



From early school leaving to second chance schools. A gender perspective

Maribel García-Gràcia*

Autonomous University of Barcelona. GRET. Department of Sociology. Faculty of Political Science and Sociology. Spain

Email: Maribel.Garcia@uab.cat

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6521-0437>

María José Chisvert-Tarazona

University of Valencia. Faculty of Philosophy and Education Sciences. Spain

Email: maria.jose.chisvert@uv.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5533-8100>

Alicia Ros-Garrido

University of Valencia. Faculty of Philosophy and Education Sciences. Spain

Email: Alicia.Ros@uv.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6968-0900>

Elsa Olmeda Rodríguez

University of Valencia. Faculty of Philosophy and Education Sciences. Spain

Email: Elsa.Olmeda@uv.es

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6458-7902>

ABSTRACT

Second chance schools (E2O) provide educational solutions to early school leaving, but only 30% of young people who enrolled in 2022 were women. The aim of this research is to analyze possible gender differences among young people who enroll in E2Os. The study is quantitative and correlational in nature, based on the analysis of two surveys conducted in 26 accredited E2Os. The first survey involved 1,779 young participants in the 2021-2022 academic year and the second involved 1,336 in 2022-2023, with 713 young people participating in both surveys. Sociodemographic information was collected, as well as information on previous school experience and the type of training undertaken. Educational and career aspirations and changes in expectations were analyzed. The results show no differences in social profile by gender or in their expectations, but there are differences in their secondary school experiences. The study concludes that a change in perspective on young women in secondary schools is necessary to improve their emotional and behavioral engagement and to review the vocational training offered by E2Os to facilitate access and the construction of a non-gendered training pathway.

Keywords: early school leaving, social inequality, second chance schools, academic failure, gender.

*Corresponding author: Maribel García-Gràcia

Received: 23/12/2024 — Accepted: 31/07/2025

ISSN: 0210-2773

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17811/rifie.22172>



1. Introduction

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) continues to be a worrying educational and social problem in Spain. It is a complex phenomenon due to its procedural, dynamic and multi-causal nature, which presents some conceptual confusion as it is related to other phenomena such as school failure and absenteeism (Suberviola, 2024a). It also has some limitations in its statistical definition, such as the one commonly used by Eurostat (García-Gràcia and Sánchez Gelabert, 2020). Data from the INE (2023) place it at 15.8% for males and 11.3% for females, percentages higher than the 9% set by the EU as a target for 2030 (Council of the European Union, 2021). Factors associated with educational dropout include gender, age, family socioeconomic status, and migrant background (Borgna and Struffolino, 2017; Navas-Saurin et al., 2021), as well as contextual factors such as location and ease of access to the educational center (Eira and Yarcé, 2021). Studies show that female students are less likely to drop out of school and have a greater perception of the usefulness of education and academic performance (Suberviola, 2024b). Sociolaboratory stereotypes attribute differential gender socialization (Fernández-Mellizo and Martínez-García, 2017) that conditions their relationship with school. They pass to a greater extent and obtain higher grades (Cerdà et al., 2020). However, the consequences of dropping out of school are greater in their case, as their participation in the labor market is reduced and their difficulties in entering the labor market increase, compared to boys (Struffolino and Borgna, 2020). The causes of educational dropout are diverse (Gubbels et al., 2019). Personal, family, school and social factors converge (Rumberger, 2024), often referred to in the literature as *push* factors, which drive students out of the education system, and *pull* factors, which attract them to the labor market (Soler et al., 2021) or to the domestic sphere (Vázquez et al., 2022), where gender makes a difference.

Second Chance Schools (E2O) emerged in Spain in the 1980s, following the publication of the White Paper on Education and Training (Commission of the European Communities, 1995), as an educational and job placement response for these young people, which has gradually become institutionalized. There are currently 46 accredited schools, which are part of the Spanish Association of E2O. Their educational provision is aimed at young people between the ages of 15 and 29 who are unemployed and have no qualifications, who have not graduated from Compulsory Secondary Education (ESO), with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups. These are young people whose families have lower levels of education and are more likely to drop out of school (Tarabini, 2017). The profile of the candidate population is characterized by an accumulation of negative educational experiences (Martínez Morales, 2021), associated with cognitive, behavioral and/or emotional disengagement from secondary school (Fredricks, 2011). For this reason, E2Os work to reverse this situation through flexible and adapted organizational practices (Prieto-Toraño, 2015) and individualized reception and support (Breton, 2021). Approximately half of the students improve their educational situation, and no significant dropout rates are reported within the E2O model (Merino et al., 2022).

