

CHAPTER 3

Youth Inactivity and Unemployment



For us, unemployment is a kind of blasphemy; an unemployed is not a person, society itself does not accept him, he is not part of the circle of society. That is the true meaning of “unemployed”: a person who is not active in the heart of the society. Tell me, what use is that person?

Unemployed graduate, Sidi Bouzid

3.1 Youth Inactivity; Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment, or Training; and Unemployment—An Overview

Youth inactivity is a massive problem in Tunisia. Young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEETs) comprise a substantial proportion of the potential youth labor force in Tunisia (see figure 3.1 and box 3.1). Young people without work who are no longer attending any school or training program spend on average more than three years searching before finding a job. Tunisia’s youth are not only struggling economically; they are marginalized and economically excluded. Many

unemployed young women and men see little chance of ever finding work and starting their careers. Formal employment grows ever more distant for the long-term jobless without connections; few young Tunisians are able to find employment. This chapter presents the key challenges related to unemployment and inactivity. The chapter presents youth labor exclusion in decreasing order of exclusion and starts with youth inactivity (NEETs) and unemployment, while the subsequent chapter proceeds to highlight the underemployed and informally employed, and ends with youth who are formally employed.

One in three young men in rural Tunisia (33.4 percent) and one in five in urban Tunisia are NEET. Rates are even higher for young women. One out of every two

Figure 3.1. Youth Employment and NEET Framework

1. Labor Force Status	2. Time Use	3. Employment Status	4. Work Status	5. Formality
In Labor Force	Full-time worker	Wage employed	Employed	Formal
		Self-employed		
		Unpaid or family worker		
	Part-time worker	Voluntary part-time employed		Informal
		Involuntary underemployed		
Job seeker	Unemployed	NEET		
Out of Labor Force	Inactivity or housework		Discouraged	
			Inactive	
	In education or training	Student	Student	

Source: Adapted from AfDB 2012a.

Box 3.1. Young People Who Are Not in Education, Employment, or Training— A Joint Indicator for Youth Unemployment and Inactivity

The acronym NEET refers to young people who are not in education, employment, or training. NEET is comprised of all youth who are either unemployed or inactive. By going beyond the arguably narrow lens of unemployment, the NEET concept helps policy makers consider the needs of all young people who have finished education and training and should be working. The NEET indicator is a powerful tool to analyze youth exclusion by focusing on all young people experiencing difficulties in transitioning from education to work life.

NEET is important because it more comprehensively defines youth inactivity, which standard unemployment statistics generally overlook. Inactive youth are those young men and women already discouraged from looking for work despite their young ages. Instead of neglecting these young people, the NEET indicator encourages policy makers to consider that discouraged young people require at least as much government support as the unemployed. Discouraged youth—often referred to as inactive youth—are particularly vulnerable. Inactive youth are the litmus test for the effectiveness of youth policies aimed at fostering social inclusion.

NEET is a well-established concept. Many member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and a growing number of developing countries are using the NEET indicator to complement youth unemployment statistics. It is systematically measured by the International Labor Organization and presented in its annual flagship report, “Global Employment Trends for Youth” (ILO 2013). The OECD is also reporting NEET shares, and the organization has prominently applied the indicator in its recent “African Economic Outlook 2012,” which focused on promoting youth employment in Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa, including Tunisia (AfDB 2012a), and in the World Economic Forum’s Global Youth Unemployment Study (WEF 2013). Recently, NEET was proposed by the United Nations High Level Panel to be used for the Post-2015 Development Goals (United Nations 2013). Originally coined by the government of the United Kingdom, the acronym “NEET” is used officially by statistical agencies in Canada, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, Spain, and South Korea. While more efforts are needed to measure NEET globally, most labor force surveys already include the required variables to establish reliable NEET rates.

Source: World Bank 2014.

young women in rural Tunisia (50.4 percent) is NEET; about one in three urban areas (32.4 percent) (see figure 3.2). The economic loss caused by this lack of productive activity is enormous. Equally important, however, is the social exclusion that millions of young Tunisians experience as they are forced to squander their skills, creativity, and potential.

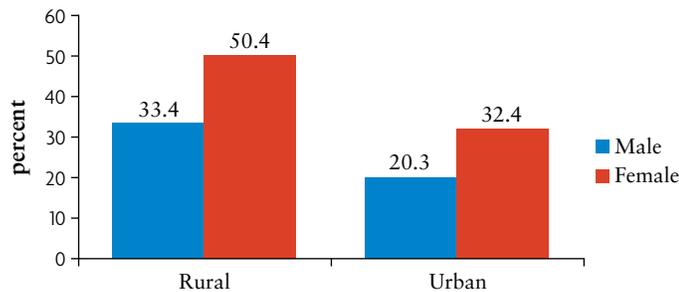
A large number of young Tunisians are leaving the countryside and often migrating to desolate urban areas. The proportion of NEET in urban Tunisia are less severe than in rural areas. However, in urban areas, the primary destination for many young job seekers—more

than one-fifth of young men (20.3 percent) and about one-third of young women (32.4 percent) is NEET (see figure 3.2).

