

▶ ILO Youth Country Briefs

June 2023

Senegal¹

Key points

- ▶ Senegal has maintained moderate to good economic growth throughout the new millennium, and is classified as a lower-middle income country. Senegal has high informality, a relatively low employment to population ratio, high Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) rates amongst the young and substantial gender gaps. The female employment to population ratio is more than twenty-five percentage points below that of their male counterparts. Almost one in every two young Senegalese women aged between 15 and 29 is NEET – more than twice the rate observable amongst young men.
- ▶ NEET rates are high amongst young people with disabilities, for both young men and women. Amongst young women, NEET rates are also highest amongst the least educated, although, even young women with tertiary education have higher NEET rates than young men whatever their level of educational attainment.
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic hit youth (and adult) labour markets hard. Young people were affected by widespread job losses, work and pay reductions and interruptions to education and training. Working poverty increased in the wake of the pandemic, sharpening concerns about job quality and youth NEET rates.
- ▶ Youth employment has been a policy priority in Senegal since at least 2004. Successive development policies, including the New National Employment Policy (NPNE) of 2017 and the Emergent Senegal Plan (ESP) 2019-2023, have explicit youth employment objectives. However, the youth employment framework contains policy gaps on: addressing high NEET and inactivity rates among young people, particularly among young women, rural youth and young persons with disabilities; closing gender gap in higher education participation; and facilitating school-to-work transitions.
- ▶ The challenge to provide decent work for young people remains acute and has been further accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic. More relevant and timely information is needed, such as from labour force survey data. There is also a need for more consistent monitoring and evaluation of youth employment policies and programmes.

¹ This brief was prepared by a team lead by Niall O'Higgins and including Vipasana Karkee, Karina Levina, Marcelo Cuautle Segovia and Anna Barford. The brief is based primarily on an analysis of the available micro-data and a desk review of policy documents. Helpful comments and suggestions were provided by Mallory Baxter, Maurice Lorka and Tamba Ngom (MCF) and Jonas Bausch, Steve Kapsos, Bernd Mueller and Jean Ndenzako (ILO).

► 1. Introduction: Contextual indicators

This brief summarises youth² labour markets and the school-to-work (SWT) transition in Senegal and its evolution in recent years. This introduction provides an overview of the aggregate economic and labour market context in the country. This is followed in section 2 by a discussion of the main characteristics of, and trends in, the country's youth labour market. Section 3 looks more explicitly at the SWT in Senegal seen through the lens of the ILO's SWT indicators and section 4 considers the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Section 5 briefly discusses key youth employment related policy initiatives in the country and section 6 summarises the main issues and challenges identified in the preceding analysis.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, Senegal has had a moderate growth performance, following a growth path similar to the global one. Real growth rates for Senegal were lower than for the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region, averaging 4.1 per cent between 2000 and 2019 (Figure 1), but still above annual population growth which averaged 2.7 per cent over the same period.

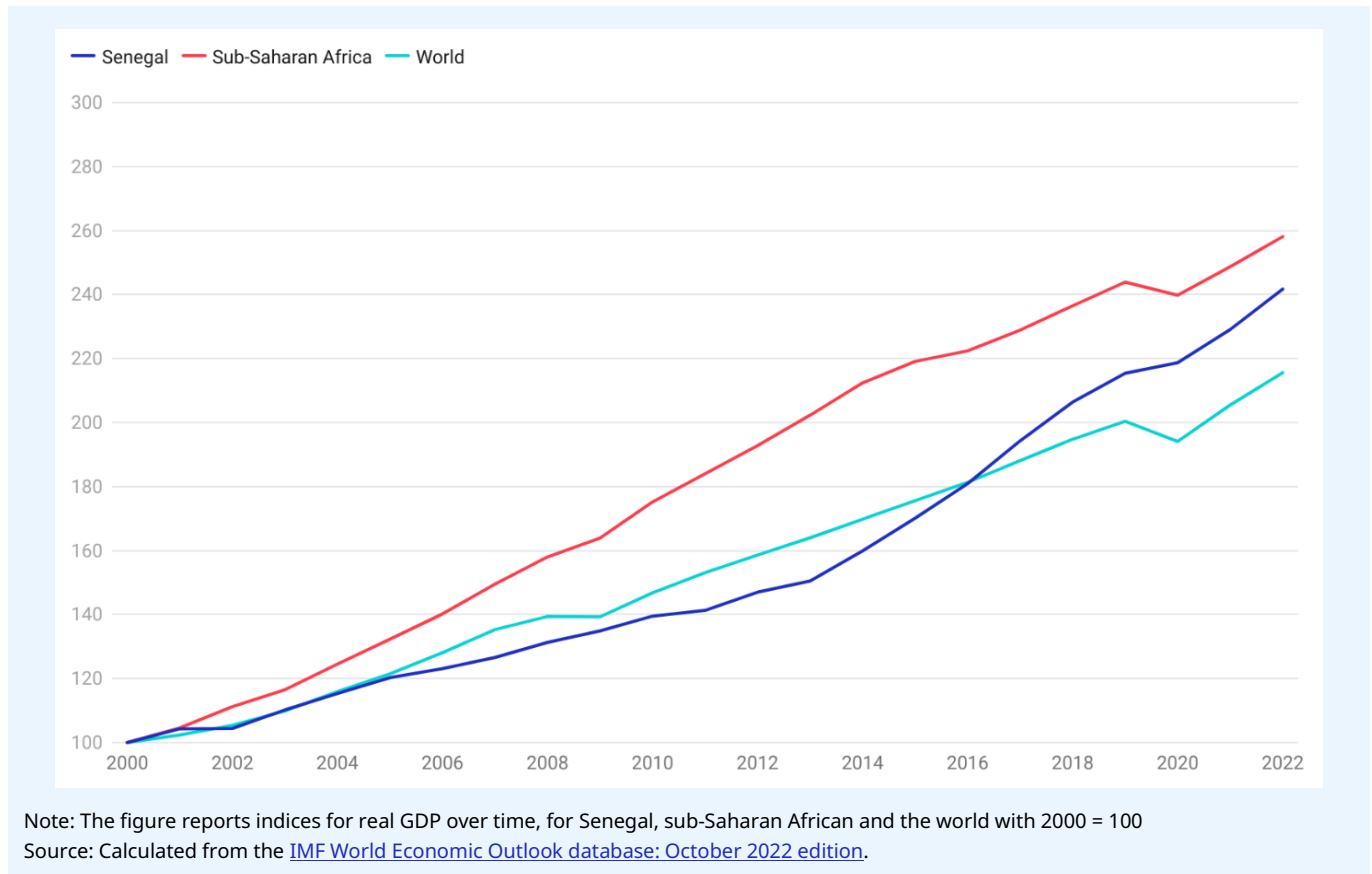
► Box 1: YouthSTATS, a partnership between the ILO and the Mastercard Foundation

