



► ILO WAEMU Youth Country Briefs

May 2026

Youth Labour Market Trends in Burkina Faso¹

Key points

- Economic growth in Burkina Faso has generally outpaced population growth over the last quarter century. Since 2021, however, growth has been volatile and modest, reflecting insecurity and pandemic impacts. Burkina Faso is a low-income economy with a purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusted gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (p.c.) of about US\$2,614.3 in 2025 – roughly half the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average of US\$5,324. Extreme working poverty remains widespread at an estimated 38.5 per cent, close to the SSA average of 40.1 per cent. The country now ranks among the least peaceful in the WAEMU region according to the Global Peace Index (GPI), after a marked deterioration in stability over the past decade.
- Employment in Burkina Faso, for both younger and older workers, is predominantly agricultural. Over half of all workers are engaged in agriculture, with industry accounting for only a small share (16.5 per cent) of total employment. Unlike some of its neighbours in the region, women in Burkina Faso are more likely to be working in the agricultural sector than men.
- The overall youth (15–29) NEET rate – the share of young people not in employment, education or training – stood at an estimated 18.6 per cent in 2022. As in many countries, there is a large gap in NEET rates between young men and young women, with young women experiencing a NEET rate more than double that of young men. Of concern, neither the overall NEET rate nor the gender gap improved between 2019 and 2022 – if anything, both worsened over this period.
- There are also significant disparities in NEET rates between young people with and without disabilities, and these have widened for both young women and young men between 2019 and 2022. Young people with disabilities face considerably higher risks of being NEET, and recent years saw the disadvantage of this group grow larger.
- NEET rates in Burkina Faso are higher among youth with higher levels of educational attainment, suggesting the existence of educational mismatch. Young adults, especially young women, with advanced education now have NEET rates which are more than twice as high as those with only basic education, indicating that gains in schooling have not been matched by sufficient growth in decent job opportunities.

¹ This brief was prepared by Niall O'Higgins and Vipasana Karkee (ILO-Geneva) with some AI support managed by Dibyaudh Das (ILO-Geneva). The authors are grateful for the very helpful comments provided by Jonas Bausch, Yacouba Diallo and Ali Madai Boukar (ILO-Africa) and by Mallory Baxter and many other colleagues at the Mastercard Foundation including those provided at a webinar organised by MCF on January 27, 2026.

► 1. Introduction: Contextual indicators

Burkina Faso has experienced periods of political instability and security challenges in recent years, yet over the last twenty-five years, macroeconomic growth has significantly outpaced population growth. Between 2000 and 2025,² Burkina Faso reported an average real growth rate (local currency) of 5.4 per cent, compared to an annual population growth rate of 2.8 per cent.³ Growth rates in GDP have remained high since the 2000s in the country; they have even outpaced SSA and the World since the 2010s. Following a pandemic-related slowdown in 2020, since 2021, annual real economic growth has reached nearly 7 per cent in 2021 and has been above 5 per cent in 2024 and 2025. Overall, in the new millennium, economic growth has been faster than that of SSA as a whole, especially in the last decade, and has been well above the global average (figure 1).

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

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

This brief is one of eight country statistical briefs for WAEMU countries undertaken under the new partnership which provide an analysis of youth labour markets with a focus on gender, educational attainment and disability issues. To complement these statistical analyses, the new partnership also involves analyses of youth employment initiatives in WAEMU countries prepared with the direct engagement of young people in the region. The countries covered are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo.

Despite its positive growth record, Burkina Faso remains one of the poorest economies in the region. It is classified as a low-income country, with a PPP-adjusted GDP p.c. of approximately US\$2,614 in 2025, just under half the SSA average of US\$5,324.⁴ Compared to other WAEMU countries, Burkina Faso is among the least economically prosperous and, in recent years, among the least stable. The country is now ranked near the bottom of the WAEMU region according to the GPI; in the 2025 index, it was placed around 41st out of 44 countries in SSA and 152nd out of 163 countries globally.⁵ This marks a sharp reversal from the earlier 2000s and 2010s, when Burkina Faso had been relatively stable. Since 2015, the escalation of conflict and insecurity has led to a consistent decline in peacefulness, leaving the country amongst the most fragile in the region. Burkina Faso’s GPI ranking in WAEMU is comparable with its ranking in the Human Development Index, where it is placed sixth among the eight countries. The country has made some improvements to human development in the 21st century, and the country rose by one place between 2015 and 2023 (to 186th of 193 countries worldwide).⁶

² IMF (2026)

