

Tr@ck-in Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural NEETs



WP 2 - MAPPING Overview on rural NEETs - SPAIN

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Preface

This report is an output of Track-IN | Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural NEETs whose aim is to deliver an evaluation model of the effectiveness of Public Employment Services (PES) tracking support types. The goal is to respond to the challenges of the mismatch between broadband policy package aims and the needs of NEETs in rural areas and contribute to a greater visibility of the constraints and needs that young people face in rural areas.

The Track-IN project comprises a comparative 6-country case study (Portugal, Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain, and Bulgaria), approached by three studies. In Work package 2 (WP2) the propose is to map the best practices in tracking young people aged between 25-29 years old, living in rural areas, and who are currently in a NEET situation (not in employment, education, or training). Methodologically, WP2 includes a comparative case study of different PES tracking support types programs foreseeing several steps: mapping (identifying all rural PES across the beneficiary countries, using Eurostat Labour Force Survey (2018) collapsed by degree of urbanization to delimit the territorial research scope); Screening (through a short survey, to target rural PES tracking practices fitting the project); Data collection (including in-depth analysis of selected cases using a multi-informant approach (PES administrative data; program documentation analysis; interviews with PES managers; world-café sessions with NEETs).

This report is the result of the phase of WP2 – mapping - an overview on rural NEETS, outlining in detail the situation of rural NEETs aged between 25 and 29 years old, over the last decade (2011-2021) in each beneficiary partner country. The overview will include indicators on youth population, youth employment and unemployment, education, and NEETs distribution. The characterization of all indicators will adopt the degree of urbanization as a central criterion, enabling proportional comparisons between rural areas, towns and suburbs, and cities. These analyses are further collapsed into age subgroups and, when possible, in sex groups for greater detail.

The statistical procedures adopted across the different selected dimensions where: descriptive longitudinal analysis; using graphical displays (e.g., overlay line charts); and, whenever relevant, the calculation of proportional absolute and relative changes between 2011, 2015 and 2021, and finally 2011 and 2021. These time ranges were chosen to capture the indicators evolution before and after the economic and financial crisis which hit European countries in the beginning of the decade and, more recently, to capture the impact of COVID19 pandemic crises. All data was extracted from Eurostat public datasets.

Ana Sofia Ribeiro and Tatiana Ferreira (ICS-ULisboa)

Introduction

This report proceeds in three parts. The first of these comprises an introductory contextualisation which provides the relevant social, economic, and political background of Spain from the last two decades, along with information on key youth policies based on a review of relevant literature. Following this, a methodological note explains the data drawn from and the statistical operations carried out. The final and main part of the report features the analysis carried out on the data, which is specifically focused on youth, organised by degree of urbanisation and gender, and is divided into four main categories: population; employment; education; and NEETs. This final part concludes with a brief summary that highlights the main results.

Contextualization

Geographical characterization

Spain is a country in the European Union, and the largest of Southern Europe. Bordering Portugal to the west and France and Andorra to the North-East, the total area of the country is 505,990km². As part of the Spanish monarchy, there are 17 autonomous communities, which includes 2 sets of Islands.

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Figure 1. Map of Spain showing position in Southern Europe, regions, and cities



Population

As of 2021, Spain had an estimated total population of 47,326.687 (INE, 2021). Spain is the fifth most populous country in the European Union, and the 30th in the world. The population distribution in Spain is somewhat uneven, with a huge concentration in urban areas; 58.4% of the Spanish population are found in just four of the 17 autonomous communities. The proportion of the entire population of Spain who live in urban areas is estimated to be around 80%, leaving 20% as rural inhabitants

(Worldometer, 2021). This rural/urban contrast has become more pronounced in recent years, where development in rural areas has backtracked, and the population in these areas has decreased. A political movement known as Teruel Existe began to take form in the late 1990's in an attempt to combat this issue in the Teruel region, and the success of this movement gave rise to another movement known as España vaciada in 2021, which attempts to address this issue in wider Spain. As a general trend, the population of 25-29-year-olds in Spain in proportion to the whole population of Spain has dropped from 9% to 5% for men, and from 8% to 5% for women in the last 22 years (World Bank, 2022). This means that, on estimate, there are around 475.000 rural youth between the ages of 25 and 29 in Spain.

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Economic situation in the last decade

As with many EU countries, Spain was adversely affected by the 2008 financial crisis, facing a huge recession as a result and ushering in a period of negative macroeconomic performance. By 2012, more than 25% of the Spanish population were unemployed. The economy reached a turning point towards the third quarter of 2012, however, in conjunction with a change in strategy of the European Central Bank, and the recessionary trend gradually reversed. In 2020, prior to the CoVid-19 pandemic, the employment rate in Spain was around 14%, meaning that unemployment had decreased by 11% since the economic crisis of 2008-2012. The pandemic has caused substantial economic issues, giving rise to many characteristics shared with the 2008 crisis, but with significantly less severity.

Administrative structure

Governance in Spain has a dual format. As a parliamentary monarchy, the Spanish government at large operates in a centralized manner, and has done since the constitution of 1978. Certain powers, however, are also delegated to the governing bodies of each of the seventeen regions of Spain. These regions, known as Comunidades Autónomas, are given the authority and responsibilities to legislate on these areas, which include health, education, and employment, among other aspects (Acosta, 2010). This dual nature creates inevitable complexities with the functioning of the country, and, in the last decade, political tensions have arisen through debate about delegation of this autonomy and the governance of the country.

Education system

Although some of the Comunidades Autónomas have been able to customise certain aspects of the education system for their regions, the generality of the Spanish

education system is universal. Compulsory education begins at 6 years old and continues until the age of 16, and universal access for children from 3 to 5 (preschool) is guaranteed. Although post-compulsory education commences beyond the age of 16, the Spanish educational system streams students from 13-14 years old onwards within high schools. One of the aims of the government is to have more youth in education after the compulsory education period and to promote greater access for youth to vocational training courses (formación profesional) in order to augment their employability in the future. With this strategy, the country is trying to adjust the qualification system to match the employment market.

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Labour market

As mentioned above, the Spanish economy was severely affected by both the 2008 crisis and the 2020 CoVid-19 pandemic. However, the effect has been made slightly less relevant by the fact that the economic structure of Spain had excessively relied upon temporary contracts and stationary work well before the economic crisis (García-Pérez & Muñoz-Bullón, 2011) especially in the building and service sectors due to its dependence on tourism and commerce. Youth unemployment has decreased in recent years (especially from 2013 to 2019 and before the CoVid-19 outbreak) and Spanish youth policy has been focusing on deepening this pattern by substantially reducing the proportion of NEET youth through adapting the Spanish policy structure to the National Youth Guarantee System (Gobierno de España, 2019). The consequences of the COVID19 crisis have also seriously affected this trend and youth unemployment has risen again for the first time since 2013. This National Youth Guarantee System focuses on young people not employed or integrated within education or training systems, to receive an offer of employment, education, or training, including apprenticeships or traineeships, after completing formal education or becoming unemployed. The youth guarantee has noticeably improved the labour situation of the youth in Spain but should be further reformed to align the policy's intervention with its objectives (Brugarolas et al, 2021). There are also notable issues in Spain related to employment for those who are qualified. Within the EU, Spain is the country with the most overqualified graduates in a job (37.6% vs. the EU average of 23.4%). To ensure that young people can access the job market (and in line with the Youth Guarantee program and its measures) the Shock Plan for Youth Employment 2019-2021 has been approved in collaboration with the Autonomous Communities and the most representative trade unions and business organisations. This plan develops 50 measures within six categories in order to reduce youth unemployment and restore quality in employment while also fighting against the gender gap in employability. A new labour reform was also approved in December 2021, and put into effect the same month, in an attempt to improve the Spanish labour

market. The reform includes a reduction of temporary contracts as well as introducing two new types of training contract, among other notable measures.