The ILO, in partnership with the [Mastercard Foundation](#), has created a regularly updated dataset called [YouthSTATS](#), available on [ILOSTAT](#). The dataset was first produced by the ILO as part of its partnership with the Mastercard Foundation on the “[Work4Youth](#)” project which concluded in 2016. Initially composed of labour indicators for young people aged 15-29 derived from [school-to-work transition surveys](#) conducted through the partnership, the dataset now benefits from the ILO's stock of [harmonized labour force survey micro-datasets](#). It serves as a central repository of international youth labour statistics.

This brief is one of seven country briefs undertaken under the new partnership. The countries covered are Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda.

² Throughout the brief, youth are defined as young people aged 15-29.

► **Figure 1. Real GDP, Senegal, Sub-Saharan Africa and the World, 2000-2022; 2000=100**



Between 2000 and 2010 annual real economic growth in Senegal averaged 3.4 per cent. Things then picked up a little between 2014 and 2019, with a real growth rate averaging 6.2 per cent per annum. Senegal maintained positive growth during the COVID-19 pandemic, at 1.3 per cent in 2020 and 6.1 per cent in 2021.

Senegal is ranked amongst the world's lower-middle income countries³ with a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) adjusted Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita of US\$3,505 in 2022.⁴ This is 89 per cent of the sub-Saharan African PPP GDP of US\$3,926.

In 2019, the employment to population ratio in Senegal of 49.3 per cent was significantly below the average for SSA of 63.5 per cent, or indeed the world (Table 1). This is partly driven by the low ratio for women in Senegal, which is more than twenty percentage points below the SSA regional ratio for women.

³ See <https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/methods/classification-country-groupings/>.

⁴ The PPP adjusted GDP p.c. estimates used in this brief are from the IMF World Economic Outlook database, October 2022.

► **Table 1. Employment to population ratio by sex in Senegal, Sub-Saharan Africa, Africa, and the World, 2019 (age 15+)**

	Male	Female	Total
Senegal (LFS)	62.8	36.3	49.3
Africa (ILO Modelled Estimates)	67.1	49.9	58.4
Sub-Saharan Africa (ILO Modelled Estimates)	68.3	58.8	63.5
World (ILO Modelled Estimates)	69.4	45.2	57.3

Source: ILO Modelled estimates and Author's calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Getting a job does not guarantee sufficient income to escape poverty. In 2022, the extreme working poverty rate (EWPR) in Senegal was estimated as 8.1 per cent.⁵ This is much below the rate of 31.1 per cent for the African continent or indeed the rate of 35.5 per cent for SSA. To be sure, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a small increase in working poverty in Senegal, but despite this, and in line with the strong economic growth especially since 2014 the extreme poverty rate fell much faster in Senegal than in SSA or Africa as a whole. Between 2010 and 2022, extreme working poverty fell by 31.0 percentage points in Senegal, compared to 8.4 percentage points in SSA and 6.1 percentage points in Africa.

A majority of workers in Senegal are employed in Services. Amongst women, the service sector accounts for over 70 per cent of employment; with 17 per cent working in agriculture and the remaining 11 per cent in industry. Services is also, by far, a larger employer of men than either Agriculture and Industry, accounting for nearly 47 per cent of male jobs, while agriculture and industry each account for around one in four male jobs (Table 2).

► **Table 2. Employment distribution by economic activity by sex in Senegal, 2019 (age 15+)**

	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture	26.1	17.9	23.0
Industry	27.1	11.2	21.1
Services	46.8	70.9	55.9

Source: Author's calculations based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Informal employment is pervasive in Senegal. In 2019, over 90 per cent of workers in the country were informally employed; 89.1 per cent of men and 91.9 per cent of women.⁶ Informality is even more pronounced amongst young people, accounting for 19 out of 20 workers aged 15-29 in 2019. In all cases, informality rates fell slightly between 2017 and 2019. Nevertheless, the informal economy accounts for more workers in Senegal than in many other comparable African countries.

