
Employment Policy Papers

The school-to-work transition of young people in Syria

Dr. Sufyan Alissa

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Preface

The transition from school to work is a critical stage in the human lifecycle during which young people take on new roles and responsibilities in the society. It is a period of social, psychological and economic transitions, and for many young people, it means making important choices that can affect their life course and determine their chance of inclusion in the society through access to work. To a large extent, the nature and quality of young people's future lives depend on how successfully they transit from school to work. The failure to find decent employment after leaving school tends to have serious and lasting effects on occupational patterns and incomes over the life course of a young graduate. An ineffective school-to-work transition system also affects the countries' economic growth, productivity and ability to compete in the global economy.

But experience shows that there is no one path to labour market participation and adulthood. Successful paths and the necessary milestones vary from region to region or country to country according to culture and the vastly different economic constraints and institutional barriers that might hamper youth's access to decent employment. The challenge, therefore, is to identify, on a country-by-country basis, the particularities of the school to work transition of young people in order to enable policy-makers to make informed decisions for overcoming these inefficiencies with the design of appropriate youth employment policies and programmes.

Within the realm of the ILO's Youth Employment Programme (YEP) and its mandate to build knowledge around the youth employment challenge, the ILO has designed a "school-to-work transition survey" and assists countries in its implementation and interpretation with the view to encouraging informed policy-making. In 2005, the ILO supported the Government of Syria in running the survey and contracted Dr. Sufyan Alissa to present the results in an analytical report. The results of this collaboration, synthesized in this publication, confirm that Syrian youth face significant challenges in finding decent employment after leaving school. Shortcomings are revealed in both the capacity of the education and training systems to produce labour market entrants that meet the requirements of employers, as well as in the capacity of the Syrian economy to create sufficient demand for young labour. In addition, existing labour market intermediation institutions are found to play only a minimal role in matching labour supply and demand. It is expected that such findings and the analysis of the underlying factors as identified in this report, will help shape the design and implementation of new policies and programmes to improve the employment prospects of Syrian youth.

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Acknowledgments

This report, written by Dr. Sufyan Alissa, is based on the findings of the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) conducted in Syria in late 2005. The survey was developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and implemented by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in Syria. The core team responsible for the survey comprised Dr. Ibrahim Ali, Dr. Ali Rostom and Eng. Mutasem Salama of the CBS, and Mr. Tariq Haq of the ILO. Dr. Mohammed Al-Refai from the Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics in Jordan provided additional training to the CBS team.

Our gratitude is due to H.E. the First Lady of Syria, Ms. Asma Al Assad, for her full support to this initiative, and to H.E. the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in Syria, Dr. Dialla Elhadj Aref, for her valuable collaboration in the implementation of the survey and the production of this report. Special thanks are also due the SHABAB Project team for the encouragement and support to this work.

The contributions of fieldworkers who conducted the survey are acknowledged. Similarly, thanks are due to the young persons and employers who gave their time for the interviews. Tariq Haq and Sara Elder from the ILO provided overall guidance and feedback that enabled the completion of this report.

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Executive summary and main findings

The objective of this report is to contribute towards reducing youth unemployment in Syria and to facilitate young people's full and productive integration into the labour market. It analyses the main factors that determine school-to-work transition among the youth and explores the characteristics of youth in the different stages of transition and the factors behind easy and difficult transitions into the labour market. The analysis and policy recommendations in this report are based on the outcomes of the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS), conducted in Syria in November 2005. This survey has been developed by the ILO to measure the realities of young people's experience as they enter the labour market.

Five target groups were covered by the survey: in-school youth, jobseekers, young employees, young self-employed and own-account workers, and youth who are neither in school nor in the labour market. In addition, the survey included a separate questionnaire that targeted employers and managers of young people. The sample size of the targeted categories was 2,000 individuals. As for the employers and managers survey, a sample of 200 establishments was randomly selected.

Characteristics of young Syrians

- Inactivity among young people is high.
- The problem of unemployment is quite severe among young people – particularly among young persons with low-levels of education (primary and secondary levels) – and the duration of their unemployment is lengthy.
- The educational achievement among young males and females is quite low.
- The majority of employed young persons are wage and salaried workers (employees) and work long hours at low-paid jobs.
- An overriding characteristic of young people, regardless of their economic activity, is a gender imbalance whereby young women are consistently shown to be at a disadvantage.

The role of employment offices

- Young persons mainly use two informal methods to search for work: relatives and friends, and direct visits to establishments.
- Employment offices in Syria are rarely seen as helping young men and women joining the labour market.

Main priorities of young males and females at different stages of transition

- Young men and women who have not started their transition from school to work, either because they are still in school or are not in the labour force, are not highly work-oriented in their thinking.
- Young persons' thinking mainly focuses on family, marriage and their studies, overlooking any tangible plans towards career development or constructing a concrete plan for future work issues.
- Young male persons currently in transition, meaning they are either looking for work or are working in a temporary or non-career job,¹ are more work-oriented than young female persons who are more concerned with family and marriage issues.
- The young persons who completed the transition stage successfully are highly work-oriented compared with other groups of young persons who suffer from a lack of direction.

¹ The transition stages are defined in more detail below (see chapter 3).

Main challenges facing young persons at different stages of transition

- Large proportion of young persons who have completed their transition stage experienced a 'difficult' transition.
- The fundamental challenges that face young persons in finding career employment are their lack of education and a dearth of jobs in the market.
- Other obstacles also play an important role in their lack of success – such as work inexperience and low wages in the labour market.

The effect of education achievement on current economic activity of young males and females

- There is a significant correlation between levels of education and the labour market status of young male and female persons (employed, unemployed, or economically inactive).
- The education and training that the young males and females received were for the most part not considered very useful towards obtaining employment and were neither suitable nor helpful for their current work.

Type of economic activity for those who completed their transition stage

- Young males and females who completed their transition stage are mainly service or production workers.
- Education, health and social sectors employed the majority of female young persons who completed their transition period.

Employers' hiring practices

- Employers who hire young persons mainly use informal methods of recruitment (through relatives and friends).
- The education and training institutions and the employment offices played a very modest role in promoting recruitment of young persons.
- Job opportunities in enterprises that hire young persons are very limited

The match between young persons' aptitudes and skills and the needs of the labour market

- Based on the employers experience with young applicants, it appears that a high number of employers think that the overall ability and skills of young applicants are moderate.
- A smaller number of employers think that young applicants are highly disciplined, will be committed to their work and have realistic expectations about the work conditions.

Policy implications

- The evidence from the survey clearly indicates that Syria needs a vision for the future of its labour market and a strategy to improve its labour market outcomes, particularly for its youth. Since youth employment is highly dependent on the general employment situation of the country, it is critical to prioritize employment in national policy making and make it central to economic and social policies.
- Since all problems and challenges in the labour market are interlinked, combating the grave challenges of youth employment in Syria can only be achieved through coordinated efforts between key ministries and other national stakeholders to develop coherent, youth friendly policies and programmes, along with structural changes in the labour market.
- Policies recommended in this report aim to achieve the following five objectives: enhancing the employability of young males and females, creating a new engine for job creation through

promoting sustainable entrepreneurship, improving access to and information about the labour market, improving labour market regulations and standards, and ensuring inclusion and equal opportunity for all members of society.

Introduction

The objective of this report is to contribute towards reducing youth unemployment in Syria and to facilitate young people's full and productive integration into the labour market. It explores the characteristics of youth in the different stages of transition and analyses the factors behind 'easy' and 'difficult' transitions to the labour market. This report describes the various challenges, attitudes and situations that influence young women and men joining the labour market.

The analysis and policy recommendations presented in this report are based on the outcomes of the school-to-work transition survey (SWTS), conducted in Syria in November 2005. The survey instrument was first developed by the ILO to measure the realities of young people's experience as they enter the labour market. The survey is designed to capture the experiences of young men and women from five target groups – in-school youth, jobseekers, young employees, young self-employed and own-account workers, and youth who are neither in school nor in the labour market. In addition, a separate questionnaire that targeted employers and managers of young people was included in the survey study. The survey reveals important issues and highlights the policies needed to improve the transition of young people from school to work.²

This report is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents the methodology used in the SWTS and in the writing of the report. It also sets the socio-economic and labour market context for this report. Chapter 2 presents the main characteristics of youth in the sample survey, and provides an overall description of young persons' household characteristics, their life aspirations and their specific preparation for transition from school to work. Chapter 3 defines the classification of the sampled youth into different stages of transition (those who have completed their transition, those in the transition stage and those who have not yet started their transition), and explores different factors that influence the type of experience they have in these stages. Chapter 4 extends the analysis of factors that determine the nature of young people's transition by examining the experience of employers who hire and those who manage young persons to identify the characteristics and establish the criteria that employers seek in hiring young males and females. It also presents the methods used by employers to hire young persons. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes the main findings in the report and proposes policy recommendations to promote youth employment and to facilitate young males and females joining the labour market.

1. Methodology and overview of the labour market

This chapter presents the methodology used in the SWTS and in writing the report. It also sets the socio-economic and labour market context for this report. This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section presents the socio-economic context of the report. The second identifies the main trends and developments in the labour market. The third section presents the methodological basis used in designing and conducting the survey as well as in the analysis of the data.

1.1 The socio-economic context

Syria is a lower middle income country with a per capita GDP of about \$1,170 and a population of about 17.8 million people that has grown, on average, 2.4 per cent per year since 1999. Following a decade of economic growth in the 1990s, economic performance has weakened

² For more information about the ILO survey and to download the survey questionnaires, visit website: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yett/swts.htm>.

significantly in the recent years. The real GDP growth declined to 2 per cent in 2004, compared with 5.1 per cent in 2001. Population and demographic expansion and slowdown of economic growth led to a decline in the living standards of the population. The growth of per capita income declined significantly in the last two years to reach – 0.4 per cent in 2004. 11.4 per cent of the Syrian population lives below the national poverty line (See tables 1.1.1 and 1.1.2).

Table 1.1.1 Selected economic indicators, 1999-2004

YEARS	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
ITEMS:						
Population at mid year (1000 persons)	15891	16320	16720	17130	17550	17793
Annual percent change	2.7%	2.7%	2.5%	2.5%	2.5%	1.4%
G. D.P at market prices (million SP)	898552	903944	950245	1006431	1017619	1038421
Annual percent change	-3.6%	0.6%	5.1%	5.9%	1.1%	2.0%
Per capita G.D.P. at market prices (SP)	56545	55389	56833	58753	57984	57754
Annual percent change	-2.4%	-2.0%	2.6%	3.4%	-1.3%	-0.4%
Structure of GDP at constant price of 2000 (%):						
SECTORS:						
Agriculture	22.0	25.0	25.0	26.0	25.0	25.0
Mining & manufacturing*	34.0	30.0	29.0	26.0	24.0	20.0
Building & construction	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	4.0	3.0
Services**	41.0	42.0	43.0	45.0	47.0	52.0
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Notes: * Oil production represents more than 80 per cent of the mining and manufacturing sectors. **Services sector includes wholesale and retail trade, transportation and communication, finance and insurance, social and personal services, government services, and private non-profit services.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria.

Whilst the share of services in GDP grew by 11 percentage points between 1999 and 2004, the Syrian economy remains highly dependant on the agriculture, mining and manufacturing (mainly oil production) sectors. These sectors are subject to uncertainties due to changes in oil prices and rain dependency. While the agriculture sector has maintained nearly the same level of contribution to the GDP in recent years, the contribution of the mining and manufacturing sectors declined significantly from 34 per cent to 20 per cent of the GDP (see table 1.1.1). Despite this trend, oil still represents about two-thirds of exports and half of the government revenue. However, the mid term prospects of the Syrian economy are worrisome given that, in the absence of new discoveries, oil is likely to be exhausted by the late 2020s and Syria will become a net importer of oil.

As for the social factors, there has been a substantial decline in infant mortality rates (per 1000 live births) of nearly 29 per cent between 2000 and 2004. In addition, the child mortality (under 5 years) rate has declined noticeably from 29 per cent in 2000 to 19.3 per cent of children under 5 years in 2004. The life expectancy rate increased slightly from 70.5 years in 2000 to 72 years in 2004. The illiteracy rate among people above 15 years old is very significant (19 per cent of the population aged 15 years and above) (see table 1.1.2).

Table 1.1.2 Selected social indicators, 2000, 2003 and 2004

Indicator:	2000	2003	2004
National poverty rate (%)	...	...	11.4
Fertility rate (births per women)	...	3.4	3.6
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	24	18.1	17.1
Child mortality rate (%of under 5 years)	29	20.2	19.3
Illiteracy rate among people 15+ (%)	17.6	18.6	19
Life expectancy at birth (years)	70.5	71.5	72

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria and the World Bank 2005 (World Development Indicator 2005).

1.2 The labour market in Syria

Population growth in Syria has experienced a relative slowdown after a rapid growth of about 30 per cent over the last ten-year period, growing from 13.8 million in 1994 to 17.8 million in 2004. The rate of the working age (15+) population has also grown in recent years, from 56 per cent of the population in 1999 to 62 per cent in 2003. The majority (about 70 per cent) of the Syrian population is less than 30 years old. While the share of children (less than 14 years old) in the total population has decreased slightly over the period (from 42.1 to 37.0 per cent), the share of young people in the 15 to 24 age bracket – the cohort of concern in this report – has increased slightly from 20.6 to 22.1 per cent of the total population.

The labour force represents less than one-third of the Syrian population and less than half of the working age population. In 2003, the participation rate in the labour force was only 46.8 per cent of the working age population, a decline from 55.8 per cent in 1999. The low overall participation rate is due to the very low participation among females (18.4 per cent), compared with 74.2 per cent among males (see table 1.2.1 and 1.2.2).

Table 1.2.1 Syrian population by sex and age distribution, 1994 and 2004

	1994			2004		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Population (thousands)	7049	6733	13782	9090	8703	17793
Age groups (%):						
Less than a year	2.9	2.8	2.9	2.5	2.4	2.5
1 - 4	12.1	11.9	12	11.4	11.4	11.4
5 - 9	15.4	15.3	15.4	13.6	13.4	13.5
10 - 14	14.6	14.5	14.5	12.2	12	12.1
15 - 19	11.6	11.7	11.6	11.7	11.7	11.7
20 - 24	9	9.2	9.1	10.3	10.5	10.4
25 - 29	7.5	7.7	7.6	7.9	8.2	8.1
30 - 34	6.1	6.3	6.2	6.5	6.6	6.6
35 - 39	4.7	4.8	4.7	5.6	5.8	5.7
40 - 44	3.8	3.8	3.8	4.7	4.7	4.7
45 - 49	2.9	2.8	2.8	3.6	3.5	3.5
50 - 54	2.4	2.5	2.5	2.9	2.9	2.9
55 - 59	1.9	1.9	1.9	2.1	2	2
60 - 64	2	2	2	1.6	1.7	1.6
65 +	3.1	2.8	3	3.4	3.2	3.3
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria

Table 1.2.2 Labour market indicators, 1999-2003 (in thousands, unless otherwise indicated)

Indicator:	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Working age population (15+)	8'893	9'702	9'958	10'398	10'861
Male	4'532	4'956	5'088	5'357	5'525
Female	4'361	4'746	4'870	5'041	5'336
Labour force	4'967	5'164	5'275	5'459	5'083
Male	...	...	4'237	4'289	4'101
Female	...	...	1'038	1'170	982
Employment	4'559	4'468	4'844	4'822	4'469
Male	3'632	3'742	3'926	3'933	3'707
Female	927	726	918	888	762

Indicator:	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Employers	369	418	394	403	358
Self employed (own-account)	1'103	1'250	1'228	1'333	1'147
Wage Earners (employees)	2'398	2'250	2'329	2'300	2'449
Other (mainly unpaid family members)	688	550	893	786	514
Unemployment	408	696	431	637	614
Male	...	...	311	356	394
Female	...	...	120	282	220
Participation rate* (%)	55.8	53.2	53.0	52.5	46.8
Male	...	...	83	80	74
Female	...	...	21	23	18
Employment-to-population ratio**	51.3	46.1	48.6	46.4	41.1
Male	80.1	75.5	77.2	73.4	67.1
Female	21.3	15.3	18.9	17.6	14.3
Unemployment rate*** (%)**	...	...	8.2	11.7	12.1
Male	...	...	7.3	8.3	9.6
Female	...	...	11.6	24.1	22.4

Notes: * Labour force as a percent of working age population (15+). ** Number of persons employed as a percent of working age population. *** Number of unemployed persons as a percent of labour force.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria and Labour Market Information Library (ILO 2005), unpublished database.

About 55 per cent of the employed population are wage earners, followed by self-employed (about 25 per cent of the employed population). The percentage of unpaid workers (mainly engaged in family work) is significant (11.5 per cent in 2003), whilst employers constitute the smallest proportion of the working population (8 per cent in 2003).

Traditionally, the agriculture and government sectors employ about 50 per cent of the employed people in Syria. While this trend remains the same over time, changes in the sectoral distribution have taken place in recent years in these two sectors as well as in other sectors. The contribution of the agriculture sector to employment has declined significantly in recent years. Table 1.2.3 shows that the percentage of employed people in the agriculture sector declined from more than 30 per cent in 2000 to 2002 to 17.1 per cent in 2004. In contrast to the agriculture sector, the contribution of the government sector to employment increased significantly from about 22 per cent of the employed in 2000-2001 to about 30 per cent in 2004.³ At the same time, employment in the building and construction sector also experienced a notable increase from 11.2 per cent in 2003 to 19.5 per cent in 2004 (see table 1.2.3).

