



RURAL NEETS IN SPAIN



2009/2019
OVERVIEW



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines in detail the situation of rural Youths Neither in Employment, nor in Education or Training (NEET) aged between 15 and 34 years old, over the last decade (2009–2019) in Spain. To do this, the report utilised indicators of: youth population; youth employment and unemployment; education; and, NEETs distribution. The characterisation of all indicators adopted the degree of urbanisation as a central criterion, enabling proportional comparisons between rural areas, towns and suburbs, cities and the whole country. These analyses are further divided into age subgroups and, where possible, into sex groups for greater detail.

The statistical procedures adopted across the different selected dimensions involve: descriptive longitudinal analysis; using graphical displays (e.g., overlay line charts); and, the calculation of proportional absolute and relative changes between 2009 and 2013, 2013 and 2019, and finally 2009 and 2019. These time ranges were chosen to capture the indicators evolution before and after the economic crisis which hit European countries. All data was extracted from Eurostat public datasets.

In the last ten years (2009 – 2019) a significant portion of the Spanish youth population has migrated from rural areas to cities and towns. This migration trend could be explained by the economic crisis which impacted upon Spain from 2008 onwards. Data shown in this report makes visible the vulnerability of rural NEET youth to these downturns from 2009 to 2013. In line with this, Early-school leaving (ESLET) and unemployment rates in rural areas were more pronounced in 2013 and the following years for rural youth in comparison with youth living in urban areas and towns. However, in the last two years (2017–2019) there has been a sharp decrease in these indicators placing youth living rural areas, on average, in line with the rest (i.e., an average NEET youth rate in Spain 15% versus 16% for rural areas).

RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

Este informe describe la situación de los jóvenes ni ocupados ni en educación o formación (ninis) con edades comprendidas entre los 15 y los 34 años, durante la última década (2009–2019) en España. Para lograr este objetivo, el informe presenta indicadores de población joven, empleo y desempleo juvenil, educación y distribución de ninis. La caracterización de todos los indicadores adopta el grado de urbanización como criterio central, permitiendo comparaciones proporcionales entre áreas rurales, pueblos y suburbios, ciudades y todo el país. Estos análisis se desglosan aún más en subgrupos de edad y, cuando es posible, en grupos de sexo para mayor detalle.

Los procedimientos estadísticos adoptados en las diferentes dimensiones seleccionadas implican un análisis longitudinal descriptivo, utilizando presentaciones gráficas (por ejemplo, gráficos de líneas superpuestas), así como el cálculo de cambios proporcionales absolutos y relativos entre 2009 y 2013, 2013 y 2019 y 2009 y 2019. Estos rangos de tiempo fueron elegidos para capturar la evolución de los indicadores antes y después de la crisis económica que afectó a los países europeos. Todos los datos se extrajeron de los conjuntos de datos públicos de Eurostat.

En los últimos diez años (2009–2019) una parte importante de la población joven española ha emigrado de las zonas rurales a las ciudades y pueblos. Esta tendencia migratoria podría explicarse por la crisis económica que afectó a España a partir de 2008. Los datos que se muestran en este informe hacen visible la fragilidad de los jóvenes ninis rurales frente a estas recesiones de 2009 a 2013. En esta línea, las tasas de abandono escolar prematuro (ESLET) y desempleo en las zonas rurales fueron más pronunciadas en 2013 y los años siguientes para la juventud rural en comparación con los jóvenes que viven en ciudades y pueblos. Sin embargo, en los últimos dos años (2017–2019) hay una fuerte disminución en estos indicadores de los jóvenes que viven en áreas rurales en promedio con el resto (es decir, tasa promedio de jóvenes ninis en España del 15% frente al 16% de las áreas rurales).

SPAIN NATIONAL REPORT

At the national level, we can observe that NEETs in Spain make up around 19% of the general population, being very similar in both rural areas and in cities and suburbs, with just 1 percentage point of difference. This percentage can be explained by various factors, such as a percentage of the young unemployed population between 17% -18% and an ESLET rate between 15% -17%, being higher in rural areas than in cities.



1. GENERAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

Spain has one of the lowest fertility rate worldwide (1.26 births per woman in 2018) according to the World Bank, but also one of the highest life expectancy rates (83 years).¹ This demographic paradox helps us to understand recurrent debates in Spanish politics. Besides COVID19, or the debate about power and political independence of the regions vs the role of the central government, the sustainability of future pensions, migration, public health and the care of the elderly are also contemporary political questions within the Spanish context.

In the last years, there have been growing concerns regarding the sustainability of rural Spain or what has been called *la España vacía* (the hollowed-out Spain). To face this problem, the new government coalition PSOE and Unidas Podemos (in government since 2019) created a Ministry on the Ecological and Demographical Challenge. Such institutionalisation reflects the relevance of the challenge, but also the pressures from rural regions protesting for feeling forgotten and having staged significant demonstrations in Madrid some months before the Spanish elections. Among their claims is the necessity of providing a sustainable future in order to retain youth as well as promoting rural development.