► 2. Youth labour market trends

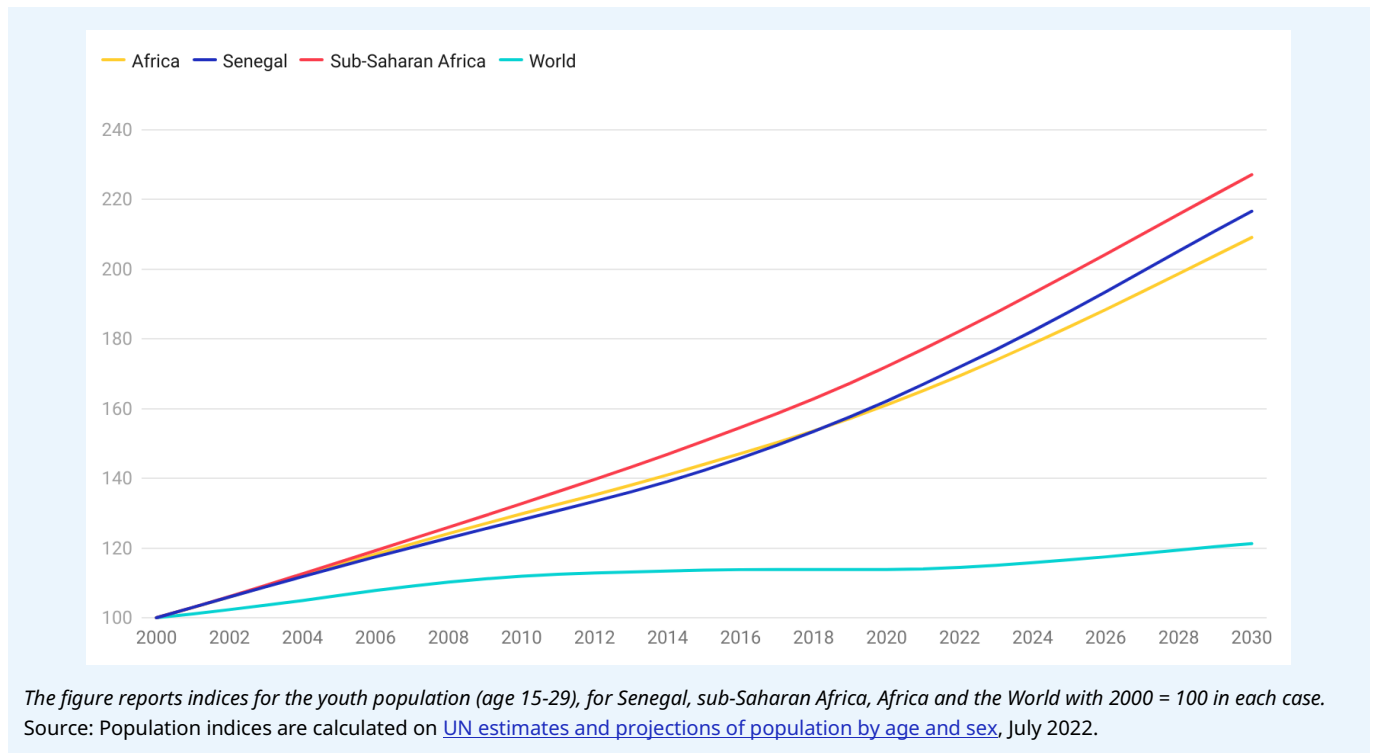
Africa is a relatively young continent, with a youth population which continues to grow with all the potential and challenges that this brings (ILO, 2020). Expansion of the Senegalese youth population has closely mirrored the growth of the youth population in the continent as a whole. From 2000 to 2022, the number of young people in Senegal grew on average by

⁵ [ILO modelled estimates](#), November 2022. The working poverty rate identifies the share of the employed population who are living in poverty despite being employed, implying that their employment-related incomes are not sufficient to lift them and their families out of poverty and ensure decent living conditions. Extreme working poverty is defined as the percentage of the employed population living in households with a per capita income of under US\$1.90 PPP (2011 prices) per day (ILO, 2019a). See also, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/working-poverty/>.

⁶ Author calculations on the Senegal Labour Force Survey Micro-data.

2.6 per cent per year, which is roughly halfway between the annual growth rate of in Africa as a whole (2.4 per cent) and in SSA (2.8 per cent). Both are well above the global growth rate of the youth population of 0.6 per cent (figure 2).

► **Figure 2. Youth population in Senegal, Sub-Saharan Africa, Africa and the World, 2000-2030; 2000=100**



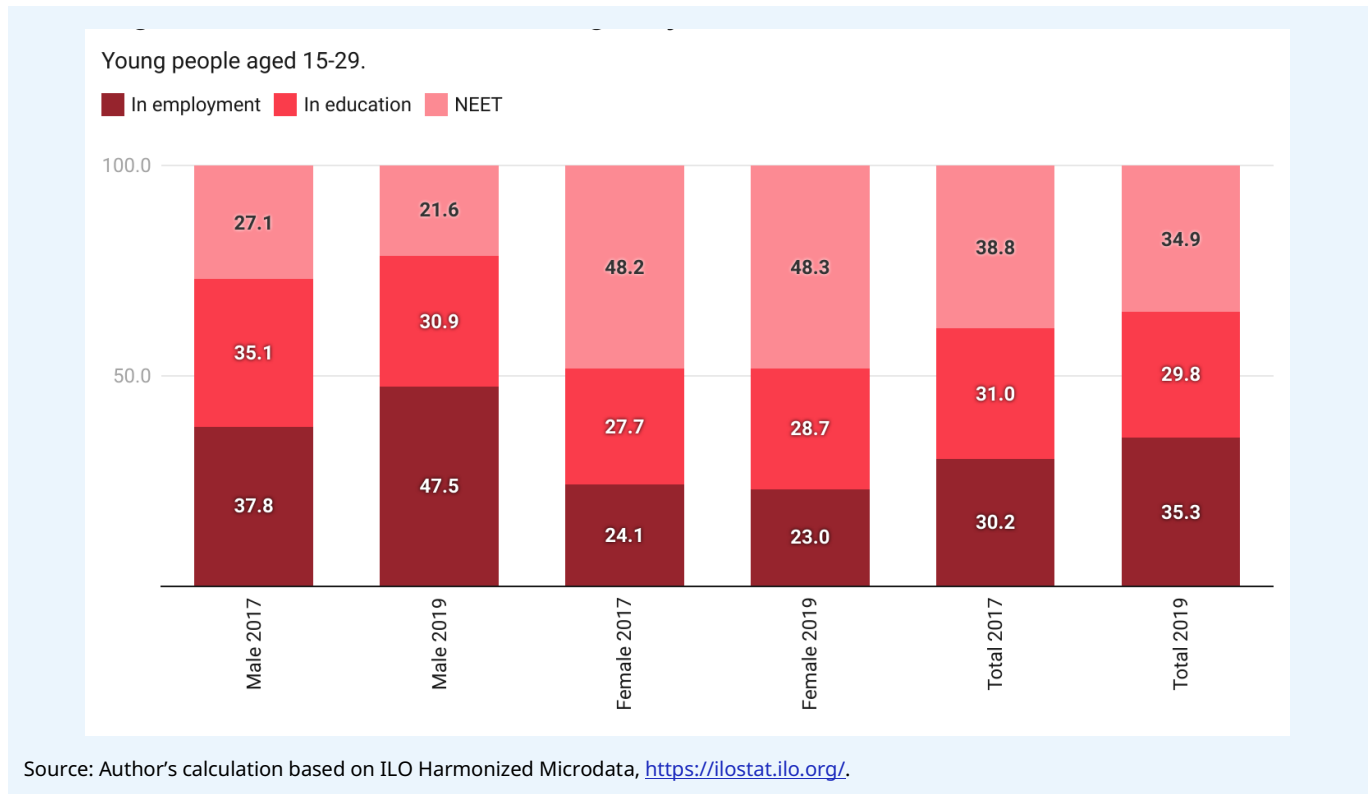
Educational attainment in Senegal is low compared to other countries on the continent. UNESCO estimates that the primary school completion rate in Senegal in 2020 was 50.8 per cent; over 12 percentage points below the SSA average of 63.2 per cent.⁷ Similarly, 2020 completion rates for lower and upper secondary education were 28.4 and 10.5 per cent respectively, considerably lower than the corresponding SSA averages of 44.5 and 26.7 per cent. Progress since 2012 includes a 7.6 percentage point (p.p.) increase in lower secondary completion rates and 2.6 percentage point increase in upper secondary completion.