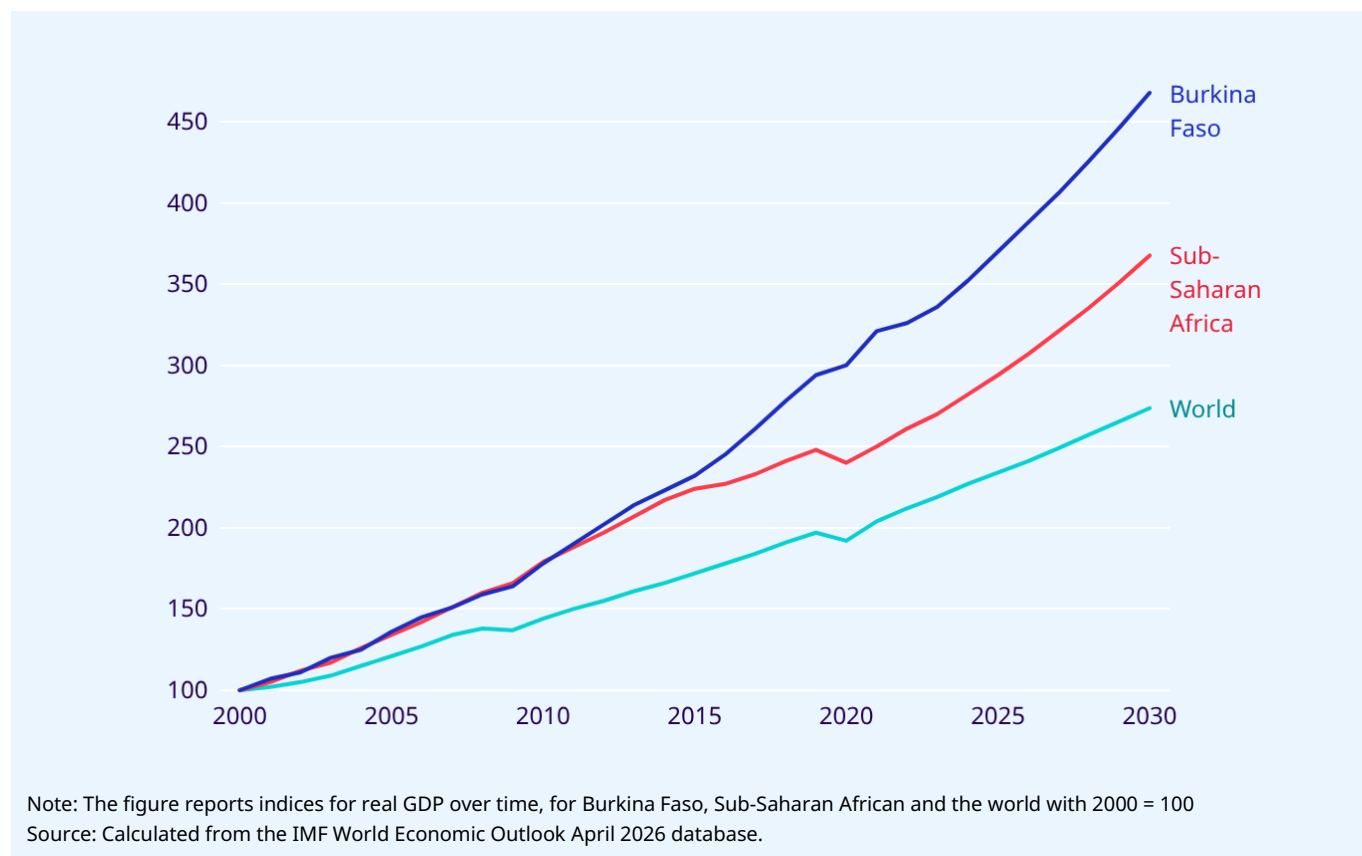
³ UN estimates and projections, July 2024 (UN, 2024; data also reported in [ILOSTAT](#)).

⁴ The PPP adjusted GDP p.c. estimates used in this brief are from the [IMF April 2026 WEO Database](#) (IMF, 2026). [Purchasing Power Parity \(PPP\)](#) adjusted GDP converts a country’s GDP into (usually) USD using exchange rates that equate the cost of a representative basket of goods and services in different countries.

⁵ Institute for Economics & Peace (2025) and GPI raw data, 2008-2023.

⁶ [UNDP Human Development Index](#) (HDI). The HDI is a broader measure of a country’s human development which takes into account also life expectancy and educational attainment, in addition to per capita GDP. See, for example, <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/human-development-index#/indicies/HDI>

► **Figure 1. Real GDP, Burkina Faso, Sub-Saharan Africa and the World, 2000-2030; 2000=100**



The employment-to-population ratios (EPR)⁷ in Burkina Faso are well above the regional and global averages. The male EPR in Burkina Faso is 78.7 p.p. and the female EPR is 64.7 p.p. – higher than the respective SSA averages (table 1).

► **Table 1. Employment to population ratio by sex in Burkina Faso, SSA, Africa, and the World, 2022 (age 15+) (percentage)**

	Female	Male	Total
Burkina Faso	64.7	78.7	70.9
Sub-Saharan Africa (ILO Modelled Estimates)	59.7	71.8	65.6
Africa (ILO Modelled Estimates)	50.5	69.9	60.1
World (ILO Modelled Estimates)	45.7	69.4	57.5