Social inclusion

The transition into adulthood is somewhat neglected in the discourse of employment, education, and housing in Spain. Legal adulthood is set at the age of 18 but the legal age for working is 16. According to Eurostat, Spanish youth leave their parental homes on average at the age of 29.5, making them amongst the oldest to do so within the EU which has an average of 25.9 years old. Regarding youth policy, Spain has a National Youth Strategy which was approved in 2014 following European standards highlighted in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan and strives to achieve Europe 2020 targets (Gobierno de España, 2013). In the last report, the European Commission (2020) highlights how in Spain youth unemployment decreased to 1.5% in 2018 and the NEET youth share was 13.3% in 2017. However, these rates vary across regions and are still high in comparison with other EU countries (before the CoVid-19 outbreak). However, each Comunidad Autónoma has their own youth policy action plans and can legislate on youth issues. The aims of these plans are usually aligned with those of the Spanish government and of the European Commission. Most of them reach youth populations between 15 and 30 years old and even 35 in some domains such housing (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017).

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Public employment services and NEET outreach

Outreach is recognized as an effective way of connecting those who are disengaged with the social and economic systems within a country, and in the context of NEETs, can be measured in terms of their registration with Public Employment Services (PES). In Spain, strategies have been employed in the autonomous communities, and Labour Force Survey outreach levels from 2018 (the most recent useful data in this regard) show that, while the average outreach level for unemployed NEETs is 77.8%, the average level for inactive NEETs is 34.2%. This indicates that Spain has not had anywhere near the same level of success in registering inactive NEETs to PES as they have had in registering the unemployed. While the reasons for this appear to be somewhat nuanced, there is clearly room for improving the outreach levels in Spain by focusing on inactive youth (Brugarolas et al, 2021).

Covid-19 effect

Spain was among the countries most affected by the CoVid-19 pandemic across the world, in both social and economic spheres. A state of emergency was declared on 14

March 2020, after cases were confirmed in all 50 provinces on the previous day, and this state of emergency continued until 21 June, putting an end to 3 months of the strictest lockdown in Europe. (RIEC, 2021). The spread of the virus in Spain, which ended up being the eighth highest in the world, was accompanied by an initial decrease of GDP of 10.8% in 2020. The rise of unemployment, which was fortunately largely offset by Spain's ERTes job retention scheme, also resulted in a shift in employment culture, whereby instances of working from home almost doubled, from 8% to 15%, but still well below the EU average of 21% (Eurostat, 2021), meaning that employment using digital platforms has been less adopted in Spain than in other EU countries on average.

Methodological note

The Spanish national report uses information gathered by the ICS-ULisboa team (working package2 coordinator) of the **Track-IN** project via the Eurostat platform. The main data presented and analysed in this report are from the following Eurostat database:

- ✓ Population Statistics: [yth_demo_020];
- ✓ EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS): [lfst_r_pgauwsc]; [lfst_r_ergau]; [lfst_r_urgau]; [edat_lfs_9913]; [edat_lfse_30]; [edat_lfse_29]; [edat_lfse_34]; [trng_lfs_14].

Selected indicators were extracted from the different databases according to two criteria:

Time range: the previous decade (2011-2021) to have a sufficiently long period of time to capture the main changes and continuities in young people's trajectories in education, training, and employment and to capture the impact of the economic and financial crisis that hit Europe in 2008 and the first impact of the pandemic crisis.

Age group: 25-29 years old (the target group) and other age groups (15-24; 25-29; 30-34 years old) to make a comparable analysis within age groups - according to available data in each indicator.

In addition to a descriptive analysis, and in order to compare the main data changes and continuities in different time periods, absolute and relative change were calculated by considering the 3 main time points that were selected, namely 2011, 2015 and 2021. Absolute change refers to the simple difference in the indicator over two periods in time and is expressed in percentage points (pp). Relative change expresses the change of a value of an indicator during an earlier period and is expressed in percentage terms.

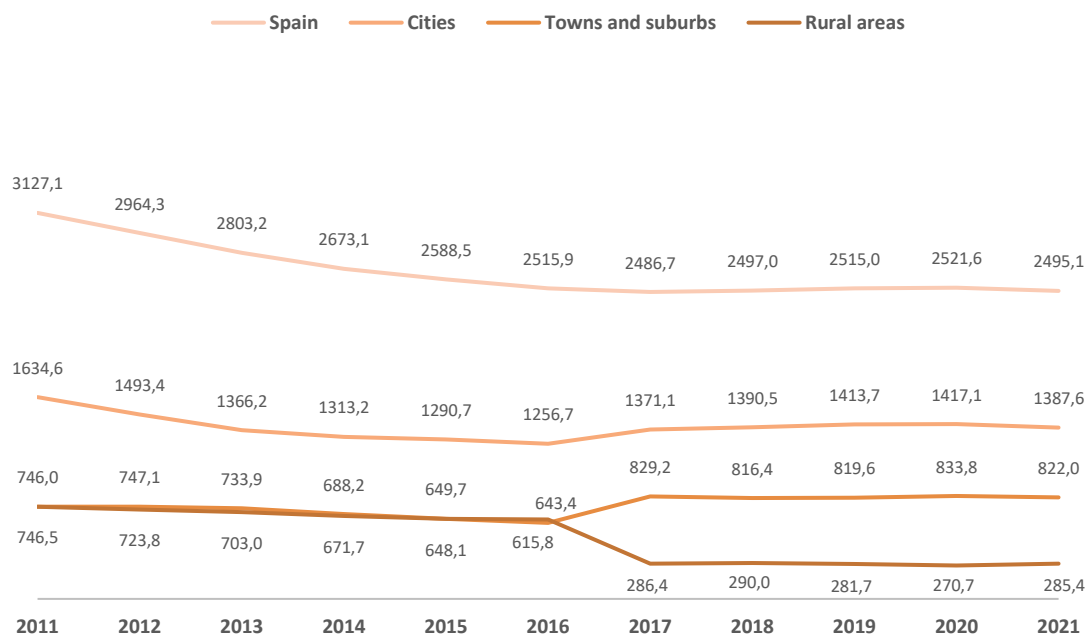
Data analysis

Population and youth population

Spain has a history of rural-urban mobility in the last six decades. One of the most significant instance of this occurred during the 1950's-70's. Many families migrated from rural areas (often southern villages) to northern industrialised cities or to coastal cities in line with the increase in popularity of tourism in Northern Europe, seeking employment and better living conditions. This exodus from rural to urban and coastal areas reduced the rural population by 40% during that time (García, 2000), but it also accelerated the growth of the elderly dependency rate in rural areas. This trend, however, is not homogeneous as Spanish population movements and the data of each region varies greatly. It is clear that a distinction must be made between, for example, depopulation dynamics in rural areas of the interior (such as Castilla y León or Teruel regions) from those in coastal rural regions where the loss and aging of their population has not been so notable. From the 1980s onwards, Spain became a popular country of immigration, with the turn of the millennium being the most notable in this regard. The influx of foreigners to Spain grew uninterruptedly until 2010. These migration flows helped to keep demographic data stable and prevented acceleration of depopulation in rural areas as anticipated. It even reversed depopulation in some specific areas (Collantes et al., 2014). However, as the economic crisis hit Spain, immigration rates decreased; rural areas experienced difficulties attracting newcomers. The profile of entrants to rural areas in this period is characterised by urban youth or families who were attracted to country life or to native-born youth who decided to return home after a period of living in the city or town.