This progress is primarily due to substantial increases in the educational attainment of girls. In 2020, the primary completion rate of girls was well above that of boys – 54.0 per cent against 44.7 per cent. This positive gender imbalance reduces when examining gender differences in lower secondary completion rates – 29.2 per cent against 26.1 per cent. By the time one gets to upper secondary completion, the gender gap has reversed with rates of 10.3 for girls and 10.8 for boys.

The emerging male predominance at higher levels of educational attainment is reflected in gender gaps in educational participation, although the difference in participation rates between young men and young women narrowed significantly between 2017 and 2019; from 7.4 to 2.2 percentage points (figure 3).

⁷ <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/> [accessed October 28, 2022].

► **Figure 3. Youth status in Senegal by sex, 2017 and 2019**



As regards the other broad components of youth activity, employment and young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) (box 2), there are even greater gender gaps. In 2019, nearly half of all young men aged 15-29 had a job, whereas less than one in four young women did. Young people (aged 15-29) who do find employment are more likely to work in agriculture or industry, and less likely to work in services than those aged 30 and above: 28.2 of young men and 20.4 per cent of young women are employed in agriculture, and 32.5 per cent of young men, and 12.9 per cent of young women work in the industrial sector (table 3). As with workers of all ages, however, services are the largest employer of both young women and young men.

► **Box 2. NEET**

With the establishment in 2015 of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the NEET rate – the share of young people not in employment, education or training – became the [target indicator \(SDG8.6.1\)](#) to measure progress in youth labour markets. Although NEETs also include (most of) the young unemployed,⁸ the NEET rate is a broader concept encompassing all young people who are, for whatever reason, not studying or working for pay or profit. NEETs are consequently a much larger, as well as a more heterogeneous, group than the young unemployed.

Inter alia, the shift from the unemployment rate to the NEET rate as the focus of policies to promote decent work amongst young people leads naturally to a broadening of the scope of interventions. Reducing the NEET rate can be achieved both by increasing entry into employment, but also by increasing participation in education and training. Moreover, there are many factors underlying (different types) of NEET status. These include the obstacles to obtaining decent work faced by specific groups – such as young women and/or young people with disabilities.

Source (and for further information): O'Higgins et al. (2023)

⁸ Excluding a relatively small but increasingly significant group of young people who are both unemployed and in education.

► **Table 3. Youth (age 15-29) employment distribution by economic activity and sex in Senegal, 2019**

	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture	28.2	20.4	25.7
Industry	32.5	12.9	26.2
Services	39.3	66.7	48.1

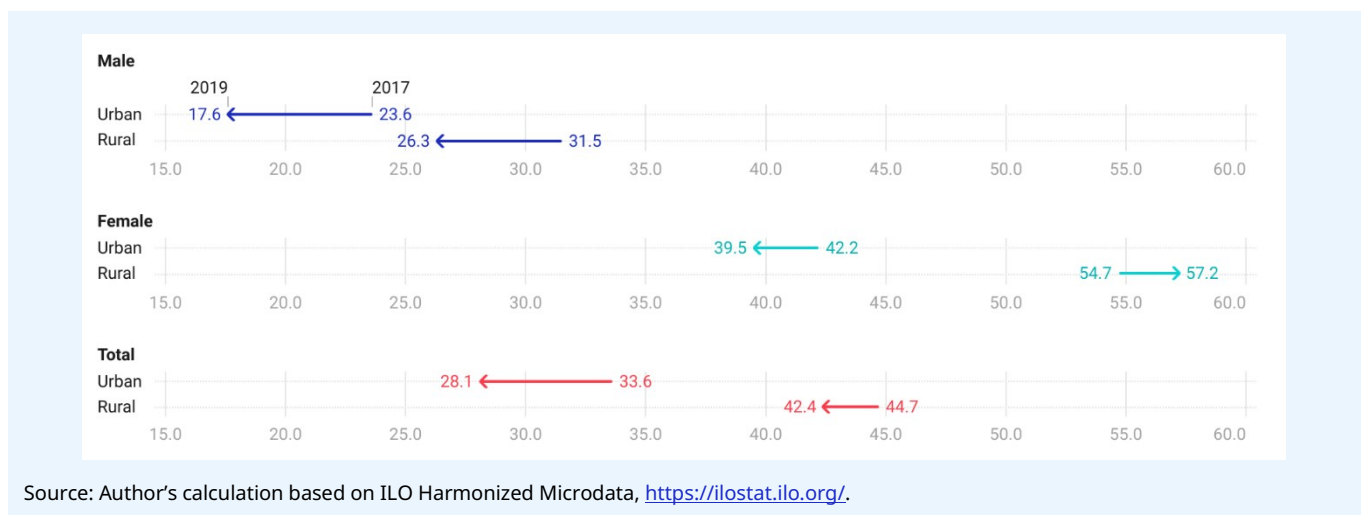
Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

The share of young women who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2019 was 48.3 per cent – almost one in two.⁹ This compares to NEET rates amongst young men of 21.6 per cent, or roughly one in five. Between 2017 and 2019 the gender disparity worsened considerably. In 2017, there were roughly 1.8 young female NEETs for every young male NEET, by 2019 this ratio was 2.2. This change was due entirely to a reduction in the NEET rates of young men, rather than any significant growth in NEET rates of young women.

Amongst both young men and young women, almost all young NEETs are inactive; that is, they are not actively seeking work and so do not appear in unemployment statistics. This underscores the importance of using NEET as a key indicator of the labour market status of young people, given it is much broader than unemployment.

