



Preventing NEETs During the Great Recession – The Effects of a Mandatory Activation Program for Young Welfare Recipients

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Brief overview

- We study the Work Investment Act for Young Individuals
- Reform of welfare benefits and ALMPs in the Netherlands
- Aimed at curbing the number of NEETs
- Empirical methodology:
 - Difference-in-differences
 - Regression discontinuity
 - Difference-in-discontinuity
- We use a large and rich data set
 - Treatment group 25–26
 - Control group: 27–28
- Main findings:
 - Decrease NEETs rate on welfare (-24%)
 - No effect on total NEETs rate, employment rate and enrollment rate in education



Relevance

- President Junker of the European Commission (2016): "continue to roll out the Youth Guarantee across Europe, improving the skillset of Europeans and reaching out to the regions and young people most in need"



Contributions

- Stricter conditionality combined with welfare-to work programs does not always increase employment or enrollment in education
- We consider all potential outcome states: enrollment in education is important when we look at employment rate
- Exceptionally large and long dataset allows to study differential trends



Empirical Literature

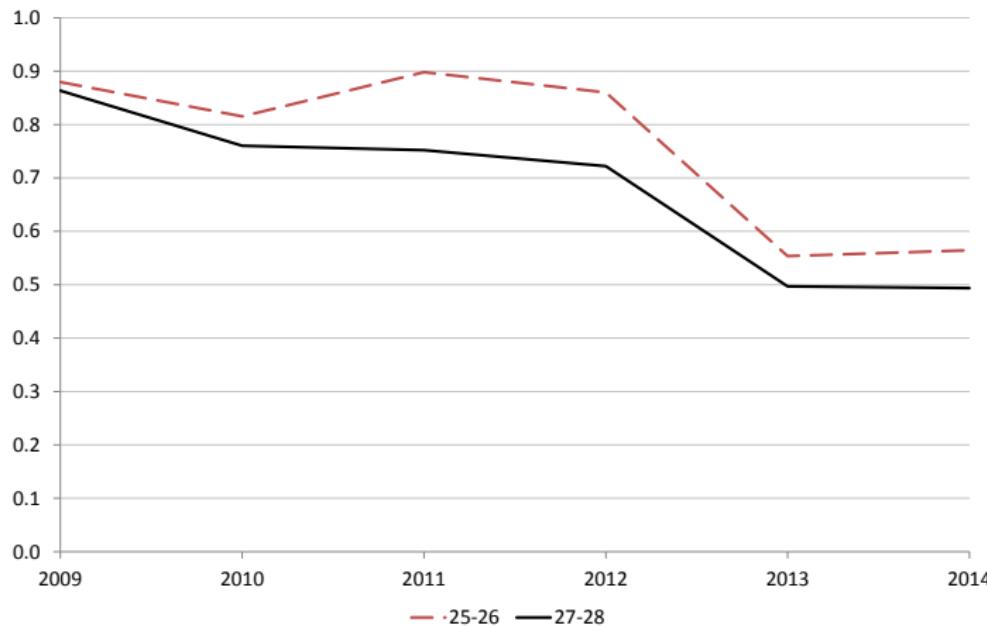
- Blundell, Dias, Meghir and Reenen (2004): New Deal for Young People in the U.K. increased transition to employment by about 5 percentage points
- Persson and Vikman (2010): entry rates in welfare are reduced by 0.6 percentage point
- Hernæs, Markussen, and Roed (2016) conditionality of welfare benefits reduces welfare claims and increases high school completion rates



Reform

- Individuals from 18–26 years old
- Mandatory activation program
 - ‘Work-learn’ arrangement (ALMP)
 - Stricter conditionality of benefits
- October 2009: for new applicants
- July 2010: for individuals already on welfare
- Implementation by municipalities

Participation in ALMPs



Source: Own calculations using data from Statistics Netherlands.



DD: Empirical specification

$$y_{iat} = \alpha_t + \beta_a + \gamma_a t + \phi_a u_t + X_i' \mu_x + X_i' \psi_x t + \delta_{a,t} DD_{at} + \epsilon_{iat}. \quad (1)$$

- y_{iat} = outcome variable (e.g. NEETs rate on welfare)
- α_t = year fixed effects
- β_a = age fixed effects
- t = age specific trends
- u_t = interaction between age and unemployment rate
- X_i' = demographic controls
- $X_i' t$ = demographic-control specific trends
- DD_{at} = treatment dummy
- ϵ_{iat} = error term (clustered at year of birth interacted with province)