The severity and regional incidence of NEET reflect the extent of despair among youth, which is particularly acute in the interior and south, the cradle of the 2011 revolution. NEET affects more than one-quarter in the coastal region (23.6 percent urban, 37.3 percent rural), more than one-third in the south (35.9 percent urban, 47.9 percent rural), and about one-third of youth in the interior region (31.4 percent urban, 42.4 percent rural, see annex 3, figure A3.3). These young people, excluded from the labor market for years, are referred to as

“Generation Jobless” (Economist 2013). Youth in the interior face an especially unproductive abyss of years transitioning between their school and work lives. As focus groups revealed, youth have little faith in their skills or qualifications as they attempt to navigate a system they perceive to be rife with corruption. The interior region is

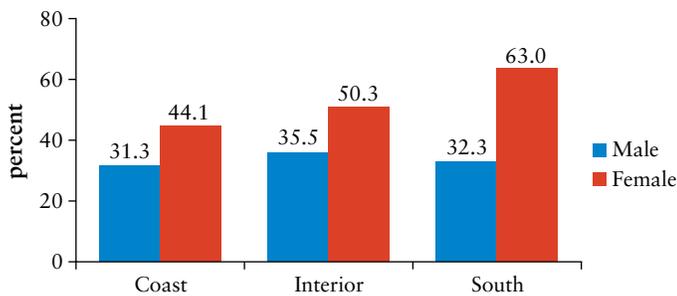
Figure 3.2. Youth NEET in Rural Versus Urban Areas



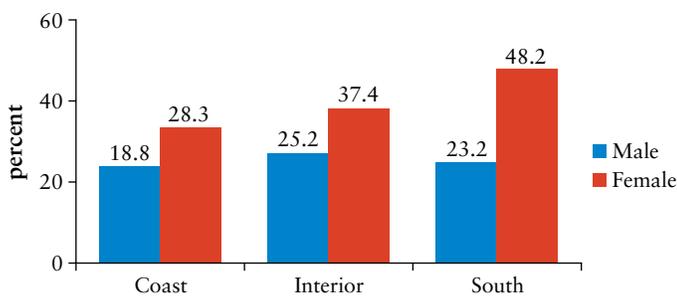
Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.
 Note: Figure includes all youth aged 15–29.

Figure 3.3. Youth NEET by Region

a. Rural



b. Urban



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.
 Note: Figure includes all youth aged 15–29.

also the area where most regular street protests for jobs and better governance have been occurring during the political transition period.

The NEET rate is highest for young women in the south, reflecting a virtual absence of adequate employment opportunities that correspond with the norms and expectations of a more traditional society. More than one out of two young women in the south is NEET (53.7 percent). Female NEET rates are similarly high in the interior region (45.4 percent) and still affect one out of three young women in the coastal region (31.3 percent) (see figure 3.3). Extended periods without work for hundreds of thousands of young and relatively well-educated young women risk further reinforcing traditional gender roles. It is also likely to delay much needed progress in gender equality and female labor market participation for decades to come. Helping young women without work obtain employment or self-employment will require renewed government efforts, investments, and innovative strategies.

3.2 Discouraged Youth without Work

Systemwide nepotism, together with regional disparities in the labor market, have convinced many potential job seekers without the benefit of bribery, family connections, or certain regional affiliations that seeking employment is an exercise in futility. Furthermore, graduates may prefer to hold out for offers of employment that are either commensurate with their level of education or professional qualifications or that provide some potential for long-term job security and financial stability. In addition to being intellectually stimulating and personally fulfilling, a position that directly corresponds with a graduate’s educational background and/or substantive professional experience ensures that whatever unique skill sets and subject matter expertise that he or she has acquired improves rather than atrophies, as would be the case for example with a “temporary” position in the service industry. Conversely, a position that does not correspond with one’s educational background or substantive professional experience but that would provide a graduate with some form of long-term job security and financial stability, provides male graduates with the social respectability, financial resources, and professional prospects

critical to a successful courtship and family formation with his partner.

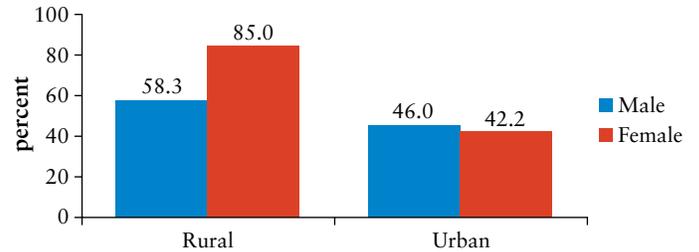
Although low-skilled temporary jobs do not provide the same stability or potential for advancement, many unemployed Tunisian youth have begun to view these positions less as temporary arrangements and more as being among the few viable options for employment. A young unemployed Tunisian may justify his or her decision to pursue such an arrangement as purely instrumental, a meager means to an immediate end. Young Tunisian males in particular may make the calculation that, as far as marriage prospects are concerned, an employed graduate or nongraduate will consistently trump his unemployed counterparts. Therefore, such a position may still afford one some modicum of social recognition and personal validation that would have been impossible to achieve otherwise. Nevertheless, these modest benefits and shifts in perspective may still be insufficient for some, as one young man described it:

When I have my official work, I will not be zero. I do not really know when it is going to come, but I still have hope. I do not want my next new job to be a menial one because spending my time studying and then taking a position that has nothing to do with this training is quite bad. Tunisian youth Unemployed male graduate, Médenine

About half of all NEETs seem to be discouraged from searching for work for several reasons. Young discouraged women and men require even greater assistance than unemployed youth to transition to the labor market and to break the cycle of youth exclusion. Discouragement is particularly high among young women in rural Tunisia—85 percent (see figure 3.4). Also, one of out two young rural men are discouraged—58.3 percent. Labor market discouragement among NEETs is only slightly better in urban Tunisia, affecting 46 percent of young urban men and 42.2 percent of young urban women.

