

Younger and older workers

In this section we refer to young workers as those under 25, and have separated those under and over 20 years old where possible.

We have defined older workers as those over 65, for the purpose of this analysis. Internationally, 55 years and over and sometimes 45 years and over constitute “older workers”.

Unemployment rates for young people, especially for those under 20 years old, are currently very high. These unemployment rates refer to those people who do not have a job, and are actively seeking work. Pacific youth, Māori and people from other ethnic minorities are much more likely to be unemployed than young Europeans. Tables 11 and 12 demonstrate the double disadvantage of age and ethnicity.

Participation rates reflect engagement in the labour force and many young people are participating in education, training or caregiving and so it is expected that the younger group (under 20 years) will have lower participation rates. The rate of young people who are disengaged from the labour market, that is, not in employment, education, training or caregiving (NEET) is of concern, and again is higher among Māori and Pacific youth. Young men have a slightly higher NEET rate than young women.

Workers over 65 years have a much lower participation rate than younger cohorts but the rate in New Zealand is high compared to other OECD countries and is increasing. Interestingly, Māori have the highest proportion of over 65 years in the workforce by ethnicity. Participation rates of younger “older” workers (i.e. 45-55 years) are very high and unemployment low.

Employment statistics

Table 11 / Participation rate by age and ethnicity

ETHNICITY	15-19	20-24	65 AND OVER	TOTAL 15 AND OVER
European	54.6%	80.7%	18.1%	69.8%
Māori	45.4%	69.7%	20.2%	66.4%
Pacific peoples	33.8%	68.8%	13.1%	61.6%
Asian/MELAA/Other	34.5%	66.0%	15.3%	66.9%
Total	48.5%	75.9%	17.8%	68.5%

Table 12 / Unemployment rate by age and ethnicity

ETHNICITY	15-19	20-24	65 AND OVER	TOTAL 15 AND OVER
European	20.4%	9.3%	2.2%	5.1%
Māori	38.2%	18.8%	..S	13.4%
Pacific peoples	40.9%	17.2%	..S	13.6%
Asian/MELAA/Other	33.5%	12.2%	..S	8.5%
Total	25.5%	11.2%	2.2%	6.6%

Table 13 / Gender participation rate by age

GENDER	15-19	20-24	65 AND OVER	TOTAL 15 AND OVER
Male	48.6%	80.2%	23.5%	74.9%
Female	48.4%	71.3%	12.9%	62.5%
Total	48.5%	75.9%	17.8%	68.5%

Table 14 / Gender unemployment rate by age

GENDER	15-19	20-24	65 AND OVER	TOTAL 15 AND OVER
Male	24.8%	11.6%	2.5%	6.4%
Female	26.3%	10.8%	..S	6.8%
Total	25.5%	11.2%	2.2%	6.6%

Older workers are sometimes categorised as those over 45. Table 15 shows participation rates start to reduce in the late fifties and early sixties but reduce sharply at 65 years.

Table 15 / Participation and unemployment of older workers

OLDER WORKERS	PARTICIPATION	UNEMPLOYMENT
45-49	87%	4.0%
50-54	86.3%	3.8%
55-59	81.4%	3.7%
60-64	70%	3.3%
65	17.8%	2.2%

