



The Status of NEET in Rwanda

A Quantitative Analysis of Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) (15 - 24 years old)

Country Report



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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ALMP	Active labour market policies
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
GDP	Gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LMIC	Low to middle income country
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NSIR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RLFS 2019	Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019
SDG	Sustainable development goals
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN DESA	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN Population Division	United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UN Women ESA-RO	UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1

INTRODUCTION

Neither good quality education nor productive employment is universally available to the world's youth. Reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET) is target 8.6 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN DESA 2021). The ILO, in their *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020* estimate that:

“One-fifth of young people currently have NEET status, which means they are neither gaining experience in the labour market, nor receiving an income from work, nor enhancing their education and skills. Clearly, their full potential is not being realized, though many may be contributing to the economy through unpaid work, which is particularly true of young women” (ILO 2020a)

The NEET indicator, which measures the percentage of young people who are not in employment, education or training, is an important concept that captures a broad array of vulnerabilities among youth. Touching on issues of early school leaving, unemployment and labour market discouragement, NEET status also highlights the issues of youth who are engaged in family labour, domestic and care work for own consumption and thus unpaid. The consequences of high NEET rates are twofold. Firstly, on an individual level, absence from both education and employment increase the risk of poverty and a permanent disengagement from the labour market. Secondly, on a country level, high NEET rates are a loss in terms of unused labour supply, lower productivity and lower GDP output.

Young women in East and Southern Africa are disproportionately affected by NEET status. Leaving school



early, marriage, assisting with subsistence farming, unpaid domestic work, taking care of family members and fewer opportunities to take up work which may be seen as inappropriate or unsafe for young women, all play a role in the NEET status of young women. NEET status is also more likely to become a permanent state for young women. The NEET rate in many developing countries declines very little for young women between 15 and 24 years old when ten years later the cohort is between the ages of 25 and 34 years (ILO 2020a).

Rwanda over the past 20 years has had sustained economic growth of over 5%, education access has expanded but employment opportunities have yet to improve for young adults, especially young women. Data analysed for this report from the Rwanda Labour Force Survey 2019 shows that 35% of women and girls between the ages of 15 and 24 and 26% of young men in this age group are not in employment, education or training (NEET). Young women between 20 and 24 are most likely to be NEET (45%) compared to young men in this age group where 30% are NEET.

While development efforts, declining poverty rates and shifts in gender norms over the past two decades were slowly improving the overall outlook for young women and men in the East and Southern African region, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to roll back these gains (UN Women 2020a). Given both the potential and the necessity to develop young adults' contribution to future economic and social development, world commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals have emphasised increased quality education, greater training opportunities and initiatives to increase youth employment.

Since 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic and associated worldwide economic decline has affected the region with job losses and an increase in poverty; schools and educational institutions have been closed for extended periods; development initiatives, healthcare services and nutrition levels have declined (UN Women 2020a). Young adults whose place in the labour market is often informal, temporary and tenuous at best have seen greater job and income losses than their parents. Increased numbers of young adults are likely to be lost to the education system. Young women are more vulnerable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interrupted education, economic and food insecurity, disruptions in services, unplanned pregnancy, all increase the risk of early marriage (UNICEF and UNFPA 2021).

To ensure that recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic also reduces the number of youth NEET, especially young women, the UN Women Eastern and Southern African Regional Office (UN Women ESA-RO) has commissioned a quantitative research report on the status of youth NEET in nine East and Southern African countries. This report constitutes the investigation into the status and determinants of NEET in Rwanda.

The report will provide a descriptive and a statistical analysis of the data from Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019 (RLFS 2019) that examines the characteristics of youth NEET in Rwanda. It will develop statistical models to better understand the current situation of youth NEET and will also look at whether there are determining factors that characterise the difference between young women and men who are NEET. In this regard Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019 data will be used to understand some of the complex interactions between poverty, employment opportunities for young women, household factors, education attainment, family structures and gender.

The report is structured as follows:

It will first give an overview of the economic, demographic and gender context of Rwanda. Growth prospects and employment opportunities will affect strategies to address the lack of access that young people have to paid work. However, these are affected by the projected size of the youth population and their current socioeconomic status. The interaction between poverty, access to social services and gender norms frequently lead to young women leaving school and into marriage and childbearing before accessing employment (UNICEF and UNFPA 2015 and 2021).

Using the country's survey data, the next section of the report gives a description of youth by status - NEET, employed or in education. This data is disaggregated by age group and sex. Methodological and definitional issues surrounding the calculation of the NEET rate and the definition of employment used in the surveys is discussed in this section.

The third section of the report presents analytical statistics and the determinants of youth NEET. Logistical regression models are used to calculate the probability of young women having NEET status depending on their circumstances. The variables tested for their effect on NEET status are age, marriage, highest level of education attained, time spent in unpaid family agriculture or enterprise, family structure, urban or rural residence.

The fourth section of the report is the conclusion and recommendations that arise from the data analysis. Most of these recommendations reinforce the country's current development agenda and the work done by committed stakeholders and development agencies.

2

DESCRIPTION OF THE RWANDAN CONTEXT

The country context plays a determining role in the prospects for young people's ability to attain good quality education and enter the labour market. Economic development, demographic growth and societal attitudes towards young women affect whether the youth can contribute to overall development and to reductions in poverty which have been eroded by the impact of COVID-19.

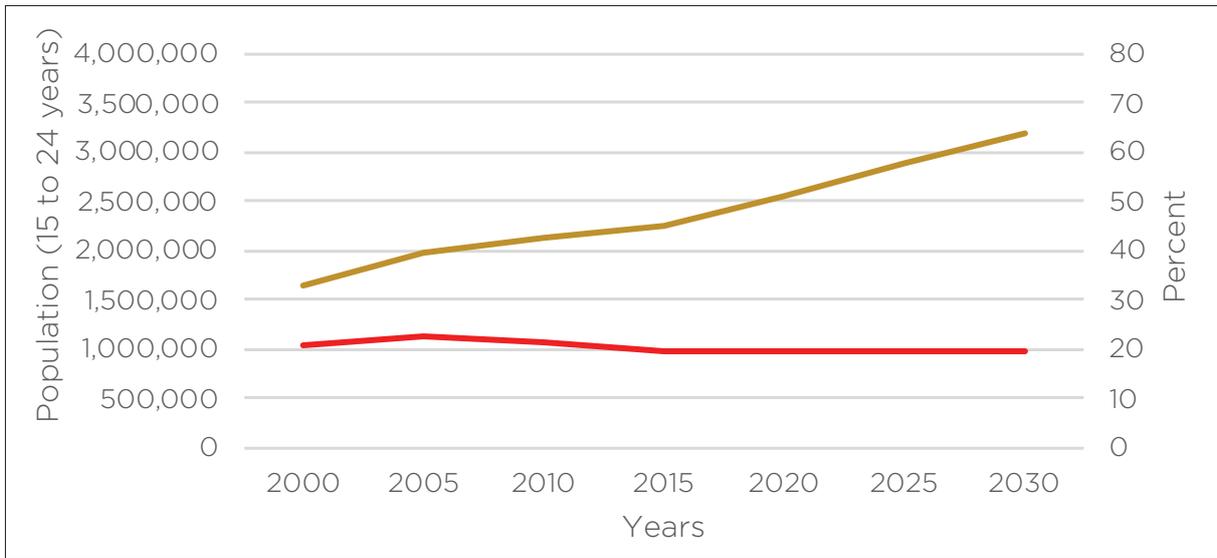
This section gives a description of Rwanda's economic growth prospects in terms of GDP growth and GDP per capita; it presents the projected growth of the youth population; the impact of poverty on young women and the gender dimensions of development in Rwanda. Issues related to education and employment are considered as central to the NEET analysis and are discussed in more detail in Section 3.

2.1 Demographic profile by sex and age

Intrinsic to wealth is population growth. This impacts at a macro level in per capita terms, in the labour absorption capacity and in the state's ability to provide services. At a family level without sufficient employment the number of dependents increases and the potential for a spiral of vulnerabilities increases. Those countries whose population growth rate has slowed down "*are much better placed to achieve economic take-off and middle-income status*" (Bryceson 2018:23).

The population growth rate in Rwanda is projected to be 2.4% (UNDP, 2022), however, the youth population of 15- to 24-year-olds is projected to continue to increase at about 2.9% until 2030. Figure 1 shows the projected youth population (left hand axis) in Rwanda as well as the projected youth population as a percentage of the total population (right hand axis). The youth population was estimated to be 2.613 million in 2021 and is estimated to grow to 3.218 million in 2030 (UN Population Division 2019). Over this period, to 2030, growth in the Rwandan youth population is expected to remain between 2.5% and 2.9% per annum.