RD: Empirical specification

$$y_{iat} = \beta_t + \beta_a a_{it} + \beta_{a^2} (a_{it})^2 + \beta_{a < a'} 1(a_{it} < a') a_{it} + X'_{it} \mu + \beta_{RD} RD_{it} + \epsilon_{it}. \quad (2)$$

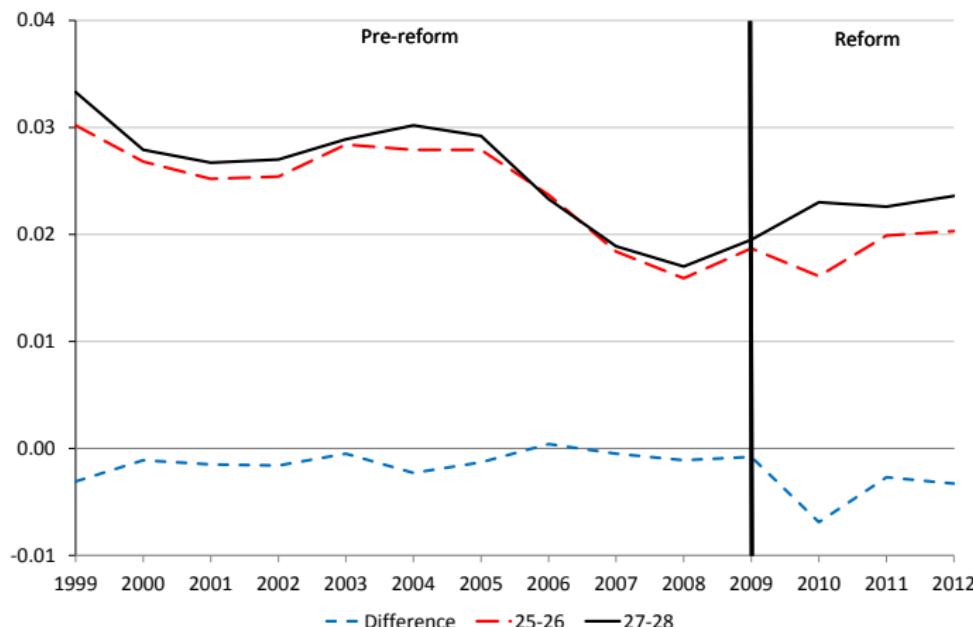
- y_{iat} = outcome variable (e.g. NEETs rate on welfare)
- β_t = year fixed effects
- a_{it} = age in months
- $(a_{it})^2$ = age in months squared
- $1(a_{it} < a') a_{it}$ = age in months when the person is younger than the cutoff a'
- X'_{it} = demographic controls
- RD_{it} = treatment effect if the age of the person is below 27
- ϵ_{iat} = error term (clustered at month of birth)



Data

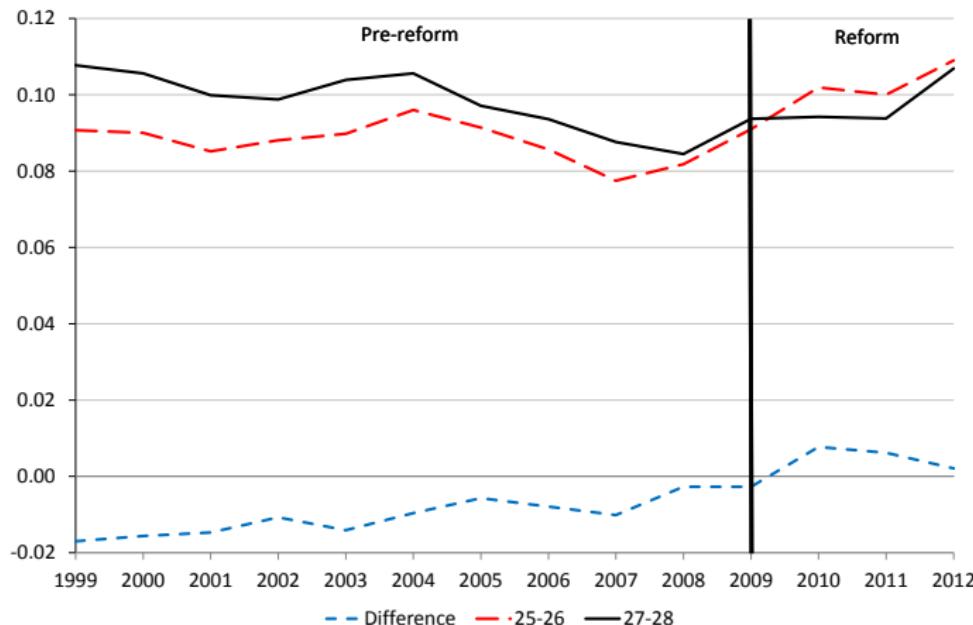
- Labour Market Panel ("Arbeidsmarktpool") of Statistics Netherlands (2015)
- Pre-reform years: 1999–2009
- Post-reform years: 2010–2012
- Treatment group: 25–26 years old
- Control group: 27–28 years old
- Outcome variables:
 - NEETs rate on welfare
 - NEETs rate not on welfare
 - Total NEETs rate
 - Employment rate
 - Enrollment rate in education

