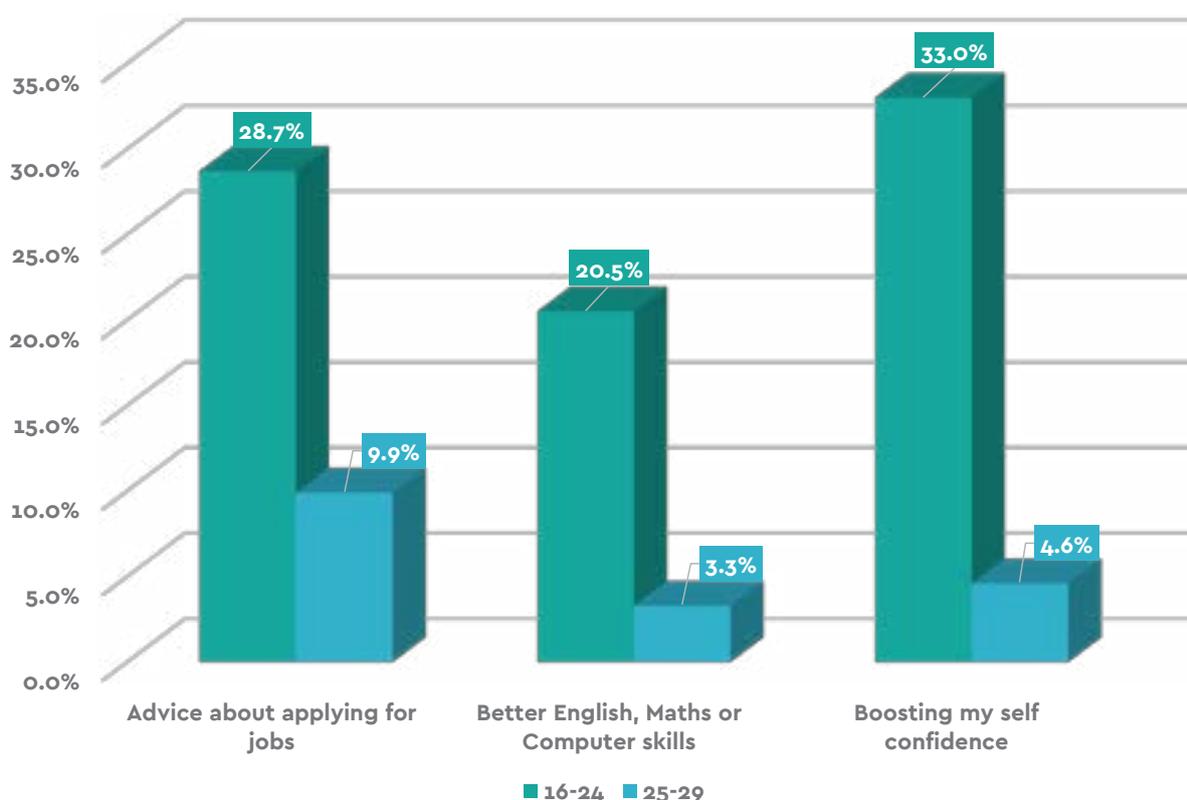
Figure 20 – Bar Chart by age: Would these initiatives help you find employment?

When looking at each statement compared to the two genders, we see that for both genders the results are quite similar. However, males tend to have higher percentages for all the three statements, with the highest being 'advice about applying for jobs'.
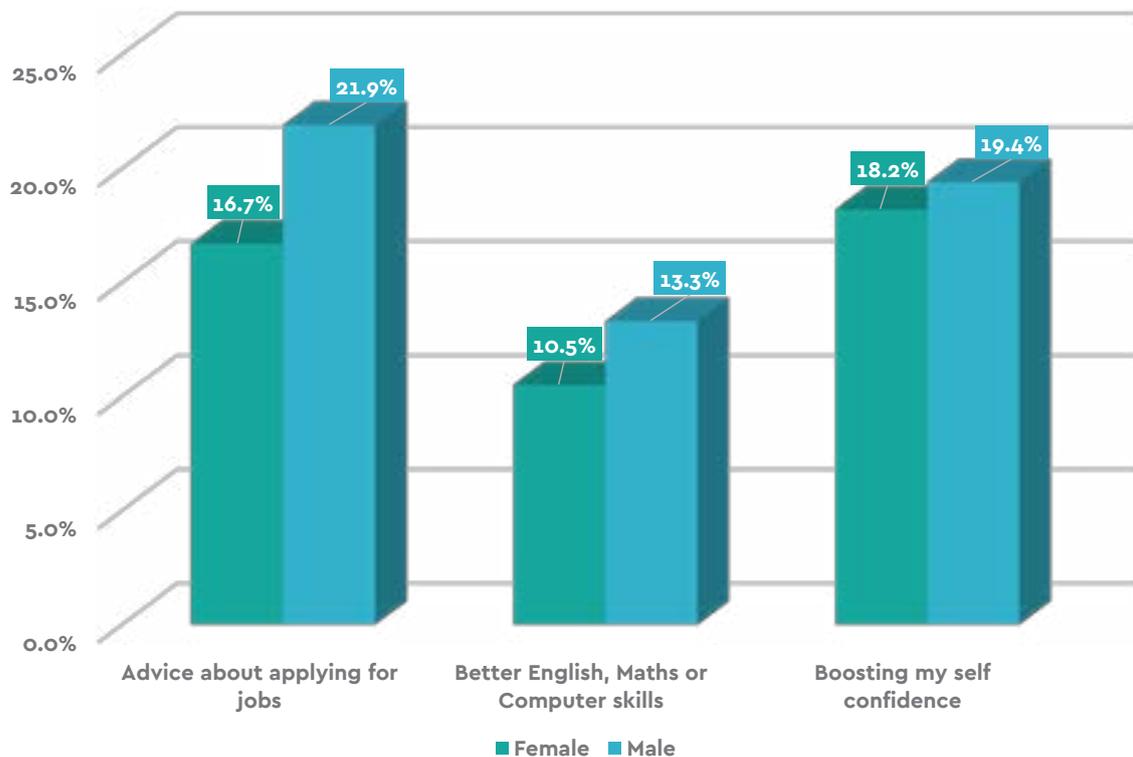
Figure 21 – Bar Chart by gender: Would these initiatives help you find employment?

The respondents were then asked if the majority of their friends are employed. The majority (59.4%) stated that their friends are employed. This is equal to 448 individuals. 21.3% stated that the majority of their friends are not employed, while 19.3% stated that they do not know if the majority of their friends are employed or not. Individuals aged between 25 and 29 are more likely to have friends in employment. These findings partially help to explain the respondents' general preference for employment over educational opportunities, since although the vast majority of their peers are not involved in further education, they do have some form of employment, which in turn encourages the respondents to seek out employment opportunities of their own, in line with findings in the literature on peer effects in employment (Tayfur et al., 2021).

Table 60 – Employment of friends vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Yes	52.7%	70.2%	**59.4%**	**448**
No	30.5%	6.4%	**21.3%**	**161**
I don't know	16.7%	23.4%	**19.3%**	**145**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 61 – Employment of friends vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Yes	57.3%	61.4%	**59.4%**	**448**
No	23.2%	19.6%	**21.3%**	**161**
I don't know	19.5%	19.1%	**19.3%**	**145**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Furthermore, when the 754 respondents were asked to state if they prefer to work in Malta, abroad or elsewhere the majority stated that they prefer to work in Malta (70.0%). This is approximately 528 individuals. Comparing these with age and gender demographics, results are quite similar. This result clearly shows that the majority of NEETs are not interested in mobility schemes.

Table 62 – Preferred place of work vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total	Count
Malta	70.8%	68.8%	**70.0%**	**528**
Abroad	5.8%	9.9%	**7.4%**	**56**
Both in Malta and abroad	23.4%	21.3%	**22.6%**	**170**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

Table 63 – Preferred place of work vs Gender

	Females	Males	Total	Count
Malta	72.1%	68.2%	**70.0%**	**528**
Abroad	6.8%	7.9%	**7.4%**	**56**
Both in Malta and abroad	21.1%	23.9%	**22.6%**	**170**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**754**

3.11 DIGITAL SKILLS AND AWARENESS OF THE GREEN TRANSITION

3.12 Green transition

The respondents were asked to state their opinion about what constitutes 'green skills'. The majority stated that they do not know what this is. Those that gave a reason, mentioned that green skills relate to the fact that today everything is moving digital. This shows the lack of knowledge about the definition of green skills, which is unsurprising since studies and international bodies have identified significant knowledge gaps in relation to green skills among youth NEETs (Marcinkowska et al., 2014).