Many young job seekers who spend years transitioning between their school and work lives are eventually discouraged from continuing the job search due to feelings of exclusion, humiliation, and judgment. Many young people decry what they perceive to be a total lack of empathy on the part of potential employers who one

Figure 3.4. Labor Market Discouragement among NEETs



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

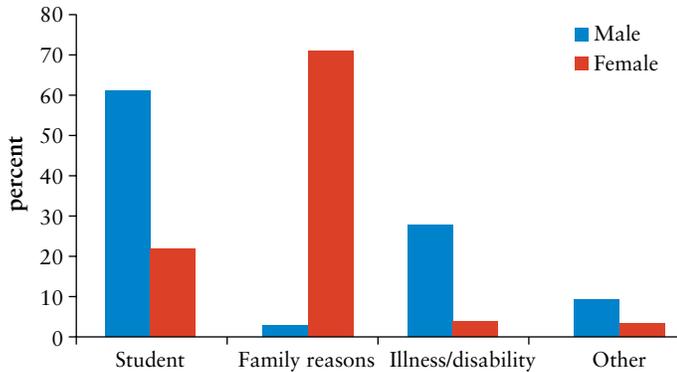
Note: Figure refers to NEETs aged 15–29 who identify themselves as discouraged.

youth said, “treat you like a beggar or tell you, ‘God will provide for your needs.’ They do not listen to me.” Moreover, youth have little faith in the likelihood that they will be able to use the skills or qualifications they have obtained. They believe that they face a system that is rife with multiple and complex barriers to their social inclusion. Some report witnessing the failure of individuals whom they regard as more brilliant or talented than themselves to secure stable, long-term employment, and subsequently lapse into self-defeating apathy:

We see people who are brilliant. They are geniuses, but they still end up unemployed. So what about me? I am really average. In my case, I am. That is what worries me. I am afraid of the future. Male high school dropout, Sidi Bouzid (interior Tunisia)

Many young women are dissuaded from seeking employment by societal norms and expectations, particularly in the interior and south, where patriarchal traditions are deeply rooted. Whereas Tunisian men remain generally unrestricted in their choice of employment sector and venue, Tunisian women often find themselves restricted to education and nursing. One young woman reported that her wish to work as a hotel receptionist was not “acceptable from the standpoint of morality” to her family. For young female graduates, the state of public space is such that many have few opportunities to socialize and network beyond the confines of the home and marketplace. A woman’s decision to pursue employment outside the home may be considered subversive and

Figure 3.5. Reasons for Being Out of the Labor Force by Gender (2010)



Source: World Bank staff based on Tunisia Labor Force Survey 2010.

as such, severely diminish her marriage prospects. Thus, a young Tunisian woman must carefully weigh the financial and professional benefits of seeking employment against the potential social consequences for herself and for her family. Before the revolution, family concerns were the most common reason for women to withdraw from the labor force (see figure 3.5).

If a girl wanted to work as a secretary in a hotel that would be beyond acceptability from the moral point of view. Female graduate, Médenine (South Tunisia)

Extended periods of youth unemployment result in negative material, social, and psychological consequences. When hundreds of thousands of young Tunisian women and men are unable to find work, adverse effects on economic output and social cohesion are quickly evident. Enduring a prolonged state of material dependence on the family denies the discouraged youth opportunities to develop as fully autonomous social beings, to marry, have children, live in their own dwellings, and confidently assert an autonomous worldview, deepening their sense of frustration and exclusion. Long periods without work or education also affect how young Tunisians value their lives and the decisions they make. Economic dependence on parents runs counter to the cultural expectation that mature children should repay their families for the care given to them. Asking parents for money for

personal needs (e.g., a phone card, bus fare, or clothing) is humiliating for them.

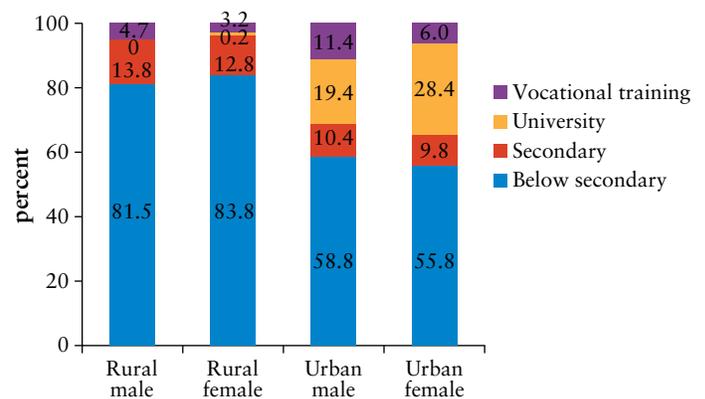
You talk about unemployment, well that has broken us, trying to find work. Now it is the only goal, this aim to find work. At an age when we should be paying back what we owe our family, we have become a burden to them. Unemployed graduate, Mahdia (coastal Tunisia)

