

There is a mismatch between the qualifications and skills that young people have and those that employers are seeking – in the case of graduates, too many gaining the skills and qualifications for public-sector jobs that no longer exist. However, the main cause of joblessness is a lack of decent employment opportunities, which in the case of young women is compounded by public attitudes which discriminate by gender. Asked for their opinions, young people do not think that their government is doing a very good job of creating employment and they think that the economic situation is the main challenge facing their country. They see their governments as corrupt and find it virtually impossible to get employment without connections. A relatively high proportion of young men are considering migration for economic reasons, as are a smaller but still noticeable number of young women. Young people also share the conservative gender attitudes of older generations.

For policy planning purposes the proportion at risk must be distinguished from the proportion in the population. A majority of NEETs are young women, most of whom are not active in the labour market, with a relatively high proportion never making the school-work transition. Most young men do eventually make the transition, but often only to the informal sector. Young men are at greatest risk of being unemployed (and becoming discouraged) and young women of becoming carers. However, while university graduates are at greatest risk of unemployment, numerically those without a high-school leaving certificate and living in urban areas make up the majority of young men and women NEETs.

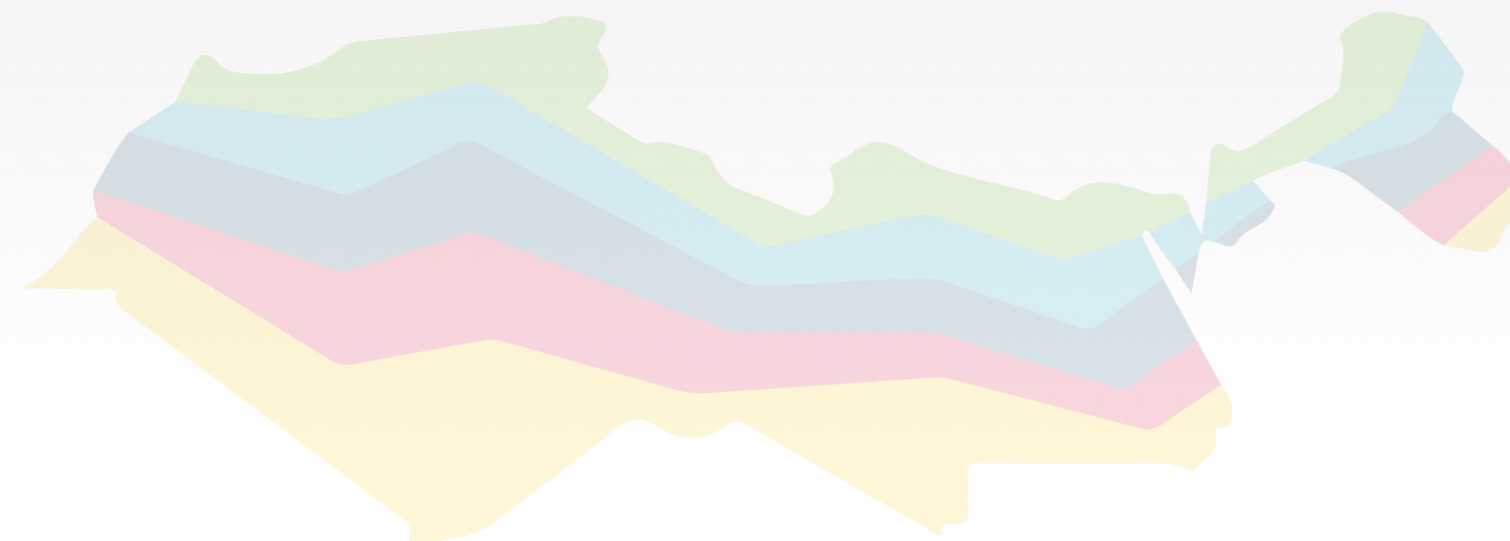
Policy Recommendations

There are no 'silver bullets' for solving the problem of youth unemployment and inactivity. The problem should not be seen just as the existence of NEETs but rather as the need to create opportunities for young people more generally – we should avoid a 'deficit' model of youth. The main cause of unemployment and inactivity for young people is a lack of decent jobs. In developing policy it is important to ensure that it is inclusive and that implementation strategies are devised that target job creation for different groups of young people: those with few educational qualifications as well as graduates; those living rural areas as well as urbanites; those in

depressed regions as well as those in more economically developed ones. Measures are needed to break down structural and cultural barriers to women's employment, including putting in place family-friendly employment law. Young people also need to be empowered; the quality of education needs to be improved and opportunities of re-entry to education for those without high-school qualifications put in place; the school curricula need to be reformed so that young people gain the skills for which employers are looking; and there should be advice for young people on specialisation in line with employment opportunities. However, there is no point in making young people more employable if the right jobs are not available.