In general terms, dropping out of school after completing lower secondary education is more common among boys than girls, as girls are more predisposed to studying (Martínez-García, 2021) and adapt better to the school environment (Valls et al., 2023). According to this research, it is to be expected that negative experiences in secondary school will result in greater behavioral disengagement among boys, with more experiences of regular or chronic absenteeism, sanctions and expulsions from school, and poor relationships with teachers. Such absenteeism is one of the determinants of academic failure that leads to early school leaving (Suberviola, 2024a), while emotional disengagement associated with phenomena such as bullying would be more frequent among young women (Blaya et al., 2007). It is therefore worth exploring the extent to which there are gender differences in the social and educational profile of the population accessing E2O. It is also worth analyzing the participation of women in second chance education. Some studies point to a lower visibility of educational dropout among women (García-Gràcia and Panadero, 2023), and a strongly biased participation in Basic Vocational Training specializations (currently Basic Level Training Cycle) (Villar-Aguilés and Obiol-Francés, 2021), which will also be analyzed in relation to the training offered by E2O. It is well known that feminized sectors face greater difficulties in entering the labor market, lower wages and less progress throughout their working lives (Soler et al., 2021). However, beyond labor market integration, some studies also point to an increase in the educational expectations of the participating population as one of the benefits of E2Os. Authors such as Palomares-Montero and Marhuenda-Fluixá (2024) note that in E2Os, expectations of continuing education are more prevalent among native youth and at younger ages. Regarding differences in participation by gender, although there are no data on the coverage rate of these programs in relation to the potential population, in the 2021-2022 academic year, 7,855 young people were trained in an E2O in Spain, 30% of whom were women (Spanish Association of Second Chance Schools, 2022).

2. Objective

The objective of this research is to analyze possible gender differences among young people who enroll in E2O programs. Specifically, the aim is to analyze these differences in:

1. The social profile of access and secondary school experience.
2. The type of training undertaken in E2Os.
3. Personal, educational and career expectations and aspirations.

3. Method

The methodological strategy followed is quantitative and correlational in nature. Permission to carry out the fieldwork was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the University of Valencia (resolution 1614696105618), as well as the consent of minors who completed the questionnaire, in accordance with current university regulations.

3.1. Sample

The first questionnaire was given to young people enrolled in the 2021-2022 academic year, in 26 E2O, who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Due to a lack of disaggregated information, it was not possible to propose a sampling process, although a total of 1,779 responses were obtained from 7,855 young people enrolled in one of the 26 accredited E2Os that participated in the study. The second questionnaire was answered by 1,336 young people enrolled in E2O training in the 2022-2023 academic year. The two instruments were completed by 713 young people enrolled in both academic years.

3.2. Variables and hypotheses

From a gender perspective, the categories and variables analyzed were aimed at confirming or refuting the following research hypotheses (Table 1). Information was collected on the socio-demographic characteristics of the young people, their school experience in secondary schools and the type of training they received. These data are complemented by an analysis of their educational, career and life aspirations, and the change in their expectations after training.

Table 1

Hypotheses, categories, and variables. Own elaboration

Hypothesis	Categories	Variables
– H1. There are no differences in the social profile of young people by gender	– Social profile	– Geographical origin, age, economic situation and family education
– H2. Girls show less behavioral disengagement from school than boys	– School profile	– Attendance, educational support, expulsion, repeating a year and attention from teachers
– H3. Young women are more likely than young men to be enrolled in formal, non-vocational studies	– Studies at E2O – Training specialization	– Studies being conducted at E2O – Whether they are studying what they wanted to. – Training specialization
– H4. Career expectations are higher among males, while educational and personal expectations are more prevalent among females	– Career, personal and educational expectations and aspirations	– Initial expectations and expectations in the final year – Aspirations: to be working; to be working in something related to the training received; to have a training certificate higher than the current level of studies; be working in a job they enjoy; find a well-paid job; volunteer for an organization; own a car; be respected; have a happy family life; feel secure; own a house; be happy; find a partner with whom they can form a happy and stable relationship; have children

3.3. Analysis tools and techniques: procedure

Two questionnaires were designed and underwent a double validation process. Each questionnaire was validated by two academics who are experts in the field under study and two professionals with extensive experience linked to the Spanish Association of Second Chance Schools. A pilot test was also carried out with 25 young people enrolled in a Second Chance School. Both processes allowed for the modification and elimination of some questions. The validated questionnaires are available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10550/108096> and <https://hdl.handle.net/10550/108400>.

The interviews were conducted in the presence of a member of the research team and a member of the E2O educational team, which helped to facilitate understanding of some questions, for language reasons, in some cases. The questionnaire was administered online using the Typeform platform.

Descriptive analyses were carried out to analyze the student profile, and a bivariate analysis was chosen to construct typologies. Some Likert scale questions were included, whose reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.870, thus proving to be consistent. The intersectionality of the gender variable with other independent variables such as country of origin and family educational level was also explored. SPSS version 25 statistical software was used.

4. Results

4.1. Social and educational profile of young people

The social profile of participating students is characterized by a majority of males, with females representing 28.4% of the total (Table 2).

Those under 20 years of age predominate (85%). More than a third are of foreign origin, particularly males (four out of 10 compared to three out of 10 females). Regarding the educational level of their families, there is a certain degree of heterogeneity: more than half come from families with secondary education, a quarter from families with compulsory education or no education, and almost two out of ten come from families with higher education. Regarding the economic situation of their families, more than half have difficulties, which are severe or very severe for more than a quarter. No significant differences are observed by gender.