Table 1.2.3 Sectoral distribution of employment, 1999-2004

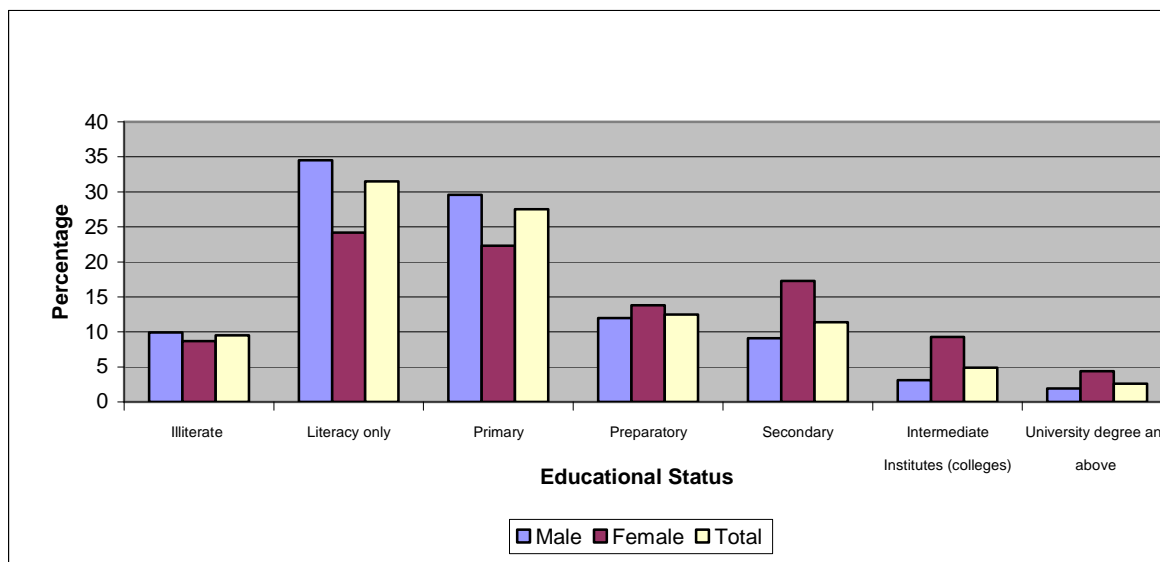
Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Agriculture and forests	28.5	30.9	30.4	30.3	26.1	17.1
Industry, mining and manufacturing	14.4	13.1	13.7	13.7	13.6	13.4
Building and construction	13.1	12.4	11.8	13.1	11.2	19.5
Hotels, restaurants and trade	15.2	14.5	14.5	15	15.2	12.1
Storage and transportation	5.4	5.3	5.3	5.5	6	6.1
Finance, insurance and properties	1.1	1.1	1.7	1.3	2	1.9
Government and other services	22.3	22.7	22.6	21.1	25.9	29.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria.

³ The data on the contribution of the agriculture sector to employment should be considered with caution. This sector is subject to rain dependency which in return affects employment and productivity in this sector.

The unemployment rate in Syria has increased considerably in the last years. It increased from 8.2 per cent in 1999 to 12.1 per cent in 2003. This rate is significantly higher among females 22.4 per cent, compared with males (9.6 per cent). In addition, the distribution of unemployment is inversely related to the level of educational achievement, such that persons with higher educational levels tend to have less of a problem with finding employment (see figure 1.2.1); nonetheless, even at higher levels of education there are more unemployed women than men.

Figure 1.2.1 Percentage distribution of unemployed by educational status and sex, 2004



Notes:

(1) The education system in Syria is divided into three main levels: school, college, and university. Schooling is divided into six years of compulsory primary, three years of lower secondary (preparatory), and three years of upper secondary education. In recent years, a new system has seen the primary and preparatory levels combined into ‘basic education’. Lower and upper secondary schools provide general (which prepares for university entrance) or vocational curricula. Colleges are open to all students who wish to continue their education. Obtaining a college degree requires two years of college education, after completing the secondary education. University students have to attend a minimum of four years of education before obtaining a university degree. In addition, postgraduate education is also available in Syria.

(2) The division of education levels in this chart is based on the Syrian Central Bureau of Statistics definition of different educational levels. In this chart and in subsequent tables/graphs, the ‘literacy only’ category is used to describe a person who can only read and write, without having obtained primary or any other formal level of education.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria.

The unemployment problem is most severe among young males and females. The share in total unemployment declines noticeably with the higher age brackets. Table 1.2.4 indicates that 60.9 per cent of the unemployed people in Syria in 2004 were youth. As one would expect, the share of young persons among the first time entrants to the labour market, i.e. those who have never worked before, is higher at 62.4 per cent than the youth share in the unemployed who have never worked before (33.1 per cent).

Table 1.2.4 Percentage distribution of unemployed by sex, age groups and previous work status, 2004

	Unemployed worked before			Unemployed never worked before			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Age Groups:									
15 - 19	10.6	17.3	11.6	28.7	24.4	27.4	27.6	24.2	26.6
20 - 24	20.7	26.1	21.5	34.5	36.2	35.0	33.7	35.9	34.3
25 - 29	17.7	20.1	18.0	17.4	20.1	18.2	17.4	20.1	18.2
30 - 34	14.8	14.5	14.8	8.3	9.7	8.7	8.7	9.8	9.0
35 - 39	11.5	11.3	11.5	4.7	5.7	5.0	5.1	5.8	5.3
40 - 44	7.8	5.5	7.5	2.5	2.1	2.4	2.9	2.2	2.7
45 - 49	5.9	3.0	5.5	1.5	1.0	1.4	1.8	1.0	1.6
50 - 54	4.4	1.2	4.0	1.0	0.4	0.8	1.2	0.4	1.0
55 - 59	3.3	0.2	2.9	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.7	0.2	0.5
60 - 64	1.7	0.2	1.5	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.3
65 +	1.6	0.5	1.4	0.5	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Syria.

1.3 Methodology for the school to work transition survey

The objectives of the survey are to collect and analyse information on the various challenges, attitudes and situations that influence young persons' entrance to the labour market. The survey is designed to capture these factors and the specific experiences of young men and women from the period of time between their exit from school to the time of entry in the career job/regular job employment. The ILO defines the school-to-work transition of a young person as the passage of a young person (defined here as persons aged 15 to 24 years⁴) from the end of schooling to the first "career" job or "regular" job. *Career job* is a subjective concept, based on the self-assessment of the jobholder. It implies a job that the respondent considers to "fit" to his/her desired career path. The contrary is termed a *non-career job*, implying a sense of dissatisfaction about the job, a desire to find something better and the likelihood that the young person has taken it because (s)he lacked a better option. *Regular job* is defined in terms of duration of contract or expected length of tenure. The contrary is a *temporary job*, or a job of limited duration.

1.3.1 Questionnaires development

The ILO has designed two surveys to measure the realities of young people's experience as they enter the labour market and to capture the demand and supply factors that influence the nature of this experience. The first questionnaire is for individuals 15-24 years of age and the second one is for employers and managers hiring young workers.

The first questionnaire consists of seven main sections and covers a broad variety of issues that are important in understanding young persons' experience in transiting from school to work. It includes general information about the young subjects and their households, information about their social and economic characteristics, as well as their education and training. It also includes detailed information about the experiences of young people in each of the five target groups: in-school youth, jobseekers, young employees, young self-employed and own-account workers, and youth who are neither in school nor in the labour market.

⁴ The age range meets the internationally-defined classification of "youth". However, in ILO-based SWTS run in other countries the maximum age limit is often extended to 29 years based on the understanding that young people are staying in school longer and therefore postponing their initial labour market entry until a later age.

The second questionnaire (for employers and managers hiring young workers) consists of four main sections. These sections include information about the nature and size of the institutions that hire young persons, the perception of employers regarding the young persons' skills and behaviour, type of training provided (if any) to young persons, and the relationship between the establishment's labour requirements and the skills, training and qualifications of the young men and women.

1.3.2 Sample design and selection

In light of the survey's goals, Syria was divided into four geographical areas: north, east, middle and southern areas. Five provinces were designated to represent these areas: Aleppo, Hamah, Tartus, Damascus and rural Damascus.

The Population and Housing Census for 2004 was adopted as a survey frame and the census results of the shares in each targeted category (workers, students, unemployed, and those who are economically inactive) were adapted to the age category (15-24). The percentage of the unemployed was used to estimate the sample size according to the following relationship:

$$n = \frac{(t)^2 (q)(1.1)(1.5)}{p (\bar{h}) v^2}$$

Where t represents the equivalent value to the trust degree 95 per cent in the natural distribution table.

P is the percentage of the unemployed family members 2.7 per cent

$q=1-P$

1.1 represents the effect of the estimated non response from previous studies.

1.5 the effect of the design (Deff).

\bar{h} is the average size of the family 5.6

V^2 is the relative square error 0.01

Accordingly, the size of (n) sample was 4,080 families and the sample size of youth was estimated at 2,000 individuals. The sample distribution was split 60 per cent urban regions and 40 per cent rural regions, to represent greater diversity in the urban regions compared with rural regions. The three-phase cluster sample method was used to select the desired number of youth in every province according to the relative composition of the targeted categories in every province and depending on the results of the population census of 2004. The counted units used in the 2004 census were adopted to select 272 counting units according to the method of probability – proportional-to-size sampling in the first phase. In the second phase 15 families were selected from every unit that were selected in the first phase according to the systematic random sampling.

Table 1.3.1 Distribution of the SWTS sample (numbers)

Province:	Employed			Student			Unemployed			Economically inactive		
	U	R	T	U	R	T	U	R	T	U	R	T
Damascus and its rural areas	96	63	159	92	61	153	40	26	66	102	68	170
Aleppo	166	110	267	160	107	267	68	46	114	177	118	295
Hamah	57	38	95	55	37	92	23	16	50	61	41	102
Tartus	30	20	50	29	19	48	13	8	21	32	21	53
Total	349	231	580	336	224	560	144	96	240	372	248	620

U = Urban, R = Rural, T = Total

As for the employers and managers hiring young persons' survey, a sample of 200 establishments was randomly selected from the 2004 official listing of registered businesses. The

sample distribution was as follows: Damascus and its rural areas (70), Aleppo (70), Hamah (30), and Tartus (30).

1.3.3 Data collection and survey results

Prior to data collection, an index of training, terminology and definitions was prepared. Supervisors, groups' leaders and researchers in every province were trained according to this index. The training course included both theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical part included an explanation of all definitions and instructions of the survey, and different methods of collecting data. The practical part focused on teaching the researcher how to complete the questionnaire. Then the researcher collected a number of forms as a pilot study. These forms were then analysed and discussed with the researchers.

A total of 69 people were employed in the running of the surveys, distributed as follows: 5 main supervisors, 5 province supervisors, 6 group leaders, 53 field researchers. The main supervisors conducted field follow-up visits for the researchers in the villages and neighbourhoods. Some households were visited to check the accuracy of the collected information. The provincial supervisors also designated the survey areas for the groups' leaders and researchers while ensuring transportation for the researchers to get to their survey areas.

After completing the field work, the forms were collected according to the administrative areas and were sent to the Central Bureau of Statistics where they were reviewed and compiled. Furthermore, the occupations, activity and the geographical index were coded in preparation for processing data and analysing results. Data were processed using a statistical data processing program (CSPRO) and they were converted to the statistical analysis program (SPSS).

2. Characteristics of youth in the sample survey

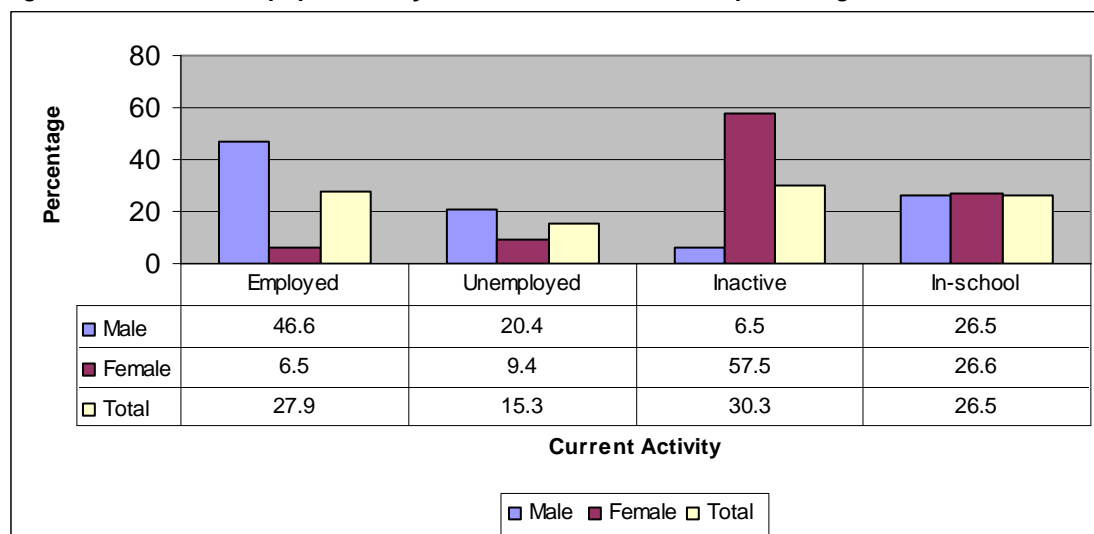
This chapter presents the main socio-economic characteristics of young males and females and identifies their skills, goals and aspirations in life. It also provides an overall description of the main characteristics of young persons' households as well as an assessment of their preparation and readiness for the transition stage from school to work.

2.1 Individual characteristics of youth

The first and most important characteristic of the sampled youth is a high level of inactivity among young persons. The second is that the problem of unemployment is quite severe among young people – particularly among young persons with low-levels of education (primary and secondary levels) – and the duration of their unemployment is lengthy. The third is that educational achievement among young males and females is quite low. The fourth is that the majority of employed young persons are wage and salaried workers (employees) but are working long hours in low-paid jobs. The low wages paid to young workers reflect, in part, their low levels of education. Finally, an overriding characteristic of young people, regardless of their economic activity, is a gender imbalance whereby young women are consistently shown to be at a disadvantage. The rest of this section illustrates these characteristics in full detail.

Figure 2.1 presents data on young persons' current activities. It reveals that 30.3 per cent of the young men and women surveyed were inactive, 27.9 per cent employed, 26.5 per cent in school and 15.3 per cent unemployed. The trends significantly differ according to gender. The data shows that 46.6 per cent of young males were employed, compared with only 6.5 per cent of females. The percentage of unemployed among males was 20.4 per cent, compared with 9.4 per cent among females. These differences are mainly affected by the fact that more than half (57.5 per cent) of the females covered by the survey were inactive, compared with 6.5 per cent among the males. The percentage of in-school youth was almost the same among both males and females, with 26.5 per cent and 26.6 per cent respectively.

Figure 2.1.1 Youth population by current activities and sex, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Inactivity and unemployment is higher among young persons aged 20-24, compared with young persons aged 15-19 years. The survey shows that 54 per cent of the inactive young persons were aged 20-24. This trend is more noticeable among females. In addition, 62.3 per cent of the unemployed were aged 20-24 years. This trend is almost the same among both male and female young persons (see table 2.1.1).

Table 2.1.1 Youth population by current activities, sex and age group, percentage

Activity:	Age Group:	Male	Female	Total
Employed	15 - 19	34	37.3	34.3
	20 - 24	66	62.7	65.7
	Total	100	100.0	100.0
Unemployed	15 - 19	38.0	37.0	37.7
	20 - 24	62.0	63.0	62.3
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Inactive	15 - 19	51.7	45.3	46.0
	20 - 24	48.3	54.7	54.0
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
In-school	15 - 19	68.0	75.0	71.4
	20 - 24	32.0	25.0	28.6
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The survey also identifies general characteristics of young persons in Syria and their perceptions of certain social issues. Table 2.1.2 presents data on these characteristics and issues. It shows that most of the young persons covered by the survey have never married, live in owned houses (usually a family home) as opposed to rented accommodation, and enjoy a son/daughter relationship with the head of the household. In addition, the survey reveals that both young men and women maintain a preference for early marriage of women: more than 85 per cent of young persons believed that the appropriate marriage age for men was between 20-29 years, whilst more than 93 per cent thought that the appropriate marriage age for women was between 15-24 years, with 46 per cent of young persons declaring that women should be married between the ages of 15-19 years. The early

marriage phenomenon appears to be even more widespread in practice: about 83 per cent of the females who were married got married between the ages of 15 and 19 years. The main source of income for the majority of young persons' households was generated through employment, though about 27 per cent of young persons' households had at least one member who had a private project/enterprise.