There is no shortage of specific recommendations in the literature. These include:

- ▶ policy reform to stimulate job creation by reducing the barriers faced by firms and entrepreneurs, including access to credit and support for new and young medium-sized firms;
- ▶ tackling government corruption and ending 'crony' capitalism;
- ▶ debt-financed public investment in infrastructure;
- ▶ investing in research and development that encourages new job creation;
- ▶ reforms to provide better protection for workers in the informal sector;
- ▶ bridging the gap between education and the requirements of employers;
- ▶ providing better information to young people so they have realistic job expectations;
- ▶ enforcing merit-based systems of recruitment and promotion;
- ▶ making government programmes which promote youth employment more effective – focusing on what works (impact evaluation);
- ▶ providing training, regulation and access to affordable credit for young entrepreneurs;
- ▶ mainstreaming youth employment in the government development strategy and ensuring that it is reflected in government budgets;
- ▶ introducing gender equality policies/family-friendly employment policies and providing child care.



ArabTrans

This paper is based on Abbott, P. and Teti, Andrea (2017), A Generation in Waiting for Jobs and Justice: Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training in North Africa. *Social Science Research Net Electronic Journal*. Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/Abbott-Teti-NEETs>



UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN



The Arab Transformations

Policy Brief 9

Young People in North Africa Not in Employment, Education or Training

Introduction

Unemployment in North Africa is a considerable problem, particularly for young people. In the developing MENA region there are about four times as many new job-seekers as vacant jobs. Talent is being wasted and the failure is giving rise to a security challenge that threatens political and social stability. The problem is not just lack of jobs, but lack of decent jobs. Young people cannot easily make the transition to adulthood; this is what fuelled the 2011 Uprisings and subsequent demonstrations and riots, and it also fuels migration, with a loss to the country of talent and skills. The problem is often seen as one of youth employability, but it needs to be put in context: neo-liberal reforms have reconfigured state, capital and labour relations since the 1980s, leading to structural issues which affect the wider society. The main cause of joblessness and inactivity is the lack of sufficient demand for workers on the labour market.

That having been said, there are other barriers. It is true that there is a lack of the skills for which employers are looking. Beyond this, corrupt officials disrupt orderly life in commerce and industry, and people who lack the social capital of privileged relationship networks cannot get jobs – the phenomenon of 'wasta'. The consequence is that young people are culturally disempowered; their

SUMMARY

Using public opinion survey data and international statistics, this Brief looks at the serious problem of youth unemployment in North Africa, due in part to decades of 'structural adjustment' which have eroded job opportunities in the public sector. The problem stretches beyond the ILO definition of 'unemployment' to include those who no longer seek work, or are waiting for public sector jobs which are just not going to appear, or who give up and lapse into a 'carer' role.

The problem is even greater for young women than young men, given conservative views of gender-appropriate employment which severely curtail their choice.

Tackling employability and upgrading school syllabi may help with the problem, but its root is that for new entrants the jobs are quite simply not there.

The number of young people who are not socially included through work poses a substantial risk to internal stability and security. Those who are not in employment, education or training tend to rate the economy and corruption as the major challenges, regard their regimes as corrupt, and are mostly not impressed with their governments' handling of the economy and job creation.

material dependency on their parents is prolonged and they are denied the opportunity to become autonomous adults. Conservative gender expectations deter many young women from seeking employment or restrict them to stereotypical female jobs, usually in the public sector. Those of either gender who fail to get employment can become part of the long-term unemployed, or cease to look actively for work (becoming demoralised), or (especially young women) withdraw from the labour market altogether.