NEETs rate on welfare



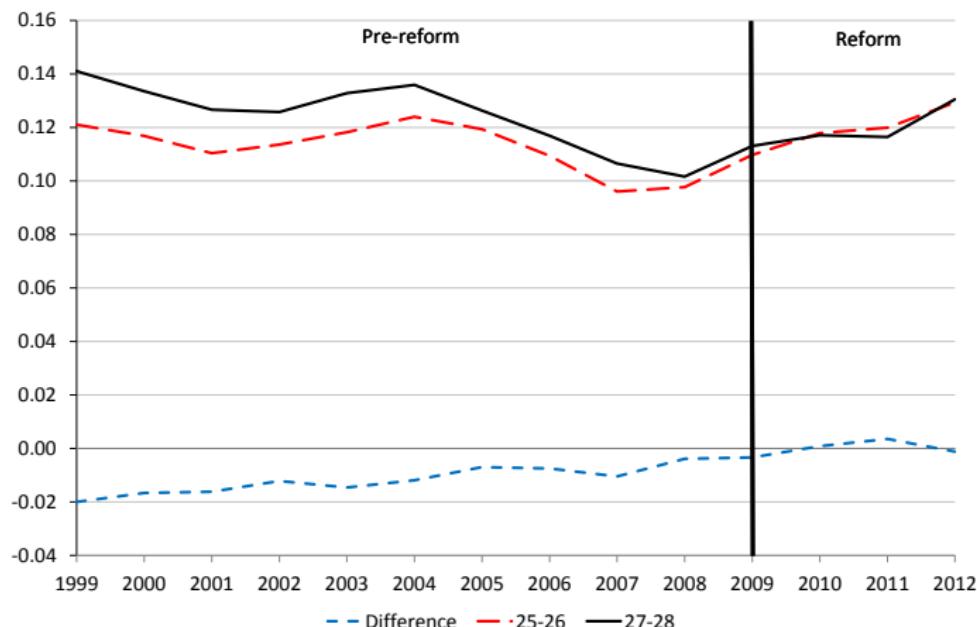
Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

NEETs rate not on welfare



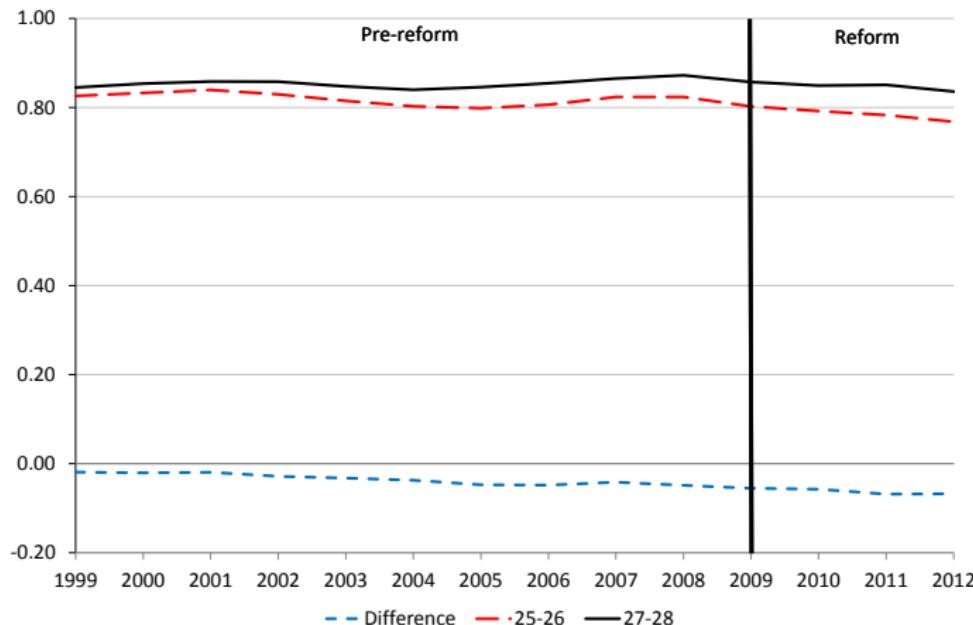
Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