As expected, Chart 1 shows an overall decline in the population of 25-29-year-olds in Spain from 2011 until 2017, after which the population count gradually stabilised. Table 1 shows the relative and absolute changes in population for this same age group and shows a 20.8% net decrease in population across the whole 10-year period. It also reveals that this decline is most pronounced in the cities. This would suggest that the unfavourable living and working conditions brought on by the 2008 economic crisis significantly decreased immigration rates, while simultaneously bringing emigration to an increase, as people were not choosing Spain as a destination to migrate to, but those living in Spain were also leaving the country in search of a better living environment.

Chart 1-Total youth population (25-29 years) 2011-2021, by degree of urbanisation (thousands)



Source: Eurostat (lfsa_pgauws) – data extracted on 9.05.2022

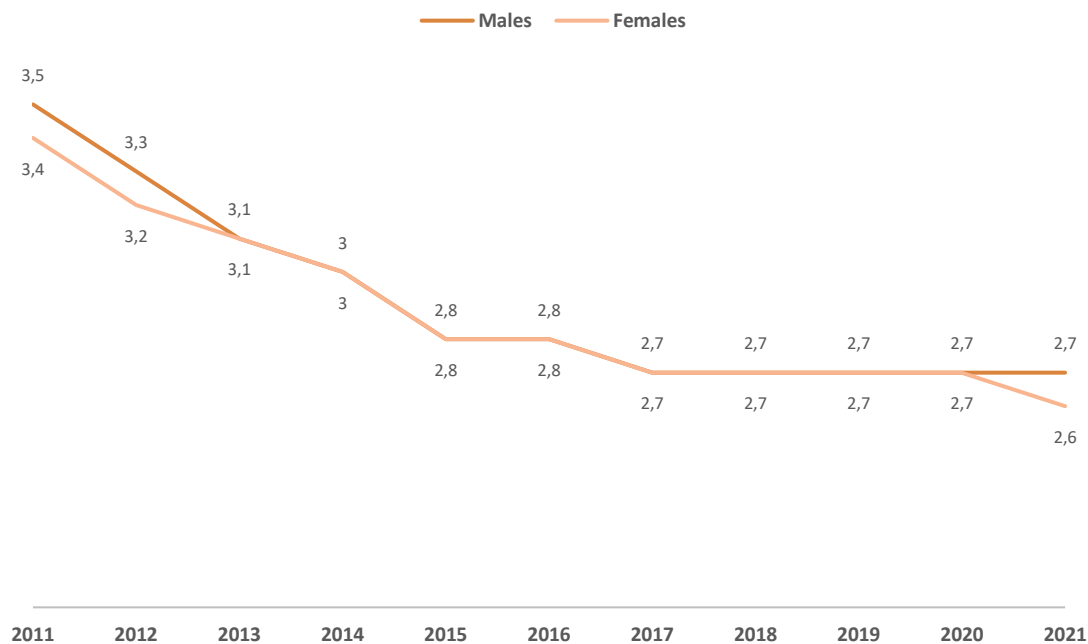
Table 1-Youth population (25-29 Years) relative/absolute change, by degree of urbanisation (2011,2015; 2021)

	2011 vs 2015		2015 vs 2021	
Spain	-538.600,0	-17.2%	-93.400,0	-3.6%
Cities	-176.300,0	-21.7%	64.500,0	10.1%
Towns and suburbs	-96.300,0	-12.9%	172.300,0	26.5%
Rural areas	-98.400,0	-13.2%	-362.700,0	-55.7%

Source: Eurostat (lfsa_pgauws) – data extracted on 9.05.2022

In Chart 2, the decrease in ratio of 25-29-year-olds to the overall population is clearly visible. This lower rate of young people is expected when considering the fertility rate in Spain, which has consistently been among the lowest in the European union. This rate has dropped even further in the last 10 years, from 1.37 in 2010 to 1.19 in 2020 (Eurostat, 2022). The trend of decline in youth population is therefore expected to continue in all parts of Spain, whether rural or urban, unless immigration markedly increases.

Chart 2-Ratio of youth population (25-29 years) 2011-2021, by sex (%)



Source: Eurostat (lfsa_pgauws) – data extracted on 9.05.2022

Employment and unemployment

Spain was among the countries in Europe most affected by the 2008 economic crisis, and factors such as the reliance of the country on the building industry made economic recovery slower as compared with other countries. The Spanish job market was, in fact, not able to recover from this crisis before CoVid-19 hit; the rate in 2019 prior to the pandemic (14.1%) had not reached the same level as before the crisis in 2007 (8.2%), after peaking in 2013 as a result of the crisis (26.1%). The onset of CoVid-19 caused an increase in unemployment from 14.1% to 15.5%. a 1.4% increase.

The following data portrays the vulnerability of youth, particularly women in rural areas, to unemployment.