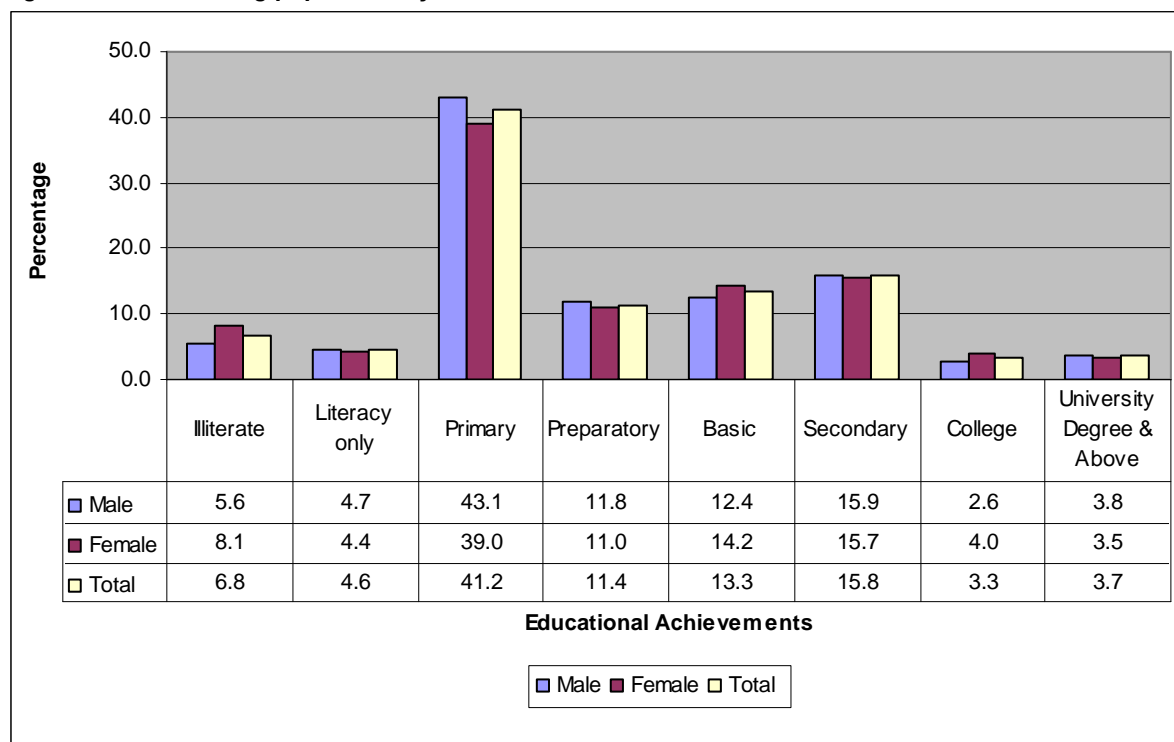
The survey shows that the educational level of young people is low. Figure 2.1.2 indicates that the majority of the young population completed primary education (41.2 per cent) or secondary education (15.8 per cent), compared with only 7 per cent with a college or university degree and above. With the exception of the illiterate, the educational level is quite similar among the male and female youth. The percentage of illiterate in this young population was relatively significant (6.8 per cent), and higher among females (8.1 per cent), compared with males (5.6 per cent).

Table 2.1.2 General characteristics of youth population by sex, percentage

Relationship with household:	Age at first marriage:			M	F	T
	M	F	T			
Household head	7.5	0.3	4.1	13	0.5	0.4
Spouse	2.3	20.4	10.8	14	3.2	2.2
Son/daughter	87.0	73.8	80.8	15	3.9	19.5
Father/Mother		0.1	0.1	16	6.5	14.2
Grandchild	0.7	0.1	0.4	17	2.6	15.8
Brother/sister	2.2	1.5	1.9	18	5.2	21.1
Other relatives	0.3	3.7	1.9	19	10.4	8.4
No relation		0.1	0.1	20	15.6	9.5
Total	100	100	100	21	11.7	3.7
Marital status:				22	26.0	2.1
Never married	91.5	75.9	84.2	23	14.3	1.1
Married	8.5	24.0	15.8	24	3.9	1.1
Separated/divorced		0.1	0.1			
Total	100	100	100	Total	100	100
Proper marriage age for men:				Proper marriage age for women:		
15-19	2.4	2.2	2.3	47.3	44.5	46.0
20-24	36.9	37.1	37.0	46.0	48.4	47.1
25-29	47.2	49.2	48.1	6.2	7.0	6.6
30-34	12.6	11.3	12.0	0.4	0.1	0.3
35 or more	0.9	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
House own type:				Whether one of your family has own private project:		
Owned	90.5	88.5	89.6	Yes	26.5	27.3
Rent	5.0	4.4	4.7	No	73.5	72.7
Free	3.6	6.0	4.7	Total	100	100
For work		0.3	0.1			
Other	0.9	0.9	0.9			
Total	100	100	100	Total	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Figure 2.1.2 Young population by educational achievements

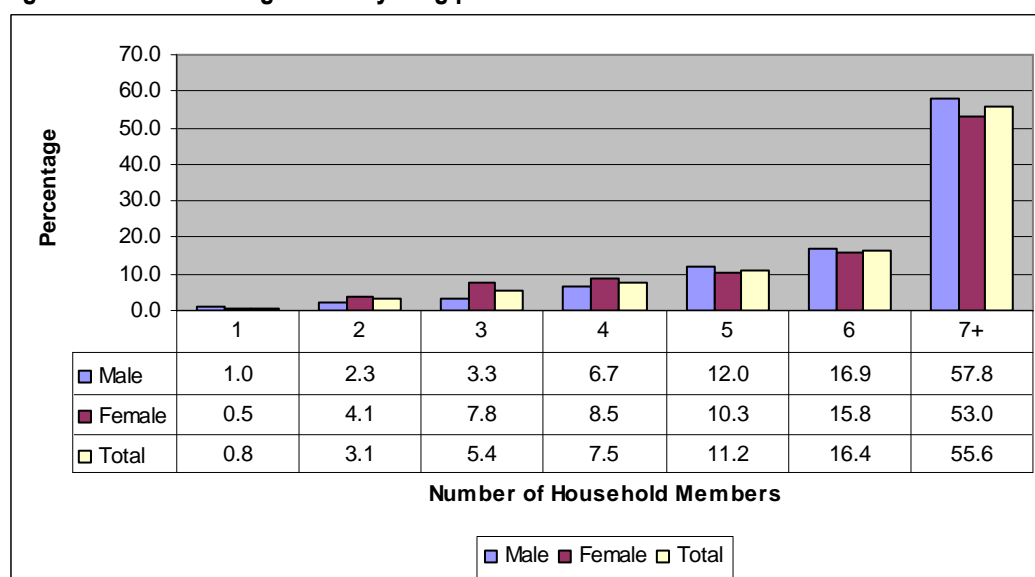


Source: SWTS (November 2005).

2.2 Household characteristics of youth

The survey provides important data regarding the major characteristics of young male and female households. It shows that the majority (89.6 per cent) of males and females lived in owned houses, usually the family home. The rest were mainly divided between those who lived in rented accommodation or those residing in houses given to them by relatives, charities, institutions (where they live without paying rent). The size of young persons' households was large. More than 55 per cent of the young persons covered by the survey were living in a household with seven members or more. The percentage of young people who were living in small households (two or three members) was very modest (see figure 2.2.1).

Figure 2.2.1 Average size of young persons' household size



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The survey reveals that the educational levels attained by young persons' parents are low. The percentage of young persons' mothers with a college or university degree was 3.2 per cent, compared to 8.1 per cent for fathers. Additionally, 56.7 per cent of mothers were illiterate compared to 30.1 per cent of fathers. Other mothers and fathers had primarily completed an elementary education or vocational training (see table 2.2.1). Comparing the educational attainment of parents in this table and that of the sampled youth (table 2.1.2), it is clear that the provision of education is more comprehensive in Syria today, meaning that the current generation is much more likely to have attained at least a basic education than their parent's generation.

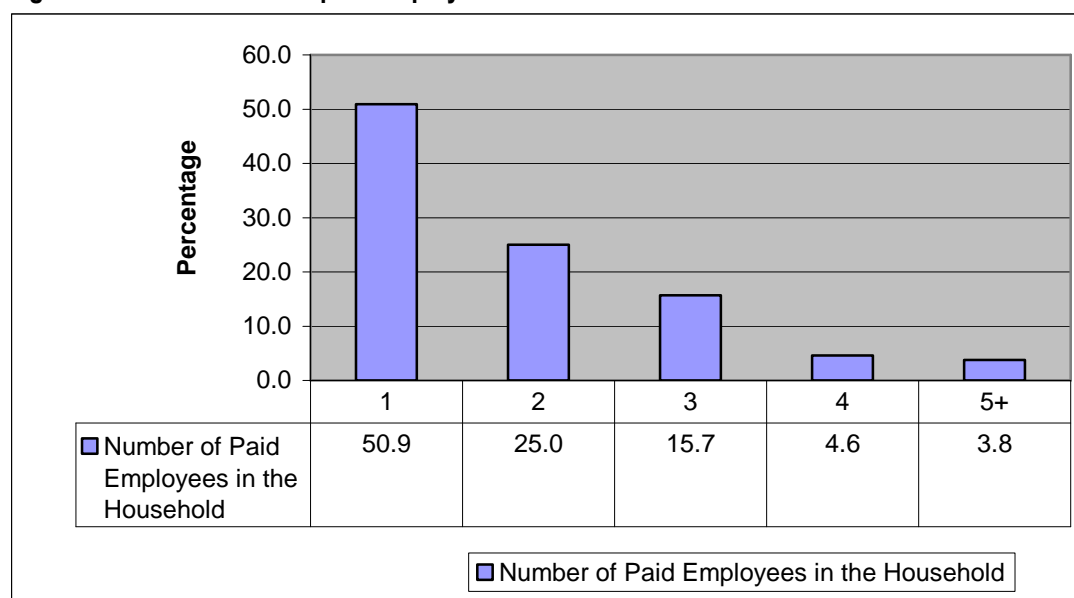
Table 2.2.1 Educational attainment of parents of young people, percentage

Educational attainment:	Father	Mother
Illiterate	30.1	56.7
Elementary	37.3	27.9
vocational Education	16.0	9.4
High school	8.1	2.7
College	3.1	2.5
University	5.0	0.7
Postgraduate studies	0.2	0.0
Other	0.2	0.1
Total	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The majority (87.5 per cent) of the young persons' households had one member or more of the household engaged in paid employment. Figure 2.2.2 indicates that more than 50 per cent of the households had only one member engaged in paid employment, compared with 4.6 per cent with four members and 3.8 per cent with five members and more engaged in paid employment.

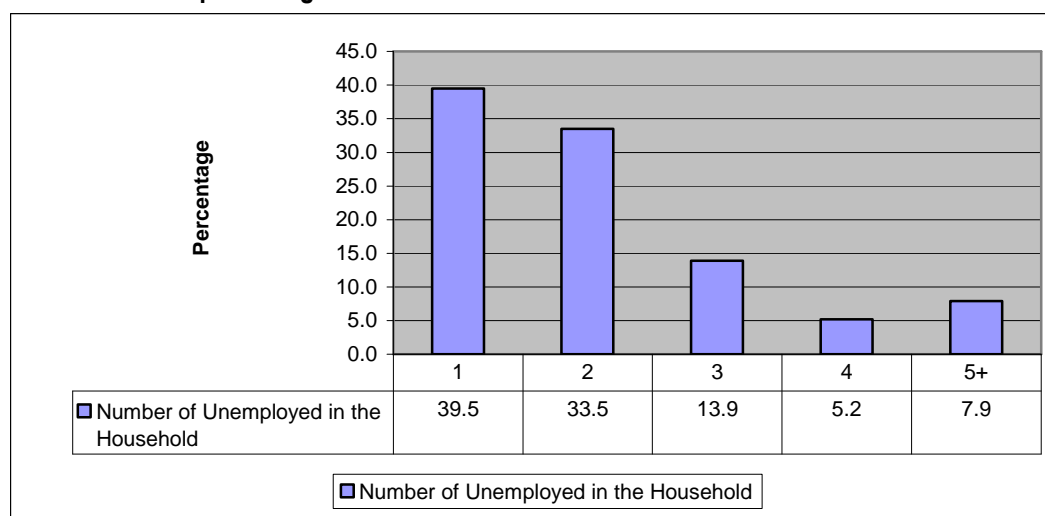
Figure 2.2.2 Number of paid employees in the household



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

In the meantime, the unemployment problem among various members of the households is severe. The survey revealed that a substantial percentage (38.2 per cent) of the young persons' households had unemployed people. More than one-third of these households had one or two members who were unemployed. Moreover, a significant percentage (7.9 per cent) of households had five members or more actively searching for jobs (see figure 2.2.3).

Figure 2.2.3 Number of household members who are actively looking for work, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The data reveals that the likelihood of being economically active had little to do with the education level of the young person's parents. Table 2.2.2 reveals, for example, that the educational backgrounds of parents were more or less similar for both the inactive youth and the employed youth (with approximately 40 per cent of fathers being illiterate and another 40 per cent of fathers having attained only elementary levels of education). What is more interesting however is the trend that unemployed youth showed the relatively highest level of education of the parents (5.4 per cent and 0.8 per cent of mothers were university educated). If one assumes that parents with university educations will be better off in terms of household income then this result implies that households of higher income families are better able to subsidize a young person as he/she undertakes the job search, whereas youth from lesser-educated (and therefore lower income) households are more likely to take any job available in order to supplement household income or to stay at home and engage in non-economic activities.

Table 2.2.2 Education attainment of parents by labour force status of youth population, percentage

Educational attainment:	Employed		Unemployed		Inactive	
	Father	Mother	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Illiterate	38.2	65.2	25.8	55.8	40.1	64.2
Elementary	38.8	25.5	34.2	26.5	39.7	28.0
Vocational Education	13.7	6.5	20.0	11.2	12.9	6.3
High school	5.3	1.1	11.9	2.7	2.7	1.4
College	1.9	1.5	2.3	3.1	2.5	0.0
University	1.9	0.2	5.4	0.8	1.6	0.2
Postgraduate studies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0
Other	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.2	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

2.3 Characteristics of employed youth

Table 2.3.1 presents data on the main characteristics of the employed young population. It indicates that about 79 per cent of the employed male and female youth were engaged in paid work, 11.2 per cent in unpaid family work and 9.8 per cent were own account workers or self-employed. The majority of employed young persons were service or production workers: 46.5 per cent of the employed young persons' jobs are classified as service workers and 29.3 per cent as production

workers. The percentages of young persons who performed administrative, technical, or clerical work were modest, at 6.1 per cent, 4.2 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively. Regarding branch of economic activity, the highest percentage of the employed young population was engaged in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing (22.5 per cent), compared with 14.9 per cent and 14.7 per cent in construction and manufacturing, respectively. If aggregated across broad sectoral categories, the results show that 22.5 per cent of young people worked in agriculture, 33.7 per cent in industry and 35.2 per cent in services.⁵

Table 2.3.1 Characteristics of employed young population, percentage

Education level:	%	Branch of economic activity:	%
Illiterate	7.4	Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	22.5
Literacy only	6.5	Mining	1.3
Primary	55.8	Manufacturing	14.7
Preparatory	10.9	Electricity, gas and water supply	2.7
Basic	7.8	Construction	14.9
Secondary	5.9	Wholesale trade	7.6
Institute/college	4.2	Hotels and restaurant	2.9
University degree & more	1.5	Transport, storage and communications	2.1
Total	100.0	Public administration	4.2
Occupation category:	%	Education	3.6
Clerical work	4.4	Health	1.5
Technical work	4.2	Social work	11.4
Administrative	6.1	Personal services	1.7
Production	29.3	UN regional organizations	0.2
Service	46.5	Other	8.6
Other	9.5	Total	100.0
Total	100.0	Received training:	%
Employment status:	%	On-the-job training	89.7
Wage earner	79.0	Non-job-related training	10.3
Unpaid family worker	11.2	Total	100.0
Own account worker/self employed	9.8		
Total	100.0		

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

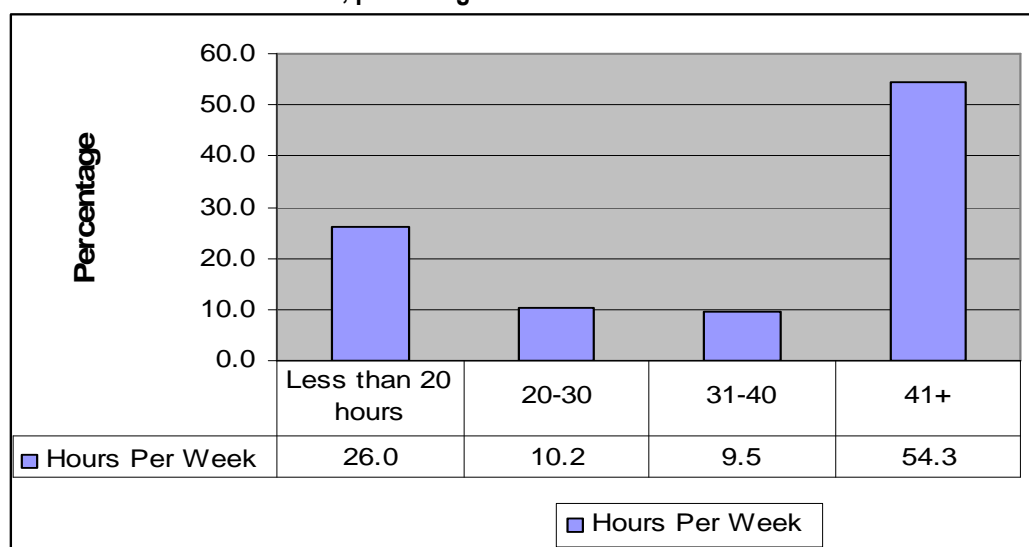
The educational level of the employed young male and female population is low. The survey shows that 55.8 per cent of the employed young males and females had a primary education, compared with 4.2 per cent with a college degree and only 1.5 per cent had a university degree and above. The percentage of employed young persons who were illiterate was quite significant 7.4 per cent (see table 2.3.1).