As is typical in much of the world, and especially in low and middle income countries (O'Higgins et al., 2023), NEET rates are significantly higher – for both young women and young men - in rural compared to urban areas (figure 4). In line with the overall NEET situation, female NEET rates are higher than male rates in both rural and urban areas; moreover, the gender gap is wider in rural areas, as is the case also at the global level (O'Higgins et al., 2023). Furthermore, whereas between 2017 and 2019 NEET rates fell in urban areas for both sexes, in rural areas NEET rates amongst young women – but not young men – increased. As a result, by 2019 almost three in every five young women in rural areas was NEET.

► **Figure 4. Share of young people (aged 15-29) not in education, employment or training by sex and geographic location, from 2017 to 2019 (%)**

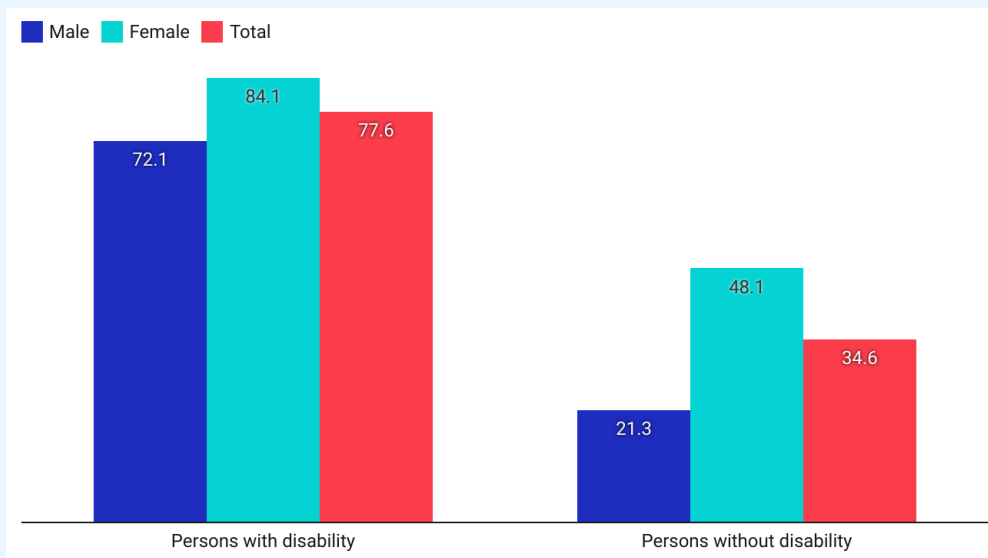


Only 0.6 per cent of young people aged 15-29 report themselves as living with a disability in Senegal. Young persons with disabilities in Senegal are much more likely to be NEET than those without disabilities (figure 5). Almost 17 out of every 20 young women with disabilities (84.1 per cent) in the country are NEET. Although NEET rates are lower amongst young men than young women, for those with and those without disabilities, the relative disadvantage of living with a disability for

⁹ For a discussion of the concept of NEET and its usefulness in examining youth labour markets, see for example, ILO (2019b). O'Higgins et al. (2023) contains a more extensive discussion.

young men is relatively high. At 72.1 per cent, young men with disabilities have NEET rates three times as big as those without disabilities (21.3 per cent).

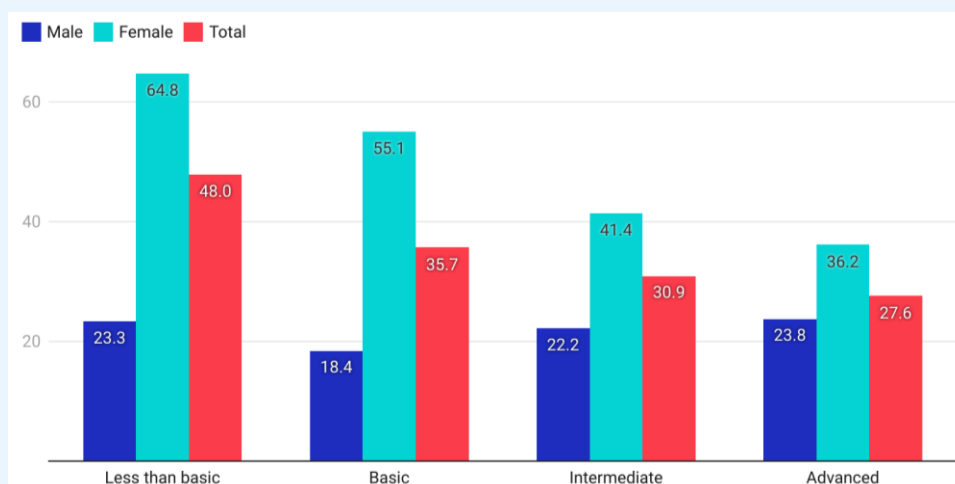
► **Figure 5. Share of young people (aged 15-29) not in education, employment or training by sex and disability, 2019 (%)**



Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Educational attainment also affects the likelihood of being NEET. Globally, NEET rates typically fall with higher levels of educational attainment (O'Higgins et al., 2023), and overall this is true also in Senegal (figure 6). However, this pattern is influenced by the relationship between the NEET rates of young women at differing levels of educational attainment. Amongst young women, NEET rates decline quite markedly as educational attainment rises, from 64.8 per cent of those with less than basic education, to 36.2 per cent for young women with tertiary (advanced) educational qualifications. Still, a degree does not guarantee employment for young women, as more than one in three tertiary educated young women are NEET. In contrast, the NEET rates of young men are more stable as educational attainment rises.