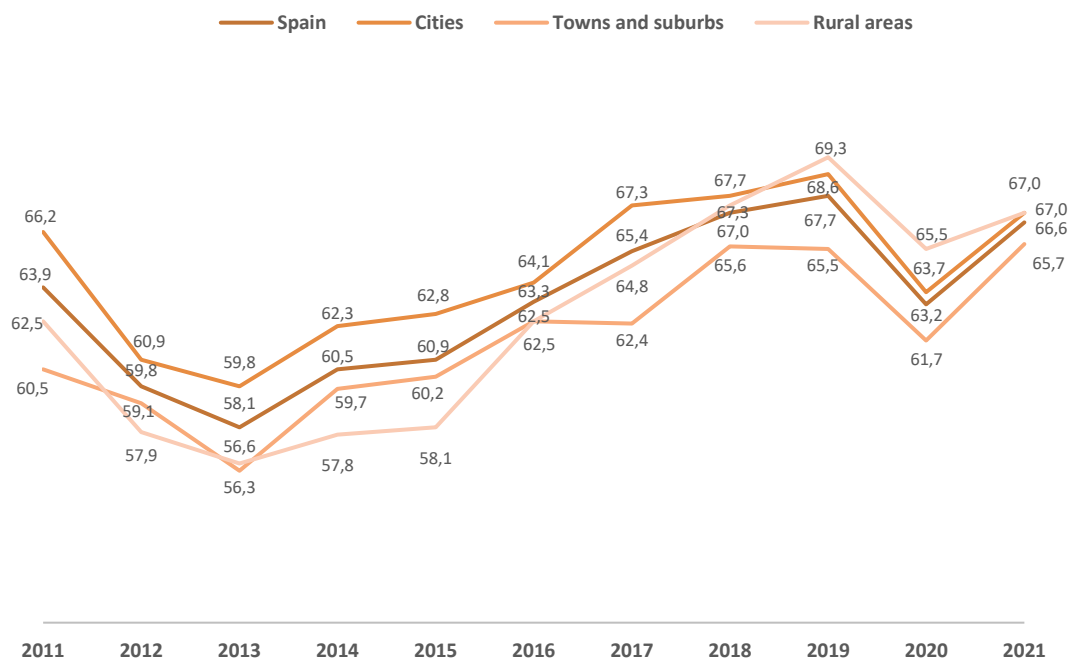
Youth Employment

Chart 3 shows employment rates in Spain for youth between the ages of 25-29 by degree of urbanisation. The chart clearly reflects the impact of the 2008 crisis, with its prolonged effect on employment lasting until 2013, after which the employment rates begin to improve. This upward trend is briefly interrupted by the social and economic effect of the CoVid-19 pandemic, as seen in 2020, with another drop in employment, although the impact was clearly not as severe as that of the 2008 crisis. This can be seen in Chart 3, where the employment for Spain as a whole was at its lowest point during this period in 2013, at 58.1%, before increasing steadily to 67.7% in 2020. The 2021 decline in employment corresponding to CoVid-19 equated to 63.2%, which was still over 5% higher than employment rates caused by the 2008 crisis.

These employment statistics show that rural areas were not as affected by the pandemic as cities, or towns and suburbs. This is not unexpected considering the effect of the pandemic on, for example, the tourism industry, which is key for the economy of cities and towns in Spain. This stands in contrast to typical industry associated with rural areas such as farming, which was clearly much less affected by CoVid-19.

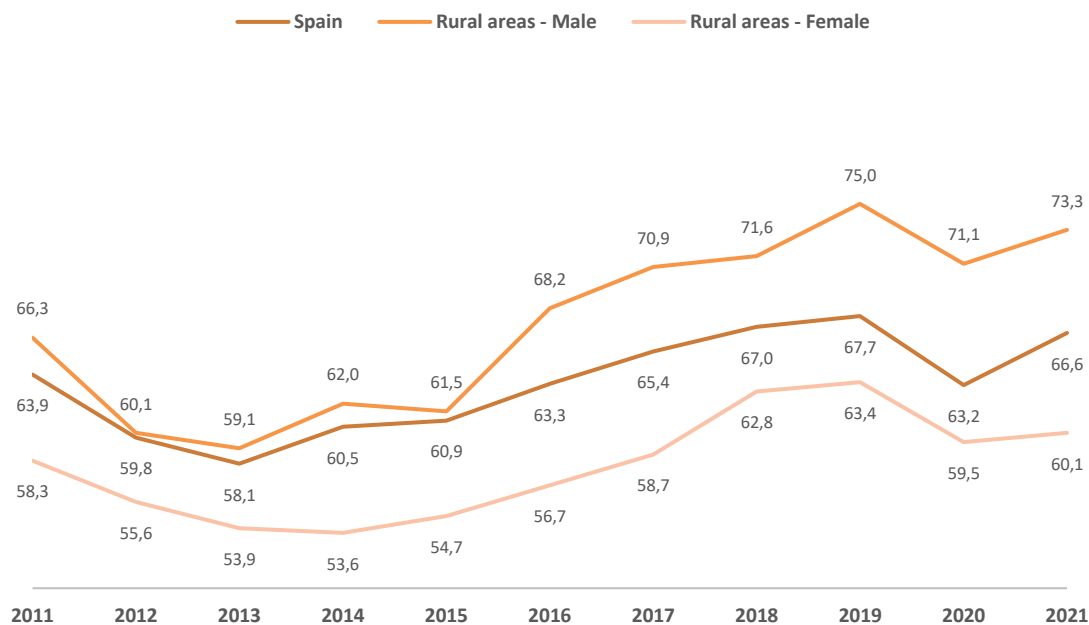
Chart 4 shows that female employment is much lower in rural areas compared to both male employment and compared with the average across Spain for this same age group. Not only is the gender gap in certain industries apparent here, but the barriers to female employment due to responsibilities such as being primary caregivers to young children, is also evident from this data, although this reality is characteristic of more universal social norms, rather than being exclusive to rural areas in particular.

Chart 3-Youth employment (25-29 years), by degree of urbanisation, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_ergau) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 4-Youth employment (25-29 years) in rural areas, by sex, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_ergau) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Youth Unemployment

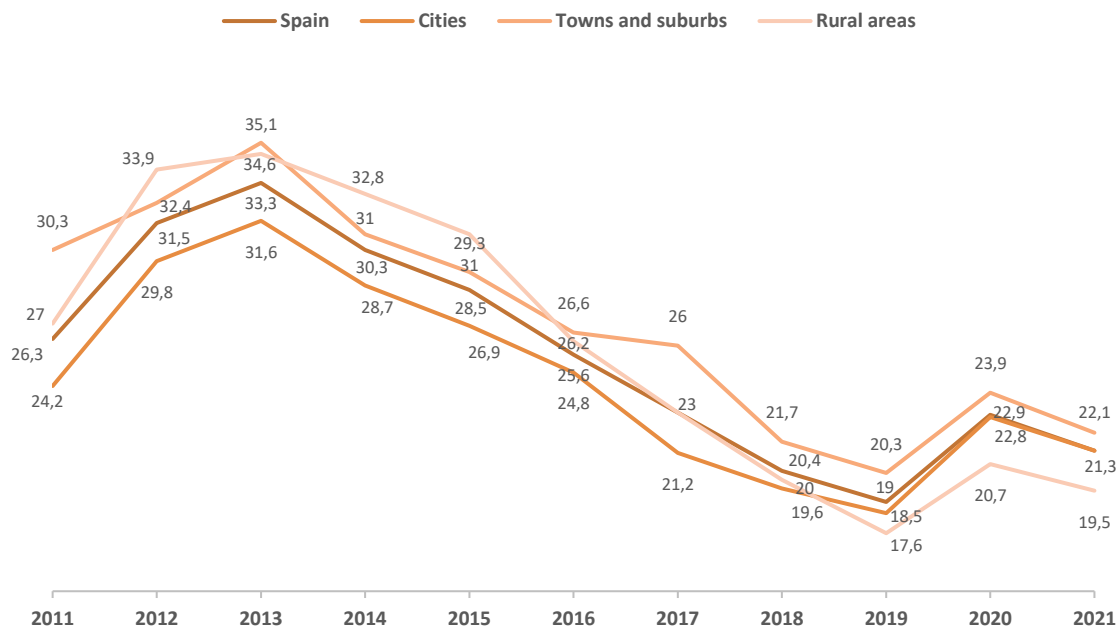
Chart 5 shows the unemployment rate for youth between 25 and 29 years old, and the trend is essentially an inverted version of chart 3, as would be expected; it reflects the same recovery after the 2008 crisis and subsequent milder decline due to the CoVid-19 pandemic. Table 2 shows the absolute and relative change in unemployment between 2011, 2015 and 2021, and shows that the biggest decreases in unemployment during this 10-year period are seen in towns and suburbs, as well as rural areas, which were 8.2% and 7.5% respectively.