The majority of employed young persons usually work more than 40 hours per week. Figure 2.3.1 shows that 54.3 per cent of those covered by the survey usually worked 41 hours and more per week. In addition, 26 per cent of those in the survey worked part time jobs (less than 20 hours per week). The income level of the employed youth is also low. Only 5.5 per cent of them earned 10,000

⁵ Industry includes manufacturing, mining, electricity, gas and water supply and construction. Services include the remaining categories, with the exception of agriculture. The remaining category is persons who are not classifiable by sector (8.6 per cent).

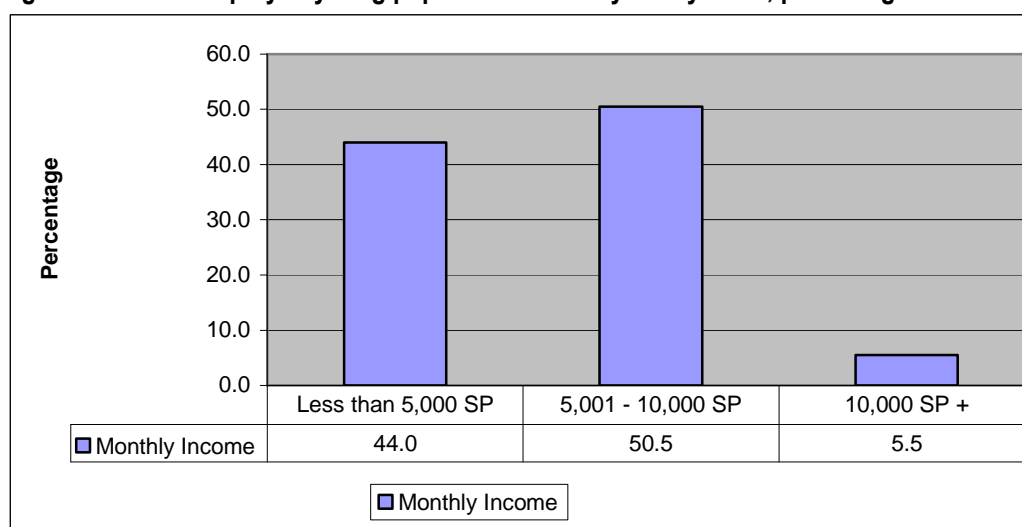
Syrian Pounds (approx. USD 200) or more per month, compared with 50.5 per cent who earned between 5,000 and 10,000 SP and 44 per cent who earned less than 5,000 SP⁶ (see figure 2.3.2).

Figure 2.3.1 Current employed young population: number of hours usually worked/week, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Figure 2.3.2 Employed young population: monthly salary in SP, percentage



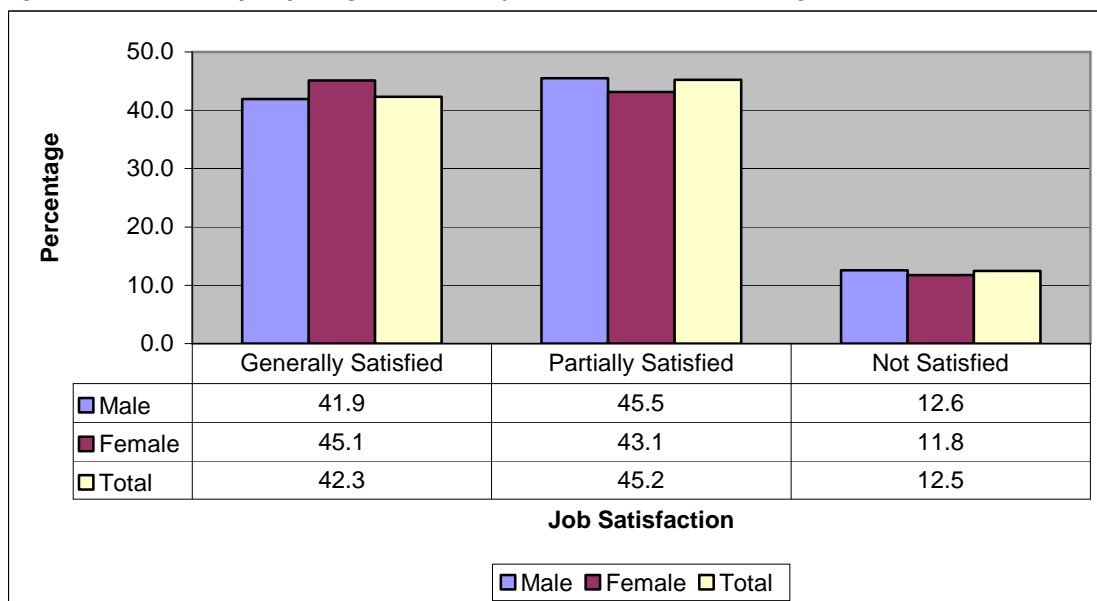
Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Despite low salary rates and long hours, it appears that the majority of employed young persons are not planning to change their current occupation. The survey shows that 64.3 per cent of the employed young persons were not planning to change their current work, 23.3 per cent were planning to change and 12.5 per cent were not sure. However, these percentages should be considered with caution. They do not necessarily indicate that employed young persons are satisfied with their current work as they might feel, for example, that it is very difficult to find another job if they leave their current employment. The survey reveals that 12.5 per cent of the young employed persons were

⁶ These figures indicate that at least 44 per cent of the young employed persons earn significantly less than average monthly salary in Syria. The average monthly salary in Syria in 2005 was 7,641 SP (8,312 SP in the public sector and 7,025 SP in the private sector).

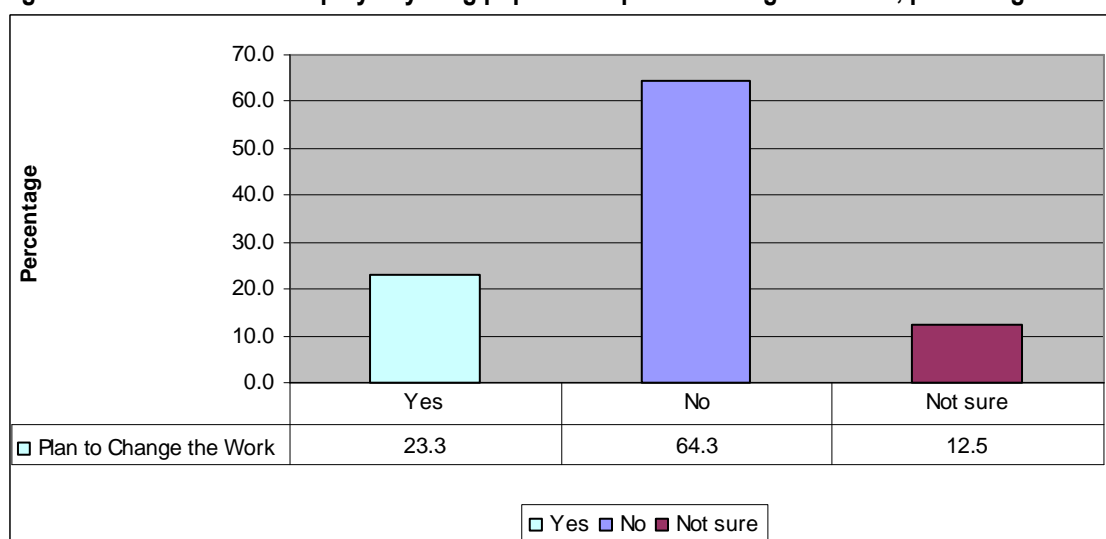
not satisfied with their current work and 45.2 per cent were partially satisfied (see figures 2.3.3 and 2.3.4).

Figure 2.3.3 Employed young population: job satisfaction, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Figure 2.3.4 Current employed young population: plan to change the work, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The main reason (identified by 62.7 per cent of respondents) for those who were planning to change their current work is financial. The second reason (7.3 per cent) is the distance of work from their area of residence. Other reasons such as the need to continue education, long working hours, and unsuitable working conditions are factors in the decision making process for young employed persons planning to change their current employment (see table 2.3.2).

Table 2.3.2 Current employed young population: reason to change the work, percentage

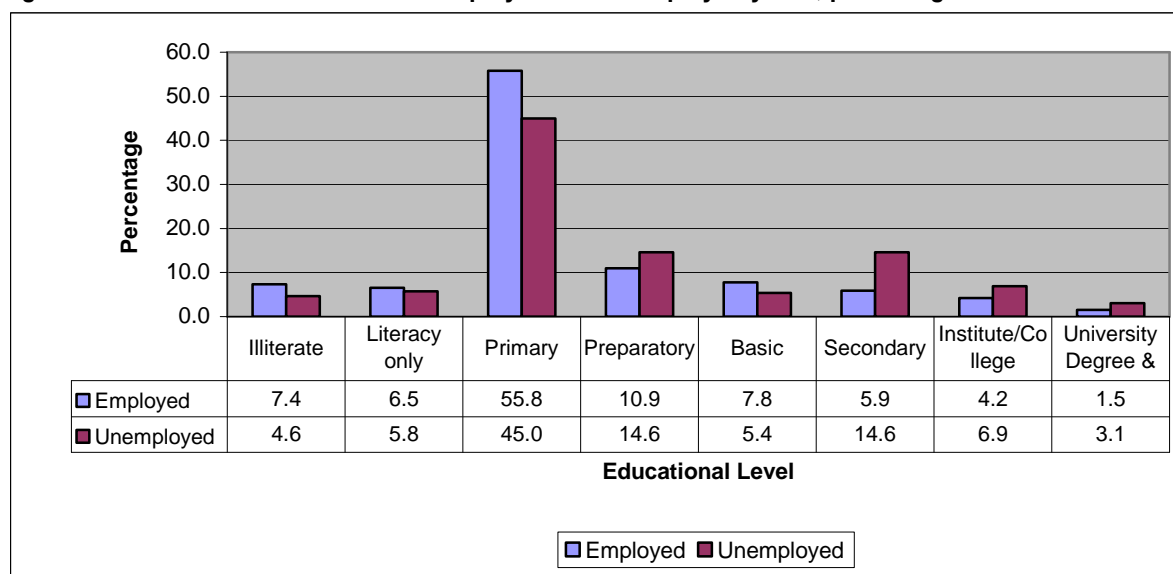
Reason:	%
Financial reason	62.7
To pursue further education	3.6
Hours worked are too short	0.9
Hours worked are too long	3.6
Work conditions are unsatisfactory	3.6
Distance from home to work is too far	7.3
Lack of satisfaction from doing such work	6.4
Other	11.8
Total	100.0

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

2.4 Characteristics of unemployed youth

The survey indicates that those with a low level of education are more likely to be unemployed than those who completed post high school educational achievements. For example, only 6.9 per cent of the unemployed young persons had a college degree, and 3.1 per cent had a university degree, compared with 45 per cent with a primary education and 14.6 per cent with a secondary education (see figure 2.4.1).

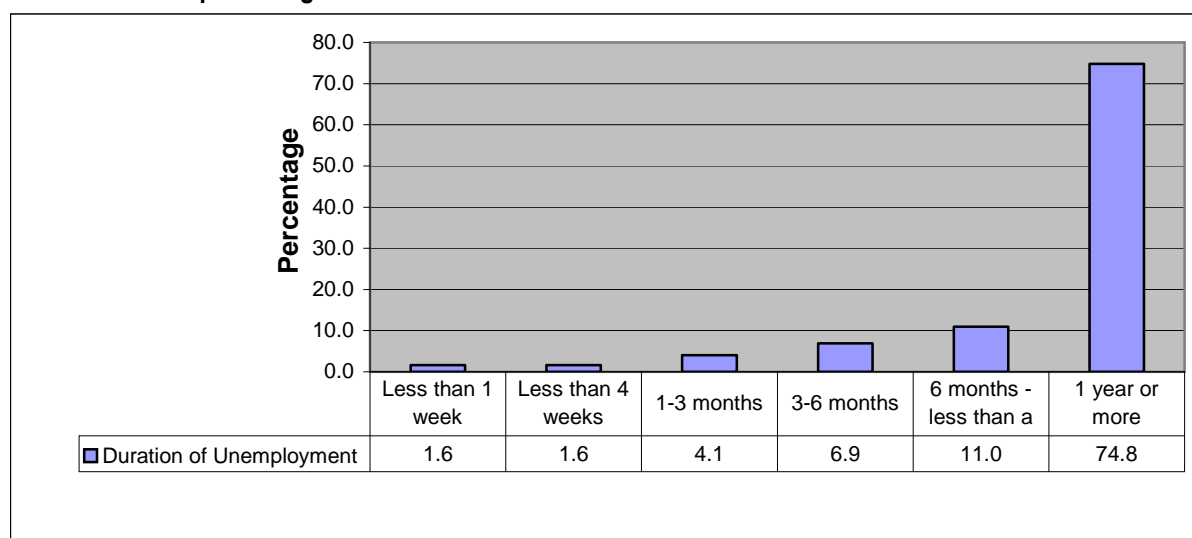
Figure 2.4.1 Educational level for employed and unemployed youth, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Figure 2.4.2 shows the duration of unemployment among young persons. It reveals that whilst only a very small proportion of respondents had been unemployed for a short period of time (less than a week or month), 74.8 per cent of the unemployed young persons had remained unemployed for a year or more, indicative of a pressing need for stronger active labour market tools and policies to help re-integrate the young unemployed into the labour market.

Figure 2.4.2 Distribution of unemployed young persons by duration of unemployment, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Young Syrian males and females often use two methods to search for employment, neither of which is linked to institutions that deal with employment/unemployment issues. The first is through relatives and friends; the second is direct visits to establishments. Other more formalized methods such as media, job fairs, and the Agency for Combating Unemployment are less frequently used by young persons as they search for jobs. Table 2.4.1 presents data on methods used by young unemployed persons in searching for jobs and the obstacles that they encounter in securing employment. It indicates that 91.9 per cent and 87 per cent of the unemployed young persons sought employment through relatives and direct visits to establishments among others, respectively.⁷ The percentage of the unemployed young persons that used the Agency for Combating Unemployment among others was relatively low (only 37.2 per cent of the unemployed).

Young males and females face numerous obstacles in their search for employment. The survey reveals five major and many other minor obstacles. The first major complication they face is a lack of educational qualifications and/or the unsuitability of their education to the jobs available in the labour market; where 66.3 per cent of youth found these issues as an obstacle to finding employment. The second is the significant dearth of jobs in the market (31.6 per cent of respondents identified this as an obstacle). The third is a scarcity of networks and connections (24.3 per cent). The fourth is a deficiency in preparation – training or suitable training if they have already been trained (17.3 per cent). Finally, another impediment is a lack of work experience; where 17.4 per cent identified this issue as an obstacle to finding employment. Other factors such as specific work requirements and the low wages of current jobs available in the market were also considered by the unemployed young persons as significant obstacles to finding a job.

⁷ Respondents were allowed to select more than one job search method so that the distribution of job search method by the number of persons sampled will total more than 100. Readers can look at the distribution of methods tabulated across total number of answers (second column of table 2.4.3) for a share out of 100.

Table 2.4.1 Current unemployed young population: Methods for searching for employment and obstacles in finding jobs, percentage

Methods for searching for a job:	count	% of total answers	% total of interviewed
Media	155	17.2	62.8
Visiting establishments	215	23.9	87.0
Helping from relatives	227	25.3	91.9
Job fairs offices	125	13.9	50.6
Agency for Combating Unemployment	92	10.2	37.2
Other	85	9.5	34.4
Total answers	899	100	
Total number of respondents	247		
Main obstacles identified in finding a job:			
lack of educational qualifications	146	30.3	59.1
Unsuitable education	18	3.7	7.2
Unsuitable vocational education	16	3.3	6.4
No available training opportunities	27	5.6	10.9
Work requirements	33	6.8	13.3
No work experience	43	8.9	17.4
Not enough job available	78	16.2	31.6
Unsuitable age	3	0.6	1.2
Sex	5	1.0	2
Lack of networks and connections	60	12.4	24.3
Low waged	32	6.6	13
Poor working conditions in jobs	11	2.3	4.4
Other	11	2.3	4.4
Total answers	483	100	
Total number of respondents	247		

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

2.5 Characteristics of young students

The majority (63.5 per cent) of the young persons who had not transited (students currently in-school) were planning to join the labour market after completing their education, and 21.6 per cent of the students wanted to pursue other types of training. In addition, the survey shows that significant numbers (12.5 per cent) of current students were unsure or undecided about their next steps after completing their education (see table 2.6.2). This could imply a likely deficiency in the provision of school-based vocational counseling and career guidance.

Table 2.5.1 Currently in-school young persons: plans after completing education

Plan:	Percentage
Looking for a job	63.5
Stay at home	1.6
Other training	21.6
Other	0.9
Don't know	12.5
Total	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

2.6 Characteristics of inactive youth

The survey reveals that the percentage of inactive males and females is very significant (30.3 per cent), and it is much higher among females (57.5 per cent), compared with male young persons (6.5 per cent). Data from the survey shows that 31.2 per cent of inactive young persons were inactive

because their families refused to allow them to join the labour market, and 29.6 per cent were inactive because of household work and 11.5 per cent because of child care commitments. The gender gap is highly significant in relation to these reasons. These reasons were mentioned more often by young females than by young males. Other factors such as lack of job opportunities or suitable employment, no financial need to work, and unsuitable health conditions to fulfill the job requirements also play important role in determining young persons' activity or inactivity in the labour market (see table 2.6.1).