The respondents were then read 15 statements and were asked to state how confident they are about every statement. Each of these statements were compared to the age and gender demographics below.

I feel confident discussing climate change.

When asked if they feel confident discussing climate change, the most popular response was that they can understand the implications of climate change on their own (27.6%). It is interesting to note that amongst those aged 25-29, 51.1% stated that they "can understand its implication, if needed, I can support/guide others about it".

Table 64 – Confidence in discussing climate change vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	7.1%	51.1%	**24.1%**
I can understand its implication on my own	27.3%	28.2%	**27.6%**
I can understand its implications with help	32.2%	14.4%	**25.3%**
I don't know about it	33.5%	6.3%	**23.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 65 – Confidence in discussing climate change vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	25.3%	23.0%	**24.1%**
I can understand its implication on my own	25.6%	29.5%	**27.6%**
I can understand its implications with help	28.4%	22.5%	**25.3%**
I don't know about it	20.7%	25.1%	**23.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident discussing green products.

When asked if they feel confident discussing green products, the most popular response was that they do not know about it (34.9%). Similarly, as above, those aged between 25 and 29 are more confident about green product

Table 66 – Confidence in discussing green products vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	3.8%	35.6%	**16.1%**
I can understand its implication on my own	15.8%	37.7%	**24.3%**
I can understand its implications with help	30.7%	15.5%	**24.8%**
I don't know about it	49.8%	11.3%	**34.9%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 67 – Confidence in discussing green products vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	15.6%	16.5%	**16.1%**
I can understand its implication on my own	25.0%	23.6%	**24.3%**
I can understand its implications with help	25.9%	23.8%	**24.8%**
I don't know about it	33.5%	36.1%	**34.9%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident collaborating with others on green products.

When asked if they feel confident collaborating with others on green products, the most popular response was that they can do it to a certain extent (41.7%). Results are very similar between males and females.

Table 68 – Confidence in collaborating with others about green products vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I feel very confident	3.2%	7.4%	**4.8%**
I feel quite confident	14.0%	25.8%	**18.6%**
I can do it to a limited extent	33.3%	54.8%	**41.7%**
I don't feel confident at all	49.5%	12.0%	**34.9%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 69 – Confidence in collaborating with others about green products vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I feel very confident	4.0%	5.5%	**4.8%**
I feel quite confident	19.5%	17.7%	**18.6%**
I can do it to a limited extent	42.2%	41.2%	**41.7%**
I don't feel confident at all	34.2%	35.6%	**34.9%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel creative when discussing green products.

When asked if they feel creative when discussing green products, the most popular response was that they feel creative to a limited extent (41.2%). Similarly, as above, the results are quite similar between males and females.

Table 70 – Feeling creative when discussing green products vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I feel very confident	2.7%	7.4%	**4.5%**
I feel quite confident	15.1%	25.1%	**19.0%**
I feel this to a limited extent	33.0%	54.1%	**41.2%**
I don't feel creative at all	49.2%	13.4%	**35.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 71 – Feeling creative when discussing green products vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I feel very confident	4.3%	4.7%	**4.5%**
I feel quite confident	18.7%	19.2%	**19.0%**
I feel this to a limited extent	33.6%	36.8%	**41.2%**
I don't feel creative at all	43.4%	39.2%	**35.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident about topics and information related to renewable energy.

When asked if they feel confident about topics and the information related to renewable energy, the most popular response was that they can understand the topic with help (29.4%). Individuals aged between 25 and 29 are more "confident about topics and the information related to renewable energy".

Table 72 – Confidence about topics and information related to renewable energy vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	5.4%	45.9%	**21.1%**
I can understand this topic on my own	21.4%	29.3%	**24.5%**
I can understand this topic with help	36.6%	18.0%	**29.4%**
I don't know about it	36.6%	6.7%	**25.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

*Table 73 – Confidence about topics and information related
to renewable energy vs Gender*

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	20.6%	21.5%	**21.1%**
I can understand this topic on my own	24.0%	24.9%	**24.5%**
I can understand this topic with help	31.1%	27.8%	**29.4%**
I don't know about it	24.3%	25.7%	**25.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

<u>I feel confident discussing environmental policy regulations.</u>

When asked if they feel confident discussing environmental policy regulations, the most popular response was that they do not know about it (31.6%). Similarly, as above, experience gives more confidence in understanding more of these concepts that are being discussed in this section.

Table 74 – Confidence in discussing environmental policy regulations vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.0%	23.6%	**10.4%**
I can understand this topic on my own	38.0%	19.0%	**30.6%**
I can understand this topic with help	15.5%	46.1%	**27.4%**
I don't know about it	44.5%	11.3%	**31.6%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 75 – Confidence in discussing environmental policy regulations vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	9.1%	11.6%	**10.4%**
I can understand this topic on my own	30.0%	31.1%	**30.6%**
I can understand this topic with help	28.3%	26.6%	**27.4%**
I don't know about it	32.6%	30.6%	**31.6%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

<u>I feel confident </u>informing <u>employees about green solutions across industry sectors</u>

When asked if they feel confident informing employees about green solutions across industry sectors, the most popular response was that they can assist to some limited extent (39.6%). Only 3.0% claimed that they can assist with a high level of confidence.

Table 76 – Confidence in assisting employees about green solutions across industry sectors vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can assist with a high level of confidence	1.1%	6.0%	**3.0%**
I can assist about most green solutions	14.9%	38.0%	**23.9%**
I can assist to some limited extent	36.3%	44.7%	**39.6%**
I don't feel confident at all	47.6%	11.3%	**33.4%**
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 77 – Confidence in assisting employees about green solutions across industry sectors vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can assist with a high level of confidence	2.9%	3.2%	**3.0%**
I can assist about most green solutions	23.5%	24.3%	**23.9%**
I can assist to some limited extent	39.0%	40.2%	**39.6%**
I don't feel confident at all	34.7%	32.3%	**33.4%**
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

<u>I feel confident to manage employees about green solutions across industry sectors.</u>

When asked if they feel confident to manage employees about green solutions across industry sectors, the most popular response was that they can assist to some limited extent (40.8%). Results between males and females are almost identical.

Table 78 – Confidence to manage employees about green solutions across industry sectors vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can assist with a high level of confidence	1.4%	4.6%	**2.6%**
I can assist about most green solutions	13.1%	35.2%	**21.8%**
I can assist to some limited extent	37.6%	45.8%	**40.8%**
I don't feel confident at all	48.0%	14.4%	**34.8%**
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 79 – Confidence to manage employees about green solutions across industry sectors vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can assist with a high level of confidence	2.6%	2.7%	**2.6%**
I can assist about most green solutions	20.6%	22.8%	**21.8%**
I can assist to some limited extent	41.5%	40.1%	**40.8%**
I don't feel confident at all	35.2%	34.5%	**34.8%**
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

I feel confident discussing green technology and innovation.

When asked if they feel confident discussing green technology and innovation, the most popular response was that they do not know about it, and that they can understand this topic with help (32.4%). Males and the older cohort are more confident in discussing green technology and innovation.

Table 80 – Confidence in discussing green technology and innovation vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	1.6%	22.5%	**9.7%**
I can understand this topic on my own	15.0%	42.3%	**25.5%**
I can understand this topic with help	38.8%	22.2%	**32.4%**
I don't know about it	44.6%	13.0%	**32.4%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 81 – Confidence in discussing green technology and innovation vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	7.7%	11.5%	**9.7%**
I can understand this topic on my own	25.6%	25.5%	**25.5%**
I can understand this topic with help	34.5%	30.4%	**32.4%**
I don't know about it	32.2%	32.5%	**32.4%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident working on a computer.

When asked if they feel confident working on a computer, the most popular response was that they feel very confident to work on a computer (41.4%). The older cohort feel very confident working on a computer if needed.

Table 82 – Confidence in working on a computer vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I feel very confident to work on a computer; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	27.5%	63.4%	**41.4%**
I am quite confident to work on a computer	47.5%	19.7%	**36.7%**
I can only work on a computer to some limited extent	19.5%	14.8%	**17.7%**
I don't feel confident at all	5.5%	2.1%	**4.2%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 83 – Confidence in working on a computer vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I feel very confident to work on a computer; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	39.4%	43.2%	**41.4%**
I am quite confident to work on a computer	40.8%	33.0%	**36.7%**
I can only work on a computer to some limited extent	16.1%	19.1%	**17.7%**
I don't feel confident at all	3.7%	4.7%	**4.2%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident working in industries related to renewable energy.