The intersectional analysis (country of origin, gender and age) shows a somewhat different profile in males of immigrant origin, who tend to be older than native males. Only 8.5% of native males are over 20 years old when they enter E2O, compared to 27% of young males of immigrant origin (Cramér's V of 0.214). No significant differences are observed among females, either by age or by migratory origin. Small differences are observed in family educational levels according to origin and gender (Cramér's V of 0.168). Men of immigrant origin are more likely to come from families with no education or low educational levels (40%), compared to native men (18%), whose families are characterized by having mostly secondary education (60%).

In terms of family economic status, young local people come from less economically vulnerable family backgrounds: 59% have no difficulty making ends meet, compared to 36% of young people from immigrant backgrounds. The latter are in a more vulnerable economic situation, with 25% experiencing severe deprivation and 14% experiencing very severe economic deprivation, compared to 17% and 4% of native young people, respectively. These are small differences that are only observable for males (Cramér's V of 0.130), but not for females.

In terms of academic profile (Table 3), there is a high percentage of students who have repeated a year (73%). The majority (59%) say they do not feel well supported by teachers, although 53% consider that they have received support when facing academic difficulties. Forty-four per cent have been expelled at some point. Regarding gender differences, girls report feeling more victimized by bullying (38% compared to 27% of boys), while boys report being expelled more often than girls (48% compared to 34.5%). There are also slight differences in relation to absenteeism, the perception of little attention from teachers and repeating a year, with girls being slightly more prone than boys, although the differences in relation to these three items are not statistically significant.

Table 2*Social profile of students in E2O. Own elaboration*

	Men		Women		Total		Cramér's V
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	
Age							0,028
14 to 17 years old	684	60,8	259	59,3	943	60,4	
18 to 20 years old	281	25,0	111	25,4	392	25,1	
21 to 25 years old	123	10,9	55	12,6	178	11,4	
26 to 30 years old	37	3,3	12	2,7	49	3,1	
	1125	100,0	437	100,0	1562	100,0	
Lost cases – invalid					217	12,2	
Origin							0,11 (*)
Local	687	59,7	319	71,5	1006	63,0	
Foreign	464	40,3	127	28,5	591	37,0	
	1151	100,0	446	100,0	1597	100,0	
Casos perdidos – no válidos					182	10,2	
Family educational level							0,05
Basic education or no studies	232	27,8	84	23,9	316	26,6	
Secondary education	451	54,1	209	59,4	660	55,6	
Higher education	151	18,1	59	16,8	210	17,7	
	834	100	352	100	1186	100	
Lost cases - invalid					593	33,0	
Family economic situation							0,04
No difficulties	512	46,4	205	46,8	717	46,5	
With difficulties	272	24,6	107	24,4	379	24,6	
Severe	234	21,2	101	23,1	335	21,7	
Extremely severe	86	7,8	25	5,7	111	7,2	
	1104	100,0	438	100,0	1542	100,0	
Lost cases – invalid					236	13,3	
Total sample					1779		

(*) Significant with weak association.

Table 3*Percentage of previous school experience in secondary schools. Own elaboration*

At secondary school, you had	% Yes			% No			Cramér's V	Valid cases	Sig
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total			
Support or assistance with academic difficulties	53,1	53,5	53,2	46,9	46,5	46,8	0,004	1436	0,876
Expulsion once or more	47,7	34,5	43,9	52,3	65,5	56,0	0,12 (*)	1512	0,000
Bullying at some point	26,7	37,7	29,8	73,3	62,3	70,2	0,108 (*)	1454	0,000
Did you feel well looked after by the teachers?	43,5	34,9	41,0	56,5	65,1	59,0	0,08	1430	0,002
Attendance (every day or almost every day)	75,0	66,0	72,4	25,0	34,0	27,6	0,09	1439	0,001
Course repetition	72,5	79,4	73,1	27,5	20,6	25,6	0,072	1522	0,005
Total (sample)								1779	

(*) Significant

Based on the variables that occur most frequently, a school profile typology has been developed (Table 4). Repetition (as an indicator of academic difficulty) and truancy (as an indicator of behavioral disengagement) have been considered. This typology shows some interesting and significant results (Cramér's V 0.141) and allows four profiles to be identified:

- Adaptation: students who missed few classes and never repeated a year, representing almost two out of ten young people, with a slight difference in favor of boys.
- Absenteeism: students who rarely attended school but never repeated a year (5%), with the percentage of boys (6%) almost double that of girls (3.3%).
- Behavioral disengagement: students who combine recurrent or chronic absenteeism with a history of repeating a year, which is more common among girls (three out of ten compared to almost two out of ten boys).
- Repeaters: students with a history of repeating a year in secondary education (more than half of the sample), with a slight overrepresentation of boys.

