

# COLOMBIA

The ILO Work4Youth project worked with the Colombian National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) to implement the School-to-work transition survey (SWTS) in urban areas of the country in 2013 (September–November). The objective of this country note is to offer a general summary of youth labour market trends in Colombia based on the SWTS. Youth is defined as 15–29.

## Main findings of the ILO SWTS

### *Human capital and mismatch*

- Nearly all surveyed youth had attended school or a training programme at some point in their lives (99.7 per cent in 2013). Nearly one-third of the youth population (34.4 per cent) was enrolled in school in 2013 with the remaining having either completed school (20.2 per cent) or left school before graduation (45.1 per cent). Young men and women have equal access to education in urban Colombia.
- SWTS results showed a strong correlation between the levels of education and a young person's labour market transition: 71.8 per cent of tertiary educated youth had completed their transition to a stable or satisfactory job, as compared to 45.1 per cent for young graduates at the secondary level and 42.5 per cent for youth who left school after the primary level.
- With relatively high levels of educational attainment in the country (less than 8 per cent of urban youth educated below the secondary level), it is not surprising to find that a large share of employed urban youth in Colombia are overeducated for the job they are doing (32.6 per cent). More than half (55.8 per cent) were classified as having qualifications matching their jobs, and only 11.7 per cent of employed youth were deemed undereducated for their occupation.
- Colombian students did not show a strong preference for future work in any particular sector: while 30.4 per cent expressed a desire to work in the government/public sector, 32.4 per cent showed a preference for self-employment and 35.9 per cent for work in a private company.

### *Underutilization of the youth labour potential remains a top concern*

- The survey registered a high youth labour underutilization rate, at 41.4 per cent. The share of underutilized labour potential consisted of 24.2 per cent of the youth population in irregular employment (either in self-employment or paid employment with contract duration less than 12 months), 9.2 per cent unemployed and 8 per cent inactive non-students.

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

See the website [www.ilo.org/w4y](http://www.ilo.org/w4y) for more information.

- The urban youth unemployment rate (strict definition)<sup>1</sup> stood at 12.5 per cent in 2013. The female youth unemployment rate exceeded the male rate by nearly 6 percentage points (15.6 and 9.8 per cent for young women and men, respectively).
- Higher levels of education do not seem to significantly protect Colombian youth from unemployment: the unemployment rate of an urban youth with tertiary education (13.0 per cent) was higher than that of youth with general secondary education (11.1 per cent) and primary education (9.1 per cent). For young women in urban areas, however, the unemployment rate did decrease between the secondary and tertiary-educated.
- The duration of unemployment is comparatively short yet still nearly one-fifth (21.2 per cent) of unemployed youth had been looking for work for longer than one year in 2013.
- The share of urban youth neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) in Colombia stood at 13.8 per cent in 2013. The share of NEETs among young women is double that of young men (at 18.3 and 9.4 per cent, respectively).

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

- Almost three in five (57.8 per cent) young Colombians in urban areas were employed in 2013, with young men more likely to working than young women (64.1 and 51.4 per cent, respectively).
- Although three-quarters of employed youth (75.7 per cent) were working as wage and salaried workers, a significant share remained in vulnerable employment as own-account workers (19.5 per cent) or unpaid family workers (2.8 per cent). At the same time, one-quarter (25.6 per cent) of youth in paid employment were engaged without a written contract.
- The services sector is by far the largest source of employment for urban youth in Colombia, providing more than three-quarters of jobs (77.2 per cent). Industry is the second source of jobs for youth (21.6 per cent) while agriculture represents only a minor share of employment opportunities for youth in urban areas (0.5 per cent).

## Selection of data tables

**Table 1. Urban youth population by educational status and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Educational status</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Never attended school	0.3	0.3	0.3
Dropped-out before graduation or completion of school	45.1	43.0	47.2
Currently attending school	34.4	34.3	34.4
Completed education	20.2	22.3	18.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 2. Key urban youth labour market indicators – traditional distribution by sex, 2013 (%)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Employed	57.8	64.1	51.4
Unemployed	8.2	7.0	9.5
Inactive	33.9	28.9	39.0
Total youth population	100.0	100.0	100.0
Youth labour force participation rate	66.1	71.1	61.0
Youth unemployment rate (strict definition)	12.5	9.8	15.6