When asked if they feel confident working in industries related to renewable energy, the most popular response was that they can do it with help (41.4%).

Table 84 – Confidence in working in industries related to renewable energy vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can work in such industries; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.5%	4.6%	**3.3%**
I can work in such industries with confidence	17.6%	12.3%	**15.6%**
I can do it with help	41.5%	60.2%	**48.8%**
I am not confident at all	38.4%	22.9%	**32.4%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 85 – Confidence in working in industries related to renewable energy vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can work in such industries; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.3%	4.2%	**3.3%**
I can work in such industries with confidence	12.8%	18.2%	**15.6%**
I can do it with help	49.7%	47.9%	**48.8%**
I am not confident at all	35.2%	29.7%	**32.4%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident handling projects in industries related to renewable energy.

When asked if they feel confident handling projects in industries related to renewable energy, the most popular response was that they can do it with help (47.1%). Males tend to be slightly more confident.

Table 86 – Confidence in handling projects in industries
related to renewable energy vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can handle projects in such industries with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	1.8%	4.6%	**2.9%**
I can handle projects in such industries quite well	15.4%	13.0%	**14.5%**
I can do it with help	40.3%	57.7%	**47.1%**
I am not confident at all	42.5%	24.6%	**35.6%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 87 – Confidence in handling projects in industries
related to renewable energy vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can handle projects in such industries with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.3%	3.4%	**2.9%**
I can handle projects in such industries quite well	11.7%	17.1%	**14.5%**
I can do it with help	47.0%	47.1%	**47.1%**
I am not confident at all	39.0%	32.4%	**35.6%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident proposing several ideas in relation to green solutions.

When asked if they feel confident proposing several ideas in relation to green solutions, the most popular response was that they can do it with help (41.2%).

Table 88 – Confidence in pushing forward several ideas
in relation to green solutions vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.2%	4.9%	**3.3%**
I can do it quite well	16.1%	21.5%	**18.2%**
I can do it with help	36.0%	49.3%	**41.2%**
I am not confident at all	45.6%	24.3%	**37.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 89 – Confidence in pushing forward several ideas
in relation to green solutions vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.3%	4.2%	**3.3%**
I can do it quite well	17.6%	18.7%	**18.2%**
I can do it with help	43.5%	39.1%	**41.2%**
I am not confident at all	36.6%	38.0%	**37.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident discussing new ideas to design green solutions

When asked if they feel confident discussing new ideas to design green solutions, the most popular response was that they can do it with help (42.4%) followed by those who said, 'I can do it with help'.

Table 90 – Confidence in discussing about new ideas
to construct green solutions vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.7%	6.0%	**4.0%**
I can do it quite well	14.6%	21.2%	**17.2%**
I can do it with help	37.8%	49.8%	**42.4%**
I am not confident at all	44.9%	23.0%	**36.4%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 91 – Confidence in discussing about new ideas
to construct green solutions vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	2.6%	5.3%	**4.0%**
I can do it quite well	17.4%	17.0%	**17.2%**
I can do it with help	44.2%	40.8%	**42.4%**
I am not confident at all	35.9%	36.9%	**36.4%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I feel confident working with machinery and specialized equipment related to green solutions across industry sectors.

When asked if they feel confident discussing new ideas to design green solutions, the most popular response was that they are not confident at all (49.2%), followed by 'I can do it with help' (38.3%). Females are less confident to work with such machinery.

Table 92 – Confidence in working with machinery and specialised equipment related to green solutions across industry sectors vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	1.6%	2.5%	**1.9%**
I can do it quite well	12.1%	8.1%	**10.5%**
I can do it with help	37.1%	40.1%	**38.3%**
I am not confident at all	49.2%	49.3%	**49.2%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 93 – Confidence in working with machinery and specialised equipment related to green solutions across industry sectors vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	0.9%	2.9%	**1.9%**
I can do it quite well	10.8%	10.3%	**10.5%**
I can do it with help	34.4%	42.0%	**38.3%**
I am not confident at all	54.0%	44.9%	**49.2%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

To summarise, what emerges from this series of questions is that awareness and diffusion of green skills among the youth NEET cohort is somewhat limited, with greater levels of awareness shown with regards to climate change and the use of computers. It would be interesting to compare such findings with the results of a similar survey conducted across the entire Maltese working population in order to identify whether such knowledge gaps are endemic to the NEET population or reflect broader trends, particularly given the expected rise in green jobs over the coming years both locally and abroad (ILO, 2019).

3.12 Digital skills

When asked to state what digital skills are, the majority stated that they do not know what this entails. Those that gave an answer mentioned that digital skills are those that relate to computers. The respondents were then provided with nine tasks and were asked to state the extent to which they could perform such tasks. Each of these statements are compared to the age and gender demographics below, similarly as above.

I know how to copy and move files (e.g., documents, images, videos) between folders, devices or on the cloud

When asked if they know how to copy and move files (e.g., documents, images, videos) between folders, devices or on the cloud, the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (49.7%). This is followed by those who said, 'I can understand its implication on my own'. This shows that most of the respondents are quite comfortable with the use of basic computing.

Table 94 – Copying and moving files (e.g., documents, images, videos) between folders, devices or on the cloud vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	32.1%	77.5%	**49.7%**
I can understand its implication on my own	47.2%	12.0%	**33.6%**
I can understand its implications with help	14.0%	7.4%	**11.5%**
I don't know about it	6.7%	3.2%	**5.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 95 – Copying and moving files (e.g., documents, images, videos) between folders, devices or on the cloud vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	49.7%	49.7%	**49.7%**
I can understand its implication on my own	33.6%	33.6%	**33.6%**
I can understand its implications with help	11.5%	11.5%	**11.5%**
I don't know about it	5.3%	5.3%	**5.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

<u>When I use a search engine I can take advantage of its advanced features.</u>

When asked if they know how to use a search engine, the option 'I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it' was selected as the most popular response (47.2%). No major differences were reported between males and females, while individuals aged between 25 and 29 are more likely to be fluent with search engines.

Table 96 – Using advanced features of a search engine vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	31.0%	72.9%	**47.2%**
I can understand its implication on my own	46.8%	10.9%	**32.9%**
I can understand its implications with help	15.4%	13.0%	**14.5%**
I don't know about it	6.9%	3.2%	**5.5%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 97 – Using advanced features of a search engine vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	47.2%	47.2%	**47.2%**
I can understand its implication on my own	34.4%	31.5%	**32.9%**
I can understand its implications with help	13.4%	15.5%	**14.5%**
I don't know about it	5.1%	5.8%	**5.5%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to use advanced video conferencing features (e.g., moderating, recording audio and video)

When asked if they know how to use advanced video conferencing features (e.g., moderating, recording audio and video), the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (44.3%), followed by 'I can understand its implication on my own' (31.0%). Consistently, we are seeing that those aged between 25 and 29 are more confident using such digital features.

Table 98 – Knowledge of using advanced video conferencing features (e.g. moderating, recording audio and video) vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	26.1%	73.2%	**44.3%**
I can understand its implication on my own	43.7%	10.9%	**31.0%**
I can understand its implications with help	19.2%	10.6%	**15.8%**
I don't know about it	11.1%	5.3%	**8.9%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 99 – Knowledge of using advanced video conferencing features (e.g., moderating, recording audio and video) vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	44.3%	44.4%	**44.3%**
I can understand its implication on my own	32.7%	29.4%	**31.0%**
I can understand its implications with help	14.8%	16.8%	**15.8%**
I don't know about it	8.2%	9.4%	**8.9%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to create a profile in digital environments for personal or professional purposes.

When asked if they know how to create a profile in digital environments for personal or professional purposes, the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/ guide others about it (46.1%). Males and females reported similar responses to this statement.

Table 100 – Creating a profile in digital environments for personal or professional purposes vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	28.3%	74.3%	**46.1%**
I can understand its implication on my own	46.1%	10.9%	**32.5%**
I can understand its implications with help	16.5%	10.9%	**14.3%**
I don't know about it	9.1%	3.9%	**7.1%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 101 – Creating a profile in digital environments for personal or professional purposes vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	45.2%	47.0%	**46.1%**
I can understand its implication on my own	34.7%	30.4%	**32.5%**
I can understand its implications with help	12.8%	15.7%	**14.3%**
I don't know about it	7.4%	6.8%	**7.1%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to create and edit digital text files (e.g., Word, OpenDocument, Google Docs)

When asked if they know how to create and edit digital text files (e.g., Word, OpenDocument, Google Docs), the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (48.7%).