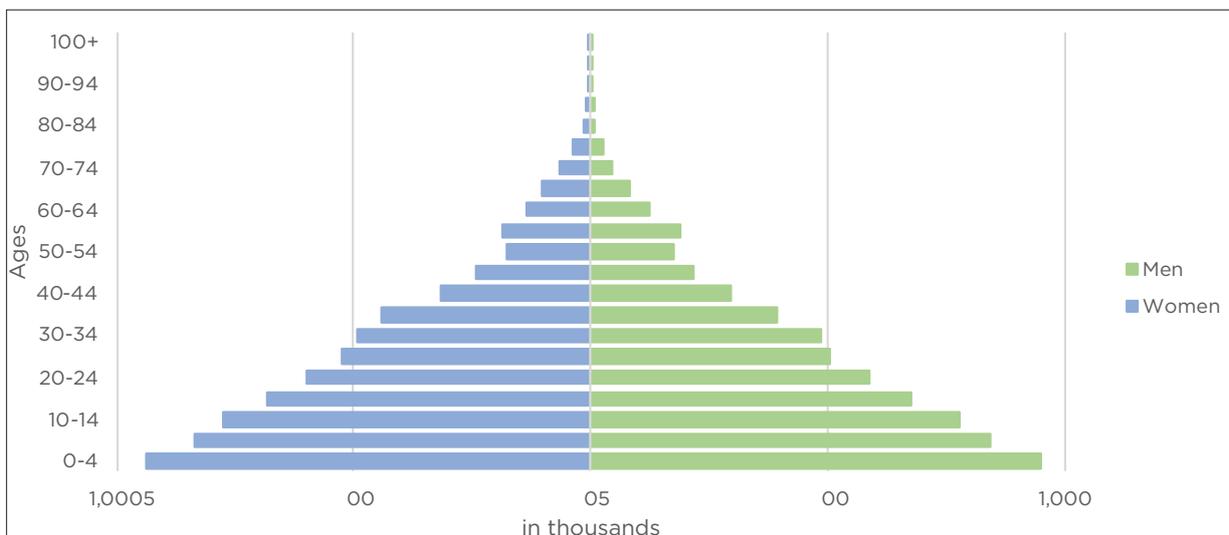
Figure 1: Youth population and youth (aged 15-24) as a percentage of the total population from 2000 projected to 2030



Source: UN Population Division (2019), author's calculations.

While the percentage of the youth population stabilises at 20% of the total population to 2030, the demographic dividend can only be realised “when the population of young people starts to decrease as a percentage of the total population” (UN Population Division 2019). As can be seen in the population pyramid in Figure 2, the growth between each five-year cohort from 0 to 14 years of age will mean that the 15 to 24 year old cohort will continue to grow significantly for the next 15 years at least.

Figure 2: Rwanda population pyramid

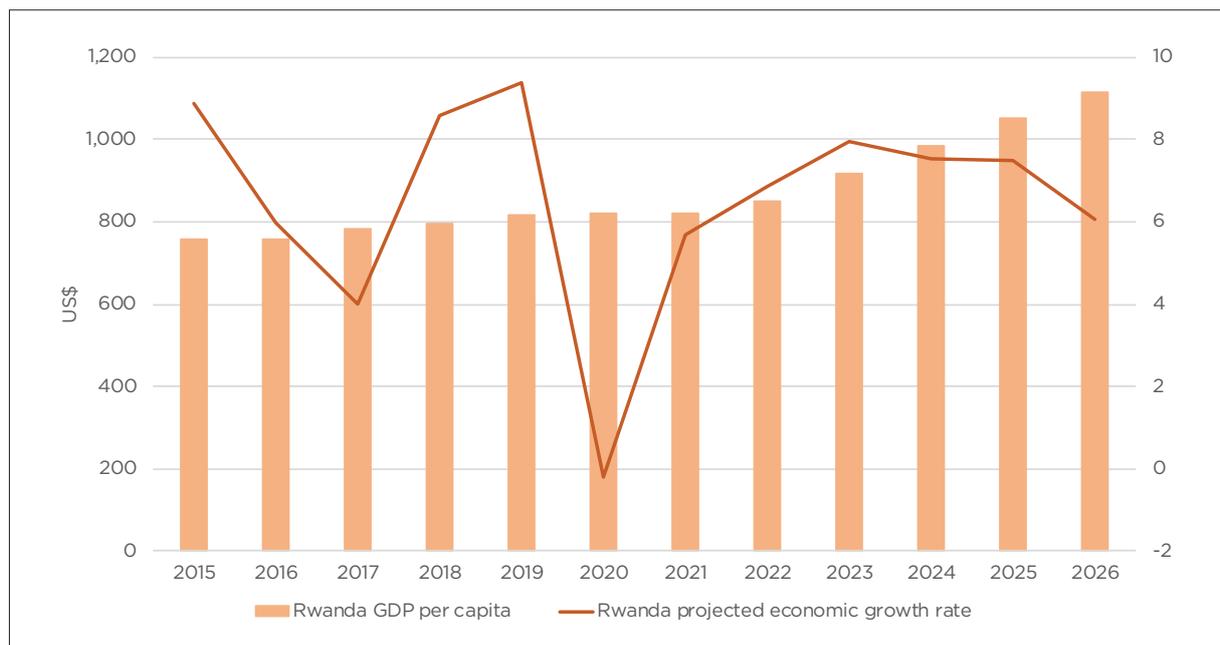


Source: Data from the UN Population Division 2019

2.2 Economic growth projections

Rwanda has seen sustained economic growth over the past decade with government spending on infrastructure and social services impacting on increased employment and human development (AfDB 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic forestalled economic growth in 2020 which was projected to be over 9% in 2020. While 2021 has seen the economy improve with a projected 5.5% growth, the negative impact of COVID-19 on human development has meant that the poverty rate has risen by 5.1 percentage points, there have been reductions in healthcare services and lengthy school closures (World Bank 2021).

Figure 3: GDP per capita and GDP growth rates projected to 2026



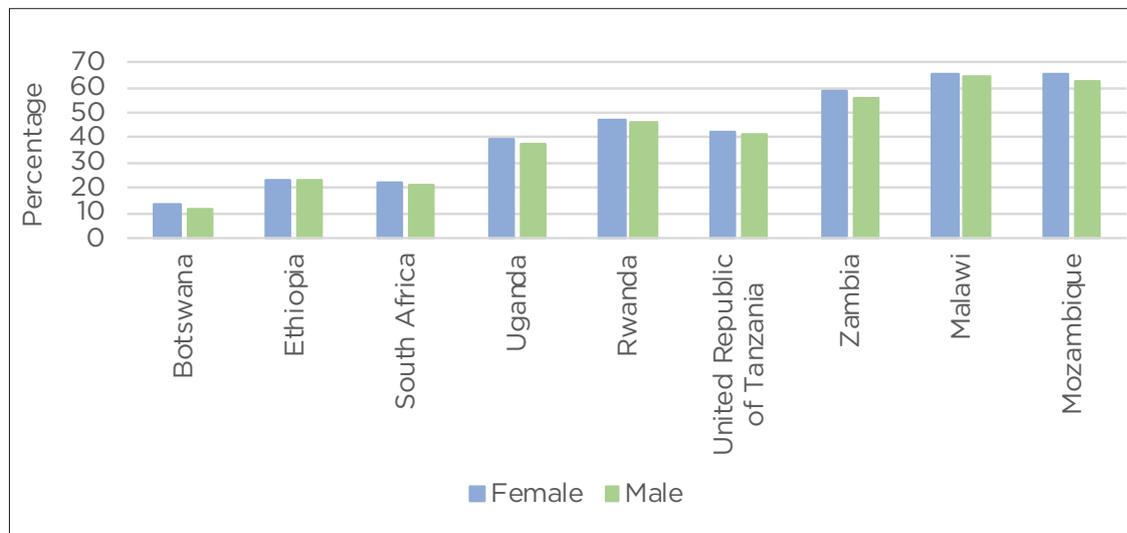
Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (2021).

2.3 Poverty profile by sex and age

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Rwanda had 41% of its population living in extreme poverty. While this is a decrease of 36 percentage points from 77% in 2001, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the poverty rate by 5.1 percentage points (World Bank 2021). Figure 4 shows the percentage of the total population living in extreme poverty (less than US\$ 1.90 per day) for selected countries in this NEET study.

The poverty rate of the total population is 48% for women and girls and 46% for men and boys (UN Women et. al. 2020). Poverty affects more women and children than men and is driven by unequal access to economic resources; the demands of childcare, domestic work and unpaid work on family farms or enterprises; gender discrimination in the labour market; the gender pay gap and social stigma around suitable occupations (UN Women 2018).

Figure 4: Percentage of total population living in extreme poverty in selected East and Southern African countries by sex

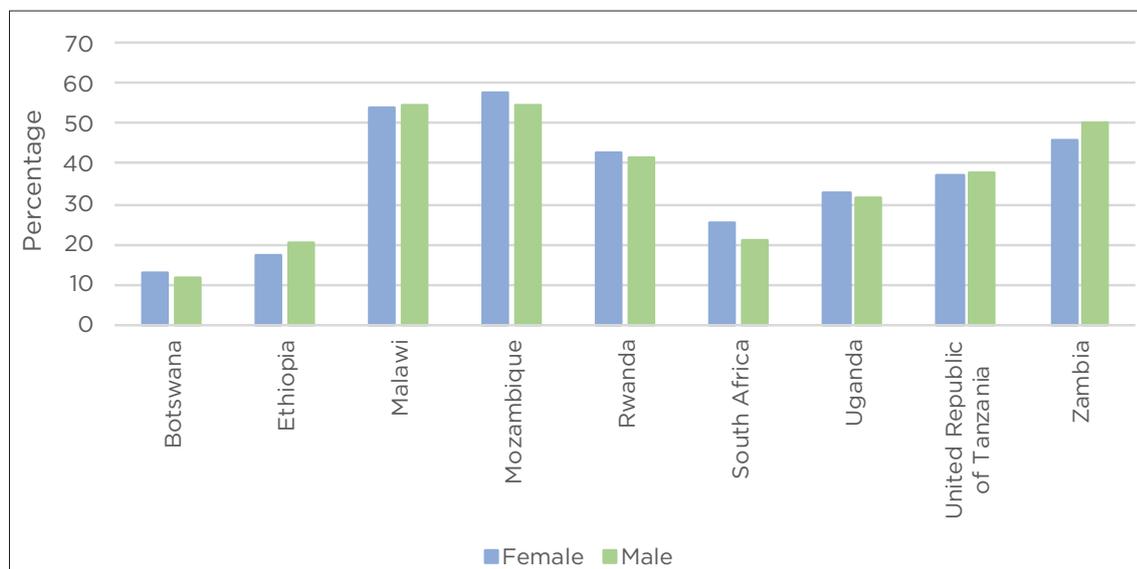


Note: Extreme poverty is below US\$ 1.90 per person per day in 2011 parity purchasing power (PPP).