Table 2-Youth unemployment (25-29 Years), absolute and relative change, by degree of urbanisation (2011,2015; 2021)

	2011	2015	2021	Absolute change 2011/2021	Relative change 2011/2021	Absolute change 2011/2015	Relative change 2011/2015	Absolute change 2011/2021	Relative change 2011/2021
Spain	26.3%	28.5%	21.3%	-5.0%	-19.2%	2.2%	8.4%	-7.2%	-25.3%
Cities	24.2%	26.9%	21.3%	-3.9%	-16.1%	2.7%	11.2%	-5.6%	-20.8%
Towns and suburbs	30.3%	29.3%	22.1%	-8.2%	-27.1%	-1.0%	-3.3%	-7.2%	-24.6%
Rural areas	27.0%	31.0%	19.5%	-7.5%	-27.8%	4.0%	14.8%	-11.5%	-37.1%

Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgau) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 5-Youth unemployment (25-29 Years), by degree of urbanisation, 2011-2021 (%)

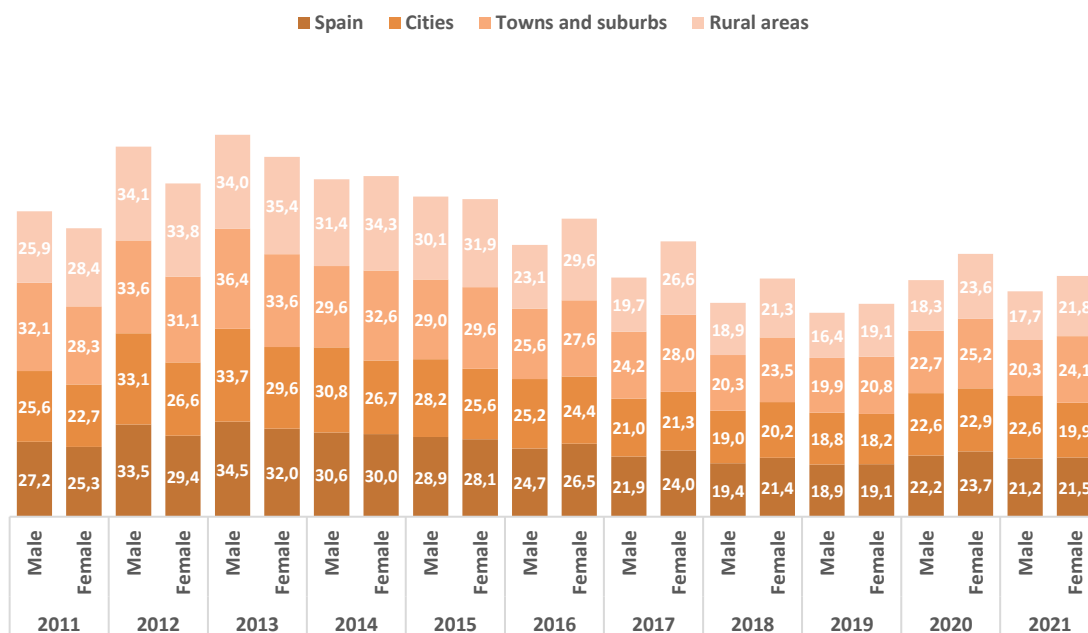


Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgau) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 6 shows the unemployment levels by sex. The chart indicates that although the unemployment level as a whole improved significantly in conjunction with the recovery

of the economy after the crisis, a wider division between male and female unemployment grew from 2016 onwards, and was particularly visible in rural areas, for example in 2017, where female unemployment among this group was almost 7% higher. Through this we can deduce that females have generally become more vulnerable to unemployment than males, particularly in rural areas.

Chart 6-Youth unemployment (25-29 Years), by degree of urbanisation and sex, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgau) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

EDUCATION

When the first PISA results were published by the OECD in 2001, many countries felt the need to refine their educational policies, since this data showed how well the educational systems performed relative to one another. These results, (such as the Early School Leavers rate, 30% in 2009) along with other data, revealed Spain to be among the worst countries in Europe by educational rankings. This revelation led to a new dimension of the discourse of education in Spain, and stimulated debates on how the educational system could be reformed to engage more youth in education and improve educational outcomes. One such reform, promoted by the Partido Popular, LOMCE (Law 8/2013), legitimised the streaming of students by homogeneous ability grouping and made curricula more flexible in lower secondary education. The consequences of this reform were numerous. It was shown to be productive in terms of granting Compulsory Secondary Education certificates, facilitating the participation of students in Vocational Education and Training systems and, as a consequence, lowering the rate of early school leavers in Spain. However, it also reinforced the reproduction of social inequalities in schooling as conditioned by social class and ethnic background. Another relevant determinant in educational attainment and early school leaving, which is accentuated from the following data, is gender. In the last years, the presence of women in tertiary education has surpassed men. Further, males tend to be more present among early-school leavers than women.

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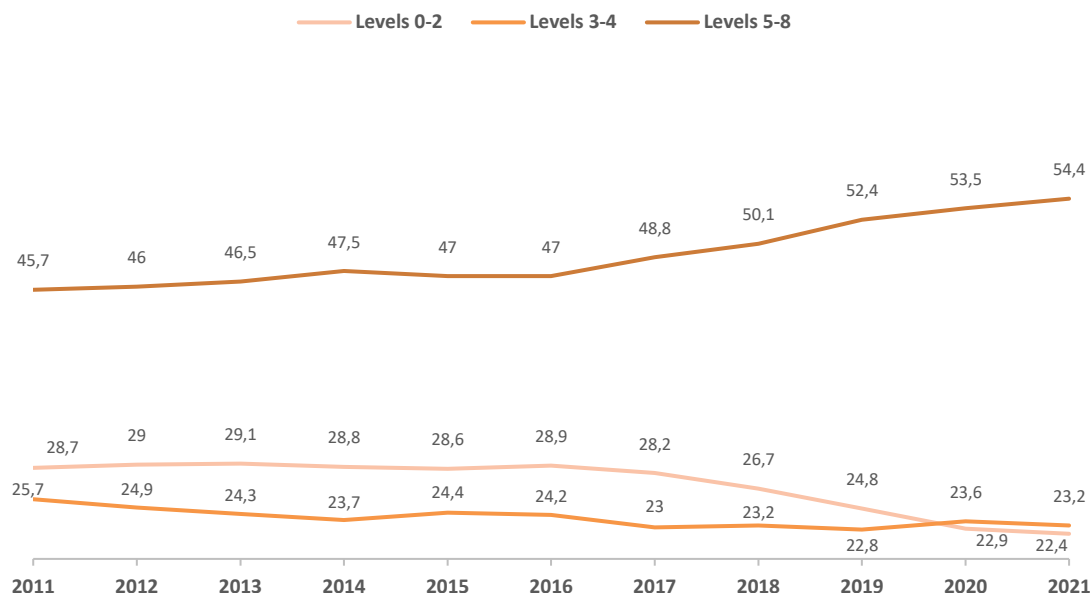
Young people by educational attainment level

Chart 7 indicates the rate of those who are educated to primary, secondary, and tertiary levels, and shows that there is an increase in tertiary educational attainment in this 10-year period, but a decrease in primary and secondary level educational attainment, for those between 20 and 34 years old.