Total NEETs rate



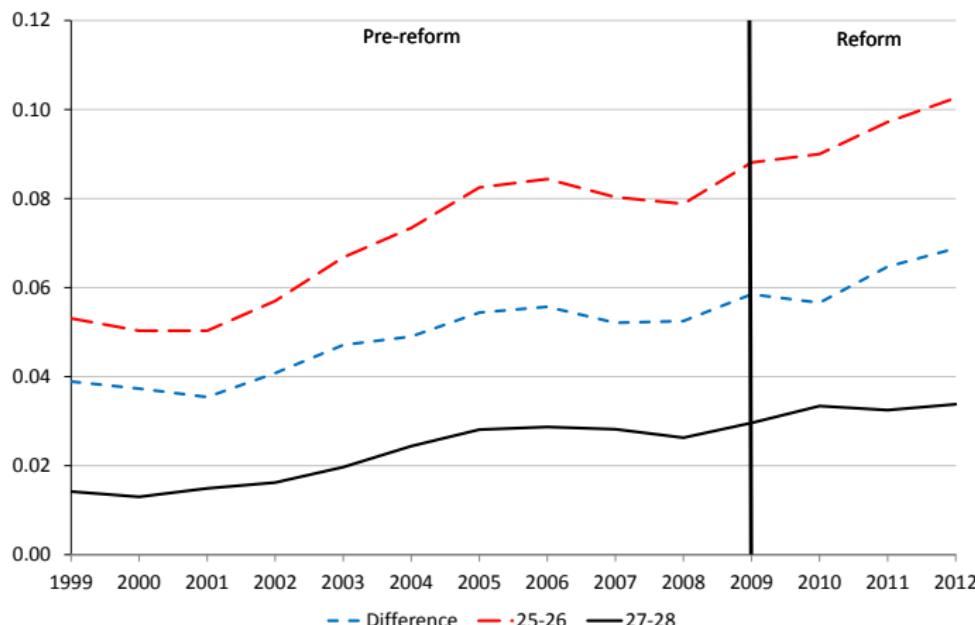
Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

Employment rate



Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

Enrollment rate in education



Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

DD: base results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0030 ** (0.0015)	-0.0028 * (0.0015)	-0.0032 * (0.0017)	-0.0043 * (0.0023)	-0.0045 ** (0.0021)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0156 *** (0.0023)	0.0158 *** (0.0025)	0.0135 *** (0.0027)	0.0058 (0.0036)	0.0059 * (0.0034)
Total NEETs rate	0.0126 *** (0.0031)	0.0130 *** (0.0035)	0.0103 *** (0.0038)	0.0016 (0.0052)	0.0014 (0.0048)
Employment rate	-0.0288 *** (0.0055)	-0.0295 *** (0.0048)	-0.0210 *** (0.0052)	-0.0023 (0.0067)	-0.0023 (0.0066)
Enrollment rate in education	0.0162 *** (0.0041)	0.0164 *** (0.0039)	0.0106 ** (0.0042)	0.0007 (0.0052)	0.0009 (0.0051)
Demographic controls	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Unemployment-age dummies	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Age-specific trends	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
Control-specific trends	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
Observations	767,710	767,710	767,710	767,710	767,710
Clusters	216	216	216	216	216

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by year of birth*province (18*12=216 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

DD: base results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
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Age-specific trends	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
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Demographic controls	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Unemployment-age dummies	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Age-specific trends	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
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Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by year of birth*province (18*12=216 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

DD: base results

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0030** (0.0015)	-0.0028* (0.0015)	-0.0032* (0.0017)	-0.0043* (0.0023)	-0.0045** (0.0021)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0156*** (0.0023)	0.0158*** (0.0025)	0.0135*** (0.0027)	0.0058 (0.0036)	0.0059* (0.0034)
Total NEETs rate	0.0126*** (0.0031)	0.0130*** (0.0035)	0.0103*** (0.0038)	0.0016 (0.0052)	0.0014 (0.0048)
Employment rate	-0.0288*** (0.0055)	-0.0295*** (0.0048)	-0.0210*** (0.0052)	-0.0023 (0.0067)	-0.0023 (0.0066)
Enrollment rate in education	0.0162*** (0.0041)	0.0164*** (0.0039)	0.0106** (0.0042)	0.0007 (0.0052)	0.0009 (0.0051)
Demographic controls	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES
Unemployment-age dummies	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Age-specific trends	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
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Observations	767,710	767,710	767,710	767,710	767,710
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Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by year of birth*province (18*12=216 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