Government. Spain has been a parliamentary monarchy since the Constitution of 1978. Some political scientists have labelled Spain as a half-way federal state because of its *Comunidades Autónomas* (its territorial distribution) wherein competences in legislating on Education, Health or Employment as well as other domains (Acosta, 2010) are distributed. Nevertheless, some political actors have highlighted that policy making is undergoing a process of re-centralisation, with the subsequent reduction of a range of rights and powers that had already been integrated into the ordinary functioning of the country. As a consequence of this historical and political discussion, Spain has been embroiled with the presence of separatist movements in different regions (particularly in Catalonia, the Basque country and Galicia). In the last 10 years, political tensions have been high with regards to who rules the government and who is/is not autonomous.

Strategic national legislation for youth. Legal adulthood in Spain is set at the age of 18 but the legal age for working is 16. The transition into adulthood in Spain is not much touched

1 https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?most_recent_value_desc=false



upon by the debates on education, employment and housing, in what has been called as “youth emancipation”. Emancipation in Spanish policy documents is understood as individuals having their own means and being able to live independently from the parental house. 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.²

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 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 COVID19 outbreak).

However, each Comunidad Autónoma have their own youth policy action plans and can legislate on youth issues. The aims of these plans are usually mostly aligned with those of the Spanish government and those 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).

Education. Compulsory education in Spain ranges from 6 to 16 years old and universal access for children from 3 to 5 (Infantil – 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. These hidden educational tracks, and the process of educational segregation which takes place after 13 years old, create social inequalities and unequal educational opportunities. During early secondary education, adolescents are selected and grouped into homogeneous classrooms with specially adapted curricula oriented towards university acceptance, vocational training or employability skills. Early school leavers feel isolated, devaluated, blamed and have a feeling of not belonging to the school system. These feelings increase the chances of early school leaving as shown in a Spanish case study (see Tarabini et al., 2018). One of the aims of the government is to have more youth in education after the compulsory education period and to promote greater access of youth to vocational training courses (formación profesional) in order to widen their employability in the future. With this strategy, the country is trying

2 https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=yth_demo_030&lang=en



to adjust the qualification system to the employment market. Within the EU, Spain is the country with the most overqualified graduates in a job (37.6% vs. the EU average of 23.4%).

Employment. The Spanish economy was severely affected by the 2008 crisis. However, the economic structure of Spain has 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 COVID19 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 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. 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 union 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.³

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



2. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The National Report of Spain uses information gathered by the National Reports Editorial Team of the Rural NEET Youth Network in 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_ur-gau]; [edat_lfs_9913]; [edat_lfse_30]; [edat_lfse_29]
- Selected indicators were extracted from the different databases according to two criteria:
- Time range: last decade (2009–2019) in order 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. The analysis mainly covered 3 dates – 2009–2013–2019 – in order to capture the impact of the economic and financial crisis that hit Europe and that, in most countries, reached its peak in 2012/2013.
- Age group: age group range varies accordingly to the data available in each indicator (15–24; 15–29; 15–34; and 15–39). Whenever possible, age range also covered young adult’s data (30–34 and 35–39) in order to capture the extent of crisis impact on these age groups.

In addition to a descriptive analysis, in order to compare main data changes and continuities in different time periods, absolute and relative change were calculated considering the three main time points that were selected – 2009, 2013 and 2019. 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 in an earlier period and is expressed in percentage terms.



3. DATA ANALYSIS

3. 1. Population and youth population

Urban-rural mobility within Spain has experienced different waves during the second half of the 20th century. One of the biggest ones was during the 1950's-70's period. Many families migrated from rural (mostly southern villages) to northern industrialised cities or to coastal cities where tourism from Northern Europe started to become popular. These migrants were 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.

It is necessary to mention that this trend of depopulation in rural areas is not homogeneous because Spanish population movements and data vary greatly between regions. For example, we need to differentiate between 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 of population and aging of their population has not been so remarkable.

From the 1980s onwards, Spain became a country of immigration, with the decade of 2000 being the most relevant. The presence of foreigners in Spain grew uninterruptedly until 2010. This migration flows helped to keep demographic data stable and not to accelerate depopulation in rural areas as expected. It even reversed depopulation in some specific areas (Collantes et al., 2014).

However, as the economic crisis hit Spain, as a consequence, immigration rates decreased; rural areas experienced difficulties attracting newcomers. The profile of the newcomers to rural areas in this period is characterised by urban youth or families who wanted to live closer to the nature or to native-born youth who wanted to come back home after living a period in the city or in the town.

The data in Chart 1 shows the decrease of youth population in towns and suburbs in comparison with rural areas. The youth population in Spanish cities remains stable if we compare the data between 2009 and 2019. Since 2009 to 2016 (during the economic crisis and partial recovery) the reduction of youth population hit especially hard in rural areas which lost