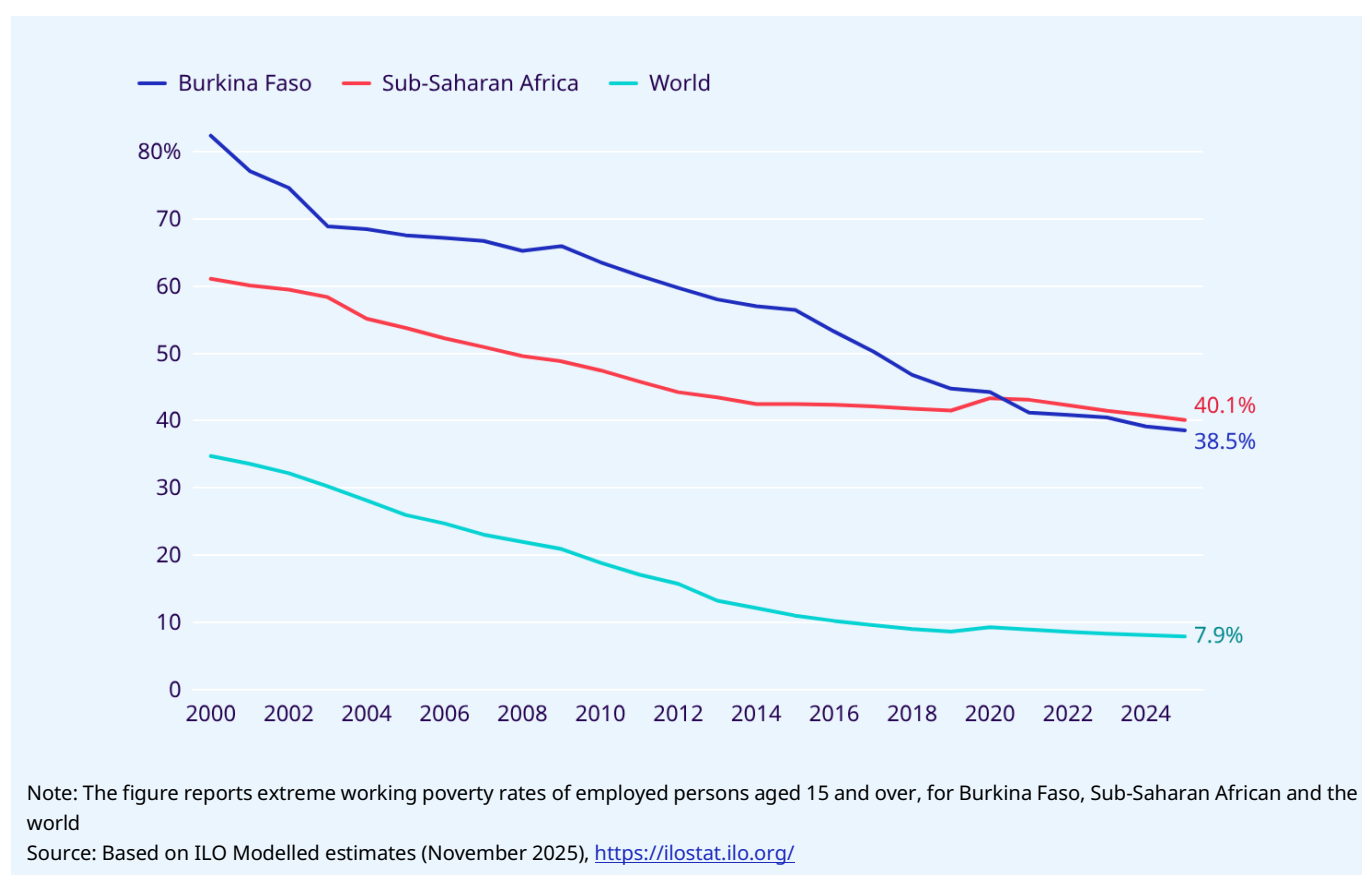
Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository; ILO Modelled estimates (November 2025), <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

⁷ This brief applies the definition of employment established by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statistician (ICLS) in 1982. [The 13th ICLS](#) definition identifies all persons who worked at least one hour during the reference period as employed. Although the [19th ICLS](#) definition is the more recent definition, which classifies those working for “pay or profit” for at least one hour during the reference period as employed, the EHCVM survey does not follow the set of statistical standards required by the 19th ICLS. The 13th ICLS definition tends to have a higher recorded employment-to-population ratio, especially in lower income countries because, for example, it excludes subsistence agriculture from employment. Both standards include informal jobs and any other type of employment of at least one hour whether or not it is formally recorded (including, for example, street vendors, unregistered platform workers and domestic workers).

Note: The reported ratios all apply the definition of employment established by the 13th ICLS in 1982.

Relatively low income levels in Burkina Faso are reflected in high rates of working poverty. In 2025, the extreme working poverty rate (percentage of employed persons living in extreme poverty below the international US\$3 per day threshold) was estimated at 38.5 per cent, far above the global average of 7.9 per cent, and close to the corresponding estimate for SSA of 40.1 per cent (figure 2). ⁸Progress in reducing working poverty has been consistent and the share of workers in extreme poverty declined significantly between 2000 and 2025, but the rate of working poverty remains higher than that of all its WAEMU neighbours apart from Niger.

