

LIBERIA

The ILO Work4Youth project worked with the Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) to implement two rounds of the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) in 2012 and 2014 (June–August, both surveys). The results of the first survey were published in Sajith de Mel, Sara Elder and Marc Vansteenkiste (2013): *Labour market transitions of young women and men in Liberia*, Work4Youth Publication Series No. 3 (Geneva, ILO). The objective of this country note is to offer a general summary of youth labour market trends in Liberia based on the SWTS. Youth is defined as 15-29.

Main findings of the ILO SWTS

Human capital and mismatch

- Most of the surveyed youth had attended school or a training programme at some point in their lives (88.5 per cent in 2014). About half of the youth population (50.1 per cent) was enrolled in school in 2014 with the remaining having either completed school (9.6 per cent) or left school before graduation (28.8 per cent). Both surveys showed that still too many young people are excluded from the educational system. In 2014, 14.2 per cent of young women and 8.2 per cent of young men had no schooling or training.
- SWTS results showed a strong correlation between the levels of education and a young person's labour market transition: the higher the educational attainment, the more likely a young person was to complete his or her labour market transition to stable and/or satisfactory employment.
- A vast majority of employed youth in Liberia are undereducated for the job they were doing (63.1 per cent in 2014). Rarely were the respondents classified as overqualified for their occupation (4.2 per cent).

Underutilization of the youth labour potential remains a top concern

- Both rounds of survey registered a high youth labour underutilization rate: it was 76.1 per cent in 2014 and 77.6 per cent in 2012. In 2014, the share of underutilized labour potential consisted of 45.7 per cent of the youth population in irregular employment (either in self-employment or paid employment with contract duration less than 12 months), 16.2 per cent unemployed and 14.2 per cent inactive non-students.

The ILO **School-to-work transitions surveys (SWTS)** are implemented as an outcome of the Work4Youth (W4Y) project, a partnership between the ILO and The MasterCard Foundation. The project has a budget of US\$14.6 million and will run for five years to mid-2016. Its aim is to “promote decent work opportunities for young men and women through knowledge and action”. The immediate objective of the partnership is to produce more and better labour market information specific to youth in developing countries, focusing in particular on transition paths to the labour market.

See the website www.ilo.org/w4y for more information.

- The youth unemployment rate (strict definition)¹ decreased from 19.8 per cent in 2012 to 11.8 per cent in 2014 and the rate based on the broad definition from 37.0 to 24.3 per cent.
- Both surveys showed that most youth in Liberia were still in transition in the labour market as they had not yet attained a stable or satisfactory job (74.0 per cent in 2012 and 68.4 per cent in 2014). Among the youth who completed their transition, many attained their stable or satisfactory job as a first labour market experience, but those who had not done so spent an average of 6 years in transition.
- The share of youth neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) in Liberia increased between 2012 and 2014 (from 16.8 to 23.0 per cent). The share of NEETs among young women was nearly double that of young men (at 29.2 and 16.6 per cent, respectively), reflecting primarily the inability of many young women to go to school and the early age of family formation in the country.

Low quality jobs remain a strong hindrance to the country's productive transformation

- One in two (50.4 per cent) young Liberians was employed in 2014, with too many working from a very young age; 7.1 per cent of young adolescents aged 15–17 were out of school and working.
- More than four in five (85.2 per cent) employed youth remained in vulnerable employment as own-account workers (36.8 per cent) or unpaid family workers (48.4 per cent). At the same time, nearly two-thirds (65.2 per cent in 2014) of youth in paid employment were engaged without a written contract.
- Unlike many other sub-Saharan African countries, more youth are employed in the services sector in Liberia than the agricultural sector. The distribution of employment by broad sector in 2014 was 60.4 per cent in services (up from 55.0 per cent in 2012), 30.6 per cent in agriculture and 8.2 per cent in industry.
- Informal employment affects more than nine in ten (91.3 per cent) young workers in Liberia. Rates are higher among young women and youth in urban areas.