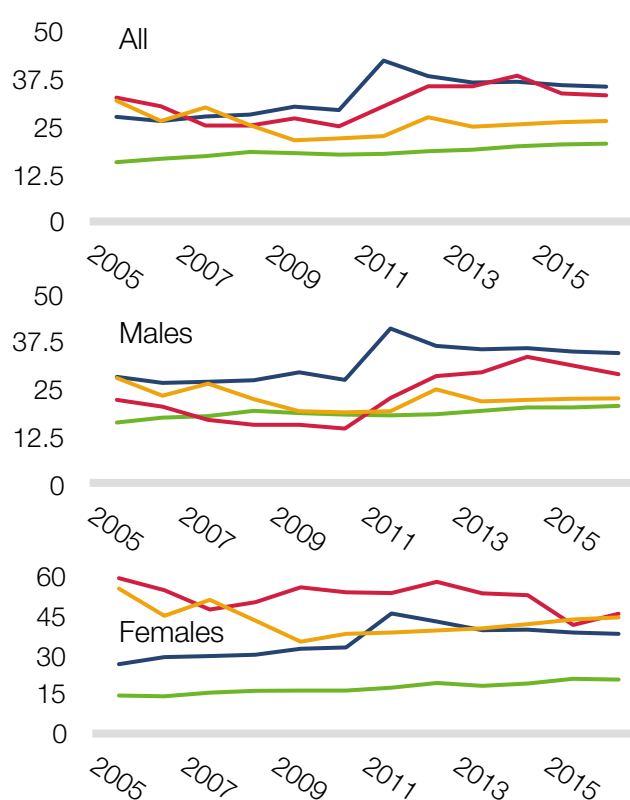
In this Brief we look at the issue in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia not just of unemployment but more widely of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETS).

Young people in and out of the labour market

The Unemployed

Youth unemployment rates in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt have been amongst the highest in the world, varying from a low of 20% in Morocco to a high of 35.7% in Tunisia - roughly twice the world average (Figure 1). Two impor-

FIGURE 1: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT, % OF ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-24



Source: World Development Indicators

tant things to note are that the youth unemployment rate differs noticeably between the countries and that it is much higher for young women than young men. Following the Uprisings in 2011 the rate increased in all four countries and had not returned to the pre-Uprising levels by 2015. The female rate is much higher than the male rate in Algeria, Egypt and to a lesser extent Tunisia but there is no noticeable difference in Morocco.

'Not in employment, education or training' (NEET)

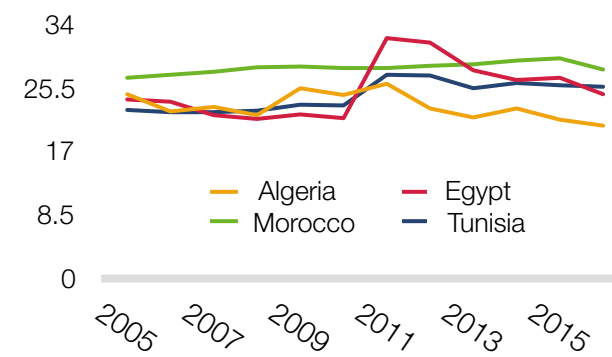
Unemployment rates are misleading, however. Only a minority of those aged 15-24 are economically active (in work or actively seeking it): Algeria 28.3%, Egypt 32.1%, Morocco 35.1% and Tunisia 34.7% in 2015. Others are in education, demoralised and no longer seeking work, full-time carers or in other ways not actively looking for employment. We need to consider not just how many of the labour force are unemployed but how many of those not in education or training are not even counted in the labour force (Table 1). To assess this, 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) is a much more useful concept. The portion of Table 1 shaded blue indicates who falls in this category.

TABLE 1: LABOUR FORCE STATUS, EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION

Labour Force Status	Time Use	Employment Status	Working	Job Quality	Formality
In the labour force	Full-time	Wage employment	Employed	Decent or precarious	Formal or informal
		Self-employed			
	Part-time	Contributing family worker/voluntary	Precarious	Formal or informal	
		Voluntary			
Out of the labour force	Job Seeker	Unemployed	NEET		
	Inactive	Broad unemployment			
		Inactive (carers, sick/disabled)			
Education	Student	Student			

NEET rates for Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia have been estimated by Driouchi and Harkal (2017) for those aged 15-24 (Figure 2). In 2016 they varied from a low of 20% in Algeria to a high of 28% in Morocco. While Morocco has the lowest unemployment rate, it also has the highest NEET rate - in other words, the highest proportion of young people who have withdrawn from the labour market altogether.

FIGURE 2: ESTIMATED NEET RATE (15-24), 2005-2016, %



Source: Driouchi and Harkal (2017): <https://mpr.aub.uni-muenchen.de/79330>

Who are the NEETs?