Table 2.6.1 Current inactive young persons: reason for inactivity by sex, percentage

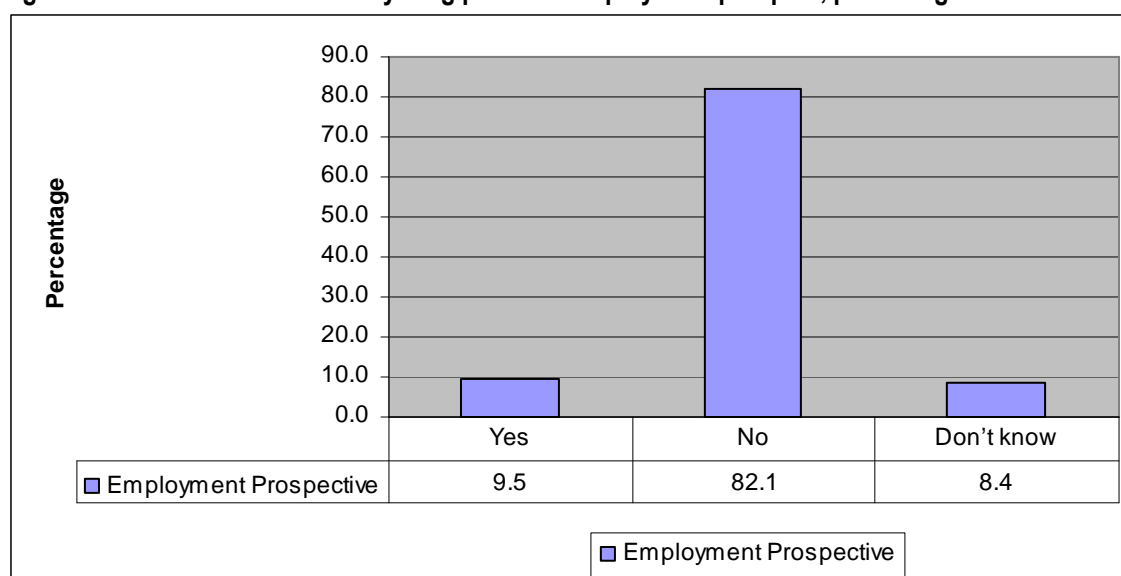
Reason:	Male	Female	Total
No financial need	17.3	8.6	9.5
No job opportunities available	7.7	7.4	7.5
The family refused	13.5	33.3	31.2
House work	13.5	31.5	29.6
Child care	5.8	12.2	11.5
Didn't find suitable job	9.6	2.0	2.8
Unsuitable health condition	28.8	2.9	5.7
Not interested in working	1.9	1.4	1.4
Don't know how to look for a job	1.9	0.7	0.8
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Young people who are inactive because they have lost hope in the possibility of joining the labour market are a matter of serious concern. These so-called "discouraged workers" are persons who would like to work but who have given up the job search because they feel the search effort would be futile. In the classification of reasons for inactivity listed in this survey, those that qualify as "discouraged" include young persons who are inactive because they feel no job opportunities are available (7.5 per cent), because they could not find suitable work (2.8 per cent) and because they did not know how to look for a job (0.8 per cent). This means a total of 11.1 per cent of young people surveyed were discouraged and would be likely to join the labour force if the economic situation improved or the job search process was facilitated.

The survey also indicated that of the inactive young people, 82.1 per cent stated they would be unlikely to become economically active in the future, 9.5 per cent hoped to join the labour market in the future and 8.4 per cent were unsure of their future employment prospects (see figure 2.6.1).

Figure 2.6.1 Current inactive young persons: employment prospect, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

2.7 Aspirations and life goals

Young persons were asked to identify their two most important goals in life. Based on their answers, it appears that the issues of marriage and family life are the most important goals for young persons. Table 2.7.1 presents data on young people's goals and aspirations in life. It indicates that 32 per cent of young people considered a good family life and 29.5 per cent considered getting married as one of their main goals in life. The next most important goal in life for young persons is the issue of study. Table 2.7.1 indicates that 23.6 per cent of young persons considered one of their main goals in life was to continue their study and 22 per cent to achieve academic success. The focus on work issues was less important for young persons. About 21 per cent identified the issue of success in work and 17.3 per cent the issue of finding a job as one of their main goals in life.

Table 2.7.1 Young persons: most important goal in life

Goal in life:	Male			Female			Total		
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Success in study	184	10.3	20.5	186	11.9	23.7	370	11.0	22.0
Continuation of study	195	10.9	21.7	203	13.0	25.8	398	11.9	23.6
Success in work	298	16.6	33.2	60	3.8	7.6	358	10.7	21.3
Have own money	216	12.1	24.0	69	4.4	8.8	285	8.5	17.0
Pursue family life	192	10.7	21.4	350	22.3	44.5	542	16.1	32.0
Get married	225	12.6	25.0	271	17.3	34.5	496	14.8	29.5
Have a baby	27	1.5	3.0	205	13.1	26	232	6.9	13.8
Find a job	191	10.7	21.3	101	6.4	12.8	292	8.7	17.3
Have own enterprise	185	10.3	20.6	31	2.0	3.9	216	6.4	12.8
Be a leader	10	0.6	1.1	2	0.1	0.2	12	0.4	0.7
Have leisure time	9	0.5	1.0	30	1.9	3.8	39	1.2	2.3
Gain skills & experience	29	1.6	3.2	27	1.7	3.4	56	1.7	3.3
Interact in society	30	1.7	3.3	32	2.0	4	62	1.8	3.7
Total answers	1791	100		1567	100		3358	100	
Total no. of respondents	897			786			1683		

Notes: 1 = count, 2 = per cent of total answers and 3 = per cent of total interviewed.

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The ranking of these goals significantly differ between males and females. The issue of marriage and family was considered by young females as the main goal in life, followed by the issue of studying. Work was not a top priority for the majority of young females. On the other hand, work was considered as one of their main goals in life for young men, followed by education (see table 2.7.1).

3. Stages of transition

This chapter presents the main characteristics and experiences of young persons undergoing different stages of transition: transition completed, in transition, and not yet transitioned. It identifies the major challenges and difficulties that young persons face in their search for a career job/regular job⁸.

⁸ According to the ILO, *career job* is a subjective concept, based on the self-assessment of the jobholder. It implies a job that the respondent considers "fit" to his desired career path. The contrary is termed a *non-career job*, implying a sense of dissatisfaction about the job and the likelihood that the young person has taken it because he lacked a better option. In addition, a *regular job* is defined in terms of duration of contract or expected length of tenure. The contrary is a *temporary job*, or a job of limited duration (ILO, 2005, School-to-work transition surveys (SWTS) – Basic concepts, ILO document).

The analysis in this chapter focuses on the period between when young people exit from school to the time of entry into career/regular employment.

ILO Concepts and definitions of the school to work transition

This report follows the ILO classification of young persons' school to work classifications. It classifies young persons covered by the survey according to three stages of transition:

- 1) Transited – A young person who has “transited” is one who is currently employed in a career job or a regular job (see definition in footnote 8).
- 2) In transition – A young person is still “in transition” if he/she has either of the following statuses:
 - Currently unemployed
 - Currently employed in a non-career job or a temporary job
 - Currently inactive and not in school, with an aim to look for work later.
- 3) Not transited – A young person who has “not transited” will be one who is either of the following:
 - Still in school
 - Currently inactive and not in school, with no intention of looking for work.

The transition period could consist of the following (exclusive) phases:

- 1) Direct transition – a young person's first experience after leaving school is finding employment at a career job or regular job.
- 2) Spells of temporary employment with no spells of unemployment
- 3) Spells of unemployment with or without spells of temporary employment
- 4) Other – a young person may fall into the other category if after leaving school he/she undertook a period of travel or was simply idle while waiting to take up future employment. (ILO, 2005, School-to-work transition surveys (SWTS) – Basic concepts, ILO document).

The experiences of young people from the time they exit from school to the time they enter into a career job/regular job vary. Some youth experience an easy transition, in terms of time they take to find a job and the difficulties they face in the process. Others may experience longer periods of searching and more severe problems in finding career job/regular employment. To account for these differences, the ILO has developed a classification of the transition experience of young people. This transition experience is classified into three categories: “easy,” “difficult” and “middling.”

An **easy transition** is classified as one in which, before obtaining the current career/regular job, the young person underwent either:

- A direct transition
- A spell of temporary employment of less than one year with no spell of unemployment
- A spell of unemployment of less than three months (with or without spells of temporary employment).

A **difficult transition** is classified as one in which, before obtaining the current career/regular job, the young person underwent either:

- A spell of unemployment of one year or over (with or without spells of temporary employment)
- A spell of temporary employment of two years or more with no spell of unemployment.

A **middling transition** is classified as one in which, before obtaining the current career/regular job, the young person underwent either:

- A spell of temporary employment of between one and two years with no spell of unemployment
- A spell of unemployment of between three months and one year (with or without spells of temporary employment (ILO, 2005, School-to-work transition surveys (SWTS) – Basic concepts, ILO document).

Based on these classifications, only 7.4 per cent of the youth population covered by the survey completed their transition stage, 38.8 per cent were still in transition, and 53.8 per cent had not yet

started their transition stage. The majority of those who completed their transition (73.8 per cent) and who were currently in transition (61.9 per cent) were aged 20-24 years. In contrast, more than 58 per cent of the young persons who had yet to start their transition stage were aged 15-19. The gender gap was significant among young persons who completed their transition stage and young persons who had not started their transition stage (see table 3.1 and figure 3.1).

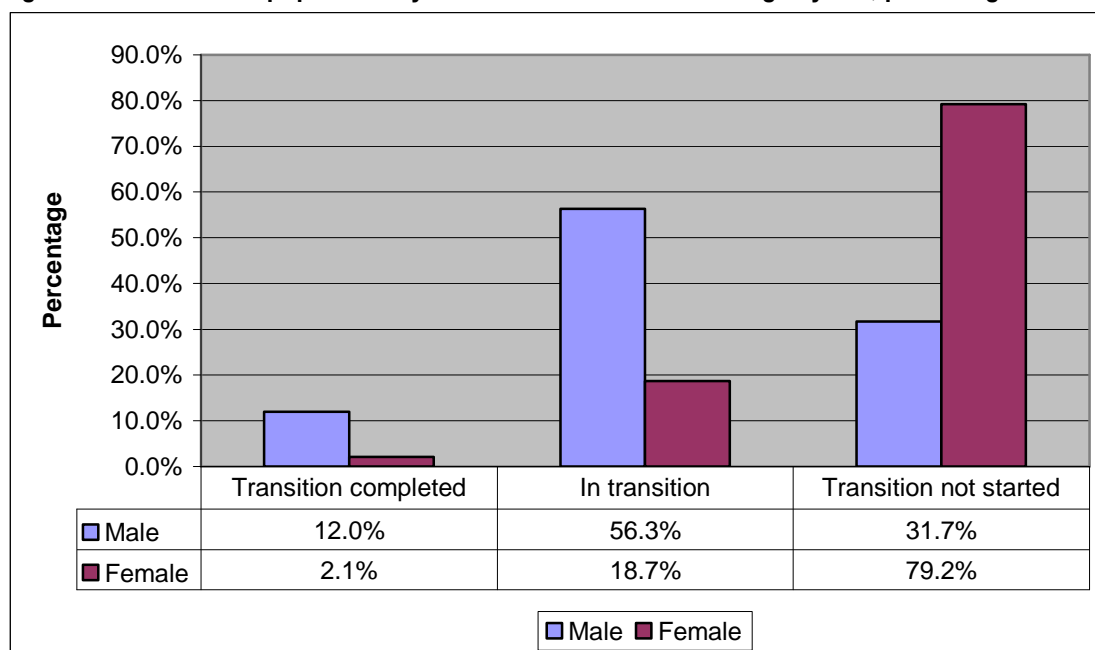
Table 3.1 Youth population by school-to-work transition stage by sex and age group

Age:	Transition completed						In transition					
	M		F		T		M		F		T	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
15-19	32.0	29.4	0	0.0	32	25.4	185	36.3	60	40.5	245	37.2
20-24	77.0	70.6	16	94.1	93	73.8	321	62.9	86	58.1	407	61.9
NR	0.0	0.0	1	5.9	1	0.8	4	0.8	2	1.4	6	0.9
Total	109	100	17	100	126	100	510	100	148	100	658	100

Age:	Transition completed						In transition					
	M		F		T		M		F		T	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
15-19	188	65.5	348	55.5	536	58.6	405	44.7	408	51.5	813	47.9
20-24	98	34.1	276	44.0	374	40.9	496	54.7	378	47.7	874	51.5
NR	1	0.3	3	0.5	4	0.4	5	0.6	6	0.8	11	0.6
Total	287	100	627	100	914	100	906	100	792	100	1698	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Figure 3.1 Youth population by school-to-work transition stage by sex, percentage



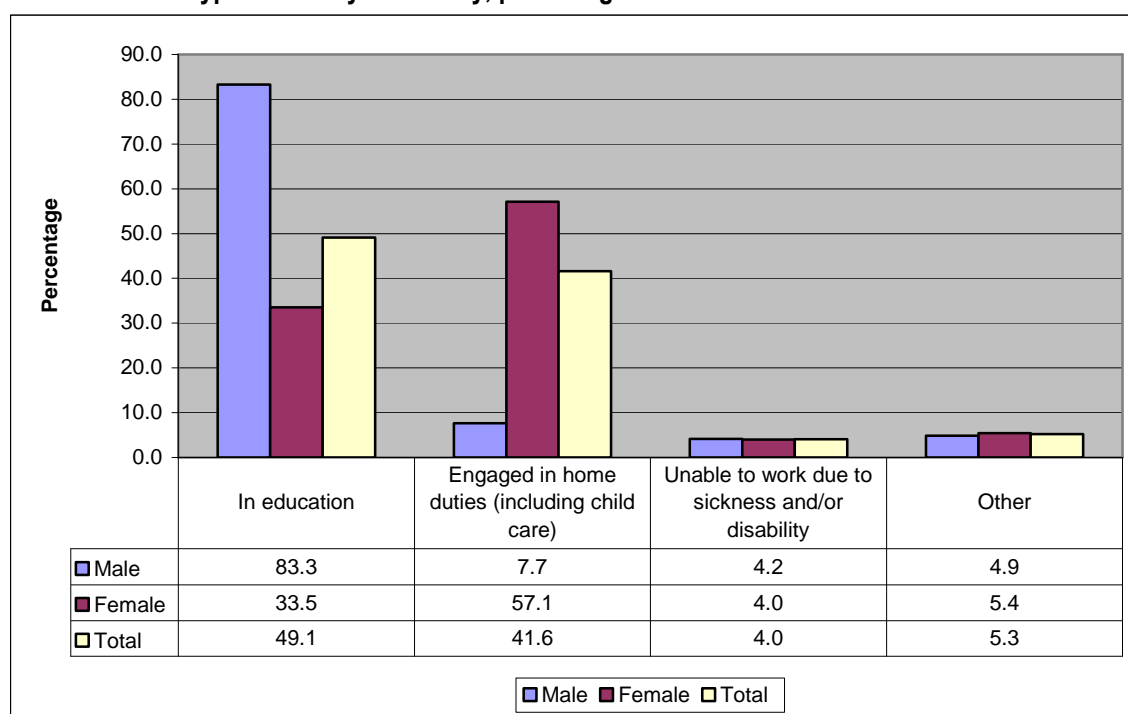
Source: SWTS (November 2005).

3.1 Youth who have not started transition

Figure 3.1.1 presents the type of activity/inactivity of the young men and women surveyed. It shows that about half of those young persons were currently in the education system and more than 40 per cent were engaged in household duties, including child care. This trend is significantly different among males compared with female young persons; young males were likely to have not transitioned because they remained in school, whereas the most applicable reason young women had not transitioned was because they were engaged in household duties. More than 83 per cent of the male youth who had not started their transition stage were in education, compared with 33.5 per cent of young females.

The majority (57.1 per cent) of female youth were engaged in household duties, including child care, compared with only 7.7 per cent for young males.

Figure 3.1.1 Youth population who have not started their transition from school to work: type of activity / inactivity, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Data from the survey shows a significant correlation between level of education and type of activity, specifically for those who are engaged in household duties. The survey reveals that more than 70 per cent of those engaged in household duties, including child care, only had a primary education or less, compared with less than 1 per cent among those with a college or university degree. As for young persons who were still in education, the majority of them were currently enrolled in basic and secondary education, however, there was significant percentage of those male and female young persons who were in colleges and universities (see table 3.1.1).