► **Figure 6. Share of young people (aged 25-29) not in education, employment or training by sex and educational attainment, 2019 (%)**



Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

► 3. School to work transition indicators

The ILO's school-to-work transition (SWT) indicators have been designed to give a more detailed classification of young people's transition pathways into the labour market. The two key indicators are the school-to-work transition stage and the school-to-work transition form. The first indicator classifies youth into three groups according to their stage in the school-to-work transition: (I) transited, (II) in transition, and (III) transition not yet started (box 3). To have transited depends on finding satisfactory or stable waged employment. The second concerns the specific form of the transition outcome of those who have completed the transition – stable wage employment on the one hand, satisfactory self-employment, or a satisfactory temporary job on the other.¹⁰

► Box 3: Stages and forms of transition from school to work

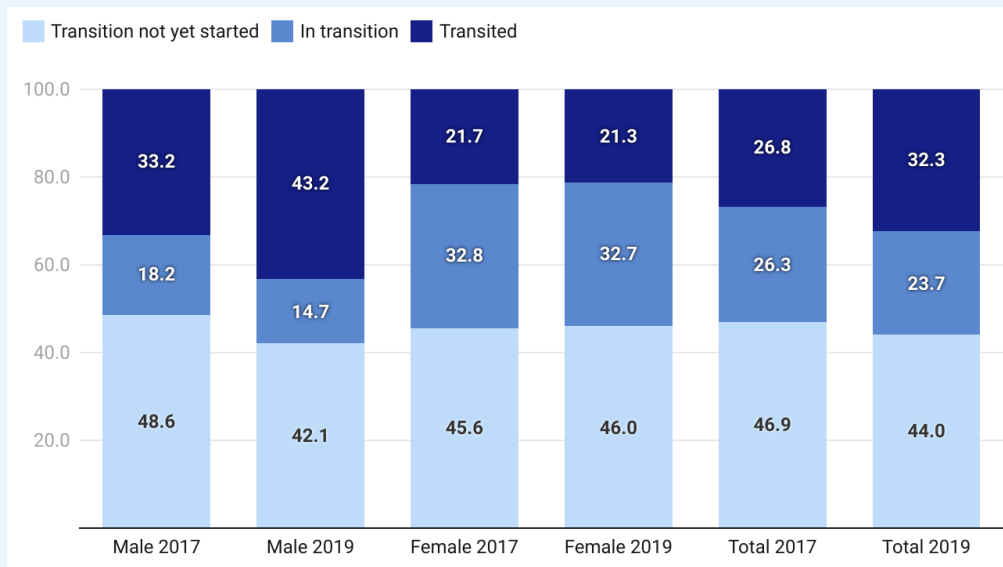
- I. Transited** – A young person (aged 15 to 29) who is not in school and currently employed in:
 - a. A stable job, or
 - b. Satisfactory self-employment or a satisfactory temporary job
- II. In transition** – A young person (aged 15 to 29) who is:
 - c. In school and currently employed or unemployed (in the labour force)
 - d. Not in school and unemployed
 - e. Not in school and currently employed in a temporary and unsatisfactory job (*unsatisfactory work*)
 - f. Not in school and not in employment but aiming to be employed later (*potential labour force*)
- III. Transition not yet started** – A young person (aged 15 to 29) who is:
 - g. Still in school and outside the labour force
 - h. Not in school, outside the labour force and with no intention of looking for a job

Information on the stage of transition and NEET status are clearly interrelated. Some young NEETs are in transition captured by group d.: those who are “not in school and unemployed”, and group f.: those who are “not in school and not in employment but aiming to be employed later”. They also comprise some of those whose transition has not yet started; specifically, group h.: young people who are “not in school, outside the labour force and with no intention of looking for a job”

A large proportion – nearly half – of young people in Senegal have not yet started their school-to-work transition (figure 7). In as much as this implies that many young people in the country are still in education, then this could be a rather positive indication. Yet, it was shown above that educational attainment in Senegal is relatively low. In fact, the labour force survey data also demonstrate that in Senegal in 2019 young NEETs comprised 39.3 per cent of young women and 27.5 per cent of young men who have not started the transition. This, in itself, is of concern. This share is, for example, much higher than the corresponding figure for Rwanda (22.6 per cent and 22.5 per cent for young women and young men respectively).

¹⁰ Satisfactory' here is based on the expressed willingness of the concerned young person to remain in the job whether temporary or self-employed. Neither 'stable' nor 'satisfactory' jobs necessarily correspond to Decent Work per se (ILO, 2019c).

► **Figure 7. Distribution of young men and women (aged 15-29) by stage of transition in Senegal, 2017 and 2019 (%)**



Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

In line with the remarkable increase in employment amongst young men between 2017 and 2019 (figure 3), there was a ten percentage point increase in the share of young men who had completed their transition, from 33.2 per cent to 43.2 over this short period. Meanwhile the share of young men who had not yet started their transition fell from 48.6 per cent to 42.1 per cent; and the share of young men in transition also fell from 18.2 per cent to 14.7 per cent. In contrast school-to-work transition changed little amongst young women in 2017-2019. Whilst the share of young women and young men who had not yet started their transition was broadly similar, however, in 2019, young women were more than twice as likely as young men to be in transition (32.7 per cent compared to 14.7 per cent); and much less likely than young men to have transitioned (21.3 per cent of young women, 43.2 per cent of young men).

► 4. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

There is no doubt that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on labour markets. The share of the population in extreme working poverty is estimated by the ILO to have increased from 8.7 per cent in 2019 to 9.0 per cent in 2020. Labour Force Survey data is not available after 2019 to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth labour markets. However, to gauge the impact of the pandemic on youth and adult labour markets in several countries, the ILO has recently undertaken a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on labour markets and livelihoods (box 4).

► **Box 4. ILO Global Survey on COVID-19 impacts in the world of work**

In collaboration with Ipsos, this multi-country survey was conducted between November 2021 and March 2022 to study the impacts of COVID-19 on education and labour markets in 40 countries. The study looks at the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on employment and education, job loss and interrupted enrolment in education, and future work aspirations. In Senegal, data-gathering targeted at 1,000 respondents using online, telephone, and face-to-face data collection.

Among the seven African countries covered by the ILO youth country briefs, four were included in this global survey, namely: Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Senegal.

The survey revealed that, in Senegal, 15.7 percent of young people – 17.8 per cent of young men and 14.2 per cent of young women – lost their job at some point following the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 (table 4). Although this affected young men more than young women, in terms of its longer-term impact, 70.0 per cent of young men who lost their job due to the pandemic subsequently regained it. Amongst young women who lost their job, just over half (54.6 per cent) regained employment, thus the longer term impact was greater for young women than young men. In other words, around 6.4 per cent of young female workers lost their job and did not subsequently regain employment, compared to 5.3 per cent of young male workers.