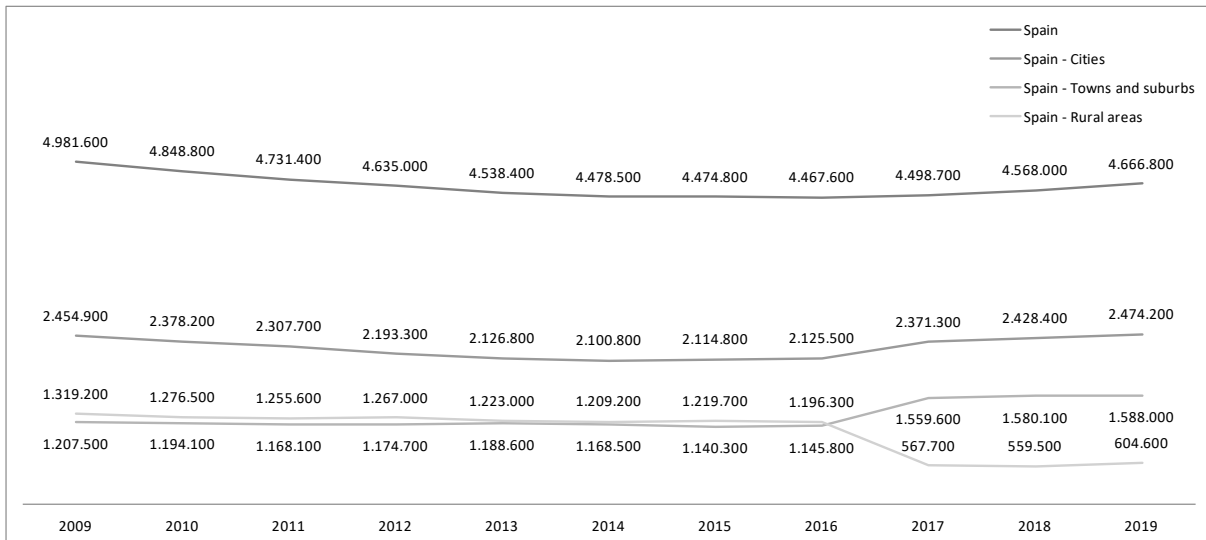
9.3% of their 15–24 years old population (see Chart 1 for absolute numbers). This reduction could be explained, among other hypotheses, by low fertility rates, the exodus of youth or families seeking new jobs in other locations as well as by the decline of internal and external immigration rates.

Besides the above-mentioned trend, we can also observe a big change in youth demographic data from 2017 onwards in rural areas as well as towns and suburbs. We think this change should be explained by the way data is gathered and categorised into towns, suburbs and rural areas from this year. Youth population decline is more accentuated among women than men. This reality is seen when comparing data between 2009 and 2016 by sex. It shows that the share loss of 15–24 year-old women living in rural areas is higher than in men (11.5% versus 7.2% respectively). This figure could be higher because more rural women study at university than men; however, they are still registered in their parental households during that period.

Thus, we can infer from this data that, in general, young women from rural areas have higher academic achievement, and consequently they leave home to study tertiary education and do not return home for permanent residence more so than men.



Chart 1. Total youth population (15–24 years) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_pgauwsc) – data extracted on 12.06.2020

Table 1. Relative and absolute changes youth population (15–24 years) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation for the years 2009, 2013 and 2019

	2009 vs 2013		2013 vs 2019	
	Absolute change	Relative change (%)	Absolute change	Relative change (%)
Spain	-443.200,0	-8,90%	128.400,0	2,83%
Spain - Cities	-328.100,0	-13,37%	347.400,0	16,33%
Spain - Towns and suburbs	-18.900,0	-1,57%	399.400,0	33,60%
Spain - Rural areas	-96.200,0	-7,29%	-618.400,0	-50,56%

Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_pgauwsc) – data extracted on 12.06.2020



3. 2. Employment and Unemployment

Spain has been one of the most affected countries in Europe by the 2008 economic crisis due to various factors (such as a great dependence of the economy on the building industry) that have made the economic recovery slower than in other countries. In fact, the Spanish unemployment rate in 2019 (14.7%) had not reached the same figure than before the crisis (8.23% in 2007) after having peaked at 24.79% in 2013. It is evident that the COVID19 economic downturn is negatively affecting the creation of employment or the odds of being employed during 2020. It remains unknown as to how long its effects will endure in employment figures affect rural youth.

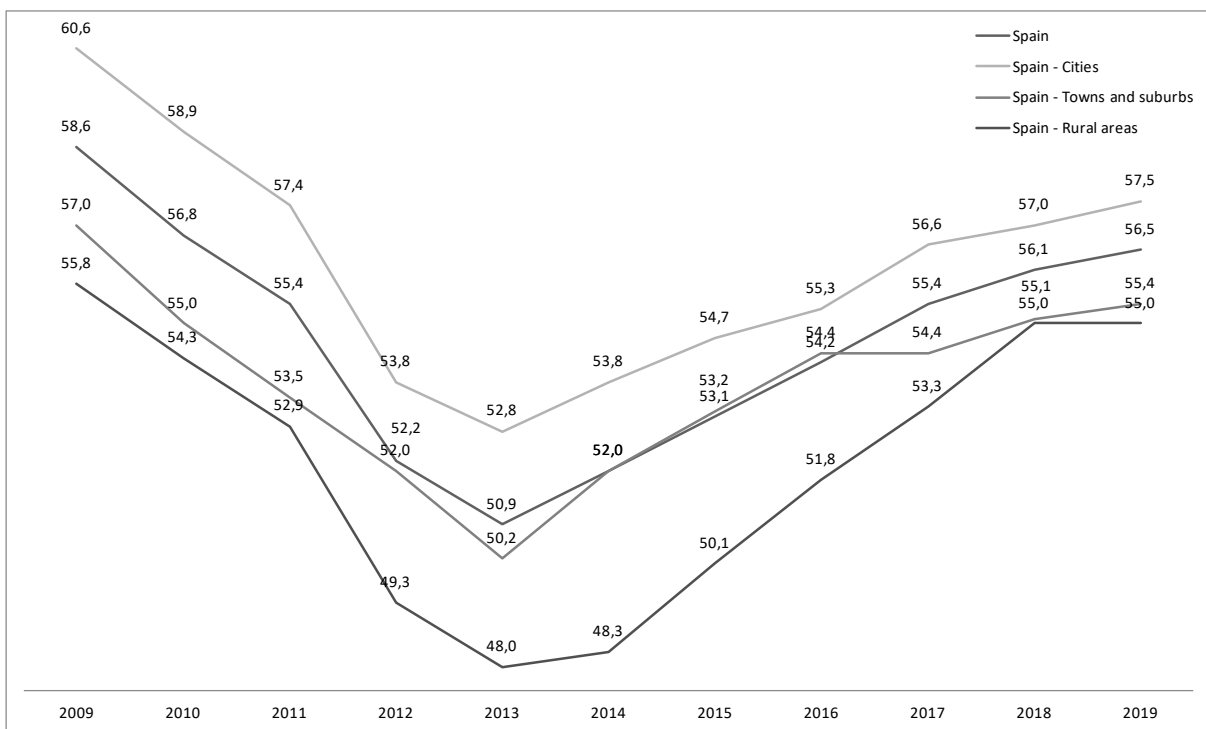
The following data shows how youth and women, and especially those living in rural areas, tend to be the most affected in pre-COVID19 times.