3.3 Education and Inactivity

The largest proportion of inactive youth is found among less educated young people in both rural and urban areas, with the rural share of inactive youth being substantially higher. In rural areas, more than four out of five NEETs do not have a secondary degree (81.5 percent male, 83.8 percent female; see figure 3.6). However, also in urban areas, more than half of NEETs do not have a secondary degree (58.8 percent male, 55.8 percent female). Notably, about one-fifth of rural NEETs have not even completed primary education (15 percent male, 24.7 percent female; see annex 3, figure A3.4) compared with 6.2 percent of urban male NEETs and 8.4 percent of urban female NEETs.¹

Very few young NEET Tunisians have completed secondary or tertiary education. In urban areas, only

Figure 3.6. Highest Education among NEETs by Gender (Ages 15–29)



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

Note: Figure refers to all NEETs aged 15–29.

one-quarter of the urban NEETs aged 15–29 have university degrees (25.0 percent total—19.4 percent male, 28.4 percent female), as shown in figure 3.6. Secondary education (Bac) remains the highest level of education for another 10.0 percent of urban youth (10.4 percent male, 9.8 percent female), followed by vocational training in urban areas (8.0 percent total—11.4 percent male; 6.0 percent female). Combined, these young women and men who represent 43.0 percent of all urban NEETs are considered skilled but remain unable to find work. By comparison, in rural areas, only 17.1 percent of all NEETs are skilled: 13.2 percent with secondary education and 3.8 percent with vocational degrees, mostly because skilled youth migrate to urban areas.² In both rural and urban areas, the interior regions show the lowest education among NEETs (see annex 3, figure A3.5). The creation of employment opportunities for these hundreds of thousands of less-educated young women and men remains an immense challenge.

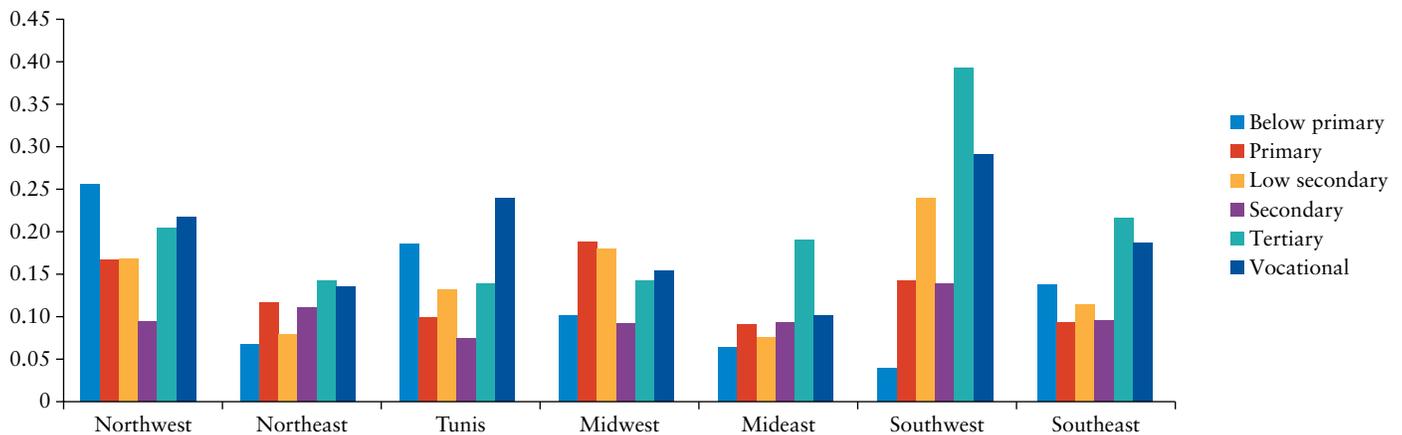
However, individuals with higher education face higher rates of unemployment. When only looking at unemployment in urban areas, it shows that unemployment rates are especially high among individuals with tertiary education (see figure 3.7). Particularly in urban areas in the interior and southern regions, unemployment rates among university graduates reach levels approaching 40 percent.

The low educational levels among many young Tunisians without work suggest that additional professional training will be needed to enable NEETs to find jobs. Without training to help young women and men acquire the skills needed to participate in a modern economy, today’s NEETs risk becoming a lost generation that will face difficulties finding employment throughout their productive lives.

Leaving School Early

The vast majority of NEETs never obtain a secondary degree, leaving most of the next generation under-equipped for tomorrow’s job market. When looking at all young Tunisians who are not attending school (i.e., employed, self-employed, or NEET), four out of five youth have not completed secondary education in rural areas—80.7 percent of males and 85.3 percent females (see figure 3.8). This compares to one out of two youth in urban areas that have stopped going to school before completing secondary education (50.6 percent of males and 47.0 percent of females).³ These young people can be considered early school leavers and are a cause of concern. Early exit from education leaves the coming generation under-equipped to take up the technical and service sector jobs that a globalizing economy is likely to offer. The additional disadvantages faced by youth in

Figure 3.7. Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, Urban Tunisia



Source: World Bank, 2013b.

Note: The rural survey did not find enough university graduates to report meaningful figures.

rural areas are further confirmed by regression analysis of early school leaving (see annex 3, table A3.1).⁴ The econometric results also highlight the key roles played by parental education and household wealth.