Selection of data tables

Table 1. Youth population by educational status and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Educational status	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Never attended school	10.5	11.5	5.2	8.2	15.2	14.6
Dropped-out before graduation or completion of school	19.9	28.8	19.8	24.9	20.0	32.6
Currently attending school	60.2	50.1	65.0	56.8	56.0	43.7
Education completed	8.7	9.6	9.7	10.1	7.9	9.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 2. Key youth labour market indicators – traditional distribution by sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Employed	49.3	50.4	54.9	53.7	44.4	47.1
Unemployed	12.1	6.7	9.8	5.8	14.2	7.6
Inactive	38.6	42.9	35.3	40.5	41.5	45.3
Total youth population	100	100	100	100	100	100
Youth labour force participation rate	61.4	57.1	64.7	59.5	58.5	54.7
Youth unemployment rate (strict definition)	19.8	11.8	15.1	9.8	24.2	13.8

¹ The “strict” definition of unemployment refers to persons without work, available to work and actively engaged in a job search. The “broad” definition excludes the job search criteria. The youth unemployment rate is the number of unemployed persons divided by the youth labour force (employed plus unemployed).

Table 3. Key youth labour market indicators – alternative distribution by sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
In regular employment	5.8	4.7	9.0	7.5	3.0	1.9
In irregular employment	43.5	45.7	45.9	46.2	41.3	45.2
Unemployed (broad)	28.9	16.2	23.7	14.0	33.4	18.3
Inactive students	16.7	19.2	18.1	21.5	15.4	17.0
Inactive non-students	5.2	14.2	3.3	10.8	6.8	17.6
Total youth population	100	100	100	100	100	100
Youth unemployment rate (broad definition)	37.0	24.3	30.2	20.6	42.9	28.0
Youth labour underutilization rate	77.6	76.1	72.9	71.0	81.5	81.1

Table 4. Youth neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) by sex and composition, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Sex	2012			2014		
	NEET rate	of which:		NEET rate	of which:	
		Inactive non-students	Unemployed non-students		Inactive non-students	Unemployed non-students
Total	16.8	10.7	6.0	23.0	20.2	2.8
Male	12.4	8.3	4.1	16.6	14.7	1.8
Female	20.5	12.9	7.7	29.2	25.5	3.7

Table 5. Employed youth by status in employment and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Status in employment	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Wage and salaried workers (employees)	11.7	9.9	17.7	14.9	5.3	4.4
Employers	3.5	2.4	4.1	3.7	2.8	1.0
Own-account workers	42.3	36.8	37.8	36.6	47.1	37.1
Contributing (unpaid) family workers	32.0	48.4	28.3	42.3	35.9	55.1
Members of producers' cooperatives	0.7	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.6	0.1
Not classified	9.8	2.2	11.3	2.1	8.2	2.4
Total employed youth	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 6. Young wage and salaried workers by type of contract and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Type of contract	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Written agreement	32.7	34.8	30.6	31.9	40.1	45.4
Oral agreement	67.3	65.2	69.4	68.1	59.9	54.6
Unlimited duration	57.4	56.6	59.4	55.3	50.3	61.4
Limited duration	42.6	43.4	40.6	44.7	49.7	38.6
– Less than 12 months	29.7	30.9	31.2	31.4	24.4	28.9
– 12 months to less than 36 months	5.7	6.5	5.0	6.4	8.1	6.6
– 36 months or more	7.2	6.1	4.5	6.9	17.2	3.1
Total young wage and salaried workers	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 7. Distribution of youth employment by sector, aggregate and 1-digit level, and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Sector	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Agriculture	30.6	30.6	33.5	30.0	27.4	31.3
Industry	11.5	8.2	15.9	14.7	6.9	1.1
Services	55.0	60.4	47.3	53.9	63.4	67.6
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	30.6	30.6	33.5	30.0	27.4	31.3
Mining	2.4	1.3	3.5	2.3	1.3	0.2
Manufacturing	5.3	3.9	5.0	6.6	5.6	0.9
Electricity, gas, steam	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.6	0	0
Construction	3.2	2.2	6.2	4.1	0	0
Wholesale and retail trade	26.7	27.4	17.5	17.0	36.6	39.0
Transport	4.3	3.4	5.9	6.3	2.6	0.1
Accommodation	2.3	0.5	0.4	0.1	4.3	1.0
Information and communications	2.0	0.7	3.3	1.3	0.6	0
Financial activities	0.3	0	0.6	0	0	0
Professional scientific activities	0.5	0	0.9	0	0	0
Administrative and support activities	1.0	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.9	1.3
Public administration	0	0.3	0	0	0	0.7
Education	1.8	4.4	2.4	7.5	1.2	0.9
Health and social work	0.4	21.4	0.1	19.6	0.8	23.4
Arts and entertainment	0.8	0.7	1.6	0.7	0	0.7
Other services	1.9	0.5	2.7	0.6	1.1	0.5
Private households	13.0	0.1	10.9	0.1	15.3	0
Activities of extraterritorial organizations	0	0.1	0	0.1	0	0