Table 4

Young people in E2O according to their academic profile in secondary education by gender. Own elaboration

	Boys		Women		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Adaptation profile	196	19,3	68	16,7	264	18,6
Absenteeism profile	62	6,1	13	3,2	75	5,3
Disengagement profile	189	18,6	126	31,0	315	22,2
Repetition profile	568	56,0	199	49,0	767	54,0
Total	1015	100	406	100	1421	100
Lost cases					358	20,1
Total (sample)					1779	

4.2. Training in E2Os

To explore whether there is a gender bias in the training provided, the training offered has been analyzed according to (1) the nature of the training: generalist or professional, (2) how well it matched what they wanted, and (3) the specializations chosen, to assess the extent to which they are gender-biased.

4.2.1. The nature of the training

A typology has been developed according to whether the training is formal or informal and whether it is vocational:

- Formal vocational training: when the respondent states that they are studying vocational training or have completed compulsory secondary education with a vocational certificate or professional license.
- Non-vocational formal education: when they state that they are studying secondary education, entrance exams and/or languages.
- Non-formal vocational training: when the respondent states that they are studying for a certificate of professional competence or professional licenses.
- Non-regulated or non-vocational training: when they state that they are studying to prepare for an entrance exam for vocational training or language courses.

As shown in Table 5, the data reveals a small statistically significant difference in the type of training according to gender (Cramér's V 0.110), although the relationship between variables is weak. Boys are more present than girls in formal vocational training (70% compared to 59% of girls), and girls are more present in formal non-vocational training (22% compared to 15% of boys) and in non-formal vocational training (17% compared to 13% of boys). The disaggregated data show a slight over-representation of girls in courses leading to the ESO (Compulsory Secondary Education) certificate (33%) compared to boys (25%) and in training leading to a level 1 vocational certificate (16% compared to 10%). Boys are slightly more present in basic vocational training (BVT), including Initial Training Programs (ITP) in Catalonia (55.5% compared to 49% of girls) and in intermediate vocational training (7% compared to 3% of girls).

Table 5*Type of training by gender. Own elaboration*

	Men		Women		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Formal vocational training	755	70,3	211	59,2	965	67,5
Non-vocational, formal education	160	14,9	79	22,1	239	16,7
Non-regulated vocational training	140	13,0	62	17,3	202	14,1
Non-regulated and non-vocational training	19	1,8	5	1,4	24	1,7
Lost cases					349	19,6
Valid cases	1074	100	356	100	1430	100
Total (sample)					1779	

4.2.2. Training adjustment

Regarding the adjustment of the studies they are pursuing to their initial preferences (Table 6), the results show that the majority are pursuing the studies they wanted, with no statistically significant differences by gender (Cramér's V 0.088). Only 8.1% consider that they have adjusted their initial preferences because there were no places available or because the program was not offered (4.5%), while almost two out of ten young people did not know what they wanted.

Table 6*Are you studying what you wanted to study? Own elaboration*

	Men		Women		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Yes, it's just what I wanted	739	70,9	249	64,2	988	69,1
No, because there were no places available for what I wanted	84	8,1	32	8,2	116	8,1
Did not know what they wanted	169	16,2	92	23,7	261	18,3
No, because the center did not have what I wanted	50	4,8	15	3,9	65	4,5
Lost cases					349	19,6
Valid cases	1042	100	388	100	1430	100
Total					1779	

4.2.3. Generic specializations

Given the importance of BVT in the educational offering of E2Os, the specializations studied have been classified and analyzed according to their degree of masculinization or feminization. To this end, we analyzed the responses of young people who took this training in 2022, who represent 69% of those surveyed (a total of 988 students), from which we obtained information on the specialization in 896 cases, representing 92% of responses (Table 7).

Enrolment data from the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2022) identify eleven specializations with strong gender connotations, ten of which are highly masculinized, with percentages equal to or greater than 80% of boys. These are: Physical and sporting activities; Agriculture; Building and civil engineering; Electricity and electronics; Mechanical manufacturing; IT; Installation and maintenance; Wood, furniture and cork; Maritime-fishing; and Vehicle transport and maintenance. Only one, Personal image, is highly feminized, with a presence of girls equal to or greater than 80%. The remaining specializations have a mixed composition of around 40-50%. These are: Administration and management; Graphic arts; Commerce and marketing; Hospitality and tourism; Food industries; Sociocultural and community services; Textiles, clothing and leather; and Glass and ceramics. This segregation by specialization is also observed among the young people in the E2O sample, with a moderate Cramér coefficient (0.531). Thus, the most masculinized professional families are the most prevalent (58.4%), particularly among males (seven out of ten), although there are also 18.5% of young women in anti-stereotypical (masculinized) training programs. At the opposite extreme, only 1% of males are enrolled in a feminized training program, in the specialization of Personal Image. Finally, it should be noted that one in three young people enroll in training programs where there is greater gender parity, the most common being Hospitality and Tourism and Commerce and Marketing (training programs that account for one in four young people).