Source: UN Women et. al. (2020) Annex 4: Estimates and Forecasts of Extreme Poverty by Sex and Age - Population aged 15-24.

Figure 5 shows the percentage of youth 15-24 living in extreme poverty. Poverty levels of the youth population in Rwanda are 6 percentage points lower than for the population as a whole (UN Women et. al. 2020).

Figure 5: Percentage of youth population (aged 15-24) living in extreme poverty by sex



Note: Extreme poverty is below US\$ 1.90 per person per day in 2011 parity purchasing power (PPP).

Source: UN Women et. al. (2020) Annex 4: Estimates and Forecasts of Extreme Poverty by Sex and Age - Population aged 15-24.

3

ANALYSIS OF THE RWANDA LABOUR FORCE SURVEY 2019: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The RLFS 2019 was conducted by the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda has a sample of 81 778 individuals of all ages, 16 610 of which are youth between the ages of 15 and 24. This country report looks at the profile of youth in the survey between the ages of 15 and 24 who live in the households surveyed and were present at the time of the survey. No data is included on usual household members who may have been absent at the time – either studying and living in hostel accommodation or working and staying in workers’ lodgings.

“Youth NEET are a highly diverse group and reasons for being NEET vary. There are many reasons why a young person may leave school and not actively be seeking a job. They may face particular obstacles; have other demands on their time such as assisting in family own use farm or enterprise production; they may be disabled, and/or there may simply be (or perceived to be) no suitable jobs available” (ILO 2020b).

The relative number of youth NEET in a country is affected by how many 15-24 year-olds are able to access education or employment. To understand the drivers of NEET, it is also important to look at the prospects for youth in both of these areas. This section gives the definition of NEET and employment as well as an explanation of the difference in the NEET rates that might arise depending on the definition of employment that is used. The section has an overview of youth NEET, in education, by highest education level, employed by type of employment and engaged in unpaid family farming.

3.1 Definition of NEET and employment

Across East and Southern Africa the NEET rates are affected by the precise definition of employment captured in the various household survey instruments – which may differ slightly by survey and by country. Many countries are still in the process of updating household and labour force surveys to reflect the definition of employment as revised at the ILO 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) in 2013 (ILO 2013).

The major revision in the definition of employment in the 19th ICLS is that it *excludes* “own use production work comprising production of goods and services for *own final use*” (ILO 2013). In East and Southern Africa NEET rates using the definition of employment from the 19th ICLS standards are substantially higher than the NEET rates using the 13th ICLS (1982) definition of employment (ILO 2013). The removal of “production of goods and services for *own final use*” from the definition of employment effectively increases the numbers of NEET youth – especially in largely subsistence agricultural countries where

young people assist with family agricultural production for own final use. There may also be more youth currently engaged in family production for own use that now become defined as unemployed – hence also potentially raising the youth unemployment rate.

The process of updating household and labour force surveys to reflect the 19th ICLS standards takes time and care needs to be taken with the design of the survey questionnaires so they reflect the standards as defined. Measuring the differences in work for pay or profit (and therefore employed) versus work for production of goods and services for own final use (and therefore not employed) can be particularly sensitive to questionnaire design – especially amongst groups in less formal employment such as youth and women. In a review by the ILO and the World Bank in Sri Lanka more detailed and carefully structured survey questions find differences in the numbers and hours of paid employment – including increased numbers of women engaged in small enterprise activities. They also find greater hours worked than previously reported in unpaid family work. (Discenza 2021).

A detailed review of employment data in household surveys by the World Bank finds that household and labour force surveys that do not have questions designed to elicit the revised definition of employment tend to collect data that overstates employment in both youth and women (Desiere and Costa 2019). Klasen (2018) points out that there is likely to be a discontinuity in comparisons of NEET before and after countries implement changes to the 2013 19th ICLS standards. In addition, countries are likely to have different time-scales for the implementation of the new standards. Care should be taken with both inter-country and in-country comparisons over time.

Definition of NEET

Youth not in employment, education or training is the indicator of the Sustainable Development Goal 8, Target 6: “By 2020 substantially reduce the proportion of youth aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training”. According to UN DESA (2021) the youth NEET rate differs from the youth unemployment rate as it includes the discouraged work seeker category as well as those who are outside the labour force and not in education or training (ILO 2013).

The NEET rate is calculated as follows*:

$$\text{NEET rate (\%)} = \frac{\text{total number of youth aged 15-24} - (\text{number of youth aged 15-24 in employment} + \text{number of youth aged 15-24 in education or training})}{\text{total number of youth aged 15-24}} \times 100$$

It is important to note that the indicator is composed of two different sub-groups – unemployed youth (actively seeking work) not in education or training as well as youth outside the labour force (not actively seeking work) not in education or training. Unemployed youth who are in education and training who should not be counted as NEET.

**Education* is formal or non-formal education (institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider).

Employment is defined as all persons of working age who, during a short reference period (one week), were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit. This specifically excludes work in family agriculture or family enterprises for own consumption and it excludes unpaid domestic and care work.

Training is a non-academic learning activity through which a person acquires specific skills intended for vocational or technical jobs. (UN DESA 2021)

Implications of the 19th ICLS definition of the labour force for NEET rate calculations

This report uses the Rwanda Labour Force Survey 2019 for analysis of youth NEET. The published report on the RLFS 2019 follows 19th ICLS protocol. However, the age range of “youth” in the RLFS 2019 analysis is from 16 to 30 years of age (NISR 2020). In this regard it is not possible to make direct comparisons between the analysis in this report and the RLFS 2019 report published by the NISR (2020). Nevertheless the NEET rate in the RLFS 2019 report for women and men aged 16 to 24 year old is 32% and for women aged 16 to 30 is 41% and for men is 26.5% (NISR 2020 p41).

Using the 19th ICLS standards, this report shows a NEET rate of 31% for both women and men between 15 and 24 years old; a 36% NEET rate for women and a 26% NEET rate for men; whereas the ILO *Modelled Estimates* in the ILO Data Explorer which use the 13th ICLS standards show a 6.7% youth (15 to 24 years) NEET rate for women and a 4.7% NEET rate for men (<https://ilostat.ilo.org/>). Table 1 shows the three different NEET rates.

Table 1: NEET rates from *RLFS Annual Report 2019*, RLFS 2019 data analysed in this report and ILO *Modelled Estimates*

Data source	Age	Women and Men (percentage)	Women only (percentage)	Men (percentage)
RLFS 2019 country report (NSIR 2020)	16-24	32	-	-
	16-30	34	41*	27
RLFS 2019 data analysed by author	15-24	31	36	26
ILO Modelled Estimates (ILO Data Explorer)	15-24	-	6.7	4.7

* Note: It does seem that the NEET rate for women increases between 25 and 30 years. This is noted in the RLFS Annual report 2019 (NIS Rwanda 2021)

RLFS 2019 data processing on work and employment

The RLFS 2019 data on work and employment was processed as follows: Questions on employment in the survey include working for wage/salary; run or do any kind of business; help unpaid in household business; work in household agriculture, farming or fishing for sale or family use.

Agriculture: In addition to the above questions on employment further questions ask the hours spent in household agriculture and if the products are sold or bartered.

Other unpaid work related questions:

The survey asks detailed questions on hours spent in the last 7 days in unpaid domestic work according to the following:

- collecting firewood
- fetching water
- searching for fodder or grass
- constructing your dwelling
- household chores (cleaning, cooking, washing etc.)
- spend looking after children and elderly members of the household

Employed if in the past 7 days:

- 1) Worked for wage/salary;
- 2) Run or did any kind of business;
- 3) Help unpaid in household business;
- 4) Work in household agriculture, farming or fishing **mainly or only for sale**
- 5) Was temporarily absent from above

Not employed if:

- 1) Work in household agriculture, farming or fishing **mainly or only for family use**.
- 2) Engage in unpaid domestic work

3.2 Population of youth by sex and age (15-24)

Table 2 and Figure 6 show the number of youth represented in the survey when weighted by their sample weight. There are a total of 2.510 million young women and men between the ages of 15 and 24, of these 1.287 million are women and 1.222 million are men. It appears as if there is a slight undercount in the RLFS 2019 of men in this age group. Table 3 shows the percentage and ratio of women to men in the survey. For the entire age-group the ratio is 1.05. According to the UNDP population estimates for 2019 the ratio of women to men in this age group is 1.009 (In UN Women et. al. 2020). This undercount of young men is typical of most of the surveys analysed for this study. The difference between the two is likely to be due to the greater number of young men who leave the household for education, employment or seeking employment and are living in hostels, at their places of work or sleeping rough. As such they aren't included in the survey.