► **Figure 2. Extreme working poverty rates, Burkina Faso, Sub-Saharan Africa and the World, 2000–2025**



► **Box 2: Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM) in WAEMU, 2019-2025**

The analysis of youth labour market trends in the ILO-WAEMU Youth Country Briefs is being undertaken primarily using the Household Living Conditions Surveys (Enquêtes Harmonisées sur le Conditions de Vie des Ménages; EHCVM) being undertaken by the World Bank and the WAEMU commission [in WAEMU member states](#). These are nationally representative [Living Standards Measurement Study \(LSMS\)](#) household surveys which incorporate labour modules, allowing for labour market analysis in the eight countries. The EHCVM surveys used in these briefs apply the same

⁸ [ILO modelled estimates](#), November 2025. The working poverty rate is an estimate of the proportion of the employed population living in poverty despite being employed, implying that their employment-related incomes are not sufficient to lift them and their families out of poverty and ensure decent living conditions. Extreme working poverty is defined as the percentage of the employed population living in households with a per capita income of under US\$3 PPP per day, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/working-poverty/>.

international statistical standards and questionnaires across years and countries, thereby collecting data that can be harmonized and allowing comparisons across countries and over time. These household surveys were conducted in each of the WAEMU countries in 2018-2019, 2021-2022 and 2025-2026.

Data for 2019 and 2022 has been received and processed by the ILO for all eight countries. All data in the ILO-WAEMU Country Briefs utilize EHCVM survey data unless otherwise stated. Data for the third round (2025-2026) will be available in late 2026.

More than half of the employed population is involved in agriculture in Burkina Faso. The service sector accounts for a relatively modest share of around 30 per cent of total employment (table 2). The country's employment structure is consistent with the SSA average. However, unlike the SSA average and its neighbours, women in Burkina Faso are slightly more likely than men to work in agriculture.

► **Table 2. Employment distribution by economic activity and sex, Burkina Faso, 2022 (age 15+) (percentage)**

	Female	Male	Total
Agriculture	55.0	51.5	53.1
Industry	14.6	18.1	16.5
Services	30.5	30.4	30.4

Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

Informal employment is pervasive, especially among women. In 2022, 96 per cent of workers in Burkina Faso were informally employed – 97.9 per cent of working women and 94.0 per cent of working men.⁹ Among young people, the incidence is even higher: almost all employed youth (98.8 per cent of young workers) are in informal jobs. Although high, this prevalence of informality is typical for WAEMU countries.

Taken together, despite periods of solid economic growth, Burkina Faso's economy remains primarily agrarian and its labour market is dominated by informal agricultural and informal service-sector work. Structural transformation has been limited, and most workers – especially youth – continue to engage in low-productivity jobs in the informal economy.

► 2. Youth labour market trends

Africa is a relatively young continent, with a youth population which continues to grow with all the potential and challenges that this brings with it (ILO, 2020; box 3). Between 2015 and 2025, the youth population (aged 15–29) in Burkina Faso expanded by an average of 3.1 per cent per annum, slightly faster than the 2.8 per cent growth rate of the youth population in SSA as a whole (figure 3).

► Box 3: Who are the youth?

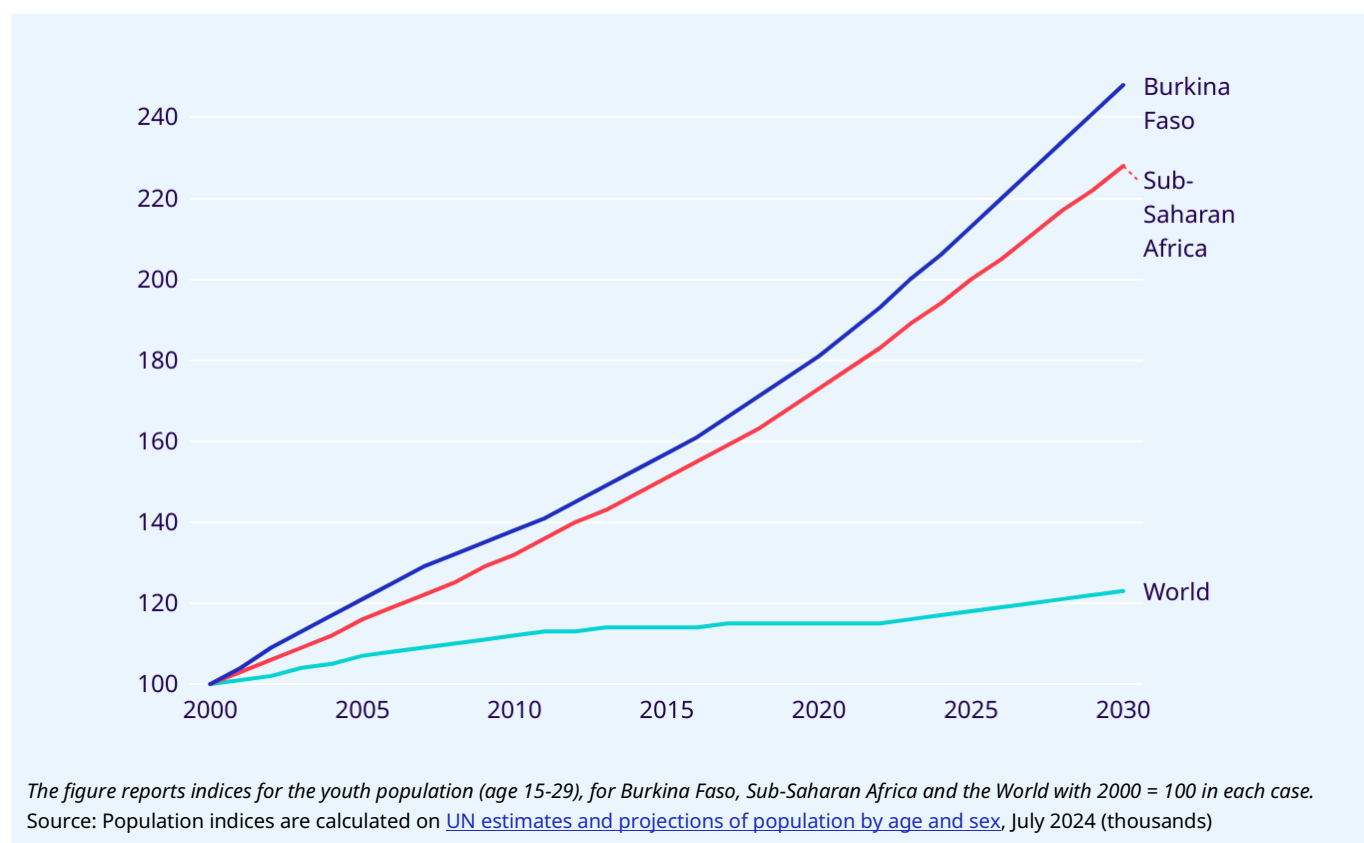
For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines youth as persons aged between 15 and 24 years old. The specific age-group was originally intended to cover the period during which the School-to-Work transition takes place for most young people. This is the definition used for the standard indicators produced by the ILO in ILOSTAT including