Table 7

Distribution of students by specialization according to degree of segregation of the offer. Own elaboration

Training specialization in E2O							Training specialization in VBT. Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2022)						
E2O	Men		Women		Total		VBT	Men		Women		Total	
	Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%		Abs.	%	Abs.	%	Abs.	%
Masculinized	485	70,2	38	18,5	523	58,4	Masculinized	38317	72,2	4020	18,1	42337	56,2
Feminized	9	1,3	57	27,8	66	7,4	Feminized	1445	2,7	5646	25,4	7091	9,4
Mixed	197	28,5	110	53,7	307	34,3	Mixed	13314	25,1	12534	56,5	25848	34,3
Total responses	691	100	205	100	896	100	Total	53076	100	22200	100	75276	100
Vocational training students					988								

4.3. Expectations and aspirations after training

Based on the students enrolled in E2O for two academic years (2021-22 and 2022-23) who responded to the second and third questionnaires (711 cases), their expectations at the beginning and end of the training were analyzed based on the total number of responses available (627 valid cases) (Table 8).

Table 8

Change in expectations from the beginning to the end of the course. Intersectionality of country of origin and gender. Own elaboration

(Cramér's V 0.097 Sig 0.040)		Local male	Foreign male	Local women	Foreign woman	Total
Still has a career goal	Count	52	45	16	17	130
	%	17,2	27,1	15,8	29,3	20,7
	Corrected residual	-2,1	2,4	-1,3	1,7	
Continues to have a training objective	Recount	141	59	51	23	274
	%	46,7	35,5	50,5	39,7	43,7
	Corrected residual	1,5	-2,5	1,5	-0,7	
From employment to training objective	Recount	72	33	17	11	133
	%	23,8	19,9	16,8	19,0	21,2
	Corrected residual	1,6	-0,5	-1,2	-0,4	
From training to employment goals	Recount	37	29	17	7	90
	%	12,3	17,5	16,8	12,1	14,4
	Corrected residual	-1,4	1,3	0,8	-0,5	
	Valid cases	302	166	101	58	627
Total	%	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
	Total	48,2	26,5	16,1	9,3	713

The overall data shows that 43.7% of young people who enroll in E2O had a training objective. At the end of the training, they remain predisposed to continue training. To this first group should be added the 21.2% of young people who, having stated initial expectations of entering the labor market, finish the training with expectations of continuing their training. The remaining percentage has a clear employment orientation, either when starting training at E2O (20.7%) or when finishing training at E2O (14.4%).

There are slight differences between native and immigrant males and females. Nearly half of native males and females have and maintain an educational goal, a percentage that is slightly lower among the immigrant population, particularly among males (35.5%). The foreign population tends to maintain a job-related goal to a greater extent. Three out of four young people imagine their future will be much better after completing E2O. There are no significant differences by gender, country of origin, age, family educational level, type of training or level of qualification obtained.

Table 9 contains a set of 14 questions on the aspirations of young people five years from now, based on the latest survey (in 2023) of a total population of 1,335 participants. The level of aspirations is very high in all the items considered. Only two items stand out below three points (out of four): volunteering in an organization (2.74) and the expectation of having children (2.75), with no significant differences by gender.

Table 9*Five-year aspirations. Own elaboration*

Degree of agreement (1 strongly disagree. 4 strongly agree)	Percentages%				Mean	Valid cases
	1	2	3	4		
I will be working	2,6	4,3	21,2	71,9	3,62	1230
I will be working in a field related to my education	7,3	11,7	27,8	53,3	3,27	1230
I will have a car	6,1	10,7	19,4	63,8	3,41	1228
I will be working at something I enjoy	2,8	8,0	23,3	66,0	3,52	1226
I will volunteer at an organization	19,3	20,5	26,9	33,3	2,74	1173
I will have a happy family life	6,1	10,8	21,8	61,3	3,38	1211
I will be respected by others	2,6	5,8	24,0	67,7	3,57	1209
I will feel safe	2,6	5,0	24,5	67,9	3,58	1225
I will have a house	7,3	11,4	21,4	59,8	3,34	1213
I will have a higher education certificate than my current level of education	5,0	9,6	25,0	60,4	3,41	1210
I will find a well-paid job	2,6	9,8	27,2	60,4	3,46	1218
I will find someone with whom I can have a happy and stable relationship	7,9	10,2	22,7	59,2	3,33	1184
I will be happy	3,2	6,4	20,6	69,9	3,57	1210
I will have children	24,2	15,6	17,4	42,8	2,75	1157

*Sample (2022-2023 academic year): 1,336***Table 10***Five-year aspirations. Intersectionality of origin and gender. Own elaboration*