Table 8. Youth informal employment by composition and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Youth informal employment rate	82.5	91.3	79.5	88.2	85.8	94.6
<i>Of which:</i>						
Informal employment outside the informal sector	19.0	13.5	20.8	17.8	17.0	8.8
Employment in the informal sector	63.5	77.7	58.7	70.5	68.7	85.7

Table 9. Employed youth by overeducation, undereducation or matching qualifications and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Qualifications mismatch	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Undereducated	59.6	63.1	48.0	57.6	69.4	68.3
Overeducated	6.3	4.2	7.8	7.0	5.0	1.6
Matching qualifications	30.2	30.5	38.7	34.8	23.1	26.5
Not classified	3.9	2.1	5.6	0.6	2.5	3.6
Total employed youth	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 10. Youth unemployment rate by level of completed educational attainment and sex, 2014 (%)

Educational attainment	Total	Male	Female
Less than primary (including no schooling)	6.8	6.2	7.1
Primary	10.2	5.3	15.0
Secondary general	14.2	9.4	20.1
University and postgraduate studies	1.4	1.3	1.5

Note: Data for 2012 is not shown due to errors in the coding of educational classification.

Table 11. Unemployed youth by duration of job search and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Duration of job search	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Less than a week	1.2	2.6	2.2	3.2	0.6	2.1
1 week to less than 1 month	6.4	4.4	11.3	2.9	3.5	5.5
1 month to less than 3 months	18.0	4.3	11.7	5.7	21.9	3.2
3 months to less than 6 months	9.0	10.6	14.6	12.4	5.7	9.2
6 months to less than 1 year	5.1	6.7	3.7	2.8	6.0	9.5
More than a year	54.3	71.5	54.7	73.0	54.0	70.4
N/A	5.9	0	1.8	0	8.4	0
Total unemployed youth	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 12. Youth population by stages and subcategories of transition and sex, 2012 and 2014 (%)

Stage of transition	Total		Male		Female	
	2012	2014	2012	2014	2012	2014
Transition completed	7.9	9.7	7.7	10.2	8.0	9.3
Transited to stable employment	1.9	1.6	2.7	2.4	1.3	0.8
Transited to satisfactory temporary employment	0	0.2	0	0.4	0	0
Transited to satisfactory self-employment	5.9	7.9	5.0	7.3	6.8	8.5
In transition	74.0	68.7	73.1	66.8	74.8	70.5
Unemployed (broad definition)	11.6	8.8	9.2	5.8	13.7	11.7
In non-satisfactory temporary employment	0.9	0.8	1.6	1.2	0.3	0.4
In non-satisfactory self-employment	14.3	15.6	13.3	14.5	15.1	16.7
Active students	43.5	30.9	46.9	35.3	40.6	26.7
Inactive non-students with aim to work in the future	3.7	12.6	2.2	9.9	5.1	15.1
Transition not yet started	17.9	20.9	18.9	22.4	17.1	19.4
Inactive students	16.7	19.2	18.1	21.5	15.4	17.0
Inactive non-students with no plans to work in the future	1.2	1.7	0.8	0.9	1.7	2.4
Not classifiable	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.8
Total youth population	100	100	100	100	100	100

Note: Unless other specified, the categories exclude current students.