3. 2. 1. Youth employment

Chart 2 shows data concerning youth employment rates of 15–39 years–old and Table 2 shows absolute and relative change during the ten years period we examine in Spain. Data shows how youth were not participating in employment during 2019 at the same rate as in 2009. Economic recovery started for youth from 2013 onwards when figures registered the lowest rates of youth engaged in jobs in the formal economy. It is worth noting that youth living in rural areas were especially affected by the crisis, especially from 2011 until 2016. The following chart indicates this pattern as evidence of the greater vulnerability of youth living in rural areas in Spain in contrast to their peers who are also experiencing the same trends but which are not so pronounced.

Chart 2. Youth employment rate (%) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_ergau) – data extracted in 12.06.2020



In this regard, Table 2 shows youth living in rural areas experience the highest share of losses in their participation in employment from 2009–2013, but also the highest share of gains in the following six years.

Table 2. Youth employment absolute & relative change between 2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
Spain	58,60%	50,90%	56,50%	-2,10%	-3,58%	-7,70%	-13,14%	5,60%	11,00%
Spain Cities	60,60%	52,80%	57,50%	-3,10%	-5,12%	-7,80%	-12,87%	4,70%	8,90%
Spain Towns and suburbs	57,00%	50,20%	55,40%	-1,60%	-2,81%	-6,80%	-11,93%	5,20%	10,36%
Spain Rural areas	55,80%	48,00%	55,00%	-0,80%	-1,43%	-7,80%	-13,98%	7,00%	14,58%

Source: Eurostat (fst_r_ergau) – data extracted on 12.06.2020

1. Youth empl. rates 2009; 2. Youth empl. rates 2013; 3. Youth empl. rates 2019; 4. Absolute change 2009/2019; 5. Relative change 2009/2019; 6. Absolute change 2009/2013; 7. Relative change 2009/2013; 8. Absolute change 2013/2019; 9. Relative change 2013/2019.