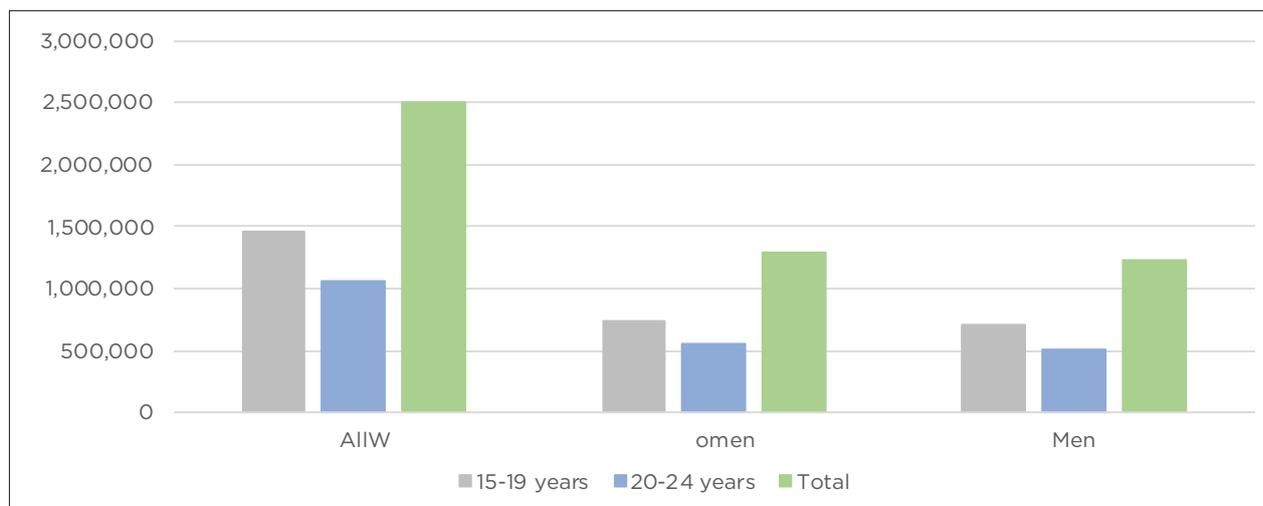
Unfortunately their absence from the survey does create some confusion in the data analysis. This is most evident in education enrolment where there is secondary data to verify the results. Rwanda has more women between 15 and 19 enrolled in school and, as will be seen in later sections, this is not evident from the RLFS. This will be noted where necessary.

Table 2: Total number of youth included in the survey by sex and age group

	Total	Women	Men
15-19 years	1 453 188	738 764	714 424
20-24 years	1 056 420	548 721	507 699
Total	2 509 608	1 287 485	1 222 123

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

Figure 6: Population by sex and age group



Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

Table 3: Percentage and ratio of women to men by age group

	Women Per cent	Men Per cent	Ratio of women to men
15-19 years	51	49	1.03
20-24 years	52	48	1.08
Total	51	49	1.05

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

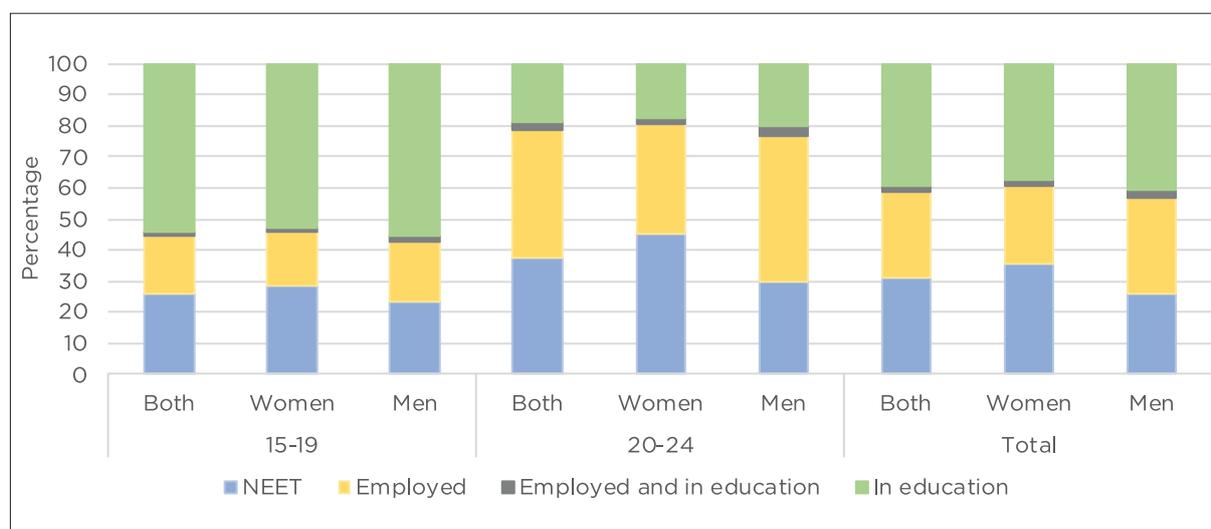
3.3 Overview of youth by activity status

Figure 7 shows the percentage of youth by activity status – NEET; employed; employed and in education; and in education only – by sex and age group. Table 4 shows the ratio of women to men in each activity status. The highest percentage of youth NEET are women aged 20-24 (45%). Young men in that age group are much less likely to be NEET (30%) with 47% employed, 20% are in education and 3% are employed and in education. 35% of young women in the 20-24 year age group are employed, 17% are in education and 2% are employed and in education.

In the age group 15-19, the RLFS data shows 52% of women and 55% of men enrolled in education. This is comparable to the statistics for this cohort in other countries in the region such as Malawi, with 49% of women and 51% of men enrolled in education and Uganda which has 56% of women and 61% of men in this age group enrolled in education. However, due to the number of young men who are not represented in the survey (Section 3.2), Rwanda actually has more women in this age cohort enrolled in school than men. In fact, the percentage of boys in primary school was less than 50% until 2017, and currently 53% of secondary school pupils in Rwanda are women and girls (UNDP Rwanda CO 2020).

Of the age group 15 to 19, 18% of women and 19% of men are employed, while 1% and 2% respectively are employed and in education. Also, of this age group, 28% of women and 24% of men are NEET.

Figure 7: Percentage of youth by activity status - NEET; employed; employed and in education; and in education only, by sex and age group.



Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

Table 4: Percentage of youth by activity status - NEET; employed; employed and in education; and in education only, by sex and age group

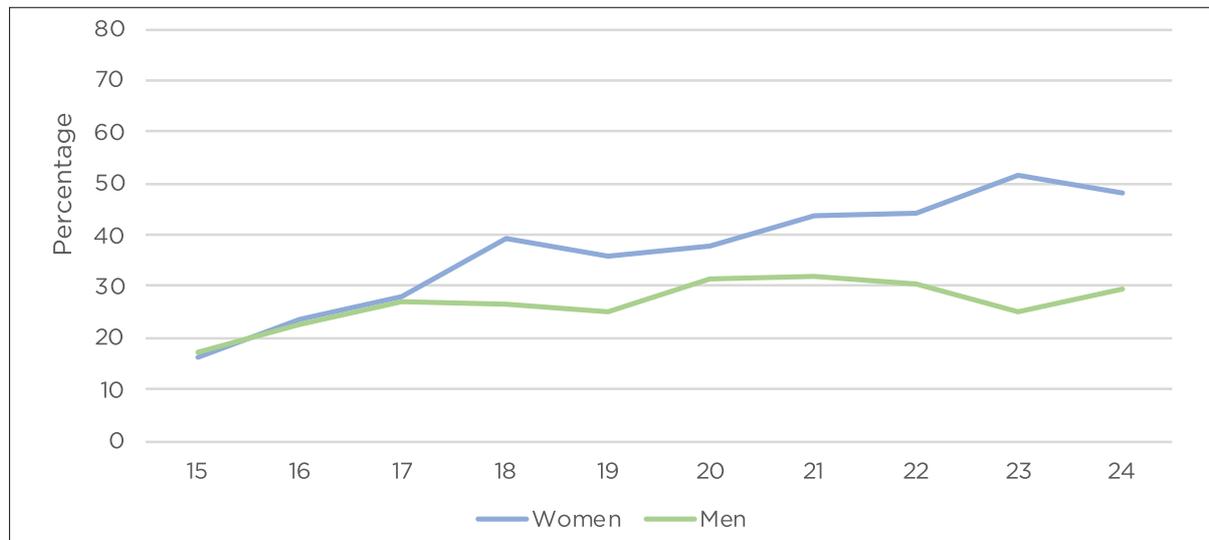
	Age Group	Women Per cent	Men Per cent	Ratio of women to men*
NEET	15-19	28	24	1.2
	20-24	45	30	1.6
	Total	36	26	1.4
Employed	15-19	18	19	1.0
	20-24	35	47	0.8
	Total	25	31	0.9
Employed and in education	15-19	1	2	0.5
	20-24	2	3	0.8
	Total	1	2	0.6
In education	15-19	53	55	1.0
	20-24	17	20	0.9
	Total	38	41	1.0

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

3.4 Profile of NEET youth by sex

In terms of the percentage of NEET by age in single years (Figure 8), both women and men have the same NEET rate, of 18%, 25% and 29% at the age of 15, 16 and 17. The NEET rates of young women increase at the age of 18 to 40% and then continues to increase to 24 years of age where it is 49%. Men NEET rates remain somewhat steady from 19 to 24, rising slightly between 20 and 22.