⁹ ILO micro database. As noted in box 2, these and the other labour market indicators analysed in this brief are derived from the EHCVM survey data.

the ILO modelled estimates of regional and global age-based aggregate indicators (see, for example, [the 2023 ILO Blog on this](#)).

In practice, varying approaches to the age-range applied to define youth are to be found in different contexts. The [African Union](#), for example, defines young people as those aged between 15 and 35 inclusive. For the analysis presented in this brief, following the standard practice for the country level indicators reported in the ILO's [YOUTHSTAT database](#), youth refer to persons aged between 15 and 29 years old. This recognizes the fact that some young people remain in education for longer and captures more information on the post-graduation employment experiences of young people. For comparison purposes, selected indicators for young people aged 15-35 are available in an online data annex.

► **Figure 3. Youth (15-29) population in Burkina Faso, Sub-Saharan Africa, Africa and the World, 2000-2030; 2000=100**



Burkina Faso has made improvements in primary education completion rates since 2003, almost catching up with the SSA average. In 2021, UNESCO estimates that 60.3 per cent of children in Burkina Faso completed primary education, somewhat below the SSA average of 65.5 per cent.¹⁰ This was a substantial improvement from the situation in 2003, when only one-fourth of children completed primary school. The primary completion rate has more than doubled since earlier in the millennium, marking significant progress, and even tripled for girls. Gains at the primary level have not fully carried over to higher levels of education, however. The lower secondary completion rate is 34.4 per cent, and tertiary education

¹⁰ <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/> [accessed on 18 August 2025].

is attained by only 16.2 per cent of the cohort. Nonetheless, some improvements in educational participation have been achieved.

► Box 4: NEET

This brief makes extensive use of the NEET rate – the share of young people Not in Employment, Education or Training – as a measure of youth labour market vulnerability. This is in line with the adoption of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals in 2015 and the consequent establishment of reductions in the NEET rate as the [target indicator \(SDG 8.6.1\)](#) chosen to measure progress in youth labour markets. Although NEETs also includes (most of) the young unemployed¹¹ (the so-called 'Active NEETs'), the NEET rate is a broader concept encompassing all young people who are, for whatever reason, not studying or working for pay or profit. NEETs are consequently a much larger, as well as a more heterogeneous group than the young unemployed including a substantial group of young people who are not studying or working, but who are also not actively looking for work. Often termed 'inactive' NEETs, many of these young people would like to work but are not looking for it, either because they believe no jobs are to be found or because they face additional obstacles - such as care responsibilities - which impede their active participation in the labour force.