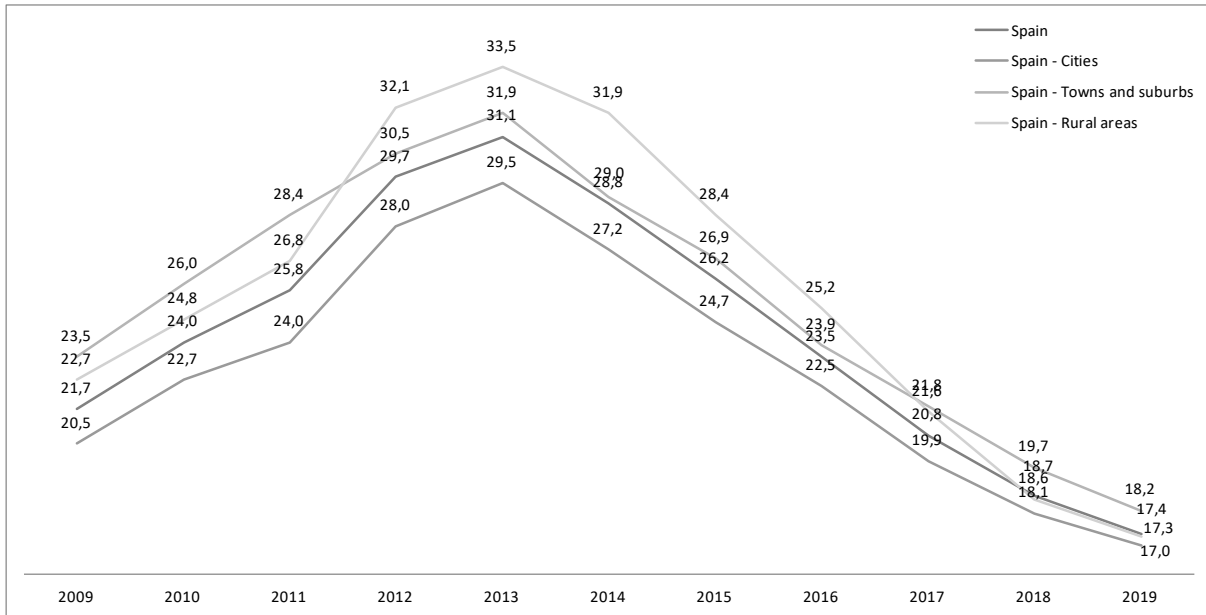
3. 2. 2. Youth unemployment

Data on youth unemployment demonstrates the same pattern the other way around as can be seen in Chart 3, but this time 2019 youth unemployment rates are situated below figures registered in 2009. In the case of youth living in rural areas, Table 3 shows how the reduction of the unemployment rate was 23.79% during these ten years. Nevertheless, we can observe the greater risk 15–39 year-old rural youths are exposed to given that they registered the highest unemployment rates, reaching 33.5% in 2013. In this regard, it is necessary to closely analyse data from 2016 to 2019 to identify the main drivers of this change vis-à-vis the sharp decline of the unemployment rate for rural youth from 25.20% to 17.30%. Those most affected by unemployment are the youngest ones. In their case, the unemployment rate of 15–24-year-olds rose to 55.5% in Spain with few differences when differentiating by the degree of urbanisation.

In addition to this pattern, it is also necessary to explore how the COVID19 crisis will affect rural youth differently than the others.



Chart 3. Youth unemployment rate (%) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgau) – data extracted in 12.06.2020

Table 3. Youth unemployment absolute & relative change between 2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
Spain	21,70%	31,10%	17,40%	-4,30%	-19,82%	9,40%	43,32%	-13,70%	-44,05%
Spain Cities	20,50%	29,50%	17,00%	-3,50%	-17,07%	9,00%	43,90%	-12,50%	-42,37%
Spain Towns and suburbs	23,50%	31,90%	18,20%	-5,30%	-22,55%	8,40%	35,74%	-13,70%	-42,95%
Spain Rural areas	22,70%	33,50%	17,30%	-5,40%	-23,79%	10,80%	47,58%	-16,20%	-48,36%

Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgau) – data extracted on 12.06.2020

1. Youth unempl. rates 2009; 2. Youth unempl. rates 2013; 3. Youth unempl. rates 2019; 4. Absolute change 2009/2019; 5. Relative change 2009/2019; 6. Absolute change 2009/2013; 7. Relative change 2009/2013; 8. Absolute change 2013/2019; 9. Relative change 2013/2019.



3.3. Education

Since 2001, when the first PISA results were published by the OECD, many countries felt pressured to make changes to their educational policies since international data showed comparatively how well their educational systems performed. The publication of these results (together with other figures), such as the early-school leavers rate (above 30% in 2009), placed Spain in one of the worst positions in educational rankings among European countries. This situation generated several debates on how the educational system should be reformed in order to have more youth engaged in education and improve educational outcomes. One of the major educational reforms 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. This reform had several consequences. On the one hand, 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 down the rate of early school leavers in Spain. However, on the other hand, it reinforced the reproduction of social inequalities in schooling as conditioned by social class and ethnic background.

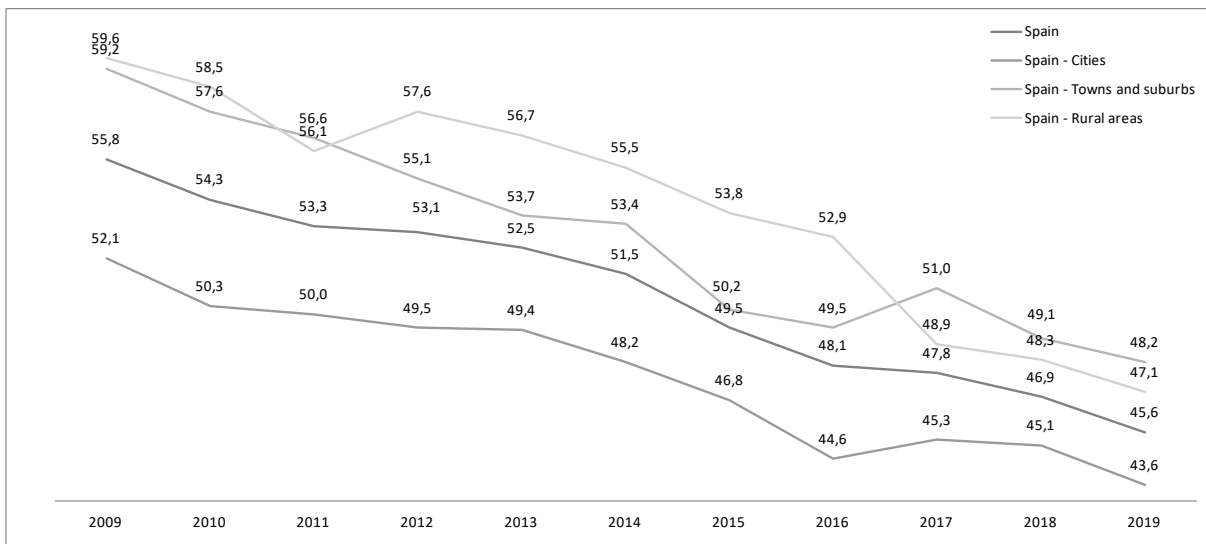
Another relevant determinant in educational attainment and early school leaving which should be mentioned is gender. In the last years, the presence of women in tertiary education has surpassed men. Moreover, males tend to be more present among early-school leavers than women. As we will see in this section, this trend is accentuated in the data, especially when we make the distinction between degrees of urbanisation.