DD: base results

	(1) NEETs rate on welfare	(2) NEETs rate not on welfare	(3) Total NEETs rate	(4) Employment rate	(5) Enrollment rate in education
Treatment 2008 (placebo)	-0.0023 (0.0028)	0.0046 (0.0058)	0.0022 (0.0073)	-0.0025 (0.0091)	0.0003 (0.0061)
Treatment 2009 (placebo)	-0.0023 (0.0034)	0.0025 (0.0065)	0.0002 (0.0085)	-0.0019 (0.0105)	0.0017 (0.0076)
Treatment 2010	-0.0086*** (0.0030)	0.0111* (0.0060)	0.0025 (0.0078)	-0.0006 (0.0102)	-0.0019 (0.0073)
Treatment 2011	-0.0044 (0.0032)	0.0094 (0.0062)	0.0051 (0.0081)	-0.0090 (0.0111)	0.0039 (0.0082)
Treatment 2012	-0.0050 (0.0032)	0.0037 (0.0059)	-0.0013 (0.0077)	-0.0026 (0.0104)	0.0040 (0.0077)
Observations	767,710	767,710	767,710	767,710	767,710
Clusters	216	216	216	216	216

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by year of birth-province (18*12=216 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level. All specifications include demographic controls, unemployment-age dummies, age-specific trends and control-specific trends.

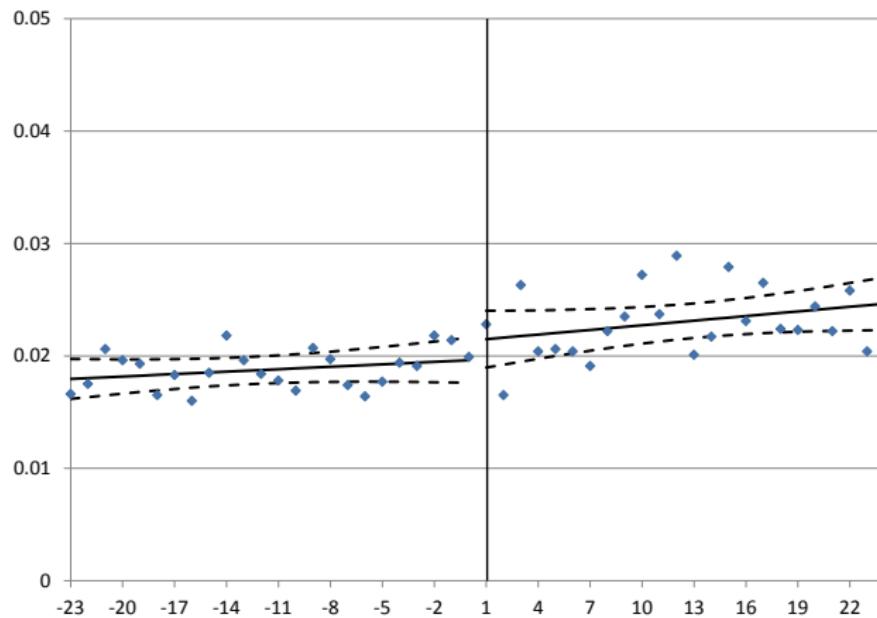


DD: Robustness checks

- Placebo's
 - 2002–2004 (business cycle differences)
 - TG1: 25–26, TG2: 27–28 and CG: 29–30

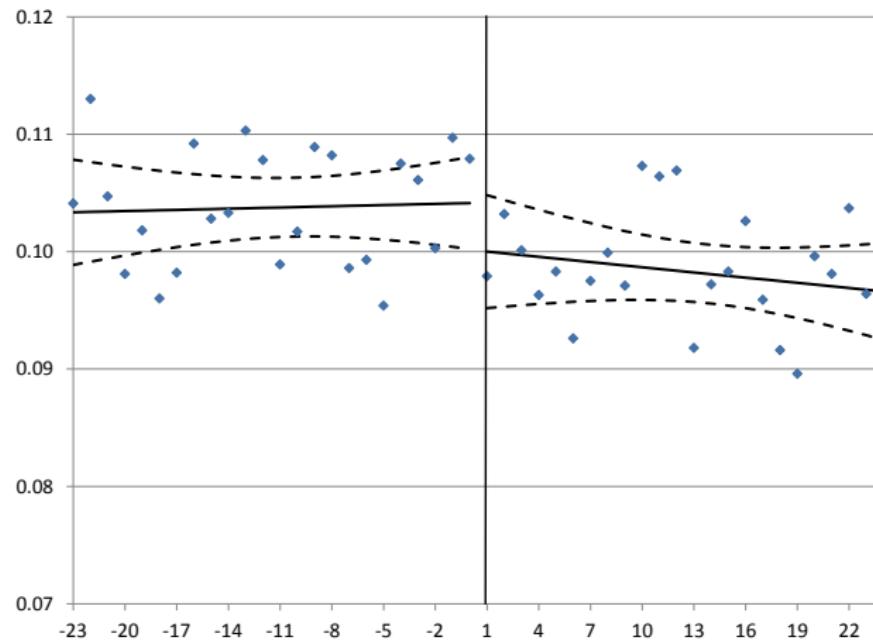
- Different treatment groups
 - TG: 20–26 and CG: 27–29
 - TG: 26 and CG: 27