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

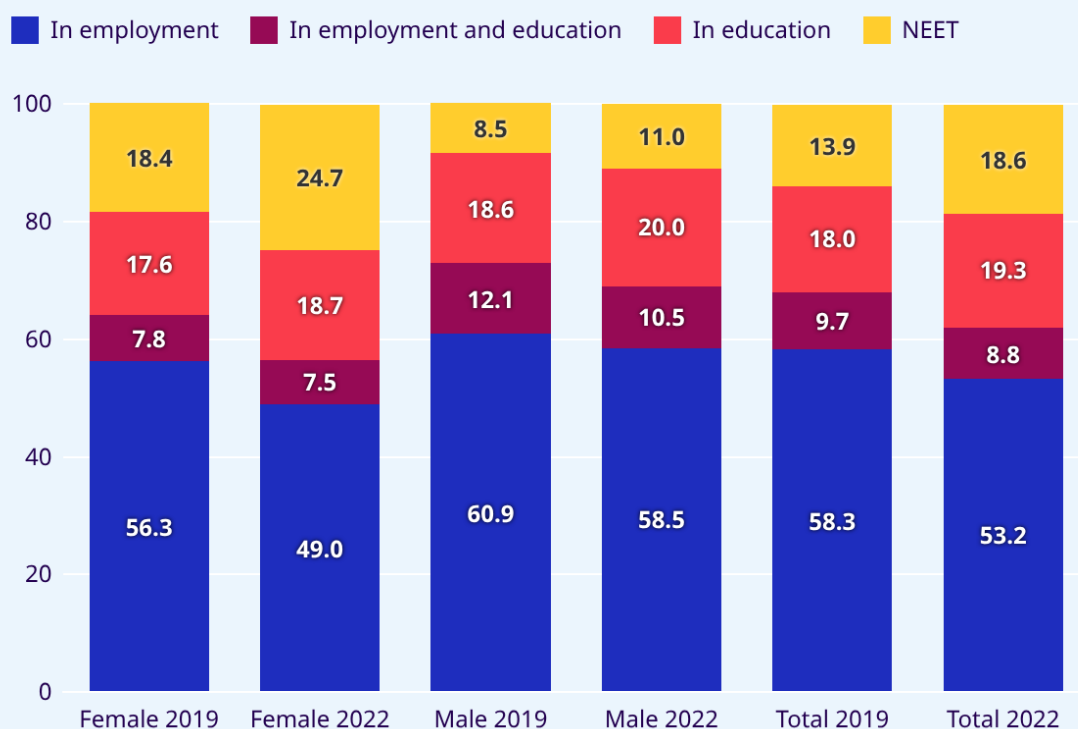
Source: O'Higgins et al. (2023). O'Higgins (2025) provides a brief non-technical overview.

Between 2019 and 2022, the share of youth (15–29) in education or training increased, reflecting efforts to boost school attendance and vocational training enrolment (figure 4). At the same time, ongoing security threats remain an issue with many school closures arising as a result.¹²

¹¹ Excluding a relatively small but increasingly significant group of young people who are both unemployed and in education.

¹² See, for example, <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/africas-forgotten-crisis-return-education-burkina-faso-0>.

► **Figure 4. Youth status (age 15–29) in Burkina Faso by sex, 2019–2022 (percentage)**



Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>

The EPR for young people in Burkina Faso is relatively high by global standards but experienced a significant decline between 2019 to 2022 (figure 4). In 2022, the overall youth EPR was about 62.1 per cent (53.2 + 8.8 in figure 4) down from around 68.0 per cent in 2019. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, almost one in ten young people in Burkina Faso were studying and working at the same time. This share had declined slightly by 2022, mostly driven by fewer young men who were both studying and working than in 2019. Young men had a considerably higher EPR of nearly 70 per cent than young women with an EPR of 56.5 per cent. The decrease in youth employment between 2019 and 2022 was driven primarily by a decline in the EPR of young women of 7.5 p.p., whereas the EPR of young men decreased by a more modest 4 p.p. This divergence exacerbated the gender gap in youth employment: also partly explained by the small increase in young women's educational participation but mainly by an increase in the share of young women becoming NEET.

► **Table 3. Youth (age 15–29) employment distribution by economic activity and sex in Burkina Faso, 2022 (percentage)**

	Female	Male	Total
Agriculture	53.2	40.6	46.6
Industry	16.7	26.5	21.8
Services	30.1	32.9	31.5

Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

As to the sector of employment, young men (15–29) in Burkina Faso are somewhat less likely to work in agriculture than young women, and differences in sectoral employment observed in the overall working-age population are more pronounced among young people. In particular, the gender gap in employment in the industrial sector is much wider among youth than in the overall population.

► **Table 4. Youth (age 15–29) employment distribution by status in employment and sex in Burkina Faso, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**

	Female		Male		Total	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Employees	9.7	28.9	21.0	47.7	15.1	38.7
Self-employed	90.3	71.1	79.0	52.3	84.9	61.3

Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat ilo.org/>.

At the same time, a growing share of young people are wage and salaried workers, as opposed to self-employed; this suggests some improvement in job quality and working conditions.¹³ By 2022, over one-third of young workers aged 15 to 29 were employees: 47.7 per cent of young men and 28.9 per cent of young women (table 5). This share, while still below that of some regional leaders (for example, Senegal, where a narrow majority of young men are employees), is significantly above the share of adult male workers (aged 30+) who are employees in Burkina Faso.

► **Table 5. Distribution of employment, prevalence of self-employment and prevalence of informality by sector among youth (age 15–29) in Burkina Faso, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**

Sector	Employment by sector		Prevalence of self-employment		Prevalence of informality
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2022
Agriculture	75.0	46.6	97.8	86	99.9
Manufacturing	4.4	10.9	55.9	40.3	97.6
Construction	1.7	3.7	18.8	21.2	96.8
Mining and quarrying; Electricity, gas and water supply	2.2	7.2	35.4	35	98.2
Market Services (Trade; Transportation; Accommodation and food; and Business and administrative services)	10.3	21	61.4	50.2	98.1
Non-market services (Public administration; Community, social and other services and activities)	6.3	10.6	26.3	28	91.5

Note: Informality could not be defined in the 2019 EHCVM/ECVM surveys, due to missing information on registration and bookkeeping of enterprises.

Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat ilo.org/>.

¹³ The ILO status in employment indicator subdivides workers to describe the relationships of their jobs to the workplace. Broadly, the employed are classified as either "employees" or "self-employed". The former are in paid employment jobs (with explicit or implicit contracts) which provide them with basic remuneration, whereas the latter are mainly or wholly reliant on sales and profits. Self-employment is dominated by own-account workers in low quality informal employment and in the past was indeed used as a proxy for informal employment.