3. 3. 1. Young people by educational attainment level

As shown in Chart 4, the number of 15–24 year-olds having less than primary education or lower secondary education declined especially after 2012. If we compare data among regions, rural areas are those benefiting the most of this reform by having more people with compulsory secondary education certificates (ESO for Spanish acronym) and exhibiting the sharpest decline between 2009 and 2019 (–20.97%). It should be noted that most of this decline took place from 2013 to 2019 (–16.93%) as is shown in Table 4.

Chart 4. Educational attainment rate (%) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat (edat_lfs_9913) – data extracted in 12.06.2020



Table 4. Educational attainment absolute & relative change between 2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
Spain	55,80%	52,50%	45,60%	-10,20%	-18,28%	-3,30%	-5,91%	-6,90%	-13,14%
Spain Cities	52,10%	49,40%	43,60%	-8,50%	-16,31%	-2,70%	-5,18%	-5,80%	-11,74%
Spain Towns and suburbs	59,20%	53,70%	48,20%	-11,00%	-18,58%	-5,50%	-9,29%	-5,50%	-10,24%
Spain Rural areas	59,60%	56,70%	47,10%	-12,50%	-20,97%	-2,90%	-4,87%	-9,60%	-16,93%

Source: Eurostat (edat_ifs_9913) – data extracted on 12.06.2020

1. Educ attain. rates 2009; 2. Educ attain. rates 2013; 3. Educ attain. rates 2019; 4. Absolute change 2009/2019; 5. Relative change 2009/2019; 6. Absolute change 2009/2013; 7. Relative change 2009/2013; 8. Absolute change 2013/2019; 9. Relative change 2013/2019.

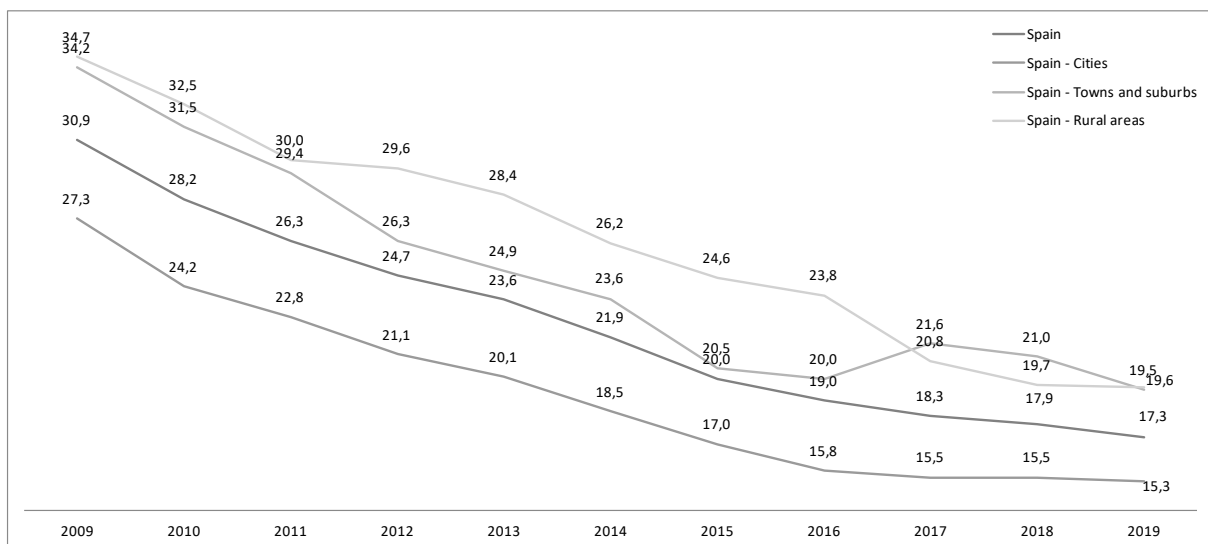


3.3.2. Early school leavers

A similar declining trend takes place with the rate of early school leavers. Chart 5 indicates a reduction of 30.99% in this share in rural areas from 2013 to 2019.

However, the rate of early school leavers in rural areas as well as in towns still remains above the Spanish average and well above that for cities (for example 19.6% in rural areas versus 15.3% in cities).

Chart 5. ESLET rate (%) 2009-2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_30) – data extracted in 12.06.2020



Table 5. ESLET absolute & relative change between 2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
Spain	30,90%	23,60%	17,30%	-13,60%	-44,01%	-7,30%	-23,62%	-6,30%	-26,69%
Spain Cities	27,30%	20,10%	15,30%	-12,00%	-43,96%	-7,20%	-26,37%	-4,80%	-23,88%
Spain Towns and suburbs	34,20%	24,90%	19,50%	-14,70%	-42,98%	-9,30%	-27,19%	-5,40%	-21,69%
Spain Rural areas	34,70%	28,40%	19,60%	-15,10%	-43,52%	-6,30%	-18,16%	-8,80%	-30,99%

Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_30) – data extracted on 12.06.2020

1. ESLET rates 2009; 2. ESLET rates 2013; 3. ESLET rates 2019; 4. Absolute change 2009/2019; 5. Relative change 2009/2019; 6. Absolute change 2009/2013; 7. Relative change 2009/2013; 8. Absolute change 2013/2019; 9. Relative change 2013/2019.