The 15-29 NEET rate in Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia is much higher than the OECD average (14.5%). Risk rates by gender are shown in Figure 3 for three of the countries (data being unavailable for Morocco) and risk rates are shown for two of the countries by rural or urban location in Figure 4.

FIGURE 3: NEET RATES (15-24) BY GENDER, 2013, %

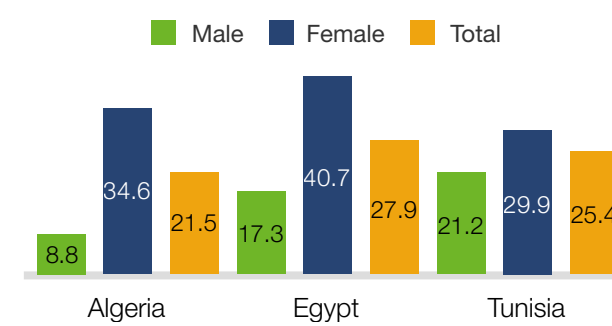
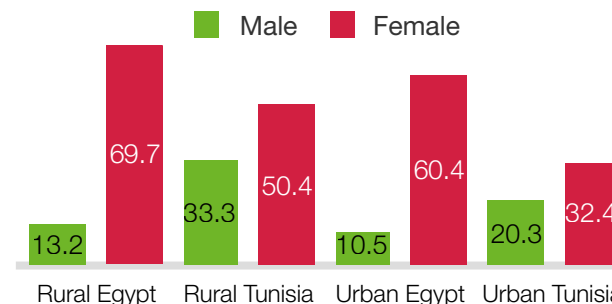


FIGURE 4: NEETS (15-29) IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS FOR EGYPT AND TUNISIA, %



Source: Bardak, et al 2015 (Eurostat)

Young women, make up a higher proportion of NEETs than young men, but the proportion varies by country, from a low of 54.9% in Tunisia to a high of 82% in Egypt. Nearly two thirds of

male NEETs are unemployed, and just over two thirds of female NEETs are carers. Only a fifth of female NEETs are unemployed. However, young women make up nearly 40% of the unemployed, varying from just under half in Morocco to 40% in Algeria. Female NEETs are more likely to be carers except in Tunisia, and Male NEETs are more likely to be unemployed except in Morocco.

It is not easy to get information on how the NEETs population is made up. Public opinion survey data provides some information. This enables us to assess the risk of becoming a NEET (the NEET rate) - i.e. the ratio of NEETs to non-NEETs in the population as a whole, disaggregated by categories of interest. The difference between population and risk needs to be kept in mind when interpreting information; for example, while the risk of being a NEET is highest for those with higher education qualifications, higher education is rare and numerically by far the largest group of NEETs is those that have not completed secondary school. Similarly, while the risk of being a NEET is higher in a rural area, larger numbers of NEETs live in urban areas.

Overall it is gender that has the greatest effect on the NEET rate. Young women are at greater risk than young men; a relatively high proportion of less educated young women never enter the labour market and a high proportion of those that do so leave on marriage. Educated young women are more likely to be active in the labour market, but have a relatively high risk of being unemployed. Young men are much more likely to be active in the labour market or else demoralised and no longer seeking work. Unemployed and demoralised workers tend to be better educated, as their failure to seek jobs actively may represent a period of 'queueing' for jobs in the public sector or the formal private sector. (When there are employment opportunities in the formal sector for less educated men there is also some queueing, as in Tunisia.) Eventually, however, men have to give up and either become self-employed or take whatever low-grade work is available.

Looking at AfroBarometer microdata, we find that differences by age group in the probability of a NEET being unemployed as opposed to a carer or in the 'other' category are very slight for both young men and young women. Differences by rural or urban location are slight for young men, but young women living in urban areas are less likely to be carers and correspondingly more