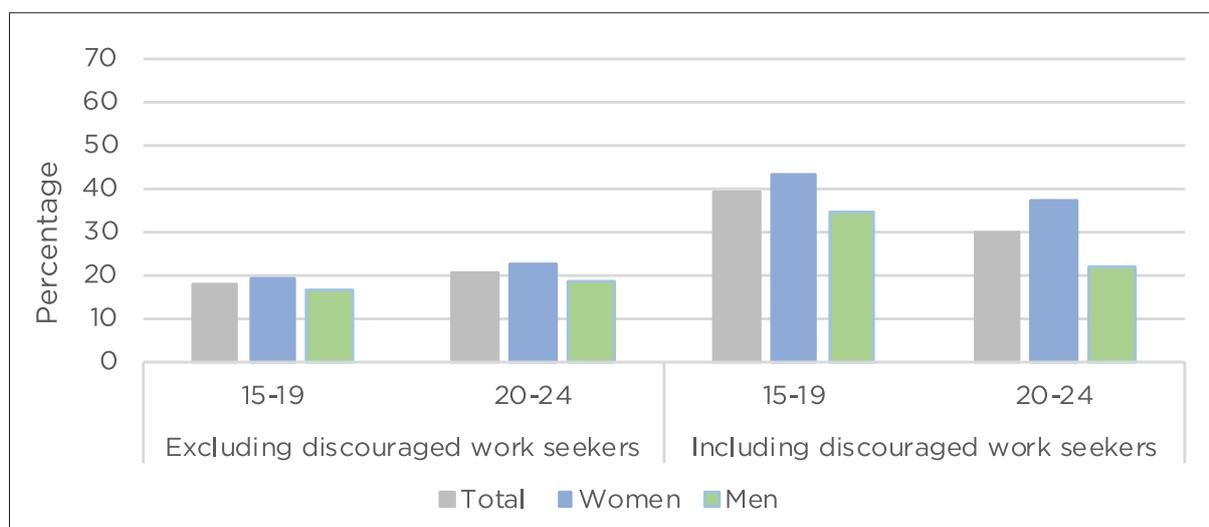
Figure 8: Percentage of youth NEET (15 to 24) by sex and age in single years



Source: Rwanda’s Labour Force Survey 2019, author’s calculations.

NEET includes all youth who are active in the labour market but unemployed, those who are inactive but are discouraged work seekers and those who are inactive. Figure 9 provides a breakdown of the NEET youth in two broad categories, namely those who are unemployed by the narrow definition and the broader definition which includes discouraged work seekers. 19% of women and 17% of men in the 15- to 19-year-old age group are unemployed by the narrow definition (excluding discouraged work seekers). These figures increase slightly with the 20-24-year-old cohort, namely 22% of women and 19% of men are unemployed. Using the broader definition (including discouraged work seekers), the unemployment rate is 43% for women and 34% for men aged 15 to 19. For the ages 20 to 24, the unemployment rate (including discouraged work seekers) is 37% for women and 22% for men.

Figure 9: Unemployed youth as a percentage of the labour force by sex and age group



Source: Rwanda’s Labour Force Survey 2019, author’s calculations.

The RLFS 2019 asks the respondents who self-identified as discouraged work seekers for their reasons for not seeking work. Table 5 shows that the overwhelming response is that there are no jobs in the area with 60% of women and 65% of men indicating that this is the case. More than one in ten women (12%) and 2% of men say that there are small children to be cared for and 4% of women say that it is because they are pregnant.

Table 5: Reasons for youth (15 to 24) wanting work but not seeking, by sex

	Women Per cent	Men Per cent
Did look for work	0	1
Considered too young or too old by prospective employers	2	6
Disability	0	0
Estrangement	0	0
Lack of experience, qualification or jobs matching skills	6	8
Lack of infrastructure (assets, roads, transportation, employment services)	1	2
Lack of jobs in the area	60	65
Other sources of income (pension, rent)	1	1
Own illness	4	4
Past failure to find suitable job	8	8
Pregnancy	4	0
Presence of small children	12	2
Refusal by family	2	3

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

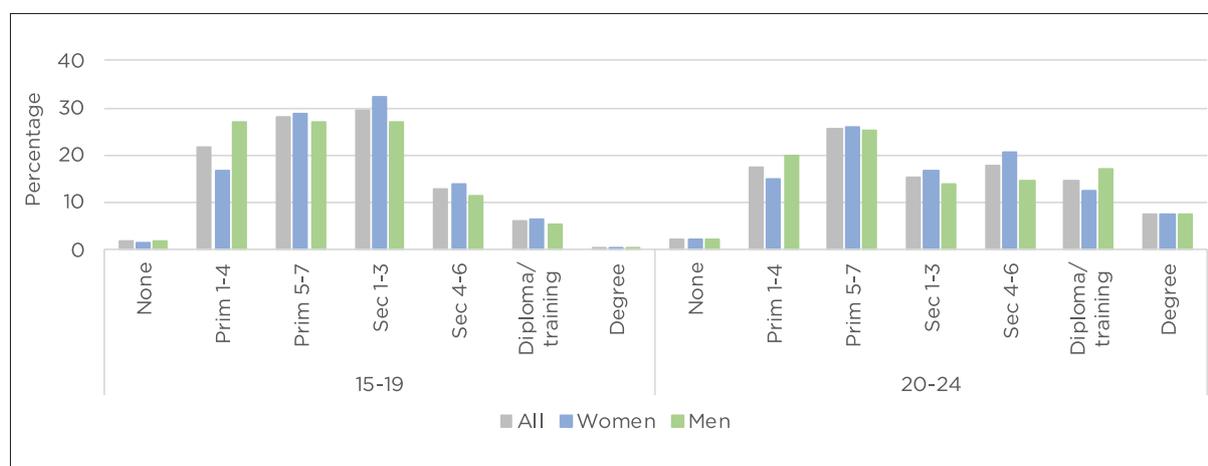
3.5 Education profile of youth

Access to education in Rwanda has improved over the past decade due to substantial investments in human capital. This has resulted in provision of primary schooling available to all children. There were more girls than boys enrolled in primary school until 2017 when boys started to be enrolled in higher numbers. Access to secondary education has also been expanding especially for women and girls who made up 53.4% of all secondary school enrolment in 2017. (Bashir et. al. 2018, UNDP Rwanda Country Office 2020). In the RLFS 2019 there 54% of secondary school enrolment is young women.

It should be noted that in the RLFS 2019, due to the undercount of men 15 to 24, the *percentages* of men attending each education level is slightly higher than it would be if all men were included in the survey.

Figure 10 and Table 6 show the percentage of women (46%) and men (38%) between 15 and 19 who are attending or have attained secondary school as their highest level of education. This is a substantial difference in favor of women. As seen by the 27% of men still enrolled in the early grades of primary school compared to 16% of women, young men are falling behind in years of education attained. This is most probably due to having their schooling interrupted by seasonal agricultural work and temporary employment opportunities leading to repeated grades or leaving school temporarily and then restarting.

Figure 10: Percentage of all youth (15 to 24) by highest level of education attained, sex and age group



Note: Education enrolment of women is higher than indicated in this figure due to the lower representation of men in the survey.

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

Table 6: Percentage of all youth (15 to 24) by highest level of education, sex and age group

		Women Per cent	Men Per cent	Ratio of women to men
15-19	None	2	2	0.9
	Prim 1-4	17	27	0.6
	Prim 5-7	29	27	1.1
	Sec 1-3	32	27	1.2
	Sec 4-6	14	11	1.3
	Diploma/training	7	5	1.3
	Degree	0	0	0.8
20-24	None	2	2	1.0
	Prim 1-4	15	20	0.8
	Prim 5-7	26	25	1.1
	Sec 1-3	17	14	1.3
	Sec 4-6	21	15	1.5
	Diploma/training	13	17	0.8
	Degree	7	7	1.1

Note: Education enrolment of women is higher than indicated in this figure due to the lower representation of men in the survey.

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

3.6 Employment profile of youth

The Rwandan economy, while beginning to diversify, is predominantly agrarian with half of women in Rwanda working in agricultural production – predominantly for household use.¹ This includes young women who are disproportionately involved in family agricultural production. Figure 11 shows the percentage of youth employed by sex and age group. Of the 20-24 year old age group, 35% of women are employed and 47% of men are employed. More than half of these women are employed in agricultural production. (ILO 2020b)

Figure 11: Percentage of all youth (aged 15 to 24) employed by sex and age group

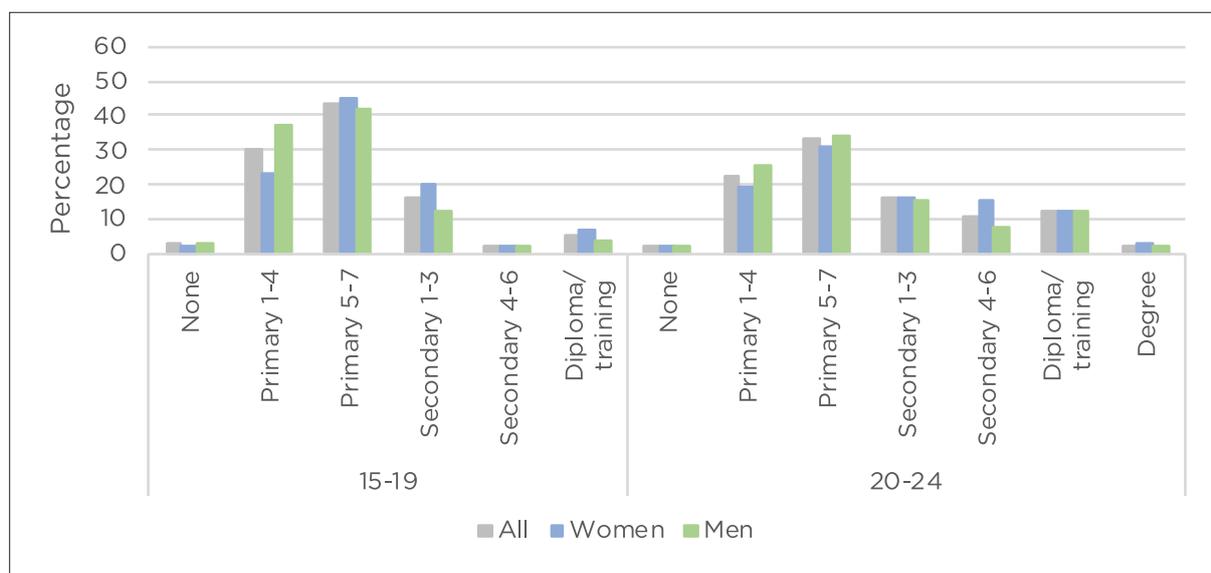


Source: Rwanda’s Labour Force Survey 2019, author’s calculations.