When we introduce the gender dimension in the data analysis we can conclude that the reduction of early-school leavers in rural areas has been more pronounced among females than in males. While this figure was reduced by half among females (from 26% in 2009 to 13% in 2019), it was not similarly reduced among males (from 42.9% in 2009 to 25.8% in 2019). Although this demonstrates a declining pattern, there remains 1 out of 4 male youths not finishing school in rural spaces as should be normally expected. In 2019, while data concerning early-school leavers with reference to rural females was comparable to the national average (16%), the same figure for males in this demographic continues to be well above (20.4%, or 4.4% higher).

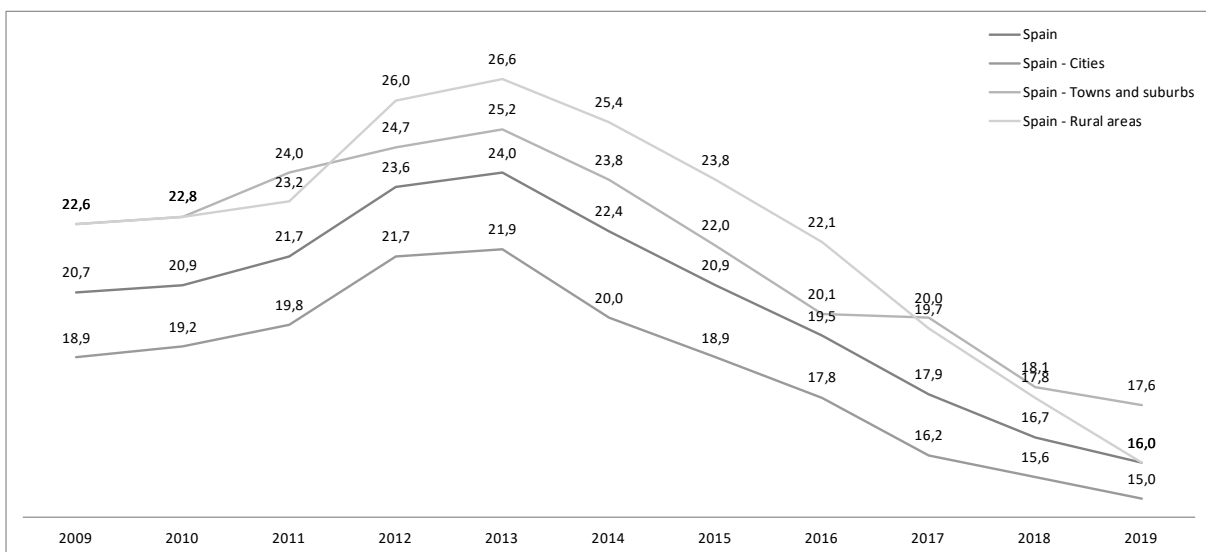


3. 4. NEET

3. 4. 1. NEET rate

Similar figures as those seen in the previous section in the 2013–2019 period are also seen for NEET rates. In this sense, this share declined steadily for rural areas among 15–34 year-old as is seen in Chart 6. While the NEET youth rate was 21.9% for cities in 2013, it was 26.6% for rural areas. This gap that initially was of almost five points was reduced only to 1 in 2019 (15% versus 16% respectively). Table 6 also reflects these changes. It can be seen how rural youth are the most vulnerable when exposed to economic cycles. During the economic crisis the rural NEET youth rate increased at a faster rate than in cities and towns (17.70% in 2013). However, its reduction during the economic recovery period was the highest at -39.85% from 2013 to 2019.

Chart 6. Youth NEET rate (%) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation



Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_29) – data extracted in 12.06.2020



Table 6. NEET absolute & relative change between 2009–2013, 2013–2019 and 2009–2019

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
Spain	20,70%	24,00%	16,00%	-4,70%	-22,71%	3,30%	15,94%	-8,00%	-33,33%
Spain Cities	18,90%	21,90%	15,00%	-3,90%	-20,63%	3,00%	15,87%	-6,90%	-31,51%
Spain Towns and suburbs	22,60%	25,20%	17,60%	-5,00%	-22,12%	2,60%	11,50%	-7,60%	-30,16%
Spain Rural areas	22,60%	26,60%	16,00%	-6,60%	-29,20%	4,00%	17,70%	-10,60%	-39,85%