	Porcentajes%				Cramér's V	Sig.	
	Quite or very much agree	Locals		Foreigns			
		Men	Women	Men			Women
I imagine a better future	74,7	70,7	75,0	78,1	82,7	0,111(*)	0.032
I will be working	93,6	93,5	91,9	95,1	92,0	0,047	0.444
I will be working in a field related to my education	81,3	81,5	71,2	86,7	80,4	0,129(*)	0.000
I will have a car	83,6	85,1	77,5	85,5	80,7	0,081	0.047
I will be working at something I enjoy	89,4	86,3	87,8	94,5	91,2	0,116(*)	0.001
I will volunteer at an organization	60,6	52,8	55,6	72,4	67,9	0,181(*)	0.000
I will have a happy family life	83,6	83,6	75,8	88,5	81,3	0,114(*)	0.001
I will be respected by others	91,9	91,1	90,1	94,0	92,7	0,055	0.31
I will feel safe	93,0	94,1	87,0	94,9	92,9	0,107(*)	0.003
I will have a house	81,9	80,2	78,1	86,4	81,8	0,081	0.047
I will have a higher education certificate	85,8	85,2	80,1	87,7	92,0	0,091	0.019
I will find a well-paid job	88,0	83,9	85,6	93,8	93,9	0,139(*)	0.000
Happy and stable couple	82,3	83,4	80,6	84,8	76,1	0,063	0.191
I will be happy	91,0	90,3	87,4	96,4	89,3	0,089	0.024
I will have children	60,5	61,6	56,3	64,4	49,5	0,089	0.026

Sample (2022-2023 academic year): 1,336

(*) Significant with weak association

Table 10 shows the scores obtained on the high end of the Likert scale (strongly agree or agree) disaggregated by migration origin and gender. No statistically significant differences were observed in the following items: being employed, owning a car, being respected, owning a home, having a higher education, having a partner, being happy, having children. However, there are significant differences between men and women of immigrant origin and native-born men and women in relation to items related to work: well paid, related to education, enjoyable, voluntary, with a sense of security and aspirations for the future.

5. Discussion

The results of the study show that there are no differences in the social profile of young people by gender, which confirms our first hypothesis. The profile of young people under the age of 20 predominates, with no significant differences by gender, although there are differences by nationality: native young men stand out among the youngest compared to young men of immigrant origin. Nor are there any differences by gender in relation to family economic situation, characterized by difficulties for more than half, with these being severe or very severe for more than a quarter. Differences are observed in terms of economic vulnerability for three out of four young people of immigrant origin, with severe and very severe difficulties for four out of ten young people in this group. This explains the need for comprehensive responses from the E2O (accompaniment to other resources and services, accommodation in supervised flats, etc.). This greater economic vulnerability could be associated with a greater focus on employment among the foreign population.

Despite the implementation of strategies that can improve retention and prevent early dropout (Gairín and Olmos, 2023), absenteeism and repetition are phenomena present in the school experiences of the group attending E2Os (Martínez-Morales, 2021; Quijada and Martínez, 2020). The results show that girls who participate in E2O training have had more experiences of disengagement from school than boys. The second hypothesis is therefore rejected, as the data allow us to identify a profile of young women who access E2O from experiences of marked emotional and behavioral disengagement.

The results also show unequal participation by gender in E2O provision, with the number of boys far exceeding that of girls. However, based on the available data, it cannot be determined whether girls have less or equal access to E2O provision in relative terms.

The third hypothesis is validated, as young women are more prevalent in non-vocational studies and less prevalent in basic vocational training studies, despite the clear contribution of this training to educational re-engagement and professional integration (Sarceda-Gorgoso and Barreira-Cerqueiras, 2021). Likewise, there is gender bias in participation, with high segregation by training specializations and a high concentration in a few specializations, particularly for girls, in line with the results of other studies (Salvà-Mut et al., 2016; Villar-Aguilés et al., 2021). The results also show a high level of adjustment to the training they initially desired, with no significant differences by gender. This raises questions about the relevance of intervening, from a career guidance perspective, to modify or broaden the professional horizons of men and women but also questions the extent to which it would be appropriate to rethink specializations and the provision of training opportunities.

The results show that 18.1% of young women undertake training in non-stereotypical fields, a higher percentage than that of young men who choose feminized specializations. It would be useful to conduct specific studies on the experiences, trajectories and assessment of these options, from the voices of those involved, their personal costs and the possible resistance that both men and women encounter in these training courses, both in the classroom and in work placements, an aspect highlighted in formal vocational training (Lamamra, 2017).

Likewise, the transition to E2O has led to an increase in their training expectations, as other studies also point out (Palomares-Montero and Marhuenda-Fluixá, 2024), thus contributing to the construction of a longer and more sustained training pathway over time.

Although the results presented do not identify the keys to this increase in expectations, studies such as those by Manousou et al. (2017) and Espinoza et al. (2019) indicate that the reconnection with education is due to the good relationship with E2O teachers, the support provided and the bond with educators. There is also evidence of greater career guidance at the end of training for four out of ten young people of immigrant origin.

Finally, our results do not confirm the fourth hypothesis, since career expectations are not higher among males, nor are educational and personal expectations more prevalent among females. The study shows that there are no differences, with educational expectations being equally important for both groups. This suggests that E2O also has a compensatory effect on the academic profile of young women with previous experiences of absenteeism and repetition. Job expectations sustained over time follow the same trend for males and females, also helping to prevent the relegation of young women to the private sphere and the reproduction of gender roles.