Figure 12 shows the number of employed youth by highest level of education. A greater percentage of men (37%) aged 15-19 have lower primary as their highest level of education than women (23%). This supports the suggestion made earlier that young men take longer to attain higher grades of education as they tend to repeat grades or leave and re-enter school due to seasonal or temporary employment. There are also numerically more women employed who have attained lower secondary as their highest education level – with 28 000 women employed and 19 000 men employed in the 15-19 age group. This trend is also evident in the 20-24 year old age group where 31 000 women and 19 000 men who have attained at least some grades of senior secondary education are employed. These numbers should be treated with some caution as there appears to be an under-representation of men sampled in the survey – as outlined in 3.2.

¹ “Rwanda has recently changed its approach to collecting labour statistics, adopting the new definition of employment established in 2013 by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS). Whilst welcome, the nature of household surveys before and since 2017 mean that it is impossible to compare core labour force statistics before and after this date, so tracking trends is problematic. However, the large discrepancy between estimated (old definition) and recorded (new definition) employment rates reflect the substantial involvement of the population – and particularly women in subsistence farming.” (ILO 2020b). See Section 3.1 for the discussion on ICLS definitions

Figure 12: Percentage of employed youth (aged 15-24) by highest level of education, sex and age group



Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

3.7 Unpaid care and domestic work by sex

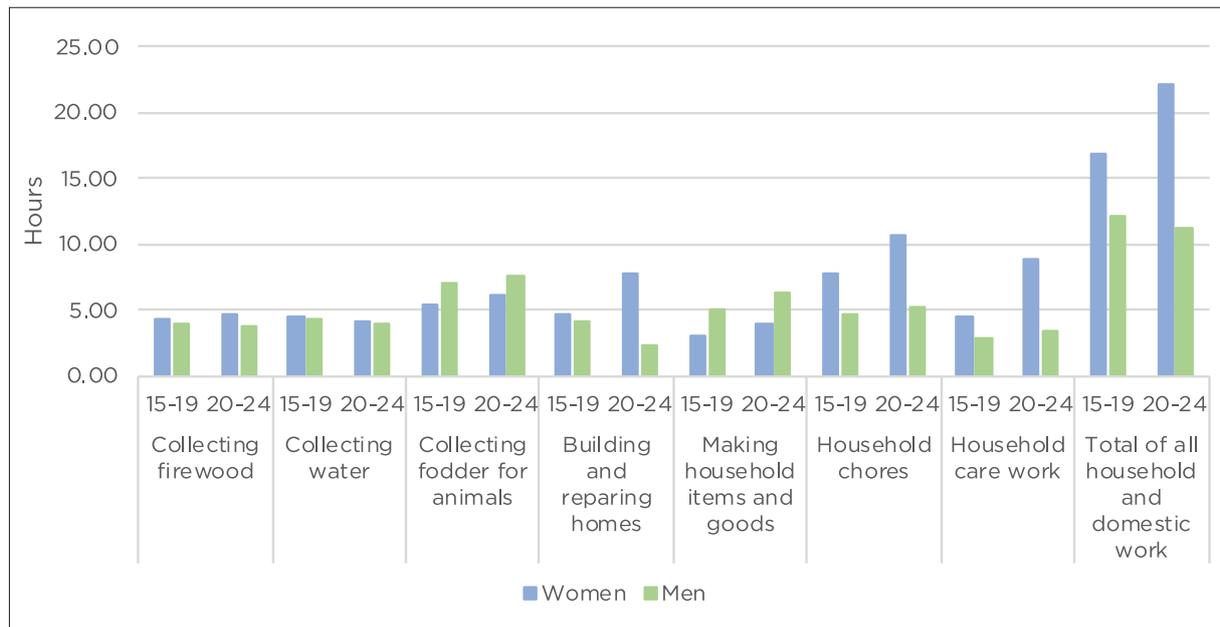
In addition to being the predominant producers of paid and unpaid family agriculture, 15-24 year-old women in Rwanda are also doing more unpaid domestic and care work than their male counterparts. Possibly due to an increasingly equal enrolment in school of girls and boys, the difference between girls and boys in amount of domestic work done by 15-19 year-olds is lower than for the 20-24 age cohort. Women between 15 and 19 years old do an average of 17 hours domestic work per week and men do 12 hours respectively. Women aged 20-24 do an average of 22 hours per week and men of the same age group do 11 hours on average (Data from the RLFS 2019).

The concern that arises from the relative burden of household farming, domestic and care work is that women are potentially permanently excluded from the labour market. The ILO (2020a) finds that the longer a young person stays outside of the labour market the less likely they are to become employed.

Figure 13 shows the average number of hours that young people spend on household and domestic work. Young women, in general, spend more time on household tasks than men except for collecting fodder for animals and making household items. Women between the age of 20 and 24 tend to spend the most time engaged in household chores and care work with an average of 22 hours of work per week compared to men of this age who spend an average of 11 hours of per week.

Figure 13 needs to be read in conjunction with Figure 14 which gives the average time spent per week on family agriculture – paid and unpaid. In this regard young women and men are spending close to the same amount of time per week on household work – especially NEET youth. 15 to 19 year old NEET spend close to 19 hours per week on unpaid family agriculture, NEET women 20-24 spend on average 21 hours and NEET men in this age group spend 19 hours on average.

Figure 13: Average time spent on household tasks in hours per week by sex and age group (15-24)

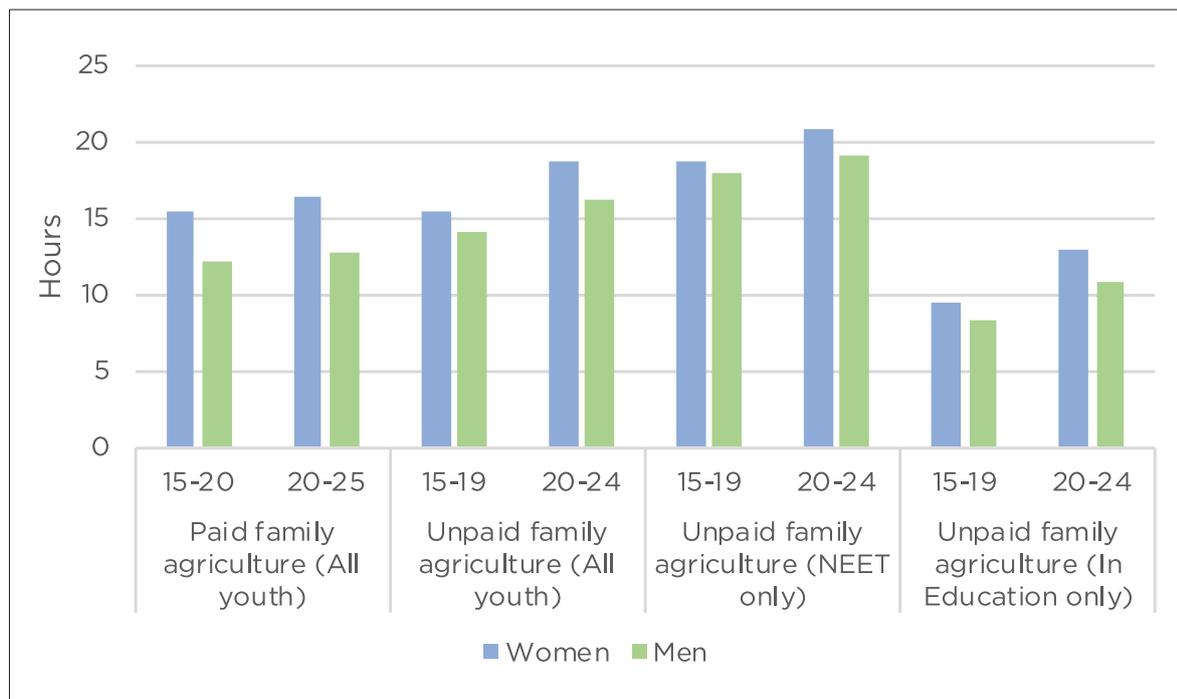


Note: Average hours are calculated as the weighted average of those respondents who engaged in the task.