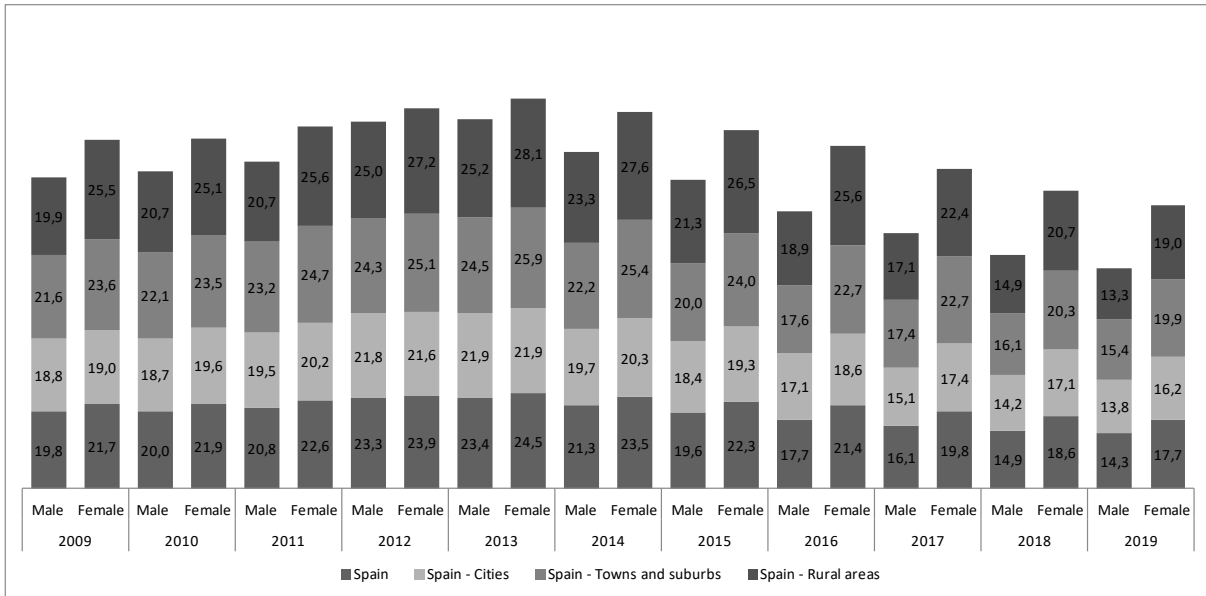
Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_29) – data extracted on 12.06.2020

1. NEET rates 2009; 2. NEET rates 2013; 3. NEET rates 2019; 4. Absolute change 2009/2019; 5. Relative change 2009/2019; 6. Absolute change 2009/2013; 7. Relative change 2009/2013; 8. Absolute change 2013/2019; 9. Relative change 2013/2019.

Although in education we can see higher rates of early-school leavers among males in Spain, those who represent higher NEET rates in 15–34 year-old are women. This is because gender inequality plays a big role. Despite the fact that women have more education, they have less chances of being employed than their male peers mostly because of maternity and/or the assumption of traditional gender roles. This situation is more pronounced in rural than in urban settings as can be seen in Chart 7. While in 2009, one out of four women in rural areas were NEET (25.5%), this rate was still high in 2019 in pre-COVID19 Spain (19%). Moreover, if we compare data from 2019 onwards, NEET youth in relation to rural women showed the lowest probabilities of being engaged in work or study in comparison with their male counterparts (0.70), if we compare this figure with that for towns and suburb areas (0.77), or cities (0.86).



Chart 7. Youth NEET rate (%) 2009–2019 (Spain) by degree of urbanisation and sex



Source: Eurostat (edat_lfse_29) – data extracted in 12.06.2020



4. CONCLUSIONS

In order to understand specific data concerning rural NEET youth in Spain, it is necessary to take into consideration the structure of autonomías (regions with some degree of autonomy) in order to develop specific policies on population, family, employment, unemployment etc. Hence, there is no centralised Spanish policy on the topic. At the same time, depopulation trends in rural areas in Spain are not homogeneous. There are some regions, such as Castilla-La Mancha and Castilla-Léon where these trends are more pronounced and where population density is lower compared to the rest of the territory and is having a direct impact on the average Spanish depopulation trends in rural territories. However, on the other hand, it is worth mentioning that there are some specific towns and rural areas gaining some population. It could be of interest to explore what are the driving factors that make these regions go against the grain in the COVID19 era and its aftermath. Despite these territorial and structural differences, we can find a common policy framework if we take into consideration how Spain implements its National Youth Guarantee System (European-funded program), and how this is specifically adapted to each territory or Comunidad Autónoma.

In the last ten years (2009 – 2019) a significant amount of Spanish youth population has migrated from rural areas to cities and towns. This migration trend could be explained by the economic crisis that hit Spain from 2008 onwards. Data shown in this report makes visible the fragility of rural NEET youth to these downturns from 2009 to 2013. In this regard, early-school leaving (ESLET) and unemployment rates in rural areas were more pronounced in 2013 and the following years for rural youth compared to youth living in urban settings and towns. However, in the last two years (2017–2019) there has been a sharp decrease in these indicators placing youth living rural areas, on average, at a similar level with the others (i.e., the average NEET youth rate in Spain (15%) versus 16% for rural areas). The two principal factors that have influenced this decreasing trend in the past years are economic recovery and outgoing migration of youth to other areas. However, we do not know what the effects of the COVID19 crisis are on rural NEET youth as yet. One hypothesis we can infer if we draw on the data from this report is that in the upcoming years it is expected that we will see higher levels of early-school leaving and unemployment among rural youth because they tend to be more fragile in relation to economic and social changes. Data confirming or refuting this hypothesis will become available in the upcoming months and years.



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6. 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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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>