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

**Table 3. Key urban youth labour market indicators – alternative distribution by sex, 2013 (%)**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
In regular employment	33.6	38.5	28.7
In irregular employment	24.2	25.6	22.8
Unemployed (broad)	9.2	8.0	10.3
Inactive students	25.0	23.8	26.2
Inactive non-students	8.0	4.1	12.0
Total youth population	100	100	100
Youth labour force participation rate (broad definition)	67.0	72.2	61.8
Youth unemployment rate (broad definition)	13.7	11.1	16.7
Youth labour underutilization rate	41.4	37.7	45.1

**Table 4. Urban youth neither in employment nor in education or training (NEETs) by sex and composition, 2013 (%)**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>NEET rate</b>	<b>of which:</b>	
		<b>Inactive non-students</b>	<b>Unemployed non-students</b>
Total	13.8	8.6	5.2
Male	9.4	4.6	4.8
Female	18.3	12.6	5.7

**Table 5. Employed urban youth by status in employment and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Status in employment</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Wage and salaried workers (employees)	75.7	76.1	75.2
Employers	1.4	1.9	0.9
Own-account workers	19.5	19.9	19.0
Contributing (unpaid) family workers	2.8	1.9	4.0
Not classifiable	0.5	0.2	0.8
Total employed youth	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 6. Young wage and salaried workers in urban areas by type of contract and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Type of contract</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Written agreement	74.4	73.2	76.0
Oral agreement	25.6	26.8	24.0
Unlimited duration	80.0	81.0	78.6
Limited duration	20.0	19.0	21.4
<i>Of which:</i>			
– Less than 12 months	53.9	44.0	65.0
– 12 months to less than 36 months	44.5	53.0	35.0
– 36 months or more	1.6	3.0	0.0
Total young wage and salaried workers	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 7. Distribution of urban youth employment by sector, aggregate and 1-digit level, and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	0.5	0.9	0.1
<b>Industry</b>	21.6	26.9	14.9
<b>Services</b>	77.2	72.0	83.9
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	0.5	0.9	0.1
Mining	0.0	0.0	0.0
Manufacturing	17.1	19.4	14.3
Electricity, gas, steam	0.2	0.2	0.2
Construction	4.3	7.3	0.4
Wholesale and retail trade	26.0	28.3	23.0
Transport	9.3	10.7	7.4
Accommodation	7.1	5.5	9.0
Financial activities	3.2	1.9	4.7
Real estate	11.1	11.0	11.3
Public administration	3.6	3.9	3.3
Education	4.0	2.7	5.5
Health and social work	5.6	2.7	9.4
Other services	5.7	5.1	6.5
Private households	1.7	0.1	3.7

**Table 8. Employed urban youth by overeducation, undereducation or matching qualifications and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Qualifications match</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Undereducated	11.7	12.6	10.3
Overeducated	32.6	37.6	25.6
Matching qualifications	55.8	49.8	64.1
Total employed youth	100.0	100.0	100.0

**Table 9. Urban youth unemployment rates by level of completed educational attainment and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Educational attainment</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Less than primary (including no schooling)	13.7	-	33.2
Primary	9.1	10.2	6.8
Secondary general	11.1	8.5	16.0
Post-secondary vocational	11.3	7.9	14.2
University and postgraduate studies	13.0	14.9	11.4

Note: Secondary vocation is combined with post-secondary vocational.

**Table 10. Unemployed urban youth by duration of job search and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Duration of job search</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Less than one week	1.5	2.7	0.5
1 week to less than 1 month	17.0	13.3	19.8
1 month to less than 3 months	25.1	26.9	23.8
3 months to less than 6 months	15.1	18.5	12.6
6 months to less than 1 year	20.2	16.6	22.8
More than a year	21.2	22.0	20.6
Total unemployed youth	100	100	100

**Table 11. Urban youth population by stages and subcategories of transition and sex, 2013 (%)**

<b>Stage of transitions</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Transition completed</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>23.8</b>
Transited to stable employment	22.0	26.3	17.6
Transited to satisfactory temporary employment	2.8	3.2	2.4
Transited to satisfactory self-employment	5.5	7.0	3.9
<b>In transition</b>	<b>40.3</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>44.2</b>
Unemployed (broad definition)	6.1	5.7	6.6
In non-satisfactory temporary employment	3.4	3.4	3.3
In non-satisfactory self-employment	4.8	4.6	5.1
Active students	21.1	20.5	21.8
Inactive non-students with aim to work in the future	4.9	2.3	7.4
<b>Transition not yet started</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>32.0</b>
Inactive students	26.2	25.2	27.2
Inactive non-students with no plans to work in the future	3.3	1.8	4.8
<b>Total youth population</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

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