Table 102 – Creating and editing digital text files (e.g., Word, OpenDocument, Google Docs) vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	31.1%	76.7%	**48.7%**
I can understand its implication on my own	46.0%	10.6%	**32.3%**
I can understand its implications with help	14.0%	9.2%	**12.1%**
I don't know about it	8.9%	3.5%	**6.8%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 103 – Creating and editing digital text files (e.g., Word, OpenDocument, Google Docs) vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	48.7%	48.7%	**48.7%**
I can understand its implication on my own	33.7%	31.1%	**32.3%**
I can understand its implications with help	11.3%	12.9%	**12.1%**
I don't know about it	6.2%	7.4%	**6.8%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to create something new by mixing different types of content (e.g., text and images)

When asked if they know how to create something new by mixing different types of content (e.g., text and images), the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (48.8%). This is followed by those who said, 'I can understand its implication on my own' (33.2%).

Table 104 – Creating something new by mixing different types of content (e.g., text and images) vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	31.6%	76.3%	**48.8%**
I can understand its implication on my own	46.4%	12.0%	**33.2%**
I can understand its implications with help	13.8%	9.2%	**12.0%**
I don't know about it	8.2%	2.5%	**6.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 105 – Creating something new by mixing different types of content (e.g. text and images) vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication, if needed, I can support/guide others about it	47.9%	49.7%	**48.8%**
I can understand its implication on my own	36.3%	30.3%	**32.3%**
I can understand its implications with help	10.2%	13.7%	**12.1%**
I don't know about it	5.7%	6.3%	**6.8%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to check that the website requesting my personal data is secure (e.g., https sites, safety logo or certificate)

When asked if they know how to check that the website requesting my personal data is secure (e.g., https sites, safety logo or certificate), the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (45.7%). 7.0% claimed that they do not know anything about it.

Table 106 – Checking that the website requesting my personal data is secure (e.g., https sites, safety logo or certificate) vs Age

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	45.0%	46.3%	**45.7%**
I can understand its implication on my own	33.4%	29.2%	**31.2%**
I can understand its implications with help	15.0%	17.1%	**16.1%**
I don't know about it	6.5%	7.4%	**7.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 107 – Checking that the website requesting my personal data is secure (e.g., https sites, safety logo or certificate) vs Gender

	16-24	**25-29**	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	29.3%	71.7%	**45.7%**
I can understand its implication on my own	43.6%	11.7%	**31.2%**
I can understand its implications with help	17.3%	14.1%	**16.1%**
I don't know about it	9.8%	2.5%	**7.0%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to protect myself from unwanted and malicious online encounters and materials (e.g., spam messages, identity theft e-mails).

When asked if they know how to protect themselves from unwanted and malicious online encounters and materials (e.g., spam messages, identity theft e-mails), the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (44.8%). Similarly, as above 16.3% claimed that they 'can understand its implications with help'.

Table 108 – Protecting myself from unwanted and malicious online encounters and materials (e.g. spam messages, identity theft e-mails) vs Age

	16-24	**25-29**	**Total**
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	28.2%	71.4%	**44.8%**
I can understand its implication on my own	46.6%	12.0%	**33.2%**
I can understand its implications with help	18.0%	13.8%	**16.3%**
I don't know about it	7.3%	2.8%	**5.6%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 109 – Protecting myself from unwanted and malicious online encounters and materials (e.g., spam messages, identity theft e-mails) vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	45.0%	44.6%	**44.8%**
I can understand its implication on my own	34.6%	32.0%	**33.2%**
I can understand its implications with help	16.1%	16.5%	**16.3%**
I don't know about it	4.2%	6.8%	**5.6%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

When I face a technical problem, I am able to find solutions on the Internet.

When asked if they are able to find solutions on the internet when they face technical problems, the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (43.2%). Consistently we are seeing that around 16% can understand its implications but with help, and around 6% are not aware about it. These percentages are rather consistent across different sections.

Table 110 – Finding solutions on the internet when facing a problem vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	28.5%	66.4%	**43.2%**
I can understand its implication on my own	47.7%	13.8%	**34.6%**
I can understand its implications with help	16.0%	16.3%	**16.1%**
I don't know about it	7.8%	3.5%	**6.1%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 111 – Finding solutions on the internet when facing a problem vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	42.0%	44.2%	**43.2%**
I can understand its implication on my own	36.6%	32.6%	**34.6%**
I can understand its implications with help	16.5%	15.8%	**16.1%**
I don't know about it	4.8%	7.4%	**6.1%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

I know how to use online learning tools to improve my digital skills (e.g., video tutorial, online courses).

When asked if they know how to use online learning tools to improve digital skills (e.g., video tutorial, online courses), the most popular response was that they can understand its implication and can support/guide others about it (44.3%).

Table 112 – Using online learning tools to improve my digital skills (e.g., video tutorial, online courses) vs Age

	16-24	25-29	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	30.5%	66.1%	**44.3%**
I can understand its implication on my own	47.4%	14.5%	**34.7%**
I can understand its implications with help	15.4%	16.3%	**15.7%**
I don't know about it	6.7%	3.2%	**5.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

Table 113 – Using online learning tools to improve my digital skills (e.g., video tutorial, online courses) vs Gender

	Female	Male	Total
I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it	41.9%	46.4%	**44.3%**
I can understand its implication on my own	38.5%	31.1%	**34.7%**
I can understand its implications with help	15.0%	16.4%	**15.7%**
I don't know about it	4.5%	6.1%	**5.3%**
Total	**100.0%**	**100.0%**	**100.0%**

To summarise, when it comes to digital skills there seems to be a relatively high level of fluency in the stated execution of various digital tasks, with older respondents from the 25-29 cohort being significantly more fluent relative to their younger counterparts, potentially reflecting the aforementioned higher likelihood of prior work experience among older respondents. This also reflects broader trends across the country, with Malta scoring highly relative to other EU countries in terms of the proportion of people with above basic overall digital skills in the latest version of the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS, 2023).

3.13 ADDITIONAL SECTION

Respondents were asked a number of questions with regards to life skills topics. The following are the most important outcomes.

1. When the respondents were asked what they enjoy doing most, the majority responded with sports (23.2%), going out with friends (16.6%), and arts (9.7%). Note that arts include crafts, drawing, painting, and embroidery amongst others.

Table 114 - What the respondents enjoy doing the most

Sports	23.2%
Going out with friends and family	16.6%
Arts	9.7%
Gaming	9.2%
Reading	4.7%
Music	4.8%
I don't know	3.7%
Watching TV and movies	4.9%
Cooking	3.3%
Studying	2.9%
Animal Care	2.1%
Cars	2.6%
Working	2.1%
Media	1.4%
Travelling	1.4%
Beauty	1.2%
Care	2.1%
Gardening	0.8%
Cleaning	0.4%
Shopping	0.3%
Others	2.9%
Total	**100.0%**

2. When asked what is hindering them from seeking educational, training, or job opportunities, the most popular response was that nothing is limiting them (57.7%). The most stated reasons were because they have personal reasons (7.3%) and because they medical reasons (around 8.1%).

Table 115 - What is hindering the respondents from seeking education/working

Nothing limits me	57.7%
Personal reasons	7.3%
Medical reasons	8.1%
I don't know	1.2%
I do not have requirements	4.8%
I am looking for a job	4.6%
I have other commitments	3.1%
I am happy how I am	2.9%
I don't have the finances	2.9%
I am afraid that I am not good enough	1.9%
Transportation problems	1.2%
Bad wages	0.8%
The course I would like is not offered	0.8%
Others	**9.8%**

3. When asked what encourages them to seek education, training, or job opportunities, the responses were varied but the most popular responses were that nothing encourages them (36.8%), followed by the fact that they would be more financially stable (13.3%).

Table 116 - What encourages the respondents to seek education/work

	Percentages
Nothing encourages me	36.8%
To be more financially stable	13.3%
I don't know	10.3%
I want to get qualifications	8.8%
I am not sure I would handle work	7.1%
I want a better future	6.9%
I want to do what I love	5.9%
I want a new opportunity	3.6%
I want to be independent	1.7%
It is a must to work	0.4%
I am happy how I am	0.3%
To help my familiars	0.3%
Others	4.5%
Total	**100.0%**

4. When asked to state what they would like to see being implemented by the Government to encourage them to take further training/schooling and/or seek employment, the majority (53.6%) stated that they do not know. The most popular responses were to have an increase in pay (18.1%), followed by to have more work and education opportunities (8.1%).