► **Table 4. Job loss among youth (age 15-29) due to the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent job recovery by sex (%)**

	Male	Female	Total
Lost a job at some point since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic	17.8	14.2	15.7
Retained employment after job loss	70.0	54.6	62.0

Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Amongst those who retained their jobs, many suffered reductions in their hours and/or pay (table 5). More than four out of five young people faced at least one of these changes in their work regimes since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

► **Table 5. Impacts of COVID-19 outbreak on employment among youth (age 15-19) by sex (%)**

	Male	Female	Total
Took leave or stopped working for 1 week or longer	41.4	43.2	42.0
Reduced hours worked	61.2	52.4	57.4
Worked extra hours	6.6	16.0	10.7
Started working from home or from home more	24.1	26.0	25.0
Reduced pay or income from employment	54.3	56.2	55.1
Faced at least one of the aforementioned events	80.5	82.0	81.2

Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Young people have also been faced by restrictions on their access to education and training (table 6). Over 85 per cent of young people faced some kind of interruption; for example, seven out of ten young men and almost eight out of ten young women stopped attending classes for at least one week or more.

► **Table 6. Impact of COVID-19 outbreak on education among youth (age 15-29) by sex (%)**

	Male	Female	Total
Stopped attending classes, in person, for 1 week or more	69.4	77.8	74.5
Switched to online classes or distance learning	37.5	29.6	32.7
Dropped out without completing your studies	21.8	14.3	17.2
Gave up plans to enrol in education or training	24.6	16.6	19.7
Faced at least one of the aforementioned events	86.3	85.9	86.0

Source: Author's calculation based on ILO Harmonized Microdata, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Clearly then, although systematic data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) is not yet available to confirm the situation, young people in Senegal have faced significant impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Broadly, gender differences in these effects are not large, however, the impact of the pandemic appears to have been slightly stronger for young women than young men.

► 5. Youth employment policy in Senegal

In summarising key features of the school-to-work transition and youth labour market outcomes in Senegal, it is important also to briefly consider the main youth employment policy initiatives in the country. This section seeks to do just that. Youth employment policies have most to offer when they are well-designed, involve strong collaboration between the relevant ministries and engage other stakeholders, including social partners, complement other policies, are properly resourced, and have realistic implementation plans alongside robust evaluation and reporting. Moreover, as the brief has illustrated in the previous sections, young people are a highly heterogeneous group, and for maximum benefit policies should address the needs of especially disadvantaged groups, such as young people with disabilities and those with low levels of education. What follows is a review of the main policies relating to youth employment in Senegal compiled in late 2022.

Youth employment has been a priority in Senegal for almost two decades. The 2004 Youth Sector Development Policy Letter (LPDSJ) included productive employment as a key dimension (Government of Senegal, 2004). A decade on, the 2014 National Employment Policy (PNE) focused on youth employment, while the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment (ANPEJ) was established to coordinate dispersed youth employment actions. The current youth employment policy framework includes the New National Employment Policy (NPNE), the Emergent Senegal Plan (PSE) and Priority Action Plan (PAP), and the Operational Action Plan for the Promotion of Youth Employment (PAOPEJ). Youth employment is also mainstreamed within other policies.

Youth employment policy framework

New National Employment Policy (NPNE) 2017-2020

The New National Employment Policy aimed to create 320,000 additional jobs (Government of Senegal, 2017, p.9). Youth employment, being key to poverty reduction, was addressed with various programmes: (1) Youth and Women's Employment Promotion Support Programme (PAPEJF) to create 15,000 direct and 7,500 indirect jobs in agricultural value chains in 2015-2019; (2) Community Agricultural Domains Programme (PRODAC) to generate 300,000 direct and indirect jobs women and young people; (3) a national programme to integrate vocational and higher education graduates into business incubators and youth-led enterprises (Government of Senegal, 2017); (4) five-year Operational Action Plans for the Comprehensive Promotion of Youth Employment (PAOPEJ, below).

Emergent Senegal Plan (PSE) 2014 and Priority Action Plan (PAP) 2019-2023

The Emergent Senegal Plan (PSE) aimed to create 100,000–150,000 productive jobs per year through private sector investments, youth self-employment, high employment projects, access to credit and labour-intensive public investment (Government of Senegal, 2014, p. 51). The PSE's Priority Action Plan (PAP) aim to create 200,000 jobs per year.¹¹ Youth-relevant priorities of PAP include structural transformation and economic growth with a focus on employment-rich sectors (mining, agriculture, construction and transportation). Meanwhile, human capital activities focus on technical and vocational education and training (TVET), youth entrepreneurship, and decent jobs for women and youth through job-creation and financial and non-financial services. The 2023 goal is to increase employment rates by 25.4 per cent for young people, and 34 per cent for women. COVID-19

Operational Action Plan for the Promotion of Youth Employment (PAOPEJ) 2018-2022

PAOPEJ has two goals. 1. Macroeconomic changes, including economic growth, economic transformation and higher labour productivity. 2. The creation of productive, decently paid, sustainable and declared jobs; alongside SMEs

¹¹ In Senegal, more than 100,000 young job seekers enter the job market annually. This figure is projected to rise to 300,000 individuals by 2030 (Government of Senegal, 2019, p. 14).

development to absorb workers (Government of Senegal, 2018). PAOPEJ aims to create 300,000 jobs, with potential to generate 600,000 jobs across the strategic priorities of job creation in promising areas (e.g. green economy and ICT), reform of the labour and social security laws to increase job creation, and boosting employability through skills (Government of Senegal, 2018). PAOPEJ co-ordinates youth-sensitive employment initiatives across sectors (agriculture, environmental protection, digital economy), between ministries (employment, gender, public services) and with development partners. Many objectives stem from existing programmes and the budget is decentralised; gender and disability mainstreaming is minimal. To date, the plan has not been evaluated.

National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Jobs (SNPEV) 2015-2019

Senegal's National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Jobs aims to enable income and employment growth through public and private investment in natural capital (Government of Senegal, 2015). Pillars 2 and 3 contain youth employment interventions. Pillar 2, on the creation of green jobs, promotes youth and women-led projects in agriculture, forestry, fisheries, renewable energy, resource-intensive processing, recycling and waste recovery. Pillar 3, on strengthening human capacity, boosts young people's employability in the green economy through business incubators, access to financial and non-financial services for youth-led micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, and educating trainers to teach entrepreneurship and other skills for green self-employment (Government of Senegal, 2015). The SNPEV does not engage TVET or public employment services to develop skills for the green economy, nor does it use macroeconomic policies to stimulate green job creation.