Table 3.1.1 Youth population who have not started their transition from school to work: type of activity / inactivity and current education level, percentage

Current education level:	In education			Engaged in home duties (including child care)			Unable to work due to sickness and/or disability			Other			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Illiterate	1.3	1.0	1.1	0.0	4.5	4.2	66.7	24.0	37.8	14.3	76.5	58.3	4.5	8.0	6.9
Literate	0.0	0.5	0.2	4.5	6.7	6.6	16.7	4.0	8.1	7.1	0.0	2.1	1.4	4.1	3.3
Primary	6.7	10.5	8.5	63.6	61.7	61.8	16.7	36.0	29.7	57.1	8.8	22.9	13.9	40.7	32.3
Preparatory	10.0	9.0	9.6	22.7	12.8	13.4	0.0	8.0	5.4	7.1	8.8	8.3	10.5	11.2	10.9
Basic	27.6	31.0	29.2	0.0	8.4	7.9	0.0	20.0	13.5	0.0	2.9	2.1	23.0	16.1	18.3
Secondary	40.2	35.7	38.1	9.1	5.3	5.5	0.0	8.0	5.4	7.1	2.9	4.2	34.5	15.5	21.4
Institute/College	2.9	4.3	3.6	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.4	1.6	1.9
University	11.3	8.1	9.8	0.0	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1		2.1	9.8	2.9	5.0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Table 3.1.2 presents information about the main goals in life for young persons who have not started their transition from school to work. It shows that 48.7 per cent of the young persons identified the issues of continuation and success in their studies and 40 per cent identified the issues of marriage and family as their main goal in life. The issue of work was not the main concern for a majority of the students, perhaps because they see that as a concern for the future only. The issues of finding a job, establishing a private project/enterprise and success in work were identified as the main goal in life by less than 5 per cent of young persons who have not started their transition from school to work. However, these goals are significantly different between males and females.

Table 3.1.2 Youth population who have not started their transition from school to work by sex and main goal in life, percentage

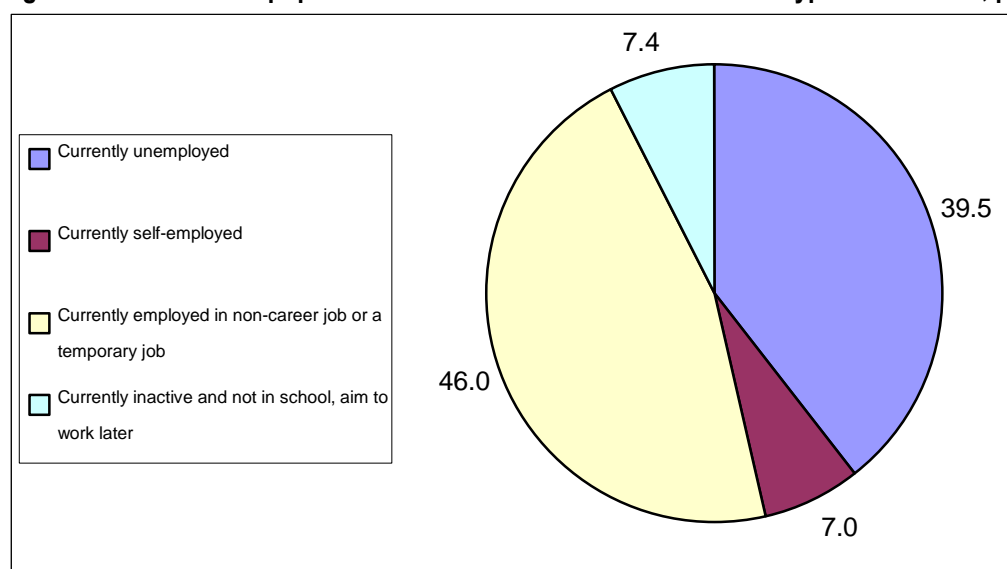
Goal:	Male	Female	Total
Success in study	52.3	24.3	32.9
Continuation of study	24.7	11.7	15.8
Success in work	5.0	1.2	2.3
Have own money	3.9	3.5	3.7
Pursue family life	5.3	34.0	25.2
Get married	2.9	20.1	14.8
Have a baby	0.7	2.9	2.2
Find a job	1.1	2.1	1.8
Have own enterprise	2.2	0.2	0.8
Other	1.9	0.0	0.5
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

3.2 Youth in transition stage

The majority of young persons in the transition stage were working but under unsatisfactory conditions; 46 per cent were employed in a non-career job or a temporary job and another 7 per cent were self-employed but wished to change jobs. The remainder were either currently unemployed (39.5 per cent) or currently in-active and not in school with the aim to work later (7.4 per cent) (see figure 3.2.1).

Figure 3.2.1 Youth population in transition from school to work: type of transition, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The educational attainment of young persons in the transition period is generally low, especially among males: in total 85 per cent had less than a secondary education; this figure was 90.4 per cent for young men, compared with 67.1 per cent for young women. The majority of young persons (93 per cent) currently employed in non-career jobs or temporary jobs had achieved less than a secondary education, as had approximately 60 per cent of the currently unemployed (see table 3.2.1).

Table 3.2.1 Youth population in transition from school to work – by sex, type of transition and education level, percentage

Educational attainment:	Currently unemployed			Currently self-employed			Currently employed in a non-career or temporary job			Currently inactive & not in school, aim to work later			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Illiterate	3.8	6.8	4.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.1	19.4	9.2	20.0	0.0	4.1	6.1	7.4	6.4
Literate	5.9	5.4	5.8	4.8	0.0	4.3	7.7	9.7	7.9	0.0	5.1	4.1	6.7	6.1	6.5
Primary	52.2	27.0	45.0	66.7	75.0	67.4	62.9	35.5	60.1	50.0	48.7	49.0	59.0	35.8	53.8
Preparatory	17.2	8.1	14.6	9.5	25.0	10.9	7.0	9.7	7.3	0.0	10.3	8.2	10.8	9.5	10.5
Basic	5.4	5.4	5.4	7.1	0.0	6.5	8.8	6.5	8.6	20.0	15.4	16.3	7.6	8.1	7.8
Secondary	10.2	25.7	14.6	11.9	0.0	10.9	2.6	6.5	3.0	0.0	15.4	12.2	6.1	18.2	8.8
College	3.2	16.2	6.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2	6.5	2.6	0.0	2.6	2.0	2.4	10.1	4.1
University & more	2.2	5.4	3.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	6.5	1.4	10.0	2.6	4.1	1.4	4.7	2.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

For those young people in transition, the period of transition is generally long and varies according to the type of activity that young people engage in throughout their transition stage. Table 3.2.2 presents data on the length of transition for the youth population who are currently in transition from school to work. It indicates that more than 30 per cent of young persons in this stage were already experiencing a difficult transition (a transition period lasting a year or more). This percentage is significantly higher among young women than young men.

Table 3.2.2 Youth population in transition from school to work: length of period of transition, percentage

Length of period of transition:	Currently unemployed			Currently self-employed			Currently employed in a non-career or temporary job			Currently inactive & not in school, aim to work later			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Less than a week	1.1	3.0	1.6	36.6	0.0	33.3	26.5	2.0	25.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.8	11.8	26.2
Less than 4 weeks	1.1	3.0	1.6	9.7	0.0	8.8	15.1	20.1	14.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.4	5.9	13.5
1-3 months	4.5	3.0	4.1	9.7	0.0	8.8	12.5	16.7	12.6	0.0	16.7	11.1	12.1	11.8	12.1
3-6 months	6.7	7.5	6.9	4.9	0.0	4.5	7.7	10.3	8.3	0.0	33.3	22.2	7.3	11.8	7.8
6 - less than a year	12.3	7.5	11.0	4.9	0.0	4.5	9.9	13.2	10.9	33.3	33.3	33.3	9.3	17.6	10.1
A year and more	74.3	76.1	74.8	34.2	100.0	40.1	28.3	37.7	28.8	66.7	16.7	33.3	29.1	41.2	30.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The current unemployed seem to face a more difficult (lengthy) transition. The survey shows that 74.8 per cent of the current unemployed had been in this stage for a year or more. Self employed young people in transition also seem to exhibit a tendency towards lengthier transitions (see table 3.2.2).

3.2.1 The search process

Young males and females in transition from school used different methods to search for work. Table 3.2.1.1 presents data on these methods used by young persons. It shows that seeking assistance from friends, relatives, colleagues, etc to search for a job was the most common method used (38.3 per cent) by young persons. This method is used more by young persons currently employed in non-career job or a temporary job (76.9 per cent), compared with currently unemployed (25.3 per cent). Education and training institutions were used only by 2.6 per cent of the young persons in transition from school to work. Other institutions such as employment offices and the Agency for Combating Unemployment were used by a relatively small number of those young persons.

Table 3.2.1.1 Youth population in transition from school to work by type of transition and method of job search (excluding self-employed), percentage

Method:	Currently unemployed			Currently employed in non-career job or a temporary job			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Media	16.9	18.2	17.2	0.4	3.2	0.7	12.0	16.5	13.1
Direct application to employers	24.7	21.9	23.9	1.1	6.5	1.7	17.7	20.1	18.3
Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, etc.	25.8	23.9	25.3	77.9	67.7	76.9	41.1	28.8	38.3
Registration at a public employment office	13.8	14.2	13.9	0.4	0.0	0.3	9.8	12.6	10.5
Agency for Combating Unemployment	9.5	12.1	10.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.7	10.8	7.7
Through education/training institution	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.0	3.2	10.2	3.2	0.4	2.6
Participation in a competition	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.5	0.7	0.0	0.7	0.2
Other	9.4	9.7	9.5	9.2	12.9	9.6	9.3	10.1	9.5
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total no. of answers	652	247	899	272	31	303	924	278	1202
Total no. of respondents	179	67	246	272	31	303	451	98	549

Notes: Young persons currently unemployed were asked to choose four methods and young persons currently employed in non-career job or a temporary job were asked to choose one method only.

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The method of direct application to employers was used by approximately a quarter of the young unemployed persons. Seeking the assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, etc. was also used by a quarter of the young unemployed persons. Registration at public employment offices was used by more than 10 per cent of young unemployed persons (see table 3.2.1.1).

Young persons in transition face many obstacles to finding career employment. The main perceived obstacles include a lack of education and the scarcity of jobs in the market. Other obstacles also play an important role in hindering the success of young people's job searches, such as a lack of work experience and low wages in available jobs. Young persons who are currently unemployed, currently self employed and currently employed in non-career or temporary jobs encountered these obstacles. These obstacles are also, to a large extent, similar for both men and women (see table 3.2.1.2).

Table 3.2.1.2 Youth population in transition from school to work by type of transition and main obstacle to finding work, percentage

Obstacle:	Currently unemployed			Currently self-employed			Currently employed in a non-career or temporary job			Currently inactive & not in school, aim to work later		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
No education	33.7	20.5	30.2	27.0	34.4	27.8	25.9	38.6	27.3	29.2	25.1	28.5
Unsuitable general education	3.4	4.7	3.7	3.2	1.6	3.0	3.1	1.8	3.0	3.2	3.7	3.3
Unsuitable vocational education	3.4	3.1	3.3	3.9	1.6	3.7	4.2	1.8	3.9	3.6	2.6	3.5
No suitable training opportunities	5.6	5.5	5.6	3.5	1.6	3.3	3.8	1.8	3.6	4.3	4.2	4.3
Requirements for job higher than education/training received	6.5	7.9	6.8	3.0	6.3	3.3	2.9	7.0	3.4	4.3	7.3	4.8
No work experience	8.7	9.4	8.9	10.1	9.4	10.0	9.8	8.8	9.7	9.4	9.4	9.4
Not enough jobs available	16.6	15.0	16.1	17.7	14.1	17.3	16.7	14.0	16.4	17.0	14.7	16.6
Considered too young	0.6	0.8	0.6	2.8	6.3	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.2	1.9	2.6	2.0
Gender-based discrimination	0.8	1.6	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.4	1.0	0.5
Other discrimination/prejudices	11.5	15.0	12.4	4.1	7.8	4.5	3.3	8.8	3.9	7.0	12.6	7.9
Low wages in available jobs	6.2	7.9	6.6	6.9	6.3	6.8	6.9	7.0	6.9	6.5	7.3	6.7
Poor working conditions in available jobs	1.4	4.7	2.3	2.0	1.6	2.0	1.7	1.8	1.7	1.8	3.7	2.1
Other	1.7	3.9	2.3	15.6	9.4	15.0	18.2	5.3	16.8	11.4	5.8	10.4
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total no. of answers	356	127	483	537	64	601	478	57	535	1'371	248	1'619
Total no. of respondents	179	66	245	311	34	345	272	30	302	762	130	892

Note: young persons covered in the survey have been asked to give two main obstacles.

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

3.2.2 Assistance needed

Given the main obstacles highlighted above and the methods used by young persons in transition from school to work, it is apparent that these young persons need assistance in passing the transition stage successfully (to move into career /satisfactory employment). The main problem in this regard is the lack of effective institutions available to assist youth pass this transition period successfully.

Table 3.2.2.1 presents data on the percentage of young persons in transition stage (currently employed in non-career job or a temporary job) that used the employment services and type of services they received – if they are registered in the employment offices. It indicates that only 5.3 per cent of those young persons were registered in employment offices. Of those registered, 91.7 per cent did not receive any advice from these offices. Only 3 per cent of those people received advice on jobs.

Table 3.2.2.1 Youth population in transition from school to work (currently employed in non-career job or a temporary job): use of employment services, percentage

Registered in employment office:	Male	Female	Total
Yes	5.9	0.0	5.3
No	94.1	100.0	94.7
Total	100	100	100
Those registered:			
Haven't received advice	91.9	90.3	91.7
Received advice on job	3.0	3.2	3.0
Received information on vacancies	1.5	0.0	1.3
Other	3.7	6.5	4.0
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The difficulty youth face in the transition from school to work in Syria has led a significant percentage of young males and females in the transition stage to think about migration as a viable alternative. The survey shows that about 27 per cent of the young persons in the transition stage were willing to migrate, given the opportunity to do so. This percentage is significantly higher among those currently unemployed and self employed, as well as among young men, compared with young women. In addition, the percentage of young persons in the transition stage who were not sure whether they were willing to migrate or not if they had the chance to do so is significant (13.8 per cent of the young persons in transition stage) (see table 3.2.2.2).

Table 3.2.2.2 Youth population in transition from school to work: willingness to migrate, percentage

Answer:	Currently Unemployed			Currently self-employed			Currently employed in non-career job or a temporary job			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Yes	73.3	18.2	40.5	35.7	50.0	37.0	27.2	12.9	25.7	28.3	17.1	27.2
No	26.7	81.8	59.5	50.0	50.0	50.0	59.6	67.7	60.4	58.3	65.7	59.0
Not sure	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	0.0	13.0	13.2	19.4	13.9	13.4	17.1	13.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

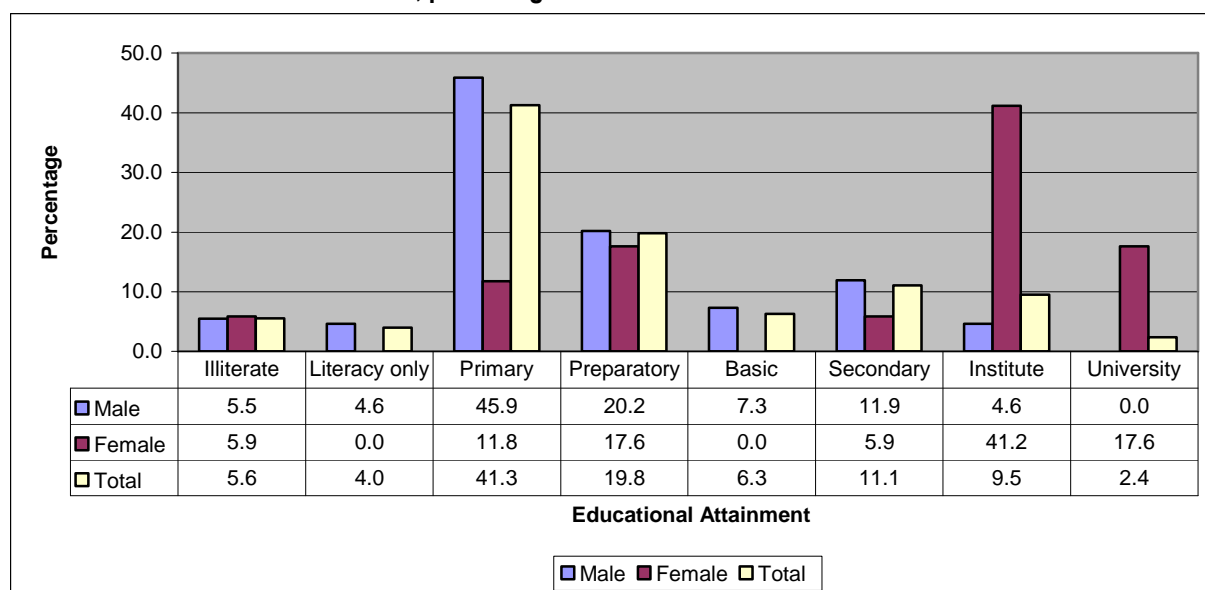
3.3 Characteristics of a successful transition

A young person is classified as having completed his/her transition if he/she is in a job with a long-term contract or has not claimed a desire to change jobs, the underlying assumption being that the lack of desire to change signifies satisfaction with the job. The educational attainment of those who completed their transition stage is mainly less than secondary education. The higher share of transitioned youth with low education levels is likely to reflect the current state of the labour market, whereby there is still a high demand for manual, unskilled labour – the type of work that the less educated generally take up. However, the educational attainment of females appears to be much higher than male young persons who completed the transition stage successfully: 58.8 per cent of the females who completed the transition stage achieved an institute/college education or above, compared with only 4.6 per cent among males with the same level of education (see figure, 3.3.1). The significance here is that it is mainly the better educated Syrian youth who stay in the labour market and the small amount of young women that are economically active are more likely to be working in a job that they would not risk quitting given their knowledge of the few opportunities for female workers in the labour market.