Table 117 - Incentives that the respondents would like the government to make

	Percentages
I don't know	53.6%
Increase in pay	18.1%
More work and education opportunities	8.1%
Improvement in education	5.2%
More inclusion	4.2%
Cheaper education programmes	1.2%
Better working hours	0.9%
Childcare services	0.9%
More control on foreigners	0.6%
Better transportation	0.4%
More for self-employed	0.4%
Others	6.5%
Total	**100.0%**

5. When asked if their families will support and encourage them to take further training / schooling and/or seek employment, the majority stated that yes (94.6%), they are supported and will be supported throughout the journey. 2.2% stated that they do not have any support, and 3.2% stated that they do not know if they will be supported.

CHAPTER 4:
CONCLUSION

4.0 CONCLUSION

This section provides an overall summary of the major findings of the project, its limitations, and recommendations that could better guide policy makers in their quest to reduce the number of youths that are not in education, training or employment.

4.1 Summary of the major findings

The following are the most salient patterns that emerged from the results of the completed surveys:

Parental Influence: Strong family bonds are evident, with 74.6% spending significant time with their family. Friendships also play a key role in their social lives. These findings shed further light on the significant influence that family has on these youths. Alfieri et al., (2015), stress that the parent's level of educational support and the nature of career guidance offered to these youths, when it comes to making career choices has a huge impact on the youth's educational attainment and career choices. Therefore, the role and the involvement of family is crucial in both preventative and activation measures.

The influence of Social Norms: Most respondents grew up in traditional family settings, whereby the father is considered as the main breadwinner and the mother as the homemaker. This has implications on how they would likely perceive the labour market and their career prospects. In fact, even though several incentives were launched over the past years aimed at supporting women to go back to employment, women may be still be pressured towards a narrow range of occupations which accommodate the needs of the family (Eurostat, 2023).

Early School Leaving; Early school leaving is common, with 35% leaving at 16 years of age. This is consistent with the findings of previous surveys linking low levels of education to low wage and unemployment. The number of Maltese NEETs with the lowest level of education "is six times higher than the one for those with a high level of education" (Eurostat 2019). Therefore, low educational attainment, which includes poor literacy and numeracy skills can be regarded as a potential predictor for low wage and unemployment (UNESCO, 2017).

The influence of Learning Difficulties: Overall, 19.3% reported learning difficulties. This finding is consistent with the global picture, suggesting that worldwide, people with learning disabilities are less likely to be employed than people without disabilities, and more likely to be in part-time or temporary positions, thus earning lower than average salaries (International Labour Organization, 2022). This might also be influenced by their educational attainment especially in cases where support is lacking both within the home and educational environment.

Plans for the future: The majority of respondents reported to have plans for their future careers or potential job opportunities. The desire for employment is high, with 94.2% expressing interest in being employed. These findings suggest that these youths may be better defined as Floating NEETs (RaE, 2007).

Work experience: 78.9 % have some form of work experience. This implies that the majority of participants have never had the benefit of planning long-term careers or settling down in specific roles.

Employment Sectors: Another interesting factor was that the majority of the respondents would preferably go for the more traditional sectors. In fact, their understanding of green skills is limited, with a majority unsure about their meaning. Confidence in discussing climate change and renewable energy-related topics is moderate across the age spectrum. This implies that they are either still aversive to new employment realities or have very little exposure to new emerging sectors. Unfortunately, the new sectors are more likely to offer the best salaries and opportunities for growth. Therefore, this resistance needs to be further explored and addressed.

Digital Skills: A general lack of confidence in digital skills was reported throughout this study with nearly half of the respondents feeling they lack confidence in their digital skills. This resistance can present a potential barrier to employment and training, at a time where the digital transitions are fast gaining traction, thus resulting in an inevitable impact on the employment landscape and the demand skills that would increasingly drive employability.

The Impact of unemployment: A significant number of respondents reported psychological consequences associated with their unemployment; namely stress (16.5%), followed by depression (6.0%), and smoking too much (5.9%). This corroborates with literature linking youth unemployment with a series of physical and psychosocial consequences, which are found to be associated with a sense of hopelessness and insecurity, thus resulting in mental and physical ill-health (Bell & Blanchflower, 2010).

Mobility: The majority stated that they prefer to work in Malta with 70% expressing a wish to continue their training or work locally. Thus, this reveals that most of the participants are not interested in mobility schemes.

4.1.1 Summary of findings for Ages 16-24:

This age group forms a significant part of the survey respondents, with 62.1% of the respondents being part of this age group. They are more likely to live with their parents and siblings. Socially, they spend considerable time with families and friends, predominantly more than two hours daily. The average school-leaving age falls within this group, with many dropping out at 16. A notable percentage (21.7%) report learning difficulties, predominantly ADHD and dyslexia. A larger portion of this age group has no plans to engage in further education or training, preferring part-time courses and valuing the opportunity to work while studying. A smaller percentage of this group has work experience compared to the 25-29 age group. Their future aspirations are primarily geared towards full-time employment, with a majority interested in employment opportunities. Younger respondents showed less confidence in digital skills compared to the older group. They are less adept at using advanced features of digital tools and solving technical problems online.

4.1.2 Summary of findings for Ages 25-29:

This age group constitutes 37.9% of the whole sample. Individuals in this age group are more likely to live independently or with fewer family members. They also show a higher engagement in social activities with friends. Those in this age bracket are more likely to have completed higher levels of education and show more interest in further learning, particularly in fields like MCAST courses. This age group shows a greater interest in engaging in educational or training courses (34.2%). They also exhibit a higher inclination towards studying in Malta. A significant majority of this group has work experience (94.1%), predominantly in full-time roles (89.2%). They also exhibit a higher confidence level in career planning and achieving their goals. Respondents aged 25-29 demonstrate higher

confidence in digital skills, including the ability to create and edit digital files, use search engines effectively, and manage online security threats.

4.2 Limitations

The following main limitations related to the Census have been identified.

This survey sought to obtain a representative sample of Maltese youth NEETs aged between 16 to 29 years. To do so, the project targeted every single person in the Jobsplus sampling frame, with up to five attempts made on five different days at five different times to reach the respondents at their own homes. In spite of this, the sample size obtained was of 754 respondents from the total number of NEET youth provided by Jobsplus of 6,701 youths that classified as NEETs. Whilst it would have been ideal to obtain a larger sample size, the sample was still representative, translating to a confidence level of 95% and confidence interval of +/- 3.33%. Additionally, those not participating in the study might in fact be the riskier group.

Moreover, since the sampling frame was compiled during August 2023 and the data collection was carried out during September - November 2023, there were cases that had to be excluded because the participants were no longer NEETs. Additionally, there could be others who at the time of writing have become NEETs.

Finally, since the study was inquiring on very sensitive aspects of the respondent's life looking at educational attainment, employment status and wellbeing, there is always the possibility of social desirability bias by some respondents, as well as interviewer bias (Saunders et al., 2015). In order to avoid this, the interviewers were trained prior to conducting the interviews.

4.3 Recommendations

In light of the findings that emerged from this census survey, a number of recommendations are being proposed. Building on the findings of the Malta NEETs Census (2015), the recommendations will be looking at preventative measures and at activation measures.

These measures focus on prevention of NEETS by ensuring that youths have the required measures in place to prevent them from becoming NEETs, and also in ensuring that transitional or floating NEETs do not become core NEETs On the other hand, activation measures focus on ensuring that the required initiatives are implemented to reduce the number of NEETs.

These measures include:

Focus on Soft skills and Personal development: Firstly, there is a clear need to focus on soft skills and personal development, since such tools would assist in boosting self-confidence at an early stage and reducing the likelihood of NEET status – an observation that has been corroborated across various studies in this field (e.g., Robertson, 2018). In many cases, not all youth would be truly ready for employment, despite them thinking that they are or being pushed by family members to engage themselves. Secondly, there is also a need for more practical, targeted information and advice related to the job application process, which would assist youth NEET in identifying appropriate job opportunities that match their skills and interests (Russell, 2014). Introducing an enhanced preparatory phase within the Youth Guarantee and focusing specifically on practical life-skills including teambuilding will equip youth with the necessary skills for future professional success.