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

Data from the RLFS 2019 shows that young women between the ages of 20 and 24 spend an average of 16.4 hours per week on family farming for income and 18.7 hours on subsistence family farming. The men in this cohort spend less time, indicating an average of 12.7 hours per week on family farming for an income and 16.2 hours per week on subsistence family farming.

Figure 14: Average hours of work in family agriculture, paid and unpaid by sex and age group (15-24)



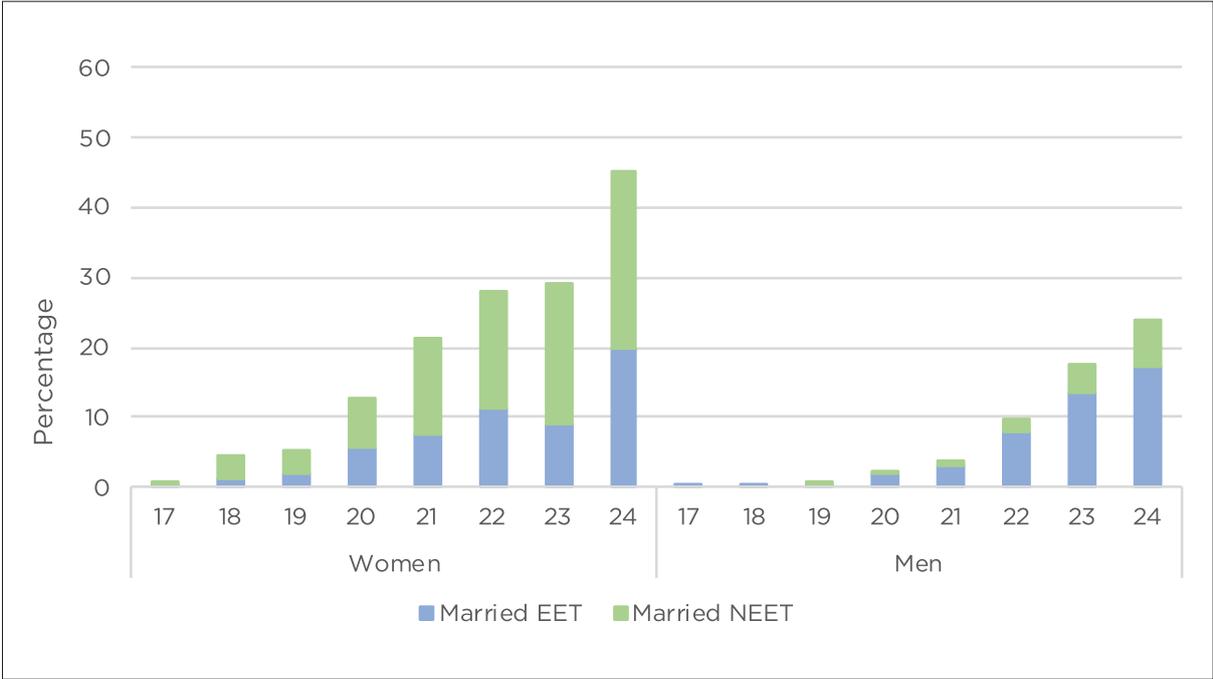
Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

3.8 Additional characteristics of NEET youth

This section looks at some of the characteristics of NEET youth that may affect the reasons for NEET status. These are marriage, the time spent on household and domestic chores and the time spent in family agriculture both paid and unpaid.

Marriage in Rwanda is not legal until the age of 21 and the relatively low marriage or cohabiting rates up to the age of 20 are an indication of this. Figure 15 compares the percentage of youth NEET against those in employment education or training (EET) who are married or cohabiting. The percentage of women married or cohabiting at 18 is 5% and men is less than 1%. For women the percentage married increases to 45% at 24 and to 24% for men. The proportion of women EET to NEET married is roughly 2 to 5 until 24 when the percentage of EET women and NEET women married is approximately the same. By 24 years old only 24% of men are married and these are predominantly EET.

Figure 15: Married or cohabiting NEET and EET youth (age 15-24) as a percentage of youth by sex and age in single years



Source: Rwanda’s Labour Force Survey 2019, author’s calculations.

4

DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH NEET

The descriptive data from the RLFS 2019 shows the differences in female and male youth in terms of their enrolment in education, employment status and NEET status. While younger women in the age group 15-19 are achieving parity in education attainment and even gaining more years of schooling they are not entering the labour market at the same rate as their male peers. Women between the ages of 20 and 24 have the greatest rate of NEET (45%) compared to men in that age group (30%). More than a third (36%) of women are employed, compared to 47% of men; 17% of women and 20% of men in this age cohort are still in education.

In addition to these descriptive observations, it is important to attempt to understand what identifiable factors in the Rwandan context determine why women are more likely to be NEET than men. Unlike many of the other countries in this East and Southern African study, marriage was not as high a determining factor in whether women were NEET or not. This is most likely due to the legal age of marriage in Rwanda being 21. In the age group 15-19, women were 3.6 times more likely to be NEET if they were married than if they are not. However, relatively few women in this age group are married. In the 20-24 year age group women are 1.8 times as likely to be NEET if they are married. While this is an important finding, young women are almost as likely to be NEET if they engaged in unpaid farm work as if they are married.

In other research on the individual and household factors associated with the number of years of education attained it has been fairly widely ascertained that socioeconomic status, education levels of parents, availability of learning resources such as books and electricity, time spent on household chores, distance from school and nutritional status are amongst the most important (Bashir et. al. 2018, Karamperidou et. al. 2020 and Tiruneh et. al. 2021). Similar factors are associated with the probability of youth and women's employment (Klasen 2018 and O'Higgins 2017). For young women in particular, early marriage, childbirth and gender norms around the cost benefits of further years of education as well as gender norms around household roles and the suitability of certain employment for women, impacts on both education levels attained and employment (Comblon 2017 and Nieuwenhuis 2018).

In order to ascertain whether there is an association between these factors and the probability of being NEET a multivariate logistic regression model was constructed with NEET status as the dependent variable. Independent variables were tested based on research as mentioned above and the descriptive analysis of the data from the RLFS 2019 which shows possible correlations between NEET and sex, age group, marriage, highest level of education attained, urban or rural residence and involvement in family farming for own use.

In order to develop policy that may best decrease the number of young women NEET, it is important to understand the factors in the Rwandan context that determine why women are more likely to be NEET than men. Table 8 shows the determinants of NEET and the probability of an increased or decreased impact on NEET status.

This section of the report is structured as follows: The first section gives the structure of the model and the method used in coding the variables for analysis is given. In the second section the findings of the model are presented and the associations between NEET and background characteristics such as sex, age, gender, marital status, family composition and gender are analysed. Lastly, some limitations of the model are explained.

4.1 Structure of the logistic regression model

A multivariate logistic regression is a widely used statistical method appropriate to the categorical nature of survey data. As well as the dependant variable (NEET status) being categorical, many of the independent variables in the survey data are categorical such as sex, married, highest level of education, urban/rural.

The logistic model is:

$$\log(\pi/(1-\pi))=\beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 \dots\dots\dots$$

where $Pr(Y=1)=\pi$

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3\dots\dots$ are the Odds Ratios of X_1, X_2, X_3 respectively

The model was run in *Stata* as a weighted sample of the survey set.

Individual level data for all 15 to 24 year olds was compiled from the RLFS 2019 for the regression analysis. Data from the following sections of the survey was used: Individual demographic information; individual education data; and individual employment and time use data. Data was coded as noted in Table 7 which lists the variables used in the model.

Table 7: List of variables used in the logistic regression model and method used for compiling the coding

Variable	Type of variable and code used	Method used to compile codes
Dependent variable		
NEET status	Dummy variable 0 = not NEET 1 = NEET	Labour and time use data was used to establish employed or not; Education data used to establish in education or not.
Independent variables		
Sex	Dummy variable Male = 0 Female = 1	Data on individual respondent.
Age group	Dummy variable 15 to 19 = 0 20 to 24 = 1	Data on individual respondent. Age in years coded as age group
Married	Dummy variable No = 0 Yes = 1	Data on individual respondent.

Relationship to head of household	Dummy variable Head = 0 Child = 1 Grandchild = 2 Spouse = 3 Other adult = 4	Data on individual respondent.
Highest level of education	Dummy variable with 7 categories None = 0 Prim 1-3 = 1 Prim 4-5 = 2 Sec 1-3 = 3 Sec 4-6 = 4 Training = 5 Higher Ed = 6	Data on the highest grade attained was coded into none; lower and senior primary; lower and senior secondary; training; higher education; and adult literacy.
Hours spend doing care work	Continuous variable	Data on individual respondent.
Hours spent doing chores	Continuous variable	Data on individual respondent.
Working in family agriculture for own use	Dummy variable No = 0 Yes = 1	Data on individual respondent.

There were substantial differences observed in the descriptive data between the age groups and between women and men. This includes the number who are NEET, in education, employed, married and type of household they may live in. In order to establish whether the various factors impact differently on the NEET rate depending on age group and gender four separate models were run as follows:

- All 15- to 19-year-olds;
- Women 15- to 19-years-old;
- All 20- to 24-year-olds;
- Women 20- to 24-years-old.

Note: Each of the four models were run separately. The effective sample is different for each demographic group and shows the results **while controlling for all other variables** in that model (unless the data is not available in which case it is denoted by n.d.). The **odds ratios** of each variable in each model is shown in a combined table only for convenience of discussing the impact on NEET on the different groups.