3.3.1 The search process

The survey reveals that informal methods of searching for jobs are the main method used by young persons (especially male) for finding their current employment. Institutions that deal with employment issues such as the Employment Offices and Agency for Combating Unemployment played a very modest role in this respect. Table 3.3.1.1 presents data on the methods young persons who completed their transition stage used in finding their current job. It reveals that 53.6 per cent of those young persons found their jobs by help from relatives and friends and 20.8 per cent through educational and training institutions. Direct visits by young persons to establishments were also a common method used by young persons. The percentage of female persons who used the latter method in finding their current employment is very high (41.2 per cent of the females).

Figure 3.3.1 Youth population who completed their transition stage from school-to-work by sex and education level, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Table 3.3.1.1 Youth population who completed their transition from school to work: method of finding current job, percentage

Method:	Male	Female	Total
Visiting establishment	3.7	41.2	8.8
Educational /training institution	21.3	17.6	20.8
Media	2.8	0.0	2.4
Participate in competition	1.9	11.8	3.2
Help from relatives and friends	57.4	29.4	53.6
Employment office	2.8	0.0	2.4
Through Agency for Combating Unemployment	0.9	0.0	0.8
Other	9.3	0.0	8.0
Total	100	100	100

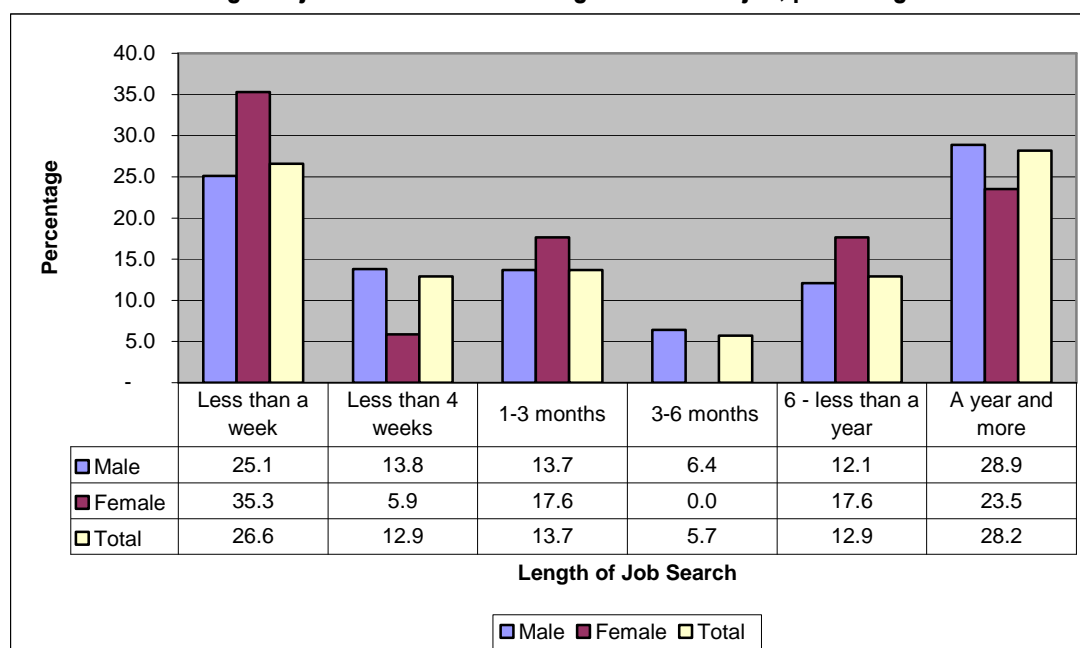
Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Only 2.8 per cent and less than 1 per cent of the male persons who completed their transition stage found their current job through the Employment Offices and the Agency for Combating Unemployment, respectively. In addition, media played a very modest role in helping young people in their search for employment. Only 2.4 per cent of the young persons who completed their transition stage found their current jobs through the media.

Young males and females spent different lengths of time searching for a job. The survey shows that 28.2 per cent of the young persons who completed their transition stage experienced a 'difficult' transition period (waiting for a year or more before finding their current jobs); 18.1 per cent experienced a 'middling' transition period (waiting a period between 3 months and one year before finding their current job); and 53.2 per cent experienced a relatively 'easy' transition (waiting for a period of less than 3 months).

The period of waiting for males seems to be relatively longer than for young women. Figure 3.3.1.1 indicates that 28.9 per cent of the male persons experienced a lengthy transition period before finding their current jobs, compared with 23.5 per cent of female young persons. In addition, 58.6 per cent of the female young persons experienced an 'easy' transition, compared with 52.6 per cent among male young persons.

Figure 3.3.1.1 Youth population who completed their transition from school to work: length of job search before finding their current job, percentage



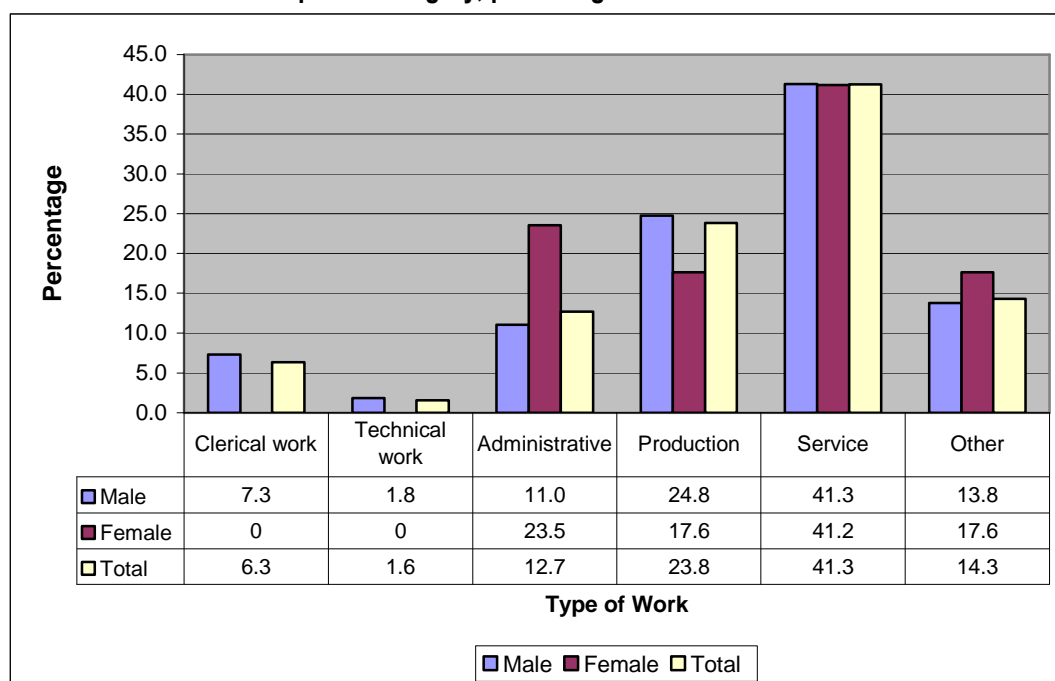
Source: SWTS (November 2005).

3.3.2 Job preference

Young persons who completed their transition stage are mainly employed in service and production work. The survey shows that 41.3 per cent of those young persons were engaged in service and 23.8 per cent in production work. Fewer people (no females) worked in clerical and technical fields (see figure 3.3.2.1).

The agriculture and manufacturing sectors appear to employ the majority of young persons. In addition, education, health and social sectors employed most young females who completed their transition period. Table 3.3.2.1 presents data on youth who completed their transition stage from school-to-work according to their economic activity. It shows that 19 per cent of the young persons worked in the agriculture sector and 16.7 per cent worked in the manufacturing sector. It also shows that 76.5 per cent of the females who completed their transition stage worked in education, health, and social work sectors, compared with only 12.9 per cent of males working in these sectors.

Figure 3.3.2.1 Youth population who completed their transition from school-to-work by sex and occupation category, percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Table 3.3.2.1 Youth population who completed their transition from school-to-work by sex and economic activity, percentage

Economic sector:	Male	Female	Total
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	20.2	11.8	19.0
Mining	1.8	0.0	1.6
Manufacturing	19.3	0.0	16.7
Construction	10.1	5.9	9.5
Wholesale trade	11.0	0.0	9.5
Hotels and restaurant	2.8	5.9	3.2
Transport, storage and communications	0.9	0.0	0.8
Electricity, gas and water supply	4.6	0.0	4.0
Public administration	6.4	0.0	5.6
Education	3.7	35.3	7.9
Health	0.9	11.8	2.4
Social work	8.3	29.4	11.1
Other	10.1	0.0	8.7
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

3.3.3 Assistance needed

The majority (62.9 per cent) of young males and females who completed their transition from school to work attended one interview before finding their current job. However, young persons face various obstacles before reaching the interview stage and securing their current employment. The main impediment faced by both males and females was their lack of education, with more than 40 per cent of young persons identifying with this category. The second main obstacle was the lack of enough jobs in the market, especially for male youth (see table 3.3.3.1).

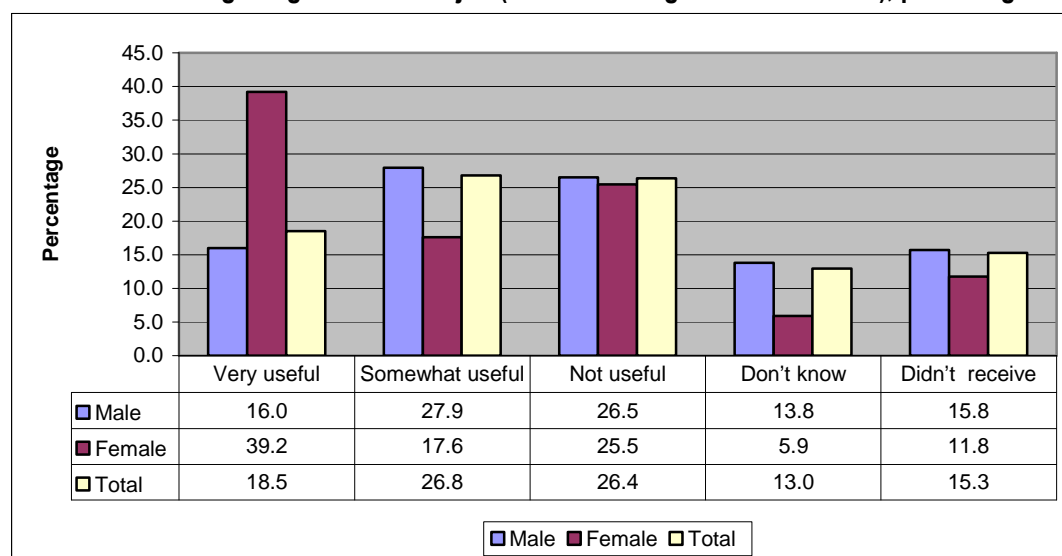
Table 3.3.3.1 Youth population who completed their transition from school to work: number of interviews attended and main obstacle faced in finding a job, percentage

Number of interviews:	Male	Female	Total
1	60.7	77.8	62.9
2	16.4	22.2	17.1
3	4.9	0.0	4.3
4	1.6	0.0	1.4
5	14.8	0.0	12.9
6	1.6	0.0	1.4
Total	100	100	100
Obstacle:			
No education	41.6	41.2	41.6
Unsuitable general education	3.7	0.0	3.3
Unsuitable vocational education	3.7	2.0	3.5
No suitable training opportunities	3.2	2.0	3.1
Requirements for job higher than education/training received	1.2	3.9	1.5
No work experience	3.2	7.8	3.8
Not enough jobs available	12.5	7.8	11.9
Unsuitable age	2.0	3.9	2.2
Being male/female	0.2	0.0	0.2
Discriminatory prejudices	0.7	0.0	0.7
Low wages in available jobs	3.0	5.9	3.3
Poor working conditions in available jobs	1.2	0.0	1.1
Other	23.4	25.5	23.7
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Based on the evaluation of young persons who completed the transition from school to work, it appears that the education and training they received was not very useful or suitable for getting their current job for the majority of the young people. Only 18.5 per cent found their education and training very useful in getting their current job. This percentage is significantly higher among females compared with the male youth cohort (see figure 3.3.3.1).

Figure 3.3.3.1 Youth population who completed their transition from school to work: the usefulness and suitability of education/training received in the past in getting their current job (or establishing current business), percentage



Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The percentage of young persons who thought their education and training was somewhat useful and suitable for their current job was almost the same as those who thought their education was not useful (26.8 per cent and 26.4 per cent respectively). Despite this evaluation, current employers still do not provide training for most of young persons. The survey shows that more than 90 per cent of the young persons who completed their transition from school to work did not receive any training for their current activity. Those who received training did so as part of the job and not through public or private training institutions. Table 3.3.3.2 indicates among those who received training, 89.7 per cent received on the job training.

Table 3.3.3.2 Youth population who completed their transition from school to work: receiving of training in current activity and type of training, percentage

Received any training:	Male	Female	Total
yes	6.9	19.2	8.2
no	93.1	80.8	91.8
Total	100	100	100
Type of training:			
on the job training	93.1	80.0	89.7
non job related training	6.9	20.0	10.3
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

4. Creating jobs for young people: The employers perspective

This chapter extends the analysis of factors that determine the nature of young persons' transitions from school to work and the challenges they face in this period. It explores the practices and criteria that employers utilize in hiring young males and females.

4.1 Characteristics of enterprises

The survey shows that of the enterprises sampled that hire young persons, 78.5 per cent were owned by private individuals, 16 per cent were partnership enterprises and only 2.5 per cent were public sector enterprises (see table 4.1.1). In addition, most of the sampled enterprises that hired young people were small sized enterprises with 1-5 persons (50.9 per cent), compared to only 12.3 per cent of larger enterprises with 16 persons or more.

Table 4.1.1 Employers who hire young persons: size and type of enterprise, percentage

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
Public	2.4			10.0	2.5
Private individual	84.3	85.0	65.0	55.0	78.5
Partnership	12.0	10.0	35.0	25.0	16.0
Joint	1.2	5.0		10.0	3.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The surveyed enterprises that hire young persons mainly engage in industry and mining (32.5 per cent), wholesale and retail (31.3 per cent), and services activities (19 per cent), with enterprises engaging in other activities such as construction, transportation and hotel and restaurants contributing only 9.8 per cent of the total (see table 4.1.2).

Table 4.1.2 Employers who hire young persons: size of enterprise and branch of economic activity, percentage

	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+	Total
Industry & mining	33.7	35.0	35.0	20.0	32.5
Construction	7.2	2.5	10.0	0.0	5.5
Transport	1.2	0.0	5.0	10.0	2.5
Hotel & restaurant	0.0	2.5	10.0	0.0	1.8
Wholesale & retail	37.3	35.0	15.0	15.0	31.3
Services	16.9	15.0	20.0	35.0	19.0
Other	3.6	10.0	5.0	20.0	7.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

4.2 Recruitment of young people

The survey reveals that employers who hire young persons use highly informal methods of recruitment. The role played by education and training institutions and the Employment Offices in promoting recruitment of young persons is very modest compared with other methods. Table 4.2.1 presents data on methods used by employers to recruit young persons. It shows that more than two-thirds of the employers filled manual and production vacancies and one-third of the employers filled administration and professional vacancies at their enterprises through relatives and friends. Media and advertisements were not used at all by employers to fill administration and professional vacancies and only 17.2 per cent of the manual and production vacancies were filled through media and advertisements. In addition, only 14.3 per cent of administration and professional vacancies and 3.4 per cent of manual and production jobs were filled through education or training institutions. The Employment Office was used to fill less than 5 per cent of both administration and professional as well as manual and production jobs.

Table 4.2.1 Recruiting young persons: most recent method used by employers, percentage

Method:	Administrative/Professional			Manual/Production		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
From education/training institutions	15.0	0.0	14.3	3.6	0.0	3.4
From public employment services	5.0	0.0	4.8	3.6	0.0	3.4
Media advertisements	30.0	0.0	0.0	17.9	0.0	17.2
Relatives or friends	35.0	0.0	33.3	71.4	100.0	72.4
Promoting employees who are already in the enterprise	5.0	0.0	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	10.0	100.0	14.3	3.6	0.0	3.4
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The survey also indicates that employment opportunities in the market are limited. There were only 25 opportunities available in the 200 enterprises covered by the survey. The majority of employers were looking for male persons to fill these openings (see table 4.2.2).

Table 4.2.2 Number of vacancies available at present, percentage

Number of vacancies:	Total
1	20.0
2	44.0
3	12.0
4	16.0
5	4.0
6	4.0
Total %	100
Total number	25

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

The majority of employers did not face problems in recruiting the kind of workers required to meet the needs of their enterprises and businesses. Table 4.2.3 indicates that 80.4 per cent of the employers did not encounter problems in their search. However, the magnitudes are slightly different when gender is considered. 30 per cent of the employers faced problems in recruiting female workers, compared with 19 per cent who faced problems in recruiting male workers.

Table 4.2.3 Problems faced by employer in recruiting the kinds of workers required for their enterprise or business, percentage

Answer:	Male	Female	Total
Yes problems were faced	19.0	30.0	19.6
No problems were not faced	81.0	70.0	80.4
Total	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

4.3 Matching expectations

Based on their experience with young applicants, employers identified important strengths and limitations of those applicants. More than 50 per cent of the employers thought that the overall ability and skills of young applicants were moderate. In addition, more than half of the employers evaluated young people's writing, technical and general communication skills as good. The employers' evaluation of the oral communications skills and ability of young persons to apply their knowledge from school to work requirements was mixed between good and moderate. In addition, a smaller number of employers thought that young applicants were highly disciplined, would be committed to their work, and had realistic expectations about the work conditions (see table 4.3.1).