Education tailored towards the family as a unit: The findings of this census survey revealed that most of the youths have a very strong bond with their parents, and that they spend plenty of time with them. Therefore, considering the parental influence on both educational attainment and employment status, it is crucial to target and educate both the parents and the youths on the importance of educational attainment and the benefits of establishing a career as opposed to finding a job, especially in cases where these families come from a more disadvantaged background. This can take place in the form of more educational and media campaigns on a national level, and also through hands-on information sessions and open days for families.

Early school leaving: This phenomenon was also present in the previous census survey (2015). Unfortunately, these youths leave school with very low levels of qualifications and a deficient set of skills (general as well as practical/technical) and thus face the highest unemployment risk. More support is required to these students who generally tend to be low achievers. These students need to be identified and supported as early on as childhood and adolescence. More support needs to be offered through the educational system so as to strive to identify their strengths and abilities. Referral to counsellors or psychologists should be sought especially in cases where children or adolescent's, lack motivation and when psychosocial issues are flagged up as potential barriers to educational attainment. In order to facilitate this process, Jobsplus could consider setting up formal MOUs with vocational and educational institutions, and the Ministry for Education, in order to set up a protocol establishing a more structured referral system aimed at targeting youths who stop following their educational paths.

The influence of Learning Difficulties: Unfortunately learning difficulties have been associated with unemployment and withdrawal from education amongst NEETS. The findings of this survey shed more light on the need to identify these difficulties as early on as possible in childhood, and to offer adequate support both at school and also within the home environment. Therefore, offering more timely assessments by specialised psychologists and drawing up IEPs aimed at ensuring adequate holistic support are pivotal to prevent these students from transitioning to NEETs.

More Inclusive Education: The general schooling and educational experience of most of the participants that were interviewed during the Census was not positive, due to a lack of interest and engagement as well as a sense of not fitting in. Therefore, it is highly recommended to rethink the current educational model being provided to potential NEETs and try to integrate alternative and more engaging ways of teaching. Additionally, second chance preventive classes such as the SEC revision classes and MCAST prevcntive classes should continue to be offered. These classes offer students a second opportunity to continue their educational pathways and eventually translate into employment.

More inclusion of new niches: Most of the respondents in this Census survey were not conversant about the topics of climate change and renewable energy, as well as the significance of digitalization. Increased integration of these aspects in formal education can encourage these youths to perceive them as significant and interesting topics which are major contributors to our economy. More educational and media campaigns could also support the shift in perception of these possible careers as accessible and interesting. Additionally, future Youth Guarantee initiatives should integrate these aspects by offering the possibility of training in digital and green skills. This is consistent with the ethos of the council recommendation on a reinforced youth guarantee.

More involvement of Career Counsellors and Youth Workers: These professionals need to be involved both at prevention and also in activation measures with the aim of offering grounding and support to youths, especially in cases where youths lack a parental figure who can act as a role model and support them in their educational and vocational goals.

Psychosocial support for NEETs: One third of the participants expressed facing physical or psychological consequences tied to unemployment, including the presence of stress and depression. It is crucial to support these youths even after they drop from formal education by offering support services including vocational guidance, counselling and psychotherapy especially in cases when depression is present. This will help to avoid the scarring effect explained earlier whilst supporting them to return to employment. These services could be offered by Jobsplus in conjunction with local community mental health services which are equipped with psychologists as well as social workers that can follow up these youths.

The job application process: There is also a need for more practical, targeted information and advice

related to the job application process, which would assist youth NEET in identifying appropriate job opportunities that match their skills. This can be implemented through the role of advisors and mentors. These advisors and mentors should embark on ongoing continuous professional development to keep abreast with emerging opportunities and be able to guide young participants appropriately. Furthermore, having one point of contact throughout the whole process; a mentor for the participants of the youth guarantee program; will ensure a smoother process and more personalized support for these youths.

The impact of parenthood: It was noted that 24.6% of respondents aged 25 to 29 years have children. This will inevitably impact their interest and motivation to apply for any scheme. In order to facilitate the re-entry into education or employment for these NEETs, a more coordinated approach with the Department of Social Services should be studied to target these participants and their needs so as to empower them to gain self-efficacy and motivation to function both as parents and employees contributing to the global economy, whilst at the same time bettering their own prospects and quality of life.

Peer reviews and best practices: It is strongly recommended that Jobsplus continues to build on a strong transnational partnership, to not only strengthen capacity building and services but also establish itself as a main player within the PES Network.

4.4 Concluding Note

This census survey aimed at developing a more holistic picture of the NEETS group here in Malta. The findings of this census built on the 2015 Malta Census Survey, and shed more light on new areas, namely digital and green skills as well as the needs of the 25- to 29- -year-old NEETs group. The findings suggest that the youth NEET population in Malta is highly heterogeneous and seems to consist of Transition NEETs, Floating NEETs, and Core NEETs. Policy measures need to be more holistic, and focus on targeting these youths early on in adolescence with the aim of preventing youths from becoming NEETs. Additionally, policy makers need to ensure that such strategies take into consideration the youth's self, their parents, the provision of education with a clear purpose, the inclusion of green jobs and renewable energy, as well as digitalization of skills, together with the involvement of educators, youth workers, counsellors, psychologists, and social workers in the fight against youth inactivity and youth unemployment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEWERS' FEEDBACK

Table 118 Was the participant educated?

	Was the participant educated?
I do not agree	0.7%
Not applicable	0.7%
I agree	96.0%
Neutral	2.5%
Grand Total	**100.00%**

Table 119 – Was the participant rude?

	Was the participant rude?
I do not agree	92.8%
Not applicable	5.5%
Neutral	1.8%
Grand Total	**100.00%**

Table 120 – Was the participant arrogant?

	Was the participant arrogant?
I do not agree	92.9%
Not applicable	5.6%
Neutral	1.5%
Grand Total	**100.00%**

Table 121 – Was the participant aggressive?

	Was the participant aggressive?
I do not agree	93.0%
Not applicable	5.6%
Neutral	1.3%
Grand Total	**100.00%**

Table 122 – Was the participant intimidated?

	Was the participant intimidated?
I do not agree	93.0%
Not applicable	5.6%
Neutral	1.3%
Grand Total	**100.00%**

Table 123 – Was the participant using bad language?

	Was the participant using bad language?
I do not agree	92.9%
Not applicable	5.6%
Neutral	1.5%
Grand Total	100.00%

Table 124 – Was the participant willing to participate?

	Was the participant willing to participate?
I do not agree	0.3%
Not applicable	0.7%
I agree	95.9%
Neutral	3.1%
Grand Total	100.00%

Table 125 – Did the participant seem honest when answering?

	Did the participant seem honest when answering?
I do not agree	0.1%
Not applicable	1.0%
I agree	97.2%
Neutral	1.6%
Grand Total	100.00%

APPENDIX 2 – CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Date:

Time in: Time out:

Interviewer:

Cell Leader:

Locality (street, town):

Participant Code:

Section A: Personal Information & Social Demographics

A.1   Personal Info
1. First Name: _____
2. Surname: _____
3. Date of Birth: _____
4. Gender: _____
5. ID Card No.:   _____

A.2 Family Members
1. Where did you live when growing up? **(Choose all that apply)**

    a. With both biological parents,

    b. Grandparents,

    c. Single-parent household,

    d. Other, please specify_____

2. Number of Family Members currently living in your household **(Choose all that apply and write the amount for each section in the place provided)**

    a. Parents_____

    b. Siblings (are you the eldest/youngest/middle-*circle the appropriate*)_

    c. Other**,** please specify_____

3. Do you have any children? **Yes or No**

        If yes:
            i.   How many?

            ii. Do they live with you? **Yes or No**

Father's Age:

4. Father's Employment type **(Choose one)**

    a. Full time employment,

    b. Part time employment,

    c. Casual worker,

    d. Self-employed,

    e. Unemployed,

    f. Other, please specify_____

Mother's Age

5. Mother's Employment type**(Choose one)**

    a. Full-time employment,

    b. Part-time employment,

    c. Casual worker,

    d. Self-employed,

    e. Unemployed,

    f. Other, please specify_____

6. How often do you spend time with your family every week? **(Choose one)**

    a. 2 or more hours per day

    b. An hour per day

    c. 1-4 hours per week

    d. I hardly ever see them

7. How often do you spend time with your friends every week? **(Choose one)**

    a. 2 or more hours per day

    b. An hour per day

    c. 1-4 hours per week

    d. I hardly ever see them

8. How would you rate your satisfaction with your life right now?

    a. Not satisfied at all

    b. So and so

    c. High satisfaction

Section B: Education and Training
B.1   Level of Education

1. How old were you when you left school? _____

2. What is your Highest Level of Education? **(Choose one)**

    a. School leaving Certificate (secondary school),

    b. O Levels,

      c. A Levels,

      d. Diploma,

      e. Other, please specify_____

3. Do you have any learning difficulties? (e.g., Dyslexia, ADHD, Dyspraxia etc.)? **Yes or No**

a.   If yes, please specify _____

b.   If yes, do you feel you were given adequate support at school? **Yes or No**