Charts 8 and 9 show figures for participation in educational training, for individuals between the ages of 20 and 34, 4 weeks prior to the data collection process. Chart 8 indicates that 2021 was characterised by the highest participation rate in education from the entire 10-year period, despite the impact of CoVid-19. This change, as shown in chart 9, was primarily led by women (41.3% vs 27.9% for men), and the percentages were highest in rural areas by a small margin (41.3 vs 41.0 for women in cities). The shift of educational programs to digital platforms during the pandemic means that education would naturally be more accessible to all as barriers associated with mobility, such as transport issues, would no longer exist. This suggests that digitalisation, at least in part, contributed to higher participation in education.

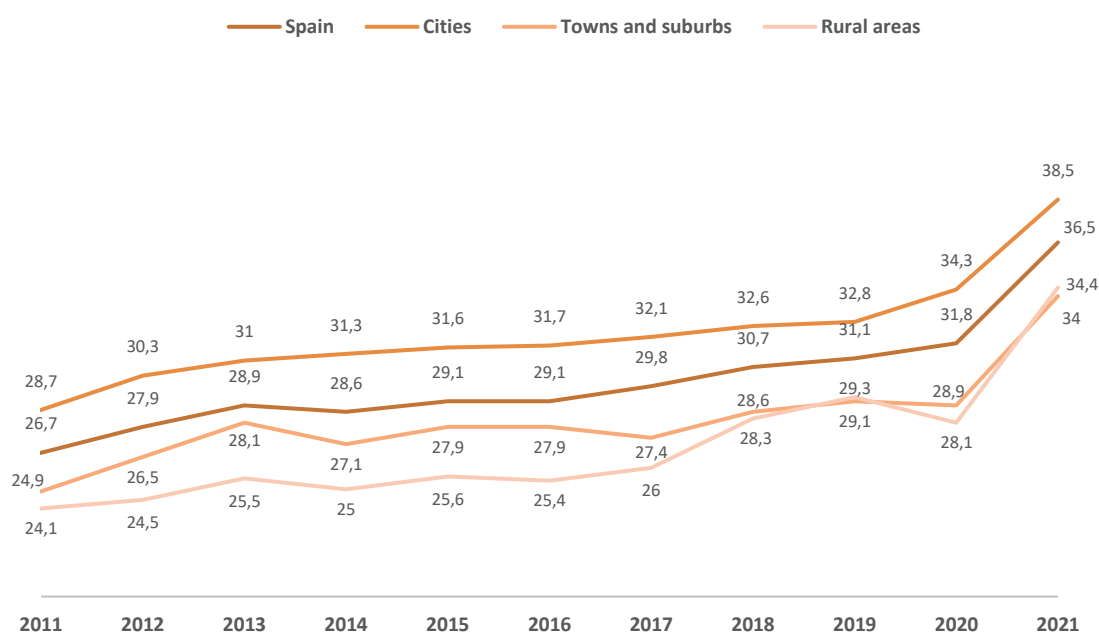
The fact that rural employment figures for men, as seen in the previous section, were higher than for women, compliments this data, suggesting that at least in some cases there were less men in educational training than women because these men were occupied with employment.

Chart 7-Youth population (20-34 years), by educational level, 2011-2021 (%)



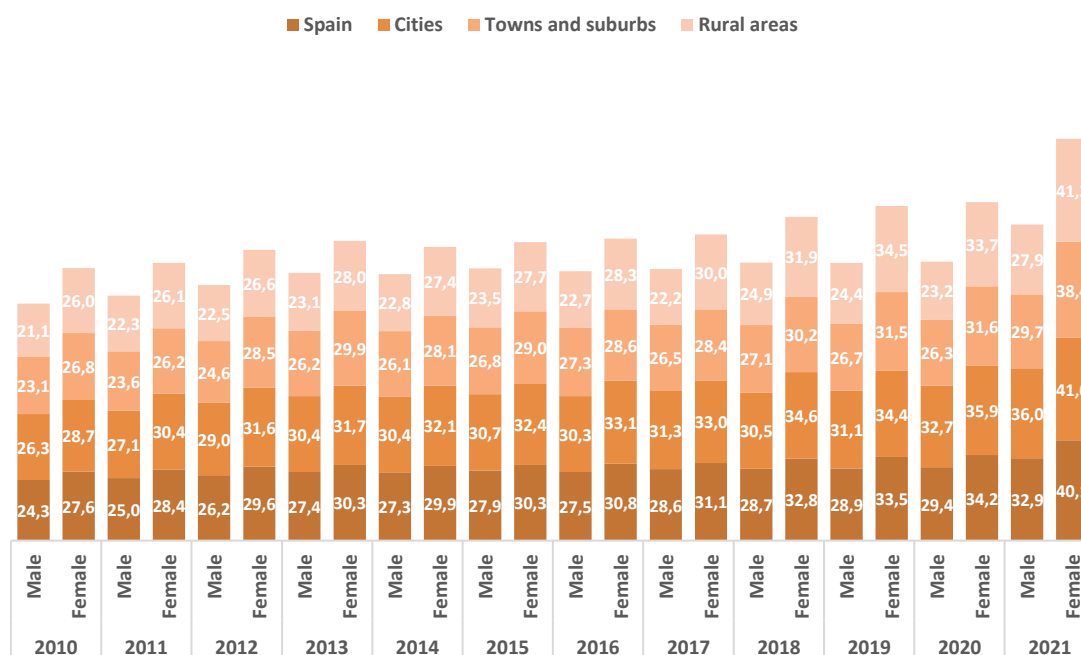
Source: Eurostat (edat_lfs_9913) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 8-Participation in education or training in previous 4 weeks (20-34 years), by degree of urbanisation, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (trng_lfs_14) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 9-Participation in education or training in previous 4 weeks (20-34 Years), by sex and degree of urbanisation, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (trng_lfs_14) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Early School Leavers from Education or training (ESLET)

Both Chart 10 and Table 3 indicate a moderate decline in the rate of early school leaving across Spain, from 2011-2021. We can see that early school leaving in towns and suburbs is above the Spanish average during this 10-year period, while that of rural areas is below this average.

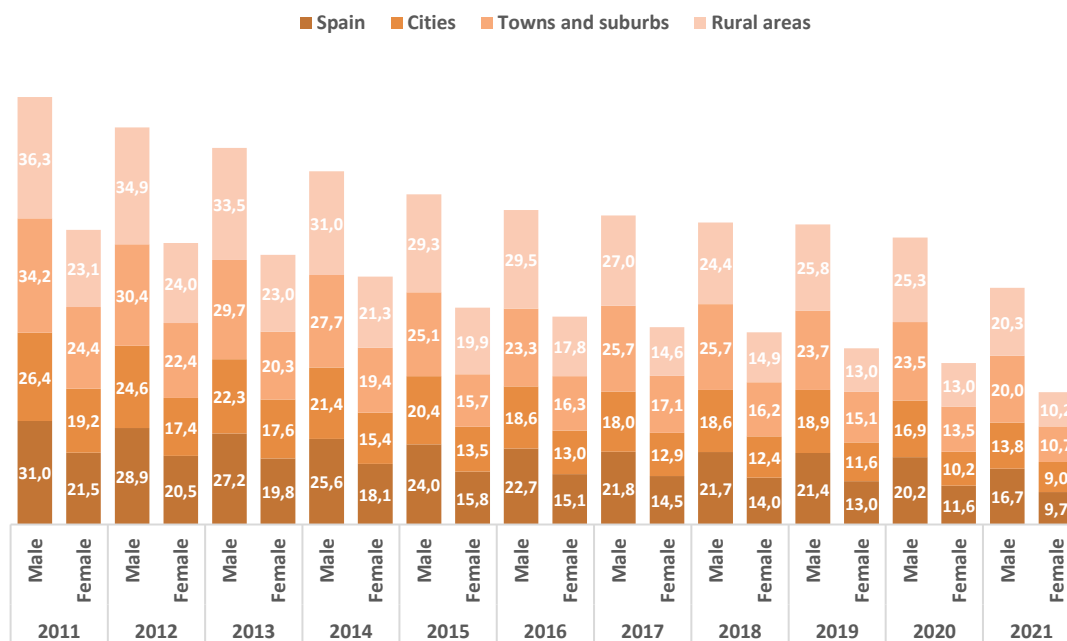
Chart 10 also shows a consistently higher rate of early school leaving for men than that of women. This would suggest that more women successfully completed formal education than men between these years. Further, in these 10 years, we see a 55.8% reduction in the rate of early school leaving among rural females, but only a 44.1% decrease in that of rural males, suggesting that this issue is not only more severe in men, but the improvements in ESLET in general have been slower for males, suggesting deeper underlying issues that warrant more exploration.