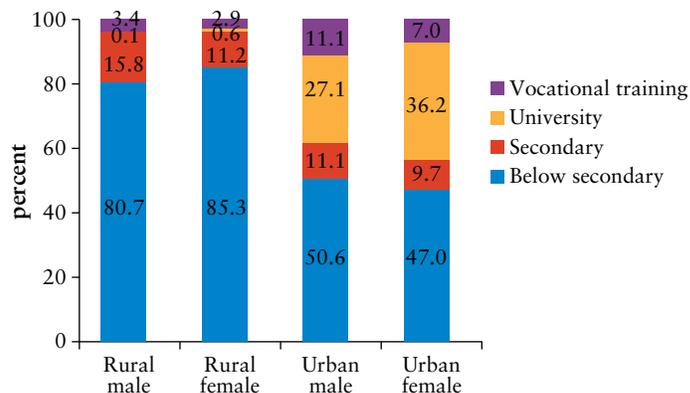
Dropping out of school is a phenomenon that affects both young men and women. More than half of Tunisia’s children leave school without completing upper secondary education. About 140,000 students drop out of school annually, 80,000 of whom have not completed their basic education (Ben Romdhane 2010). Two-thirds of these dropouts obtain no further training and to varying degrees, generally find themselves in exploitative forms of casual labor. Often, they express a degree of bitterness or regret at having left school due to family circumstances over which they had no control—e.g., poverty, family instability, or the geographic area where they were raised. Youth dropouts may be vulnerable to being recruited by radical religious organizations or may have few viable options beyond clandestine emigration, as pointed out by one young school dropout.

One of us stopped school so that another in the family could study. Like that our family can avoid getting into debt. Better that one of us makes the sacrifice, and I repeat—it is a sacrifice. Male school dropout, Mahdia (CE)

It is remarkable these days how the state just bypasses the young. That’s why there is so much clandestine emigration. Male school dropout, Mahdia (CE)

Girls stay longer at school than boys and account for 62 percent of university students. School and university attendance by girls has increased markedly since the 1960s and 1970s, and their academic performance has also overtaken that of boys. In urban Tunisia, more than one-third of all young women complete a university education (36.2 percent), a figure much higher than the proportion of young men (27.1 percent) (see figure 3.8).⁵ However, women’s higher tertiary enrollment reflects the absence of employment opportunities for young women, at least in part. Qualitative research revealed that many young women chose to prolong their studies to postpone facing the reality of unemployment.

Figure 3.8. Highest Education among NEETs by Gender (Ages 25–29)



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

Note: Figure reports the highest level of educational attainment among all young people aged 25–29 who have left education, including the employed and NEET.

I would like to complete my studies. What am I going to do if I stay at home? Watch the TV? It’s just further training, but it passes the time. Female university student, Tunis

Once economic reforms begin to create economic growth, firms will shift toward sectors of higher productivity with higher demands for skilled labor. The need for unskilled manual labor will be replaced by demand for creative skills, innovative capacity, and technical specializations. Such skills typically require a secondary degree or vocational training. It is therefore a serious cause for concern that large portions of young Tunisians are unlikely to benefit from future productivity-driven economic growth. As a result, workers will continue to receive low wages and will face increased job insecurity and increased income inequality.

Educational Quality

Despite high enrolment rates, educational outcomes are poor across Tunisia. The findings of the 2011 TIMSS survey indicate that 75 percent of eighth graders in Tunisia perform “low” and “below low” in mathematics, despite marginal improvements since 2003. Like most

other Middle East and North Africa countries, Tunisia performs much lower than similar middle-income countries in other regions (Mullis et al. 2012). Overall, secondary schools do not seem to provide students with the basic competences necessary to competitively perform in a globalized economy (World Bank 2012f, 2013c).

Schools fail to impart life skills that would equip young people to transition to adulthood and active citizenship. Practical skills training is largely lacking in schools, as is instruction and extracurricular activities that help to develop social, personal, and communication skills that would enable young people to reach their full potential and impart the values of work and citizenship. According to a study published by CNIPE in 2008, among the many factors related to the perceived declining standards was the abandonment of the examination at the end of the sixth year of primary school, known as the *concours*.⁶ Successive curriculum reforms failed to improve basic learning skills by Tunisian students. As one student commented:

Before, they weren't like us; they knew the value of things. They knew what the human sciences were. Now, there are lots of books, but nothing in the head. We study lots of complicated subjects, but they serve for nothing. Student, Zaghuan (Northeast Tunisia)

A perception exists that the quality of teachers also plays a role in the quality of education. Qualitative research suggests that problems of poorly trained teachers start from the lowest level of the education system, where too many primary school teachers are recruited straight from college, without specialized teacher training. As one young respondent said:

It's not a question of training or recruitment; there are teachers who simply cannot control their classes, who are simply not suited to the profession. Female unemployed graduate, Madhia (interior Tunisia)

Most teachers don't explain to their students what approach to take. They just give the equation and the result. Male nurse, 28, Tunis (coastal Tunisia)

Career counseling in secondary schools and at the university level is very limited, and students lack guidance on critical career decisions. Many young people emphasize the absence of support and advice regarding the choice of courses and their career implications. In addition, the centralized and rigid university admission system that is in place limits the choice offered to prospective students and access to many popular courses.