4. Why did you stop your Education or Training? **(Choose all that apply);**

      a. Financial Reasons

      b. Personal Reasons

      c. Medical Reasons

      d. Family Pressures

      e. Time

      f. I wasn't interested in Education

      g. Other, please specify:_____

5. Have you been involved in any further learning (e.g. short training courses, apprenticeships etc) since leaving school? **Yes or No**

      a. If yes, please specify _____

B.2 Future Plans

6. Do you currently have any plans to engage in any educational or training courses?

Yes or No

      a. If yes, please specify _____

7. If 'Yes' (Question 6), Do you plan to study in Malta ___ Abroad ___ or Both ___?

8. Imagine you were given the opportunity to participate in some form of educational or training courses, what sort of courses would you prefer. (**Choose all that apply)**

    a. Class-room based

    b. Online

    c. Part-time

    d. Full-time

    e. Evening classes

    f. Day classes

    g. One-on-one

    h. Other, please specify: _____

9. Do you believe the following will help you get into education?

    a. Clear information about education and training opportunities that suit my career ambitions **Yes or No**

    b. Better English, Maths, or Computer skills **Yes or No**

    c. Boosting my self-confidence **Yes or No**

    d. Financial Incentives **Yes or No**

    e. Guaranteed employment upon completion of course **Yes or No**

    f. The opportunity to work whilst studying **Yes or No**

10. Are the majority of your friends currently in Education or Training?

    Yes or No or Don't Know

Section C: Work Experience and Interests

1. Do you have any work experience? **Yes or No**

    If yes,

4.   Please specify. **(Choose all that apply)**

        a. Part-time work

        b. Full-time work

        c. Volunteer work

        d. Apprenticeship

        e. Casual work

4.   If you have ever had any work experience, how would you describe it? **(Choose all that apply)**

        a. Great, I was treated fairly and really enjoyed working

        b. It was ok

        c. I didn't like the work I was doing
        d. I wasn't treated fairly
        e. I hated it

2. Why are you currently unemployed? (**Choose all that apply)**

    a. I do not have the required qualifications

    b. Personal Reasons

    c. Medical Reasons

    d. Family Pressures

    e. I am not interested in working

    f. I haven't found a job that I like

    g. Other please specify _____

3. Would you like to find some form of employment? **Yes or No**

4. What are your career plans for the future? **(Choose one)**

a. To gain full-time employment,

b. To gain part-time employment,

c. I don't have plans,

d. Other, please specify_____

5. Do you know how you are going to achieve the above plans?

   Yes or No or Not Applicable

6. Do you believe you have the support needed to achieve the above plans?

   Yes or No or Not Applicable

7. Which Industries interest you the most? **(Choose all that apply)**

   a. Manufacturing

   b. Retail (Shops)

   c. Construction

   d. Catering (Restaurants)

   e. Hospitality (Hotels)

   f. Beauty

   g. Healthcare

   h. Public Sector

   i. Other, please specify_____

8. Has being out of work had any of the following effects on your wellbeing? **(Choose all that apply)**

   a. Stress

   b. Depression

    c. I rarely leave the house

    d. Smoking too much

    e. Eating unhealthy foods

    f. Drinking too much alcohol

    g. Self-harming

    h. Feeling physically ill

    i. None of the above

    j. Other, please specify_____

9. Where would you like to see yourself in a year from now? **(Choose one)**

    a. Working full- or part-time

    b. In full- or part-time education or training

    c. The same as today

    d. Owning my own business

    e. I don't know

    f. Other, please specify_____

10. If they said 'Owning my own business', could you please provide further details? What are your plans? _____

11. Which of the following, if any, do you think would help you get into work? **(Choose all that apply).**

    a. Advice about applying for jobs

    b. Better English, Maths, or Computer skills

    c. Boosting my self confidence

12. Are the majority of your friends currently Employed? **Yes or No or Don't know**

13. Do you plan to work in Malta ___ Abroad ___ or Both ___?

Section D: Digital skills and awareness of the green transition
Section D.1 Green Transition

1. In your opinion, what are 'green skills'? (Provide a brief description)

2. In your opinion, why are these important for the current employment opportunities?

3. I feel confident discussing climate change.
   I don't know about it ___
   I can understand its implications with help ___
   I can understand its implication on my own ___
   I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

4. I feel confident discussing green products.
   I don't know about it ___
   I can understand its implications with help ___
   I can understand its implication on my own ___
   I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

5. I feel confident collaborating with others about green products.
   I don't feel confident at all ___
   I can do it to a limited extent ___
   I feel quite confident ___
   I feel very confident ___

6. I feel creative when discussing green products.
   I don't feel creative at all ___
   I feel this to a limited extent ___
   I feel quite confident ___
   I feel very confident ___

7. I feel confident about topics and the information related to renewable energy.
   I don't know about it ___
   I can understand this topic with help ___
   I can understand this topic on my own ___
   I can understand this topic; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

8. I feel confident discussing about environmental policy regulations.
   I don't know about it ___
   I can understand its implications with help ___
   I can understand its implications on my own ___
   I can understand its implication; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

9. I feel confident assisting employees about green solutions across industry sectors.
    I don't feel confident at all ___
    I can assist to some limited extent ___
    I can assist about most green solutions ___
    I can assist with a high level of confidence ___

10. I feel confident to manage employees about green solutions across industry sectors.
    I don't feel confident at all ___
    I can manage to some limited extent ___
    I can manage about most green solutions ___
    I can manage with a high level of confidence ___

11. I feel confident discussing green technology and innovation.
    I don't know about it ___
    I can understand its implications with help ___
    I can understand its implications on my own ___
    I can understand its implications, if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

12. I feel confident to work on a computer.
    I don't feel confident at all ___
    I can only work on a computer to some limited extent ___
    I am quite confident to work on a computer ___
    I feel very confident to work on a computer; if needed, I can support/guide others about it___

13. I feel confident working in industries related to renewable energy.
    I am not confident at all ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can work in such industries with confidence ___
    I can work in such industries; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

14. I feel confident handling projects in industries related to renewable energy.
    I am not confident at all ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can handle projects in such industries quite well ___
    I can handle projects in such industries with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

15. I feel confident to push forward several ideas in relation to green solutions.
    I am not confident at all ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it quite well ___
    I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it ___

16. I feel confident discussing about new ideas to construct green solutions
    I am not confident at all ___

I can do it with help __

I can do it quite well __

I can do it with a high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it __

17. I feel confident working with machinery and specialized equipment related to green solutions across industry sectors.

    I am not confident at all __

    I can do it with help __

    I can do it quite well __

    I can do it with high level of confidence; if needed, I can support/guide others about it __

Section D.2 Digital Skills

Reference: *https://europa.eu/europass/digitalskills/screen/questionnaire/generic*

1. In your opinion, what are 'digital skills'? (Provide a brief description)

2. In your opinion, why are these important for the current employment opportunities?

3. I know how to copy and move files (e.g., documents, images, videos) between folders, devices or on the cloud.

   I don't know how to do it __

   I can do it with help __

   I can do it on my own __

   I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others __

4. When I use a search engine, I can take advantage of its advanced features.

   I don't know how to do it __

   I can do it with help __

   I can do it on my own __

   I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others __

5. I know how to use advanced videoconferencing features (e.g., moderating, recording audio and video).

   I don't know how to do it __

   I can do it with help __

   I can do it on my own __

   I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others __

6. I know how to create a profile in digital environments for personal or professional purposes.

   I don't know how to do it __

   I can do it with help __

   I can do it on my own __

   I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others __

7. I know how to create and edit digital text files (e.g., Word, OpenDocument, Google Docs).
    I don't know how to do it ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it on my own ___
    I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others ___

8. I know how to create something new by mixing different types of content (e.g., text and images).
    I don't know how to do it ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it on my own ___
    I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others ___

9. I know how to check that the website requesting my personal data is secure (e.g., https sites, safety logo or certificate).
    I don't know how to do it ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it on my own ___
    I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others ___

10. I know how to protect myself from unwanted and malicious online encounters and materials (e.g. spam messages, identity theft e-mails).
    I don't know how to do it ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it on my own ___
    I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others ___

11. When I face a technical problem, I am able to find solutions on the Internet.
    I don't know how to do it ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it on my own ___
    I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others ___

12. I know how to use online learning tools to improve my digital skills (e.g., video tutorial, online courses).
    I don't know how to do it ___
    I can do it with help ___
    I can do it on my own ___
    I can do it with confidence and, if needed, I can support/guide others ___

Section E: Additional Section.