The analysis of five-year aspirations also shows no significant differences according to gender in aspects related to labor market integration, family life, educational aspirations, personal well-being and the symbolic dimension of recognition and status. This could be interpreted as the widespread acceptance of a model of social success that is articulated under these parameters, both for men and women. Authors such as Martins et al. (2020) refer to positive expectations about their future as one of the reasons why they choose the second chance.

One of the limitations of the study was the lack of disaggregated information regarding the universe, which made it difficult to calculate the representativeness and weighting of the sample. There were also linguistic and comprehension difficulties among young immigrants in answering some of the questions in the questionnaire. Furthermore, more research is needed to support policies and

practices aimed at preventing early school leaving from a gender perspective (Martins et al., 2020, García-Gràcia and Panadero, 2023) that enable young women to access alternative socio-educational settings, such as E2O, and to track their educational and career paths.

Among the practical implications of the study, it is worth noting that it is necessary to (1) change the way young women are viewed in secondary schools in order to improve their emotional and behavioral engagement, incorporating inclusive practices and individualized support; and (2) review the vocational training offered by E2Os in order to reduce the high level of segregation in training provision by gender. In short, the results show the role of E2Os in raising educational expectations and reducing educational dropout rates, with compensatory effects for young women.

Funding

This work has received support from the Valencian Regional Government, through the Regional Ministry of Innovation, University, Science and Digital Society, as part of the Program for the Promotion of Scientific Research, Technological Development and Innovation in the Valencian Community (Ref. AICO/2021/254).

References

- Blaya, C., Debarbieux, E., and Lucas Molina, B. (2007). Violence against women and other people perceived as different from the dominant norm: the case of educational centres. *Education Journal*, 342, 61-83.
- Borgna, C., and Struffolino, E. (2017). Pushed or pulled? Girls and boys facing early school leaving risk in Italy. *Social Science Research*, 61, 298-313. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2016.06.021>
- Breton, H. (2021). L'accueil de l'expérience dans les pratiques d'accompagnement. *Éducation Permanente*, 1, 173-183. <https://doi.org/10.3917/edpe.226.0173>
- Cerdà, A., Sureda, I., and Salvà, F. (2020). Intention to drop out and dropout during the first year of intermediate vocational training: An analysis based on the concept of student involvement. *Studies on Education*, 39, 35-57. <https://doi.org/10.15581/004.39.33-57>
- Commission of the European Communities (1995). *White paper on education and training. Teaching and learning. Towards the learning society*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Council of the European Union (2021). *Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)*. Official Journal of the European Union, 26 February 2021.
- Erira, D. C., and Yarce, E. (2021). School dropout from the experience of adolescents in a rural area. *UNIMAR Journal*, 39(1), 29-44. <https://doi.org/10.31948/Rev.unimar/unimar39-1-art2>
- Espinoza, O., González, L. E., Castillo, D., & Neut, S. (2019). Factors influencing student retention in "second chance schools" in Chile. *Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Children and Youth*, 17(2), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.11600/1692715x.17201>
- Fernández-Mellizo, M., and Martínez-García, J. S. (2017). Inequality of educational opportunities: School failure trends in Spain (1977-2012). *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 26(3), 267-287. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2016.1192954>
- Fredricks, J. A. (2011). Engagement in school and out-of-school contexts: A multidimensional view of engagement. *Theory into practice*, 50(4), 327-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2011.607401>
- Gairín, J., and Olmos P. (2023). Guidance and mentoring strategies in vocational training to improve retention and prevent early dropout. In E. Álvarez Arregui, A. Rodríguez-Martín, C. Rodríguez Fernández, C. González Melgar, and D. Álvarez Menéndez-Hervía (Eds.), *Organisation and management of systems in transformation: challenges, visions and proposals for improvement* (pp. 111-118). University of Oviedo.
- García-Gràcia, M., and Sánchez Gelabert, A. (2020). The heterogeneity of educational dropout in post-compulsory transitions: Pathways and subjectivity of the school experience. *Papers: Journal of Sociology*, 105(2), 235-257. <http://doi.org/10.5565/rev/papers.2775>
- García-Gràcia, M., and Panadero, H. (2023). *Educational dropout from a gender perspective. Where are the girls?* Barcelona Provincial Council.
- Gubbles, J., Van Der Put, C. E., & Assink, M. (2019). Risk factors for school absenteeism and dropout: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 48, 1637-1667.
- INE (2023). *Labour force survey*. National Institute of Statistics. <https://www.ine.es>
- Lamamra, N. (2017). Vocational education and training in Switzerland: a gender perspective. From socialisation to resistance. *Educar*, 53(2), 379-396. <http://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.863>
- Manousou, E., Linardatou, C., and Teacher, M. M. (2017). The role and importance of Second Chance Schools for female attendance: Views and perceptions of women trainees, opportunities and prospects. *International Women Online Journal of Distance Education*, 6(2), 8-21.
- Martínez-García, J. S. (2021). Gender and education: reverse gap and segregation. In E. Ortiz, J. Benito, J. C. Solano, and M. A. Bote (Eds.), *Overview of equity, education and gender in the 21st century* (pp. 21-30). Murcia Regional Ministry of Women, Equality, LGTBI, Family and Social Policy.
- Martínez-Morales, I. (Coord.). (2021). *Training in Second Chance Schools (E2O) accredited in Spain: profile, trajectory and conditions for success of young people*. Ministry of Education and Vocational Training.