NEETs rate on welfare



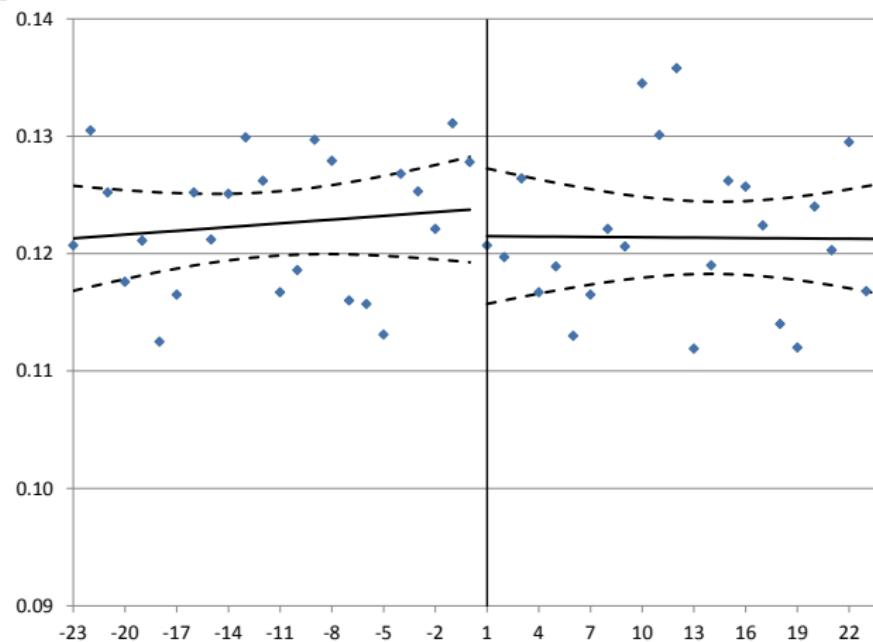
Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

NEETs rate not on welfare



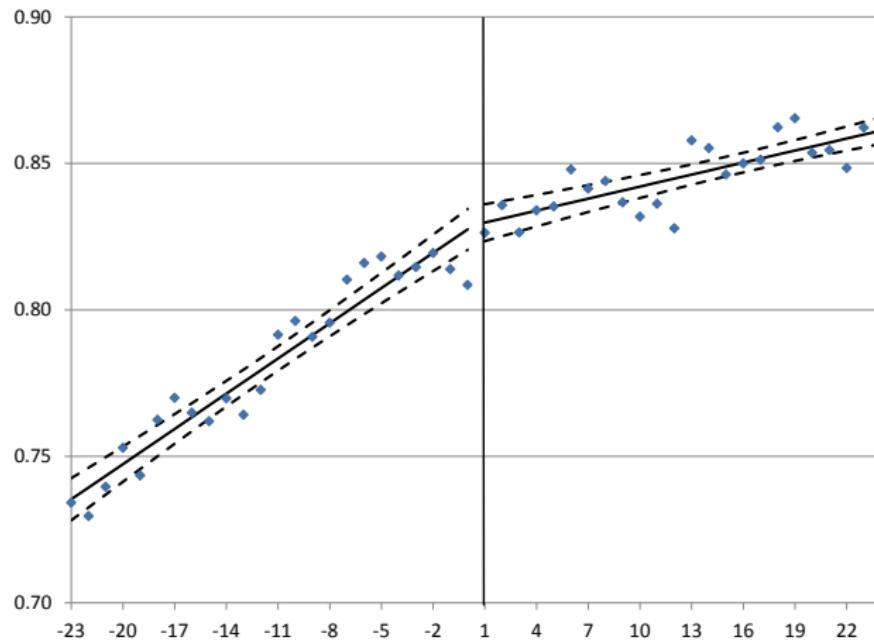
Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