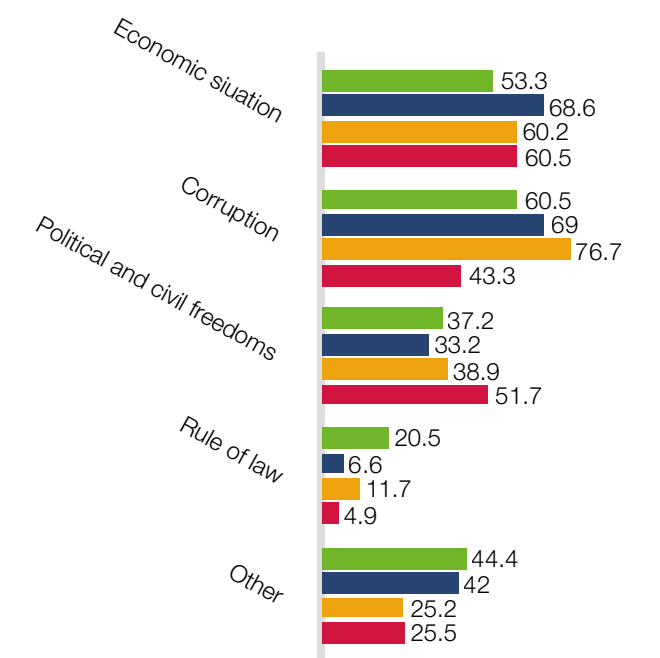
likely to be unemployed. More female NEETs are 25-29 than 18-24, probably because of young women withdrawing from the labour market on marriage. Nearly two-thirds of female NEETs live in urban areas.

The views of young people

In this section we consider young people's opinions on a number of relevant questions: the economic situation of the country, corruption, the need for *wasta* to gain employment, and people's attitudes to married women working. Data show that young people are much more concerned about not getting/losing a job than those aged 30+, but other concerns are shared across the generations.

According to Arab Barometer III, concerns about the economic situation and corruption were the two factors most often mentioned as drivers of the 2010-2011 Uprisings (Figure 5) and according to the Arab Transformations survey the economic situation was by far the most important challenge facing their country: 91.6% in Egypt, 79% in Morocco, and 79.8% in Tunisia.

FIGURE 5: ITEMS NOMINATED BY PEOPLE AGED 18-29 AS MAIN CAUSES OF THE 2011 UPRISINGS

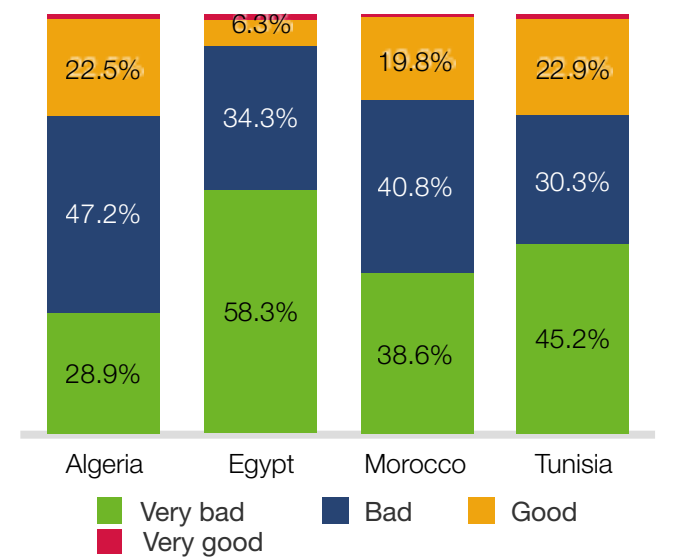


Source: ABIII. 'Other' includes increased dignity, social and economic justice, other.

Few young people thought their government was creating employment; in Egypt only 7.5% think the Government was good or very good,

and half or less believed so in Morocco and Tunisia (Figure 6). A majority thought that employment is rarely obtained without *wasta* (connections); only 5.3% thought work could be obtained without it in Algeria, 1.9% in Egypt, 4.6% in Morocco and 19% in Tunisia. The economic situation was making nearly half the young men consider migration for economic reasons.

FIGURE 6: YOUNG PEOPLE'S EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE ON JOB PROMOTION, %



Source: ABIII

Conservative gender norms are a major barrier to women's employment: survey data suggest there is relatively strong support for a traditional gendered division of labour with men as breadwinners and women as carers, leaving women economically dependent on men. This is most clearly evidenced by strong support for shari'a, and although support is noticeably lower in Tunisia, still only a third of young people disagree with status law being based on shari'a, despite Tunisia having civil law.

Discussion and Conclusions

The NEET rate is a more useful concept than the unemployment rate because it includes all young people not in employment, education or training: it covers a wider range of marginalised and excluded young people, some of whom may never get employment. At the same time we should be aware of marginalised young people whom it does not cover, i.e. those in precarious employment, forced into the informal sector (with low pay and poor terms and conditions) or into low-productivity self-employment - what we might call 'hidden unemployment'.