- Martins, F., Carneiro, A., Campos, L., Ribeiro, L. M., Negrao, M., Baptista, I., & Matos, R. (2020). The right to a second chance: lessons learned from the experience of early school leavers who returned to education. *Pedagogia Social. Revista Interuniversitaria*, 36, 139–152. https://doi.org/10.7179/PSRI_2020.36.09
- Merino, R., Olmeda, E., García Gracia, M., and Palomares, D. (2022). Young people and second chances: changes in educational and career paths. *Teaching Staff. Journal of Curriculum and Teacher Training*, 26(3), 221–241. <https://doi.org/10.30827/profe-sorado.v26i3.23455>
- Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (2022). *Equality in Figures MEFP 2022. Classrooms for equality*. Technical General Secretariat. Sub-Directorate General for Citizen Services, Documentation and Publications.
- Navas-Saurin, A., Abiétar-López, M., Bernad-Garcia, J. C., Córdoba-Iñesta, A. I., Giménez-Urraco, M. E., Meri-Crespo, E., and Quintana-Murci, E. (2021). Student involvement in vocational training: Differential analysis in the province of Valencia. *Journal of Education*, 394, 189–213. <https://doi.org/10.4438/1988-592X-RE-2021-394~505>
- Palomares-Montero, D., and Marhuenda-Fluixá, F. (Eds.). (2024). *The demand for second chance programmes: E2Os and their impact on young people's expectations*. University of Valencia.
- Prieto-Toraño, B. (2015). The path from school vulnerability to educational disengagement. The role of second chance schools in the strategy against educational dropout. *Profesorado. Journal of Curriculum and Teacher Training*, 19(3), 110–125.
- Quijada, R. A., and Martínez, D. V. (2020). School failure and early school leaving. Second chance schools as an alternative. *Rumbos TS. A critical space for reflection in Social Sciences*, 23, 63–79. <https://doi.org/10.51188/rrts.num23.423>
- Rumberger, R. (2024). Dropping out of high school: an international problem. In M. Berends, B. Schneider, and S. Lamb (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Sociology of Education* (pp. 421–437). Sage Publications. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529783506>
- Salvà-Mut, F., Nadal-Cavaller, J., & Melià-Barceló, M. A. (2016). Pathways to success and disruption in second-chance education. *Latin American Journal of Social Sciences, Children and Youth*, 14(2), 1405–1419. <https://doi.org/10.11600/1692715x.14235251115>
- Sarceda-Gorgoso, M. C., and Barreira-Cerqueiras, E. M. (2021). Basic Vocational Training and its contribution to the development of skills for educational re-engagement and labour market integration: students' perceptions. *Educar*, 57(2), 319–332. <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/educar.1239>
- Soler, A., Martínez-Pastor, J. I., López-Meseguer, R., Valdés, M. T., Sancho, M. A., Morillo, B., & Cendra, L. (2021). *Map of early school leaving in Spain. General Report*. EFSE. European Foundation for Society and Education.
- Spanish Association of Second Chance Schools (2022). *2022 Annual Report*. <https://www.e2oespana.org/memorias-anuales/>
- Struffolino, E., and Borgna, C. (2020). Who is really 'left behind'? Half a century of gender differences in the school-to-work transitions of low-educated youth. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(2), 162–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1713308>
- Suberviola, I. (2024a). Narrative literature review for the conceptualisation of early school leaving: terminological definition and measurement indices. *Education Studies*, 47, 7–33. <https://doi.org/10.15581/004.47.001>
- Suberviola, I. (2024b). The influence of gender on early school dropout. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Educational Studies*, 20(1), 119–141. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-011X/CGP/v20i01/119~141>
- Valls, O., Sánchez-Gelabert, A., & Troiano, H. (2023). Students' attitudes towards school. *Educational Research Notebooks*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.18861/cied.2023.14.1.3254>
- Vázquez, R., Calvo-García, G., and López-Gil, M. (2022). School dropout from an intersectional perspective: Gender makes a difference. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 52, e08553. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053148553>
- Villar-Aguilés, A., and Obiol-Francés, S. (2021). Gendered pathways in basic vocational training. Results of a study in Valencian educational centres. *Recerca. Revista de Pensament i Anàlisi*, 26(1), 155–178. <https://doi.org/10.6035/Recerca.2021.26.1.8>