Total NEETs rate



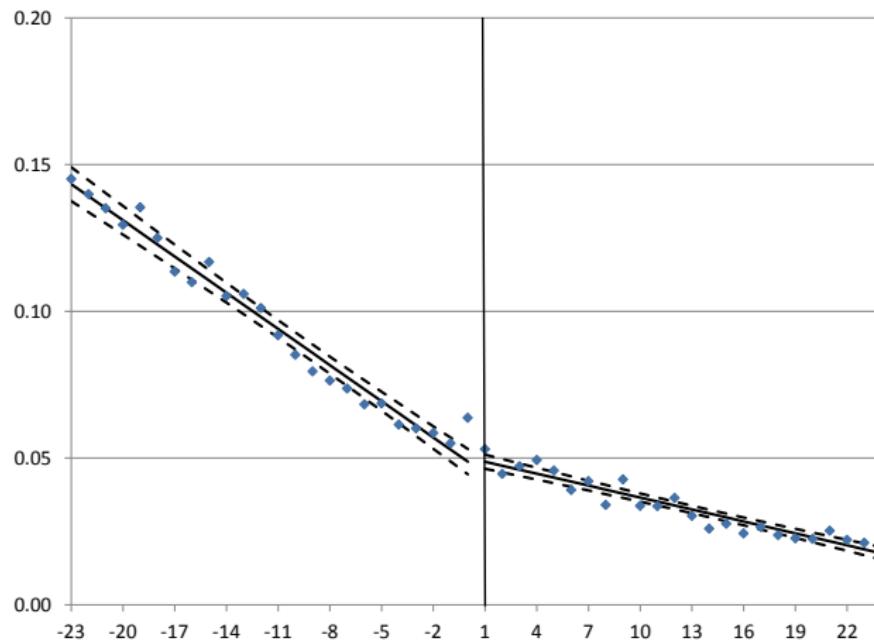
Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

Employment rate



Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

Enrollment rate in education



Source: Own calculations using the Labour Market Panel (Statistics Netherlands).

RD: base results (2010-2012)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0017 (0.0014)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0040 (0.0029)	0.0045** (0.0022)	0.0044** (0.0022)	0.0044** (0.0022)
Total NEETs rate	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0031 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)
Employment rate	0.0005 (0.0047)	0.0002 (0.0038)	-0.0009 (0.0041)	-0.0008 (0.0038)	-0.0011 (0.0027)	-0.0022 (0.0030)
Enrollment rate in education	-0.0028 (0.0035)	-0.0025 (0.0022)	-0.0013 (0.0024)	-0.0023 (0.0035)	-0.0019 (0.0021)	-0.0008 (0.0024)
Age in months squared	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
(Age in months) x 1(age<27)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Demographic controls	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Observations	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195
Clusters	72	72	72	72	72	72

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (72 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

RD: base results (2010-2012)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0017 (0.0014)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0040 (0.0029)	0.0045** (0.0022)	0.0044** (0.0022)	0.0044** (0.0022)
Total NEETs rate	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0031 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)
Employment rate	0.0005 (0.0047)	0.0002 (0.0038)	-0.0009 (0.0041)	-0.0008 (0.0038)	-0.0011 (0.0027)	-0.0022 (0.0030)
Enrollment rate in education	-0.0028 (0.0035)	-0.0025 (0.0022)	-0.0013 (0.0024)	-0.0023 (0.0035)	-0.0019 (0.0021)	-0.0008 (0.0024)
Age in months squared	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
(Age in months) x 1(age<27)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Demographic controls	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Observations	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195
Clusters	72	72	72	72	72	72

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (72 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

RD: base results (2010-2012)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0017 (0.0014)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0040 (0.0029)	0.0045 ** (0.0022)	0.0044 ** (0.0022)	0.0044 ** (0.0022)
Total NEETs rate	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0031 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)
Employment rate	0.0005 (0.0047)	0.0002 (0.0038)	-0.0009 (0.0041)	-0.0008 (0.0038)	-0.0011 (0.0027)	-0.0022 (0.0030)
Enrollment rate in education	-0.0028 (0.0035)	-0.0025 (0.0022)	-0.0013 (0.0024)	-0.0023 (0.0035)	-0.0019 (0.0021)	-0.0008 (0.0024)
Age in months squared	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
(Age in months) x 1(age<27)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Demographic controls	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Observations	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195
Clusters	72	72	72	72	72	72