Other national policies contributing to youth employment

Senegal Digital Strategy (SSN) 2016-2025

The Senegal Digital Strategy aims to create 35,000 direct jobs and 105,000 indirect jobs. Youth employability and young digital entrepreneurs will be supported through mentoring, financial support and incubator services (Government of Senegal, 2016a). Youth are targeted without gender sensitivity.

National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality in Senegal (SNEEG) 2016-2026

Objective 3 "Economic empowerment of women based on gender equity" of the of the National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality in Senegal seeks to improving women's employment outcomes by enhancing access to productive and financial resources (Government of Senegal, 2016b). The SNEEG does not recognize the particular vulnerability of younger women in the labour market.

National Agricultural Investment Program for Food and Nutritional Security (PNIASAN) 2018-2022

The National Agricultural Investment Program for Food and Nutritional Security is a major agricultural investment instrument, promotes inclusive value chains with high potential for nutrition and job creation for young people and women. PNIASAN also aims to strengthen skills of agro-silvo-pastoral and fisheries workers, and boost food security and nutrition (Government of Senegal, 2018b).

Programme for the Improvement of Quality, Equity and Transparency in Education and Training (PAQUET-EF) 2018-2030

The Programme for the Improvement of Quality, Equity and Transparency in Education and Training includes two youth initiatives. A Programme for the Development of Vocational and Technical Training aligns vocational training with labour market needs, aiming for 30 per cent of secondary school pupils graduating to TVET by 2022 (Government of Senegal, 2018c, p. 66). An Apprenticeship Development Programme supports quality, accessible apprenticeships and professional training (Government of Senegal, 2018c, p. 69). Both initiatives address gender disparities and adaptability to labour market demands; yet neither considers green or digital skills, or the needs of specific sub-groups.

National Strategy for the Implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement (NS-AfCFTA) 2020

The National Strategy for the Implementation of the AfCFTA¹² Agreement aims to include young people and female entrepreneurs in intra-African trade (Government of Senegal, 2020). This involves increasing the productive capacities of youth- and women-led businesses, facilitating access to low-interest loans, and creating export opportunities e.g. labelling and protecting young entrepreneurs' products (ibid.).

► 6. Key issues and challenges

- At 49.3 per cent, the employment to population ratio is relatively low compared to the world and regional averages. This is primarily due to the relatively low female employment to population ratio of 36.3 per cent (in 2019); more than 26 percentage points below the corresponding male ratio.
- Job quality is a serious concern; over 95 per cent of young workers are in informal jobs.
- Adequate employment opportunities for young people are scarce. The NEET rate in 2019 stood at 34.9 per cent and, as with employment, there is a substantial gender gap. The 2019 NEET rate for young women was 48.3 per cent, almost one in two young women are NEET. This is more than twice as high as the corresponding rate for young men of 21.6 per cent.
- NEET rates are high amongst young people with disabilities.
- Amongst young women, NEET rates are highest amongst the least educated. Young women with tertiary education have higher NEET rates than young men at all levels of educational attainment.
- Despite the maintenance of positive economic growth in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a substantial impact on youth and adult labour markets in the country. The most recent labour force survey data is from 2019, prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, however, other sources show the pandemic had a substantial impact on Senegalese labour markets. The share of workers in extreme poverty increased from 28.9 per cent in 2019 to 30.2 per cent in 2020. Young people have been hit hard by the squeeze on employment; 17.8 per cent of young men and 14.2 per cent of young women lost their job following the onset of the pandemic. Many more who managed to remain in employment, faced reductions in working hours, reduced pay, or both. Moreover, as observed elsewhere (ILO, 2021), the pandemic also meant interruptions to education and training affecting more than one in two young people in Senegal who were participating in education and training, or who wished to do so.
- Youth employment has been a major policy priority in Senegal for nearly two decades. In 2004, employment was established as a key component in Senegal's Youth Sectoral Development Policy and subsequently youth employment was included in the Emergent Senegal Plan and the National Employment Policy. In 2014, the National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment was established to harmonize institutional coordination on youth employment.
- The New National Employment Policy of 2017 followed the Emergent Senegal Plan (PSE) of 2014 in prioritizing youth employment. It has presented new opportunities to address youth labour market challenges by calling for the development of five-year Operational Action Plan for the Promotion of Youth Employment with the aim of more holistic youth employment activities.
- The two-fold approach of the current Operational Action Plan for 2018-2022 focused on addressing macroeconomic challenges while supporting private sector development to absorb young workers in decent jobs. The comprehensive nature of the Plan increased its potential to address a wide range of youth employment deficits. However, the lack of gender and disability specific actions may have meant interventions that fail to address specific employment needs

¹² African Continental Free Trade Area.

of young women and youth with disabilities and so perpetuate labour market inequalities. Closer monitoring and evaluation is needed to assess the impact of this Plan.

- Other key Senegalese development policies have prioritized youth employment in line with the PSE and NPNE. This is reflected in the mainstreaming of youth employment measures in the National Agricultural Investment Program for Food and Nutritional Security, Senegal's National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Jobs, the Senegal Digital Strategy, National Strategy for Gender Equity and Equality in Senegal, and the Senegal's National Strategy for the Implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement.
- The focus of the policies for youth employment strategy is largely on the "traditional" sectors (e.g., agriculture, construction, transportation) associated with low-wage employment. There is a need for youth employment support in key sectors of structural transformation, the green and digital economies, which would require high-skilled workforce.
- Policies tend to focus on supply-side activities of skills development, self-employment and entrepreneurship promotion. Strengthening the demand-side youth employment strategy and creating a stronger link between the supply- and the demand-side intervention are likely to provide more sustainable school-to-work transition pathways to young people in Senegal.
- The policies and programs for youth employment in Senegal would benefit from a gender perspective and attention to people with disabilities. Without this, the most vulnerable young people, including women, youth with disabilities or NEET may be left behind and youth employment deficits will persist.
- Little evidence is available on systematic monitoring and evaluation of the impact on and challenges of providing decent work for young people resulting from these policy advances. There is an urgent need for systematic evidence gathering on the performance of the policies and programs for youth employment. This would support the development of effective and efficient youth employment interventions now and in the future.

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