I requested Sociology and English and got Arabic. I hadn't filled in the ninth and tenth choices on the form, and the boy sitting next to me suggested putting Arabic. [...] I dropped the phone when I got the news. Male entrepreneur, Tunis

Much criticism is lodged against the successive reforms of the past few decades, which youth believe affected the education sector and that students view as ill-considered and arbitrary. The reforms resulted in policies that teachers were ill prepared to incorporate in the classroom. One such contested policy was “Arabization,” which is using Arabic as the language of instruction at the primary and, in part, at the secondary and tertiary levels, including for science courses.⁷ Initiated in the 1980s, the Arabization policy is considered by the youth to have been implemented in an unsuccessful and hurried manner. As one young woman described her experience:

For three years I studied in secondary school, years 6 to 9, I studied mathematics, physics, and sciences in Arabic. But we had teachers trained in French. Personally, being among the best students, I think that the teacher was confused. He couldn't communicate, and I couldn't understand, because it was in Arabic, and I had the impression that it had been learned unwillingly. If the course was not in Arabic from the beginning, and the teacher has not taught in Arabic before, he is not going to be able to teach the knowledge. [...] It helps neither the student nor the teacher. It is exhausting. Female graduate student, Sidi Bouzid (interior Tunisia)

The final secondary assessment (baccalaureate) is another area of contention. Some 25 percent of the final evaluation is based on evaluations derived from continuous

assessment, meaning that teachers can assign grades arbitrarily. This grading system is open to manipulation, favoritism, and score inflation. In addition, the timing and manner of how foreign languages are introduced into the curriculum are criticized by many students.

While most industrialized countries are pursuing a strategy of life-long learning, in Tunisia, opportunities for additional training are very limited after leaving school. On-the-job training for employed youth is very infrequent—only 1 in 10 young employed Tunisians have received professional training in the past year. According to the National Employment Observatory-International Labour Organisation 2013 School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS), only 10.4 percent of young employed Tunisians had taken part in professional training, mostly for further specialization (ILO 2014). Nearly half of these training activities were funded through public programs (40.8 percent). Access to these training activities is similar for young men and women.⁸

Counseling for Better School-to-Work Transition

Given the high levels of school dropouts from secondary education, counseling services need to be established, particularly for students in the grades most affected by early school leaving. To be effective, these services should be professionally managed by private-sector providers in partnership with youth-led nongovernmental organizations to ensure proper outreach to teachers and parents and, most importantly, peer mentoring. Counseling could be incrementally introduced in secondary public schools across Tunisia to provide professional orientation, relevant information, life skills, and psycho-pedagogical support to facilitate the school-to-work transition, including the identification of apprenticeship opportunities. By developing inclusive information and orientation spaces and coaching Tunisian youth toward long-term work goals—especially disadvantaged youth at risk of dropping out of school—counseling services would also serve as a preventative measure to reduce early school leaving. This proposed reform is intended to complement necessary structural, long-term reforms across the education sector in Tunisia.

A final key recommendation is to ensure that youth organizations have the opportunity to voice concerns

and offer solutions regarding educational issues. The experience of other middle-income countries shows that, apart from its immediate value in curbing corruption and malpractice in the school system, greater student and parental participation in schools increases the accountability of teachers and school administrators while providing students with greater opportunities to influence how curricula are designed. In Tunisia, this would likely lead to a focus on introducing skills that are valuable for the job market (La Cava and Michael 2006).

University youth organizations can play a constructive role in improving the educational system. For example, a regional network of student organizations from several countries in Southeastern Europe, established in the aftermath of the post-Yugoslavia conflicts, helped to implement several crucial reforms. These organizations succeeded in introducing student ombudswomen and ombudsmen in several universities, quality of education assessments, and governance changes affecting education ministries as well as university administrators and faculty (La Cava and Michael 2006). In the United Kingdom, all university departments have staff-student consultative committees that review everything from research strategies to program quality assurance to student demands. Students sit on all internal university review boards, and student representatives sit on university governing bodies. There is an enormous range of opportunities for including student unions more fully in university reform and oversight. Similar initiatives at secondary school levels could be supported in Tunisia through a competitive grant scheme to which students and youth organizations could apply.

3.4 Pathways and Obstacles to Employment

Unemployment Registration

Despite the high NEET rates, few young Tunisians are registered with the unemployment office. In rural Tunisia, only 14.5 percent of young men and 8.1 percent of young women without work are formerly registered as unemployed (see figure 3.9). The registration rates are somewhat higher in urban Tunisia—46.0 percent of men and 63.3 percent of women—but are far from universal.

Tunisia’s unemployment offices must greatly improve and expand services to reach young NEETs, provide helpful services, and effectively support youth without work to find employment, especially in rural areas. The current system barely reaches one in ten rural youth without work and only one out of two urban NEETs.

Barriers to Finding Work

Unemployment offices provide only limited support, and most NEETs are not even registered as unemployed, especially in rural Tunisia. Information about new job openings is difficult to obtain and is rarely available without connections. In a labor market with widespread unemployment affecting most families, the few new jobs that become available are first reserved for relatives and friends before regular applicants are considered.

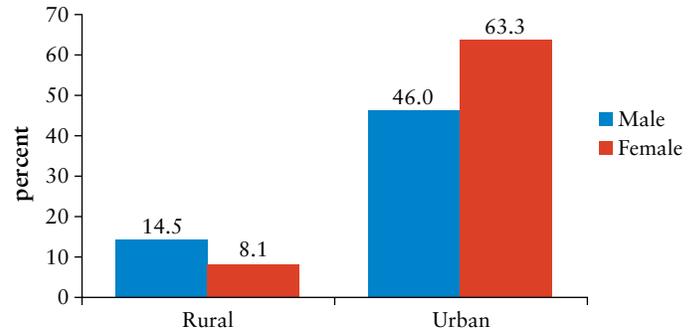
Tunisia’s unemployment registration system requires substantial investments and technical assistance. The lack of unemployment services in urban and especially in rural areas further strengthens rural-urban disparities. More detailed analysis reveals that little regional variation exists, even though registration in the interior region is the lowest overall (see annex 3, figure A3.6).