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (72 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

RD: base results (2010-2012)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0017 (0.0014)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0040 (0.0029)	0.0045 ** (0.0022)	0.0044 ** (0.0022)	0.0044 ** (0.0022)
Total NEETs rate	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0031 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)
Employment rate	0.0005 (0.0047)	0.0002 (0.0038)	-0.0009 (0.0041)	-0.0008 (0.0038)	-0.0011 (0.0027)	-0.0022 (0.0030)
Enrollment rate in education	-0.0028 (0.0035)	-0.0025 (0.0022)	-0.0013 (0.0024)	-0.0023 (0.0035)	-0.0019 (0.0021)	-0.0008 (0.0024)
Age in months squared	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
(Age in months) x 1(age<27)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Demographic controls	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Observations	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195
Clusters	72	72	72	72	72	72

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (72 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

RD: base results (2010-2012)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NEETs rate on welfare	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0018 (0.0014)	-0.0017 (0.0014)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)	-0.0014 (0.0013)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0041 (0.0029)	0.0040 (0.0029)	0.0045** (0.0022)	0.0044** (0.0022)	0.0044** (0.0022)
Total NEETs rate	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0023 (0.0032)	0.0031 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)	0.0030 (0.0023)
Employment rate	0.0005 (0.0047)	0.0002 (0.0038)	-0.0009 (0.0041)	-0.0008 (0.0038)	-0.0011 (0.0027)	-0.0022 (0.0030)
Enrollment rate in education	-0.0028 (0.0035)	-0.0025 (0.0022)	-0.0013 (0.0024)	-0.0023 (0.0035)	-0.0019 (0.0021)	-0.0008 (0.0024)
Age in months squared	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
(Age in months) x 1(age<27)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Demographic controls	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Observations	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195	158,195
Clusters	72	72	72	72	72	72

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (72 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

RD: pre-reform (2007-2009)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
NEETs rate on welfare	0.0020 (0.0016)	0.0020 (0.0016)	0.0019 (0.0016)	0.0020 (0.0014)	0.0020 (0.0014)	0.0020 (0.0014)
NEETs rate not on welfare	0.0009 (0.0025)	0.0009 (0.0025)	0.0010 (0.0025)	0.0010 (0.0022)	0.0010 (0.0022)	0.0011 (0.0023)
Total NEETs rate	0.0028 (0.0035)	0.0028 (0.0035)	0.0029 (0.0035)	0.0030 (0.0030)	0.0030 (0.0030)	0.0031 (0.0030)
Employment rate	-0.0032 (0.0043)	-0.0031 (0.0038)	-0.0041 (0.0041)	-0.0035 (0.0038)	-0.0034 (0.0032)	-0.0044 (0.0034)
Enrollment rate in education	0.0003 (0.0031)	0.0003 (0.0020)	0.0012 (0.0022)	0.0004 (0.0031)	0.0003 (0.0020)	0.0013 (0.0022)
Age in months squared	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
(Age in months) x 1(age<27)	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Demographic controls	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
Observations	157,543	157,543	157,543	157,543	157,543	157,543
Clusters	72	72	72	72	72	72

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (72 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.

RD: difference-in-discontinuity (2007-2012)

	(1) NEETs rate on welfare	(2) NEETs rate not on welfare	(3) Total NEETs rate	(4) Employment rate	(5) Enrollment rate in education
Treat RD x 1(year>2009)	-0.0033* (0.0020)	0.0032 (0.0031)	-0.0001 (0.0038)	0.0022 (0.0046)	-0.0021 (0.0030)
Treat RD	0.0020 (0.0014)	0.0011 (0.0022)	0.0031 (0.0030)	-0.0044 (0.0034)	0.0013 (0.0022)
Observations	315,738	315,738	315,738	315,738	315,738
Clusters	108	108	108	108	108

Cluster-robust standard errors in parentheses, clustered by month of birth (108 clusters), * denotes significant at the 10% level, ** at the 5% level and *** at the 1% level.



RD: Robustness checks

- By individual year
- Quarter of birth or year of birth
- Age range 24–29 or 26–27
- Number of observations around the cutoff



Conclusions

- Main findings:
 - Decrease NEETs rate on welfare (-24%)
 - No effect on total NEETs rate, employment rate and enrollment rate in education
- Possible explanations:
 - Threat effect
 - Great Recession
- Policy implications
 - ALMPS and stricter conditionality of welfare benefits not effective in economic downturn
 - These policies may then drive the NEETs out of welfare but not in employment or education