Table 3-Early school leavers from Education or training (ESLET) - 20-34 year olds - absolute and relative change (2011-2015, 2015-2021, 2011-2021).

	2011	2015	2021	Absolute change 2011/2021	Relative change 2011/2021	Absolute change 2011/2015	Relative change 2011/2015	Absolute change 2015/2021	Relative change 2015/2021
Spain	26.3%	20.0%	13.3%	-13.0%	-49.4%	-6.3%	-24.0%	-6.7%	-22.3%
Cities	22.8%	17.0%	11.5%	-11.3%	-49.6%	-5.8%	-25.4%	-5.5%	-32.4%
Towns and suburbs	29.4%	20.5%	15.4%	-14.0%	-47.6%	-8.9%	-30.2%	-5.1%	-24.9%
Rural areas	18.3%	15.2%	11.0%	-7.3%	-39.9%	-3.1%	-16.9%	-4.2%	-27.1%

Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_30) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 10-Early school leavers from Education or training (ESLET) - 20-34 years - by sex and degree of urbanisation, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_30) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

NEET

Over the last decade, Spain has been among the countries in the European Union with the highest rates of youth who are not in employment or educational training. Although the rates have improved between 2011 and 2021, they are still above average and factors such as the 2008 financial crisis and the 2020 pandemic have not remedied this situation. The decentralised nature of the governance in Spain has meant that the strategies to combat the NEET rate have varied, just as the demographic and population density varies between the autonomous communities, where some are predominantly rural and some are more urban. The diverse nature of the NEET status and their varying life circumstances mean that the issue is somewhat nuanced, and NGOs such as Fundación Exit have been created, whose mission is to assist youth in diverse situations to transition out of the NEET status. The following section will look more closely at some trends of the NEET rate within Spain over the last decade.

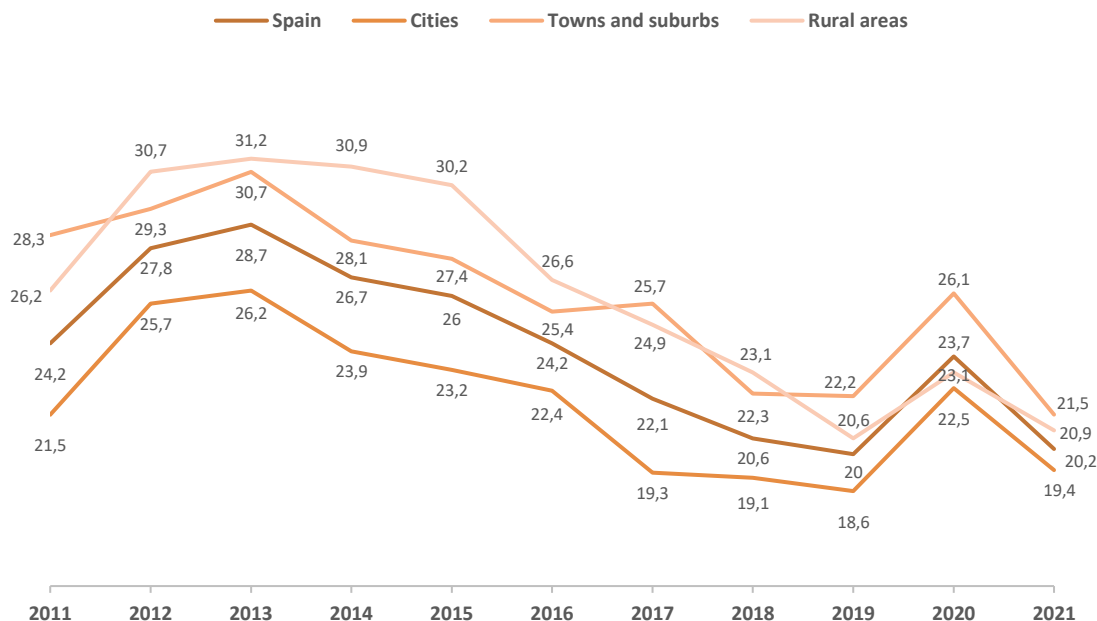
24

NEET rate

Chart 11 shows the NEET rate for youth between 25 and 29 by degree of urbanisation and reveals a similar trend between 2011-2021 to that of unemployment, reflecting the economic crisis and, in 2020, the CoVid-19 pandemic. Clearly, rural NEETs were most vulnerable when exposed to such economic cycles; the rural NEET rate increased at a faster rate than that of cities and towns, to hold the highest share until 2017. During the pandemic, the rural NEET rate became lower than that of cities, but rather than the situation having improved for rural NEETs, it appears that cities were instead more impacted by the pandemic than rural areas or towns and suburbs, and so the rate surpassed that of the other areas. Chart 12 shows that, during the period of economic recovery, it was males who benefitted the most; recovery from the 2008 economic crisis for females was much more subtle and much slower. Between 2013, when the Spanish economy began to recover from the crisis, and 2017, when the figures show economic stabilisation, the male rural NEET rate dropped from 29.6% to 19.6%, a 10% decrease, as compared to the reduction of NEET rate for rural females, 32.9 to 30.3, only a 2.6% decrease.