In order to find work, it is necessary to consult the Internet, go to an employment office, but this is one of the few regions where there is no employment office. ...It costs 2 dinars for one-hour Internet access ... and 10 dinars just to register to the employment office.
Unemployed graduate, Sidi Maklouf, Médenine

Recruitment processes are widely considered unfair, especially for public sector jobs. Job competitions, which are the formal avenue for recruitment, were dismissed as a sham during qualitative focus group discussions. The following factors, among others, were considered as common practice in influencing recruitment: (1) connections, (2) bribery, (3) nepotism, and (4) regionalism. While these types overlap, each has its own characteristics.

However, corruption and nepotism are essential to actually getting a job. When asked about the two most important aspects in their job searches, young Tunisians underscored the importance of relations—53.6 percent of rural and 62.6 percent of urban youth (see figure

Figure 3.9. NEETs Registered as Unemployed—Rural Versus Urban

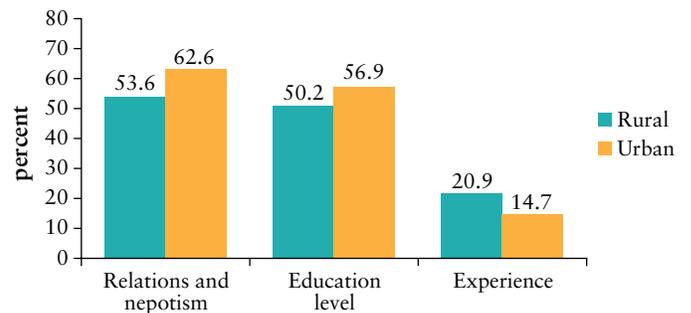


Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.
Note: Figure refers to all NEETs.

3.10). Qualifications are thought to be of equal importance, expressed by levels of education (50.2 percent of rural youth and 56.9 percent of urban youth) and work experience (20.9 percent of rural youth and 14.7 percent of urban youth).

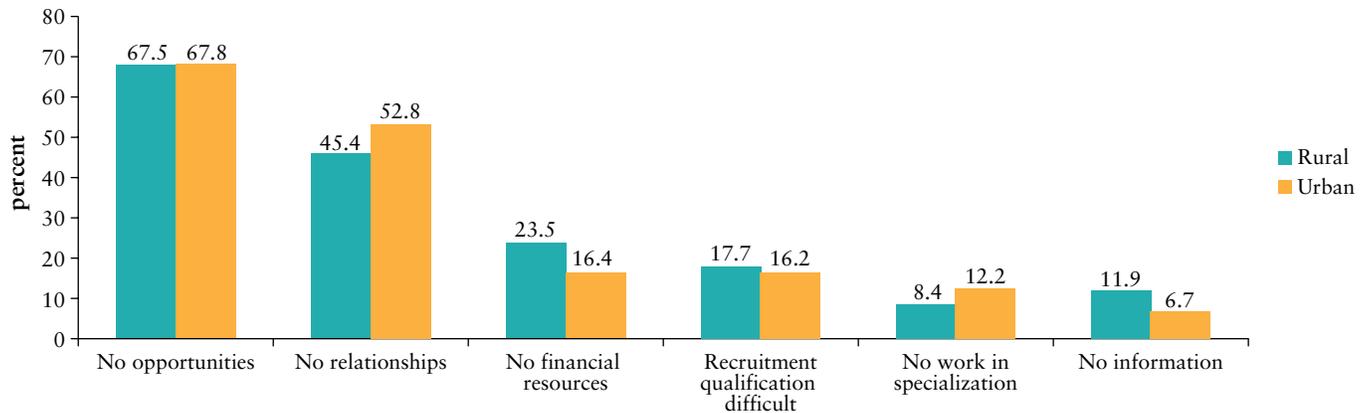
Regionalism describes the phenomenon of favoring youth from the coastal region for many private sector jobs. Regionalism is prevalent and contributes to inequities. The favoritism may be because of the perceived ability of coastal youth to draw on cross-regional networks of patronage. At many private sector institutions, including banks and factories, hiring decisions are heavily influenced by regional elites. This is not only a character-

Figure 3.10. Main Reasons for Finding Work Opportunities—Rural Versus Urban



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.
Note: Figure refers to all youth. Because multiple answers were allowed, percentages do not equal 100 percent.

Figure 3.11. Main Difficulties in Finding Work Opportunities—Rural Versus Urban



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

Note: Figure refers to all youth. Because multiple answers were allowed, shares do not add up to 100 percent.

istic of the interior. A female student at Zaghouan, only 15 km from Tunis, said of a factory established there:

They never employ people from around here. They recruit people from Tunis or Sousse, because the bosses and the university professors are not from here. Everybody takes on the people that they know. Female student, Zaghouan (coastal Tunisia)

Lack of personal contacts is a key obstacle in the search for employment among young Tunisians, in addition to the overall lack of opportunities. When asked about the two most important difficulties in finding work, the lack of opportunities and lack of contacts ranked the highest in both urban and rural Tunisia (see figure 3.11). Other important aspects frequently cited are the lack of financial means and qualifications. These are interrelated, creating multiple layers of barriers. In focus group interviews, participants identified a vicious cycle: lack of work experience makes it difficult to break into the job market, especially into the private sector.