4.2 Findings of the model

The odds ratios of the independent variables are presented in Table 8. The odds ratios measure the strength of the association between a variable with the probability of being NEET. An odds ratio greater than one indicates that the variable is associated with an increased probability of being NEET. The strength of the association will be the odds ratio times one. For example, if a variable has an odds ratio of 2 it will be associated with twice the probability of being NEET. If the odds ratio is less than one it means that there is a decreased probability of being NEET. The associated value of the odds ratio is again times one. For example, if the odds ratio is 0.4, the associated probability of being NEET is multiplied by 0.4 or, in other words, has a 60% lower probability of being NEET. An odds ratio of one (or close to one) means that there is little to no association between the variable and the probability of being NEET.

Women: Women between the age of 15 and 19 are only 2% more likely to be NEET than men of the same age. However, as noted in Section 3.2, it is likely that this is understated due to the lower count of young men in the household. Given that young men are likely to be absent from the household due to taking up employment (even if temporary), those who remain in the household are as likely to be NEET as their female contemporaries.

Women between the age of 20 and 24 are 18% more likely to be NEET than men between 20 and 24. As with the 15- to 19-year-olds, the difference is likely to be higher since young men in the household are notably absent from the survey – again, most likely due to taking up employment outside the household.

Marriage: In the age group 15-19, women were 3.6 times more likely to be NEET if they were married than if they are not. However, the legal age of marriage in Rwanda is 21 years old and less than 4% of women under 21 are married. In the 20-24 year age group women are 1.8 times as likely to be NEET if they are married.

Education attainment: As with other countries in the study, increased years of education attainment reduce the probability of being NEET by a significant amount. Attaining primary school reduces the probability of being NEET by 77% for women in the 15 to 19 age group and by approximately 50% for women in the 20 to 24 age group. Attaining secondary education reduces the probability of being NEET by 95% in the 15-19 year age group and by close to 60% in the 20-24 year age group.

Unpaid domestic and care work: The RLFS 2019 has detailed information on how many hours the respondents were involved in household chores and care work. It is important to note that this is a continuous variable with hours as the unit of comparison. Each additional hour of domestic or care work is associated with an increase of approximately 5% in the probability of being NEET. Women between 20 and 24 years old spend twice as much time on household chores as men with an average of 22 hours per week compared to 11 hours per week for men. It is not possible, from the data, to know if the social norms of women being more engaged in domestic and care work prohibits them from entering the labour market; or if the types of paid work that young men are able to look for and engage in are not deemed suitable for young women.

Engagement in unpaid family agriculture: Unfortunately, too many respondents who said that they were engaged in unpaid family agriculture had missing data to be able to use hours spent as an independent variable in the regression model. The variable used is thus whether the individual was engaged in unpaid family agriculture or not.

Engagement in unpaid family agriculture is most likely to be associated with NEET status in the 15- to 19-year-old population for whom there is an 3.23 times greater probability of being NEET for both women and men and an 3.45 times greater probability of being NEET for women only. 20-24-year-old women have a 1.73 times greater probability of being NEET if they are engaged in unpaid farm work. This is lower than the increase of 2.05 times the probability for women and men combined in that age group, suggesting that having to be engaged in unpaid labour places more constraints on men's ability to be in education or employed than women.

Table 8: Results of the logistical regression models for youth NEET status

Category (omitted variable in parenthesis)	Variable	15-19 year-olds		20-24 year-olds	
		Women and men	Women only	Women and men	Women only
		Odds Ratio			
Sex (Men)	Women	1.02*		1.18**	
Age group (15-19)	20-24				
Married (No)	Married	3.20**	3.55***	1.81	1.85***
Relationship to head of household (Head)	Child	3.32*	3.17	4.11***	2.40***
	Grandchild	2.27*	2.30	4.01***	3.37***
	Spouse	2.25*	2.41	1.82***	1.20
	Other adult	1.70	1.52	0.46	0.31
Highest level of education (None)	Prim 1-3	0.27***	0.23***	0.52***	0.45***
	Prim 4-5	0.26***	0.23***	0.52***	0.53**
	Sec 1-3	0.06***	0.06***	0.54***	0.59***
	Sec 4-6	0.04***	0.04***	0.47***	0.41*
	Training	0.07***	0.06***	0.30***	0.25***
	Higher Ed	0.05***	0.05***	0.11***	0.11***
Hours spent doing care work		1.07***	1.09***	1.05***	1.04***
Hours spent doing chores		1.05***	1.06***	1.05***	1.05***
Working in family agriculture for own use (No)	Yes	3.23***	3.45***	2.05***	1.73***
Constant		0.39*	0.42	0.22***	0.42**

Source: Rwanda's Labour Force Survey 2019, author's calculations.

4.3 Limitations of the model

The main limitation of the model is not having data for additional factors that might be associated with the probability of being NEET such as having children, age of first child, access to community employment projects or socio-economic status of the household. In terms of socio-economic status of the household other indices could be constructed to use as a proxy for income or relative poverty this was not done for several reasons. Firstly, the time required for the construction of such an index was not included in the research brief which originally intended the reports to be orientated more towards a policy audience. Secondly, a relative poverty index was constructed from house type, water availability and frequency of food deprivation for three of the countries in the study – Malawi, Botswana and Uganda. Not only was there no impact on NEET status of this relative poverty index (nor any of the individual components) but it's inclusion

in the model created collinearity to the extent that it weakened both the impact and the statistical significance of nearly *all* the other variables – but most especially highest education level attained. While there are certainly various statistical methods to correct for this – most notably by creating interaction terms, it was felt that interpreting the interaction terms would be too complex for the policy reader. (See O’Higgins 2017 pp 179 to 197). In any case, while there is research that shows a relationship between number of years of school attained and socioeconomic status (Bashir et. al. 2018, Karamperidou et. al. 2020 and Tiruneh et. al. 2021), there is less direct evidence of a relationship between women’s employment prospects and socioeconomic status (Klasen 2018). In conclusion, an index of socioeconomic status was not included in any of the country studies without necessarily first testing each country’s data. This work will have to be the topic of further research.

5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rwanda has made significant progress in its gender equity indicators and is one of the top ten countries in terms of reductions in their gender gap. Improvements in human and social development have achieved gender parity in primary, secondary education and tertiary education; increased access to health and fertility care mean that 93% of births are attended by skilled health providers and maternal mortality is the lowest in East Africa (UNDP 2020); and implementation of a minimum age of 21 for marriage has effected a teenage marriage or cohabiting rate of 7% and a teenage childbirth rate of 4% (UNFPA 2022).

Young women are still affected by a number of gender norms that currently limit their access to property ownership, agricultural productivity improvements, employment opportunities and further education in the science and technology fields, however, these are being addressed in a number of governmental policy initiatives including the 2021 *Revised National Gender Policy* and the 2015 *National Youth Policy* (Government of Rwanda 2021 and 2015)

Employment opportunities for young women are limited – especially in the formal sector. Of note are the higher proportions of young women to young men who are unemployed both in the narrow definition (22% women and 19% men)² and including discouraged work seekers (44% women and 35% men). An area of potential growth for employment is in the agricultural sector (NSIR 2020). The following are a number of policy recommendations that emerge from the findings of the RLFS 2019 data analysed in this study. All these are at the core of Rwanda’s youth and gender equity policies, however, the hope is that this data gives concrete evidence to the efforts of various stakeholders in Rwanda.

5.1 Increased access to quality education and training

Rwanda has universal access to primary school with rapidly expanding access to secondary school. Currently, more girls are enrolled in both levels of schooling than boys and are gaining more years of schooling than boys. The data shows that there are more young women reaching secondary school than boys (Crawford 2017, UNDP Rwanda CO 2020). While there is parity in enrolment in tertiary education, women are under-represented in technical training.

2 Unless referenced otherwise, data in this section is from the RLFS 2019 analysed by the author.

As with many countries in East and Southern Africa the education challenge is to improve the quality of education in schools and to increase enrolment of women in post school education and training – particularly in those fields where gender norms have excluded women. In the budget speech to parliament in 2020 the Minister of Finance committed the government to increasing the budget for education by 52%, predominantly for increasing the number of teachers, school building, textbooks and the extension of the training sector (UNICEF 2020). It would be important to ensure that the training sector includes young women’s access to non-traditional fields of study – particularly in science and technology.

5.2 Transition from school to work

The RLFS 2019 data analysed in this study was able to show the extent to which young women’s work in unpaid domestic and care work, as well as family agricultural production for own use, is associated with a higher probability of being NEET. Twenty to 24-year-old women spend an average of 20 hours a week on domestic and care work and for those women who are engaged in family farming for own use spend an average of 23 hours a week. RLFS 2019 data from the annual report shows that young women’s NEET rate continues to increase between 25 and 30 years old (NISR 2020). Unlike many of the East African countries in this study, young women between 20 and 24 have higher percentages of unemployed and discouraged work seekers than men, suggesting that for many young women in this age group their NEET status is not due to a choice to be involved in family production.

In its *Country Brief* on youth employment in Rwanda, the ILO (2020b) outlines the importance of expanding youth employment by “promoting macro-economic and/or sectoral strategies to create wage employment opportunities for young people.” Increasing the productivity of family farming and developing young women’s engagement in agricultural enterprises may assist in reducing the NEET rates of young women as they become more involved in family care.

Any strategy for expanding employment would need to prioritise access by young women to suitable employment as well as look for ways in which women could access employment opportunities such as increased access to public transport.

6

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