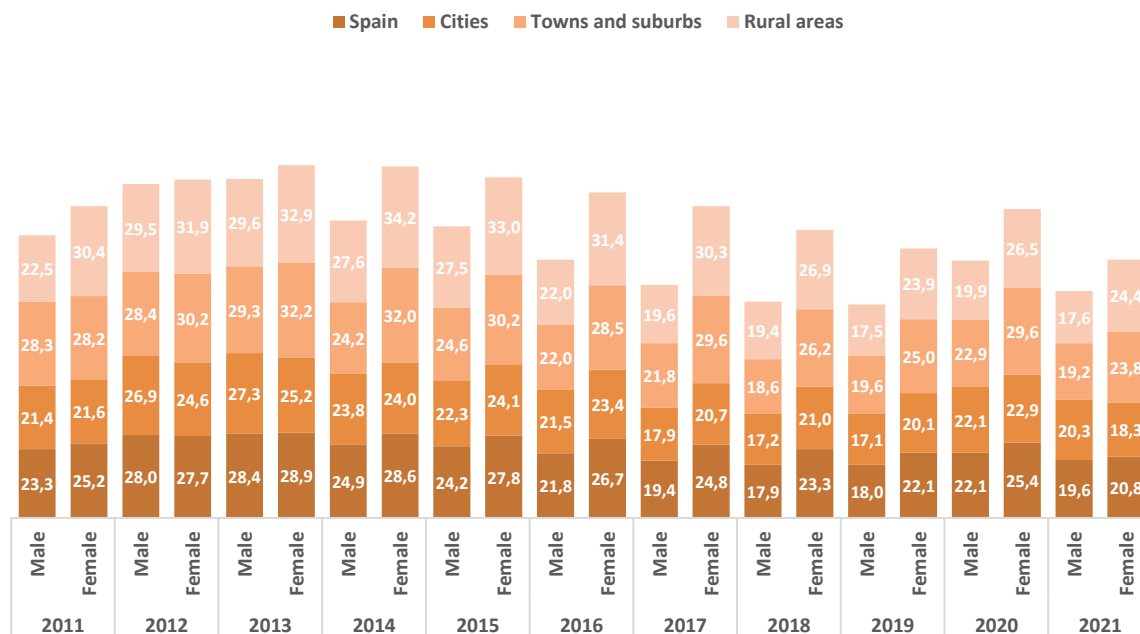
Chart 13 shows us the NEET rate by gender for rural youth, for 25-29 year-olds, against the overall rate for this same age group across all of Spain. The data shows that the rate for females is consistently higher than for males, and significantly higher than the average across Spain.

Chart 11-NEETs rate (25-29 Years), by degree of urbanisation, 2011-2021 (%)



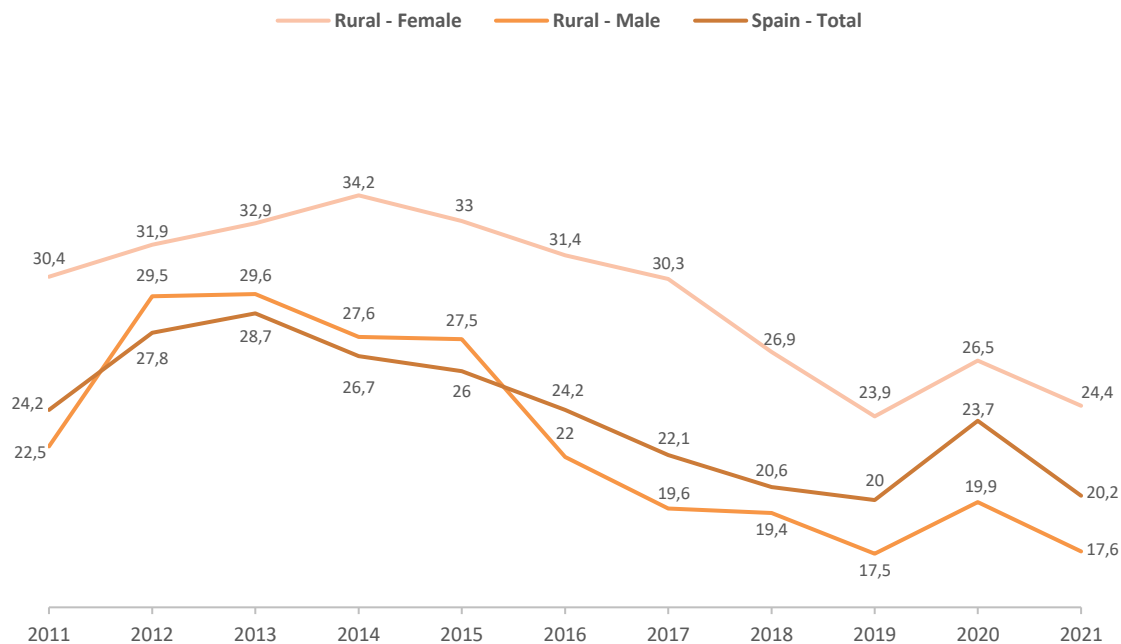
Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_29) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 12-Youth NEET rate (%) 2011-2021 (Spain) by sex and degree of urbanisation (25-29 Years)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_29) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Chart 13-NEETs rate in rural areas (25-29 Years), by sex, 2011-2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_29) – data extracted on 8.05.2022

Conclusions

To put into context of the data concerning rural NEET youth in Spain, it is important to understand that the autonomous communities of Spain tailor their own policies on aspects such as population family and employment to their own regions, and as such there is no centralised Spanish policy on the topic. When analysing the population trends in Spain, it is important to understand that depopulation trends in rural areas in Spain are not homogeneous. Some of the autonomous communities of Spain are statistical outliers, in that these trends are much more pronounced, such as Castilla La Mancha and Castilla Leon, and as a result the average Spanish depopulation trends in rural territories are brought lower and are not necessarily representative of the entire of rural Spain. However, on the other hand, it is worth mentioning that there are some specific towns and rural areas gaining some population. Despite the differences between policy and structure in the autonomous communities of Spain, we find a common policy framework in how the National Youth Guarantee is implemented across Spain, which is in principle a national initiative before being adapted to each territory.

In the last 10 years the population of cities has increased, while the overall population has decreased, showing that a significant amount of the Spanish population have migrated to cities from more rural areas. While the overall decline can largely be explained by the 2008 economic crisis, and by more subtle contributors such as the relatively low fertility rate, the increase in population in cities can be explained by the process of urbanisation that is occurring all over Europe.

The data has shown that a higher share of men are in employment as compared to women, and that a higher share of women are unemployed, but in contrast a higher share of women are in educational training than men, and a higher share of women have successfully completed education than men. This seems to be partially because more men tend to leave education early, as the data also suggests. There are more female NEETs than male NEETs, although the overall NEET rate has decreased in the last 10 years.

While it is too soon to see any clear trends in population related to the CoVid-19 pandemic, it is clear that this crisis generated further unemployment in all parts of Spain by degree of urbanisation, however, cities were the most impacted. Involvement in education also markedly increased during the pandemic, most significantly in rural areas and among women. This would, of course, contribute to a decrease in the NEET rate, which has been steadily declining over these 10 years.

It will be important to observe if this increase in educational participation, a result of the digitalisation of educational programs as stimulated by the pandemic, will lead to prolonged changes in policy and institutional approaches, and how this will affect rural youth and the wider NEET category. Mascherini pointed out in 2016 that the NEET classification, being heterogenous in nature, is better understood, and their needs better addressed, when broken down into different sub-categories. With the data from this report also in mind, it is clear that understanding these sub-categories, and how they relate to the gender gap in society, is significant in helping to address the needs of rural NEETs.

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Mascherini, M., Ledermaier, S. (2016). Exploring the diversity of NEETs. Publications Office of the European Union.

Important links

Youth Wiki national description: Youth policies in Spain, 2017.

<https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/sites/youthwiki/files/gdlspain.pdf>

National Youth Guarantee System

<https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil/documentacion-garantia-juvenil.html>

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<https://www.sepe.es/HomeSepe/Personas/encontrar-trabajo/Garantia-Juvenil/documentacion-garantia-juvenil.html>

National Institute of Youth of Spain

http://www.injuve.es/en/home_principal

Youth Council in Spain

<http://www.cje.org/en/>

Spanish rural development network

<http://redr.es/es>