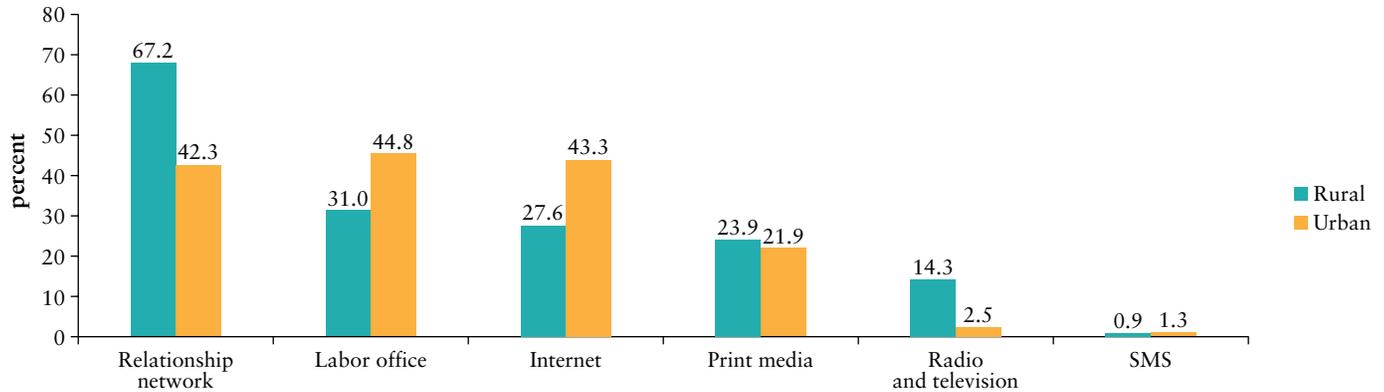
Three years after the beginning of the revolution, the Tunisian government continues to face the enormous challenges of expanding youth access to labor opportunities in a gender- and spatial-inclusive manner. Young Tunisians view informal networks and other unfair practices as barriers to the few existing available jobs. In particular, young Tunisians from poor households and

disadvantaged youth without secondary education degrees spend years searching for work. Moving forward, the integration of disaffected (NEET) youth into a labor market that is largely driven by regional disparities, personal connections, traditional norms, and family preferences should be a central policy concern for boosting the country's path to socially sustainable economic growth and stability. The following chapters will highlight measures to be considered for reducing the exclusion among the most affected youth categories.

Instead of relying on the labor office for information about job openings, most young people use informal social networks to find employment. Only 31.0 percent of rural youth and 44.8 percent of urban youth rely on the labor office for information on new jobs. Instead, more than two-thirds of rural youth (67.2 percent) and nearly half of urban youth (42.3 percent) learn about job openings through networks and personal contacts (see figure 3.12). This creates large information asymmetries, whereby many qualified youth do not learn about job openings, further contributing to longer periods of unemployment and fewer job placements.

Among young Tunisians, the Internet has become the second most important source of information about job openings. In urban areas, 43.3 percent of youth use the Internet to find jobs, compared with a still much lower 27.6 percent in rural areas (see figure 3.12). The Internet has surpassed traditional media such as television and

Figure 3.12. Sources of Information about Work Opportunities—Rural Versus Urban



Source: World Bank 2012d; 2012e.

Note: Figure refers to all youth. Because multiple answers were allowed, percentages do not add up to 100 percent.

radio for 14.3 percent of rural and 2.5 percent of urban youth, and it has surpassed newspapers for 23.9 percent of rural and 21.9 percent of urban youth. However, many young Tunisians do not have Internet access, especially disadvantaged youth and young women and men in rural areas. Alternative technologies, such as Short Message Service (SMS), provided by public-private initiatives, hold the potential to reach many more young Tunisians. The current rate of SMS subscription for new jobs opening remains very low among young people—0.9 percent in rural areas and 1.3 percent in urban areas.

Notes

1. These rates of educational achievement are better than those of older generations. The share of Tunisians aged 30-59 who are NEET and have not completed secondary education is 91.7 percent (male) and 98.3 percent (female) in rural areas, compared with 71.3 percent (male) and 80.9 percent (female) in urban areas (see annex 3, figures A3.1 and A3.2).

2. The survey did not capture sufficient rural youth with university degrees to make qualified statements about their share.

3. These results refer to young people living in rural and urban areas, respectively; they do not account for migration.

4. The table reports the results of a Probit model of early school leaving and largely confirms the results also found for educational attainment as a whole. As before, the very large and strongly statistically significant coefficients make it plausible that household wealth is playing a strong causal role in determining educational outcomes. Some of the reasons for this were suggested above.

5. The rural sample did not include enough university graduates to make a meaningful comparison.

6. A 2008 study by CNIPE (2008) revealed that a good proportion of year seven and eight students, in the aftermath of the discontinuation of the practice of repeating years in 1996, could neither read nor write Arabic or French.

7. Officially, Arabic is the language of instruction at the basic education level, and French is taught as a foreign language. French becomes the language of instruction for technical, scientific, and mathematic subjects, while all other classes are taught in Arabic. However, focus groups indicate that mathematics and some science classes are being taught in Arabic in locations throughout the country.

8. See annex 1 for more details on the results of the 2013 School-to-Work Transition Survey.