1. What is the one thing you enjoy doing most?

_____

2. What is hindering you from seeking educational, training, or job opportunities? (*forget about all the previous questions you have answered*)

_____

3. What would encourage you to seek educational, training, or job opportunities? (*forget about all the previous questions you have answered*)

_____

4. What would you like to see implemented by The Government to encourage you to take further training/ schooling and/or seek employment?

_____

5. Do you believe your family will support and encourage you to take further training /schooling and/or seek employment?

_____

6. What would be your dream job? _____

Section F: Interviewer observations

TO BE FILLED IN BY THE INTERVIEWER

Please circle the number that mostly applies to each statement;

Appearance

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
a. The participant showed awareness of personal grooming.	1	2	3	4
b. The participant looked healthy (i.e., not obese, too thin, alert etc)	1	2	3	4

Verbal and Physical Behaviour

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
a. The participant was polite	1	2	3	4
b. The participant was rude	1	2	3	4
c. The participant was arrogant	1	2	3	4
d. The participant was aggressive	1	2	3	4
e. The participant was intimidating	1	2	3	4
f. The participant used foul language	1	2	3	4

Human Traffic/ Presence of Other People

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
a. Other individuals (e.g., parents, siblings, relatives etc) were present during the interview.	1	2	3	4
b. The participant appeared to have a healthy relationship with their family members	1	2	3	4
c. The other individuals present encouraged the participant to participate in the interview	1	2	3	4
d. The other individuals present discouraged the participant to participate in the interview	1	2	3	4

Attitude of the Participant

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
a. The participant was willing to respond to the questions.	1	2	3	4
b. The participant took the interview seriously.	1	2	3	4
c. The participant seemed truthful in their answers.	1	2	3	4

Surroundings

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Not Applicable
a. The participant's house was clean and habitable.	1	2	3	4
b. The participant appeared to feel comfortable and safe in their house.	1	2	3	4

Any further comments: *(Please state if anything in particular stood out about the Interview, Participant, or Home of Participant)*

APPENDIX 3 – TRAINING PLAN

MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE INITIATIVE AND THE TARGET GROUP (NEETS AGED 15-24 AND 25 – 29).

Introduction to the Youth Guarantee scheme and the main characteristics of the target group. A representative of Jobsplus will provide the necessary information to the contractor to carry out this module.

Course content: The course shall focus on insights related to the Youth Guarantee initiatives, main beneficiaries, real cases, and important factors/categories/demographics in relation to this topic.

Syllabus:
Topic 1: Introduction to the Youth Guarantee Scheme.
Topic 2: Understanding different categories of youths and their related demographics and social economic factors.
Topic 3: Real cases of main beneficiaries with regards to the Youth Guarantee Scheme.
Course structure: This training session shall be carried out face-to-face amongst all data collectors. A number of sessions will be held so that groups are kept low in size to ensure that the above information is well delivered amongst the participants. A pack of notes shall be distributed amongst the participants. Duration of the module: 2 hours.

Learning Outcomes: The main learning outcome is to understand the concept of the youth guarantee scheme and the main characteristics of the different target groups.

MODULE 2: INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Course content: The scope of the module is to teach interviewing techniques aimed at having objective investigations and handling specific situations that might occur.

Syllabus:
Topic 1: Introduction to data collection
Topic 2: Face-to-face interviews
Topic 3: Challenges of face-to-face interviews
Topic 4: Approaching different groups of interviewees (E.g., different social economic factors)
Topic 5: How to record all possible information from face-to-face interviews

Course structure: This training session shall be carried out face to face amongst all data collectors. A number of sessions will be held so that groups are kept low in size to ensure that the above information is well delivered amongst the participants. For this module, two separate session of 2 hours each for every data collector shall be held. A pack of notes shall be distributed amongst the participants. Duration of the module: 4 hours.

Learning Outcomes:
o   approaching different respondents in a way to instil optimal confidence and establish

    a short and close rapport with the interviewers;
- o observing and recording respondent reactions to different questions;
- o recording of classificatory information;
- o recording of any observations not directly related to any of the questions made as part of the structured interview.
- o ensuring that all data is accurately collated.

MODULE 3: SOFT SKILLS FOR INTERVIEWS

Course content: The scope of this module is to improve soft skills of interviewers which shall be used when conducting the interviews.

Syllabus:
Topic 1: Introduction to soft skills
Topic 2: Gaining trust of the interviewee
Topic 3: Mastering an interview
Topic 4: Interview etiquette
Topic 5: Tips of interview preparation and story telling

Course structure: This training session shall be carried out in person with all data collectors. A number of sessions will be held so that groups are kept low in size to ensure that the above information is well delivered amongst the participants. For this module, two separate session of 2 hours each for every data collector shall be held. A pack of notes shall be distributed amongst the participants. Duration of the module: 4 hours.

Learning Outcomes:
This course will cover the most essential soft skills to help to facilitate interviews amongst this challenging group. It is designed to help the interviewer to boost their skills so that they learn how to use different techniques and strategies to excel in any scenario that are faced with during the face-to-face interview. This module will assist the interviewer to prepare for their face-to-face interviews using soft skills; especially being compassionate with individuals that are tense during the interview.

MODULE 4: ROLE-PLAY

Course content: The scope of the module is to have a simulation of real situations that might occur during interviews.

Syllabus:
This session is a practical session based on role-plays. Our team of key experts will prepare four different scenarios to practice with the data collectors.
Scenario 1 – A situation where there is a language barrier.
Relevance: To find the best technique how to communicate with the individual

Scenario 2 – A situation where the individual has a low level of education
Relevance: To find the best technique how to simplify the questions without changing the context of the questions.

Scenario 3 – A situation where an individual suffers from anxiety
Relevance: To find the best technique how to calm down the individual and the compassionate with the interviewee.

Scenario 4 – A situation where none of the above applies, hence the interviewer can communicate without any difficulties
Relevance: To be able to compare with the above three scenarios.

This session will be well-designed and coordinated by our Psychologist (Level 8) to ensure that all psychological elements are studied during this session.

Course structure: This training session shall be carried out in person with all data collectors. A number of sessions will be held so that groups are kept low in size to ensure that the above information is well delivered amongst the participants. A pack of notes shall be distributed amongst the participants. Duration of the module: 2 hours.

Learning Outcomes:
In the above situations the participants will clearly see the differences between one scenario and the other. Thus, they will learn from a practical perspective how to tackle every situation. This will enhance their interviewing skills during the process of the data collection.

APPENDIX 4 – DISTRICTS

Southern Harbour District

Cospicua
Fgura
Floriana
Hal Luqa
Haz-Zabbar
Kalkara
Marsa
Paola
Santa Lucija
Senglea
Hal Tarxien
Valletta
Vittoriosa
Xghajra.

Northern Harbour District

Birkirkara
Qzira
Hal Qormi
Hamrun
Msida
Pembroke
San Gwann
Santa Venera
St Julian's
Swieqi
Ta' Xbiex
Tal-Pietà
Tas-Sliema.

South Eastern District

Birzebbuga
Gudja
Hal Ghaxaq
Hal Kirkop
Hal Safi
Marsaskala
Marsaxlokk
Mqabba
Qrendi
Zejtun
Zurrieq.

Western District

Had-Dingli
Hal Balzan
Hal Lija
H'Attard
Haz-Zebbug
Iklin
Mdina
Mtarfa
Rabat
Siggiewi.

Northern District

Hal Gharghur
Mellieha
Mgarr
Mosta
Naxxar
St Paul's Bay

Gozo and Comino District

Fontana
Ghajnsielem
Gharb
Ghasri
Munxar
Nadur
Qala
San Lawrenz
Ta' Kercem
Ta' Sannat
Victoria
Xaghra
Xewkija
Zebbug.