Table 4.3.1 General aptitude level of job applicants: based on employers experience interviewing young job applicants, percentage

	Good	Moderate	Weak	Total
Clerical skills	57.7	37.3	5	100
Technical skills	60.9	32.5	6.6	100
Oral communication skills	49.3	44	6.7	100
Breadth of educational training	64.7	30	5.3	100
Ability to apply knowledge learned in school to work environment	35.6	50.6	13.8	100
Scientific commitment and discipline	41.3	40.2	18.5	100
Overall Evaluation	42.1	52.9	5	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

Employers perceive that young people, when applying for jobs, have high expectations that are concentrated in two main areas. The first is financial aspects and the second is job security. The reputation of the job comes third. This trend is almost the same among both male and female youth. Table 4.3.2 indicates that the aspect of earning a substantial amount of money was identified by 41.4 per cent of young persons and the aspect of job security was identified by 36.4 per cent of young persons as the most important quality they looked for when they applied for jobs. The reputation of the job was also identified by 9 per cent of young persons as one of the most important two aspects they looked for when applying for jobs.

Table 4.3.2 Aspects that young people look for when applying for a job: most important two aspects, percentage

Aspect:	Male	Female	Total
Job that people regard highly/status of the job	9.6	0.0	9.0
Earn a lot of money	41.5	40.0	41.4
Good promotion prospects/clear career path	2.7	5.0	2.8
Job that uses skills and abilities	4.0	15.0	4.7
Steady job/job security	36.2	40.0	36.4
Having lots of vacation time	1.3	0.0	1.2
Having an easy pace of work	1.0	0.0	0.9
Being able to work independently, without supervision	1.0	0.0	0.9
Job that is family-friendly	1.3	0.0	1.2
Opportunities for travel	1.3	0.0	1.2
Total (% of answers)	100	100	100
Total no. of answers	301	20	321
Total no. of respondents	151	10	161

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

4.4 Education and training

The survey indicates that 302 young workers were provided with training and/or education, whether job or non-job related training and/or education. Table 4.4.1 presents information about type, length and provider of training and/or education to young persons. It shows that about half of the employers who provided training to young persons did so for 2-3 young persons, compared with 26.5 per cent who provided training for 5 young workers or more.

Table 4.4.1 Training of young workers, percentage

Number of young workers were provided training by the enterprise:				Place where education/training took place:			
	Male	Female	Total		Male	Female	Total
1	20.4	0.0	18.9	On-the-job, informal	93.9	25.0	88.7
2	24.5	25.0	24.5	Classroom, on premises	6.1	50.0	9.4
3	28.6	0.0	26.4	Other	0.0	25.0	1.9
4	4.1	0.0	3.8	Total	100	100	100
5	6.1	0.0	5.7	Training provider:			
6+	16.3	75.0	20.8	Your enterprise	100.0	50.0	96.2
Total (%)	100	100	100	A government training institution	0.0	25.0	1.9
Total enterprises	49	4	53	A private sector training institution	0.0	25.0	1.9
Type of education/training:				Total	100	100	100
Job-related training	100.0	50.0	96.2	Training payer:			
Non job-related education/training	0.0	50.0	3.8	The enterprise	89.8	75.0	88.7
Total	100	100	100	Workers	8.2	0.0	7.5
Training period:				Government	0.0	25.0	1.9
Less than a week	8.2	25.0	9.4	Other	2.0	0.0	1.9
1 week to 1 month	28.6	50.0	30.2	Total	100	100	100
				Enterprise participation in any work experience/internship programme:			
	28.6	25.0	28.3	Yes	3.3	30.0	4.9
1 to 3 months				No	96.7	70.0	95.1
3 to 6 months	14.3	0.0	13.2	Total	100	100	100
6 months to 1 year	8.2	0.0	7.5				
More than 1 year	12.2	0.0	11.3				
Total	100	100	100				

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

4.5 Work experience requirement and hiring preferences

Employers look for certain characteristics in hiring workers. These characteristics are based on the type of enterprise/business they run and also differ according to the nature of the work. The survey reveals that about one-third of the employers take gender into account and about a quarter of the employers consider education a factor in hiring practices for administrative/professional jobs. Work experience and training also appear to be important for these kinds of jobs.

Table 4.5.1 Most important characteristic employers look for in the worker in hiring administrative/professional workers and manual/production workers, percentage

Characteristic:	Administrative/Professional			Manual/Production		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Gender	34.6	10.0	32.9	14.0	12.5	13.9
Age	9.0	10.0	9.1	20.0	12.5	19.6
Education	24.1	50.0	25.9	8.0	37.5	9.5
Marital status	0.8	0.0	0.7	1.3	0.0	1.3
Past training	11.3	0.0	10.5	18.0	12.5	17.7
Job experience	16.5	30.0	17.5	37.3	12.5	36.1
Ethnic background	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	12.5	0.6
Other	3.8	0.0	3.5	1.3	0.0	1.3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

This trend is quite different in hiring practices for manual/production jobs. The survey shows that more than one-third of the employers consider work experience and about one-fifth think about age in hiring practices for manual/production jobs. Training, gender and education issues are less important in this regard. Issues such as marital status and ethnicity were not taken into account by most of employers in their hiring practices for both administrative/professional and manual/production jobs

While table 4.5.1 provides information about the characteristics employers look for in hiring practices, it is important to further discuss each category. Table 4.5.2 presents detailed data about 5 main characteristics employers look for in hiring practices: age, gender, marital status, nationality and education. It shows that more employers prefer workers between 15 and 24 years, male workers are preferred to females, the marital status of the employee is not important, a Syrian worker is preferred to a non-Syrian, and employers prefer workers who completed their preparatory education (see table 4.5.2).

The hiring preferences and aspects required by employers are slightly different in hiring administrative/professional and manual/production workers, especially in relation to age and education. Table 4.5.2 shows that 60.4 per cent of the employers preferred to hire workers aged between 15 and 24 years and 34.4 per cent preferred to hire workers aged 25 years and above for manual/production jobs, compared with half of the employers who preferred to hire workers aged between 15 and 24 years and the other half preferring to hire workers aged 25 years and above for administrative/professional jobs. In addition, 61.2 per cent of the employers preferred to hire workers who completed their preparatory education for manual/production jobs, compared with 31.3 per cent of the employers' preference for administrative/professional jobs. However, the percentage of employers who preferred to hire workers with a college or university degree for administrative/professional jobs is significantly higher than the percentage for manual/production jobs. In addition, the overall trend of hiring preferences differs significantly according to gender.

Table 4.5.2 Hiring preferences by employers based on the nature of their businesses and type of enterprises, percentage

Hiring Preferences	Administrative/Professional			Manual/Production		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Age:						
Workers below 15	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.4	0.0	5.2
Workers between 15 and less 24	51.2	28.6	50.0	61.5	33.3	60.4
Workers from 25 years and above	48.8	71.4	50.0	33.1	66.7	34.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Gender						
Female workers	84.8	28.6	81.8	75.5	16.7	73.2
Male workers	4.0	57.1	6.8	10.2	33.3	11.1
No preference	11.2	14.3	11.4	14.3	50.0	15.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Marital Status						
Unmarried workers	14.4	28.6	15.2	17.7	50.0	19.0
Married workers	28.0	14.3	27.3	19.7	0.0	19.0
No preference	57.6	57.1	57.6	62.6	50.0	62.1
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Nationality:						
Syrian workers	86.6	75.0	85.9	79.5	66.7	78.9
Non Syrian workers	0.0	12.5	0.7	1.4	0.0	1.3
No preference	13.4	12.5	13.3	19.2	33.3	19.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Education:						
Completed preparatory education	33.3	0.0	31.3	63.3	0.0	61.2
Completed secondary, vocational education	27.8	37.5	28.4	19.0	40.0	19.7
Completed college	19.0	0.0	17.9	4.1	20.0	4.6
Completed university	19.0	50.0	20.9	4.1	0.0	3.9
Completed post-graduate studies	0.0	12.5	0.7	0.0	20.0	0.7
Other	0.8	0.0	0.7	9.5	20.0	9.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: SWTS (November 2005).

5. Summary, conclusions, and policy recommendations

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section summarizes the main findings and conclusions. Based on the analysis of the SWTS, the second section proposes policy recommendations to overcome problems and challenges that influence young men and women's full and productive integration into the labour market.

5.1 Summary and conclusions

The SWTS analysis clearly identified the main socio-economic characteristics of young men and women in Syria. The first and most important characteristic is a high level of inactivity among young persons. The second is that the unemployment problem is quite severe among those persons, highly concentrated among young persons with primary and secondary education, and the duration of unemployment is lengthy. The third is that educational achievement among young men and women is quite minimal. The fourth is that the majority of employed young persons engage either in unpaid work or paid jobs where they work long hours for low pay. In addition, the gender gap is highly significant in relation to these issues.

The report discovered that institutions that deal with employment issues in Syria play a very small role in helping young males and females join the labour market. Young persons have mainly

used two informal methods to search for work: relatives and friends, and direct visits to establishments.

The assessment in this report also shows that young men and women who have not started their transition from school to work are not highly work-oriented in their thinking. Their thinking is mainly focussed on family, marriage and education issues, without properly considering career options or constructing a concrete plan for obtaining future work. Young men currently in the transition stage are more work-oriented, while young women are more concerned with family and marriage issues. Young persons who completed the transition stage successfully are highly work-oriented compared to other groups of young persons.

The report further indicates that youth in transition face many obstacles to finding career employment. The main obstacles are their lack of education and a scarcity of jobs in the market. Other obstacles such as lack of work experience and low wages in the labour market also play an important role in this regard. These obstacles have influenced the period of transition. The data showed that about one third of the young persons in the transition stage are willing to migrate, given the opportunity to do so. The data also showed that a large number of young persons who completed their transition stage experienced a 'difficult' transition.

The analysis presented in the report also reveals a significant correlation between level of education and type of activity in which young men and women were involved: employed, unemployed, and economically inactive. However, based on the evaluation of young persons who completed the transition from school to work of their education and training, it seems that education and training that young people received was not that useful for getting their present employment, nor was it particularly suitable for the work that they are currently doing.

In addition, the report found that young males and females who completed their transition stage were mainly engaged in service and production work. The agriculture and manufacturing sectors appeared to employ the largest proportion of young persons. Education, health and social sectors employed the majority of female young persons who completed their transition period. The results seem to indicate a dearth of available professional posts, and this is backed up by the evidence from the employers' surveys. If these results are taken into consideration, then in order to have an easier transition, the youth of Syria should not aim too high. An easier transition would be ensured if they are to leave education early and take up a manual labour job that is likely to be low paid. But this is not the advice that the ILO or the government of Syria would be willing to give. Alternatively, the Syrian labour market needs to change in a way that allows it to absorb more of an increasingly educated young labour force and this requires specific demand-side measures and active labour market policies.

This report extends the analysis of factors that determine the nature of young persons' transitions from school to work and the challenges they face in their transition stage to explore the hiring practices and criteria that employers use in hiring young men and women. It shows that small enterprises that are owned by private individuals constitute the main employer of youth. Enterprises that hire young persons are mainly engaged in industry and mining, wholesale and retail and services activities. The employment of young persons by other enterprises that engage in activities such as construction, transportation and hotels and restaurants is very modest.

The data shows that employers who hire young persons mainly use informal methods of recruitment (through relatives and friends). The role played by education and training institutions and the employment offices in promoting recruitment of young persons is very limited, compared with these other methods. The data also indicates that job opportunities in these enterprises are very few.

Furthermore, the report details the strengths and limitations of young persons who apply for work. Based on the employers' experience with young applicants, it appears that a high number of employers think that the overall ability and skills of young applicants are moderate. A smaller number of employers think that young applicants are highly disciplined, will be committed to their work and have realistic expectations about the work conditions.

5.2 Policy recommendations

Different policies have been used in both developing and industrial countries to promote employment opportunities and to manage labour market risks for young men and women. These policies include active labour market policies such as job search assistance, training and retraining of the unemployed, special programmes for job creation (e.g. community or public works programmes), and even measures to change the structure of demand, such as wage and employment subsidies, particularly in favour of disadvantaged groups. Each policy is designed to address certain problems and challenges in the labour market.

Within the context of Syria, the analysis of the SWTS highlights the policies needed to reduce youth unemployment and to promote the career path for young males and females. The evidence from the survey pointed out clearly that Syria needs a vision for the future of its labour market and a strategy to improve its labour market outcomes, particularly for its youth. Since youth employment is highly dependent on the general employment situation of the country, it is critical to prioritize employment in national policy making and make it central to economic and social policies. Addressing the challenges currently facing young males and females requires transforming the labour market structure. If current trends in the labour market continue, rising unemployment and low productivity among young persons will undermine the economic performance and the well-being of the young male and female population. If these challenges can be overcome, the position of the Syrian economy will be enhanced in general, and the conditions of young persons in the labour market and their standard of living will be improved in particular. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that will reform the labour market regulations and specifically design new policies and programmes that target young men and women in the labour market. It is important to emphasize that all problems and challenges in the labour market are interlinked. Hence, properly addressing the issue of employment of young persons can be achieved in Syria only through coordinated efforts in various policies and programmes and structural changes in the labour market. Designing such policies and programmes is beyond the scope of this report. However, the rest of this section introduces some policy recommendations to promote the employability of young persons, improve access to information and access to the labour market.

Enhancing employability

This report clearly describes the need for enhancing employability among young men and women. On the supply side, the report revealed that large groups of young persons have a low level of education and lack many of the skills required for establishing their career path towards a productive working life. Hence, action is needed on the supply side through two main policies and programmes. The first is maintaining and expanding access to education and training. The second is improving the educational quality and addressing the skills mismatch to allow young males and females to meet the needs of the market.

Boosting demand

Improving the quality of the labour supply will do little to integrate disadvantaged young males and females into the labour market unless this coincides with demand side policies. On the demand side, increasing the quantity and quality of employment for young persons should be placed at the centre of economic policy. One of the main approaches to increase the demand for employment in Syria is to promote employment intensive investment policies and programmes. This may create jobs for the currently unemployed, and allow those involved in part-time, or in non-career or temporary jobs to increase their productivity in the labour market and establish their career path.

New engine for job creation: Promoting sustainable entrepreneurship

This report shed some light on the labour market structure and trends in Syria. It is obvious that demand for labour is too low to absorb all young males and females, both already in the labour force and the new entrants to the labour market. In this regard, promoting youth entrepreneurship is a favourable option. Indeed, the Tenth Syrian Five Year Plan attaches significant importance to youth self employment, with the specific objective:

"To reduce youth unemployment by creating opportunities for work and self employment and to empower them to set up their own businesses and to provide them with the necessary training and skills to do so".

In this regard, a range of interventions may be pursued, including, for example:

- Undertaking a legal and regulatory assessment of the business environment in order to depict the constraints and obstacles faced by Syrian youth in starting their own business initiatives (business development services should be needs-based, accessible and affordable; accessibility to start-up capital; mentoring);
- Fostering an entrepreneurship culture in Syria through the introduction of entrepreneurship training and educational material in educational and technical institutes;
- Undertaking targeted awareness raising campaigns for students at universities, schools and vocational/technical training centres in order to promote the idea of self-employment as a career option among Syrian youth.⁹

Improving access to labour market and information: The role of employment institutions and agencies

Young persons use informal methods of searching for jobs. Employers also use informal networking to recruit young persons. The role of institutions and agencies that deal with employment/unemployment issues is very modest in this respect. Given this situation, increasing the labour demand without improving information and access to the labour market will do little to help integrate those without connections and other disadvantaged young people into the labour market.

Labour market information, job search assistance, vocational counselling and career guidance should be promoted in Syria to assist and orient young persons. Employment/unemployment offices and agencies (both public and private) should be activated to help young persons choose their career or find a job. Improving knowledge about the labour market structure and opportunities in Syria are vital to integrate all young people into the labour market. These improvements also help increase the job matches between employers and unemployed young persons and reduce the duration of unemployment which is currently high.

Improving labour market regulations and standards

The report points out the nature, condition, and relevance of employment to the skills and aspirations of young men and women. Policies and programmes should focus on creating decent and productive work, not just any kind of employment for young persons. This is crucial for young persons so they can use their skills, qualifications, and talent in their work and establish their career path. In addition, the report highlights the major problems many young people who work currently face in terms of low salaries and extensive work hours. Hence, there is a need for establishing a

⁹ Certain business awareness and entrepreneurial skills development initiatives are already planned or underway in Syria (e.g. the ILO's Know About Business (KAB) programme, Business Awareness, Bidaya etc.). These efforts should be supported and further expanded.

system of minimum wage which covers all groups of young persons. This protects young males and females against unfair wages, improving their working conditions. In addition to minimum wages, helping young persons establish their career path in decent conditions requires clear and strict protection regulations, including labour rights and regulating working hours.

Ensuring inclusion and equal opportunity

This report identified the clear gap between male and female young persons' access to the labour market through exploring the high level of economic inactivity among young persons (especially female) and non-institutionalized methods of job search and recruitment. Therefore, action is needed to ensure inclusion of both men and women in the labour market, and ensure that equal opportunity is available for all young persons from different strands of society. This requires two main policies and programmes. The first is public policies and programmes that concentrate on increasing educational opportunities for women and address the social and cultural constraints that prevent women from participating effectively in the labour market. The second is a set of policies to combat the pervasive culture of connections and to empower marginalized and disadvantaged young men and women in the labour market.

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