The rising share of wage employment among youth is a positive sign, however, given the predominance of agricultural employment, most jobs – even for youth – remain in self-employment or informal family work. As noted earlier, the youth employment-to-population ratio actually fell over the same period. Thus, while a larger proportion of working youth held wage jobs in 2022 compared to 2019, the number of young people in wage employment grew only modestly. The increase in the employee share among youth should be interpreted cautiously – it reflects a changing composition of a shrinking pool of employed youth, rather than a broad-based surge in formal job creation.

Informal employment is even more common among young people than among older workers. In 2022, roughly 97 per cent of employed young men and 98 per cent of employed young women (15–29) in Burkina Faso were in informal employment – compared to about 90 per cent of adult men and 95 per cent of adult women aged 30 and over. Although the share of youth employment accounted for by employees did increase significantly between 2019 and 2022, this does not represent a dramatic expansion of formal wage opportunities. The prevalence of informality among young people does not vary significantly across sectors as nearly all employed youth across every broad sector are in informal employment. Still, young people in the non-market services and manufacturing have lower shares of informal employment than the other sectors.

In Burkina Faso, the overall NEET rate for youth aged 15 to 29 worsened during the pandemic and conflict-affected years, increasing from 13.9 per cent in 2019 to 18.6 in 2022. The gender gap in NEET also widened over the same period: in 2019, 8.5 per cent of young men and 18.4 per cent of young women were NEET, whereas in 2022 the corresponding rates were roughly 11.0 per cent and 24.7 per cent, respectively. In other words, the NEET rate for young women is more than twice the rate for young men, and this disparity worsened between 2019 and 2022.

The lion's share of young NEETs in Burkina Faso fall into the category of inactive NEETs. Roughly nine out of ten young NEETs are not actively looking for work, which is clearly a matter of concern, but a pattern that is also typical across the WAEMU region (table 3). In 2022, an overwhelming 94.6 per cent of young female NEETs and about 85.1 per cent of young male NEETs were not actively looking for work. Moreover, the share of NEETs who are not actively seeking employment increased between 2019 and 2022 for both young men and women. High inactivity among young NEETs highlights structural issues, such as discouragement and traditional gender roles, with many young women remaining outside the labour force due to family responsibilities.

► **Table 6. Youth (age 15–29) NEET distribution by active-inactive status and sex in Burkina Faso, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**

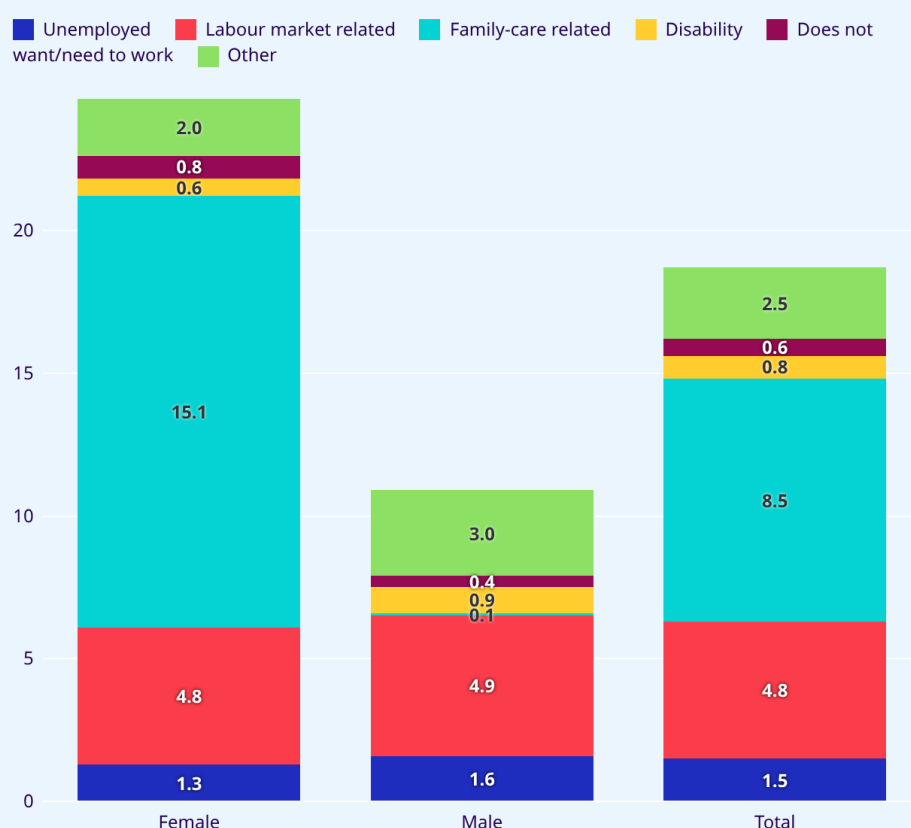
	Female		Male		Total	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Active NEET	7.1	5.4	17.5	14.9	10.0	7.9
Inactive NEET	92.9	94.6	82.5	85.1	90.0	92.1

Note: Active NEETs are those who are not engaged in employment, education or training but are available and actively looking for employment opportunities, whereas inactive NEETs are also not engaged in employment, education or training but are not available or actively looking for employment.

Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat ilo.org/>.

Most young NEETs in Burkina Faso are either discouraged from seeking jobs, are awaiting job or business prospects, or remain outside the labour force due to domestic responsibilities (figure 5). Traditional gender roles clearly play a role in the large gender gap in NEET rates. In 2022, 15.1 per cent of young women in Burkina Faso are NEET due to care responsibilities at home, compared to only 0.1 per cent of young men who are NEET for the same reason. This is a common trend observed in WAEMU countries. While all other reasons for being NEET display little or no difference between young women and men, family-care responsibilities consequently account almost entirely for the NEET gender gap.

► **Figure 5. NEET rates of young people (aged 15–29) by sex decomposed by reason for being NEET, Burkina Faso, 2022 (percentage)**



Note: **Unemployed** NEETs are those who are not engaged in employment, education or training but are available and actively looking for employment opportunities. **Labour market related reasons** for being NEET include those associated with discouragement (past failure to find a suitable job, lack of experience, qualifications or jobs matching the person's skills, lack of jobs in the area, considered too young or too old by prospective employers, and does not know how/where to find a job) as well as other labour market reasons (waiting for an answer to an application, and seasonal break). **Family-care related reasons** cover looking after small children and other household and domestic responsibilities; **disability** covers young people who are not seeking a job due to disability or illness; whereas a young NEET who **"does not need/want to work"** may have other sources of income. **Other** is a residual category covering a variety of motivations not covered by the first four categories.

Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository, <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>.

► 3. Vulnerable groups in the youth labour market

3.1 Gender

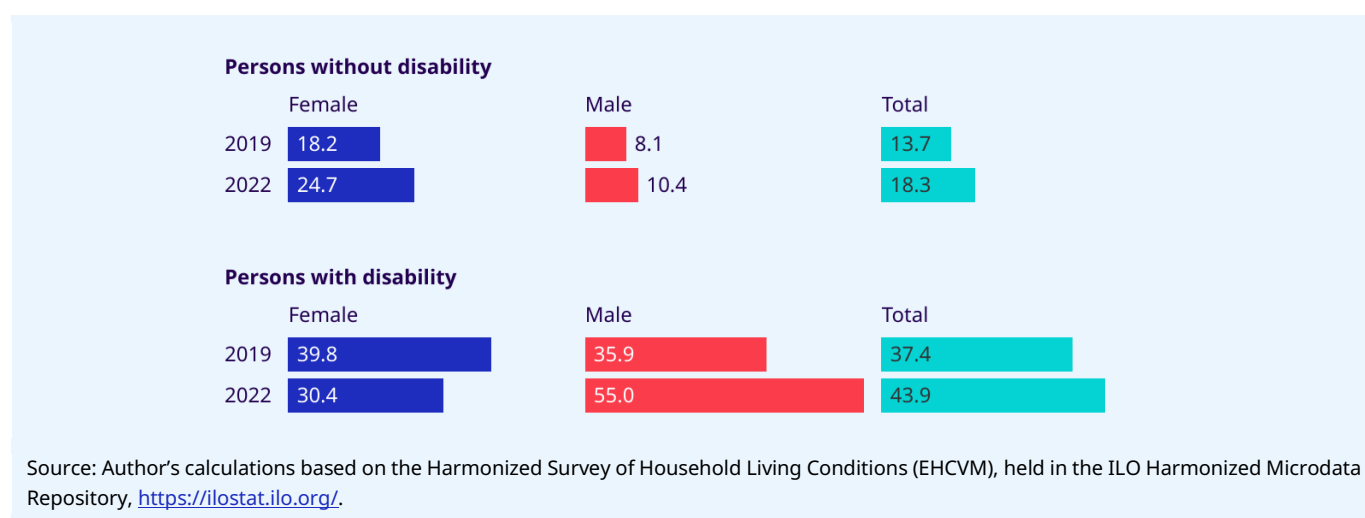
Young women clearly face far more challenges than young men in gaining entry to the labour market in Burkina Faso. They are far more likely than young men to be engaged in family care responsibilities and, in consequence, their NEET

rates are over twice as high as those of young men; they also have lower employment–population ratios and educational participation rates (as well as lower educational attainment levels). Between 2019 and 2022, the situation worsened further: the NEET rate for young women rose from 18.4 per cent to 24.7 per cent, along with declining employment participation. Although the employment–population ratio of both young men and women decreased overall in this period, it declined more for young women than for young men. At the same time, the share of self-employment among employed young women dropped significantly as more women moved into wage work or exited the labour force for schooling. Nevertheless, young women’s outcomes remain substantially worse than young men’s across most dimensions of the labour market. In what follows, we examine other vulnerable youth groups and consider how these vulnerabilities intersect with gender in shaping labour market outcomes.

3.2 Disability

People with disabilities face additional obstacles to their effective participation in labour markets. As pointed out by the 2025 Global Disability Summit in Berlin, young people with disabilities are especially disadvantaged at the global level, facing NEET rates that are twice those of their non-disabled peers.¹⁴ In 2022, 1.2 per cent of the young Burkinabes reported having an illness or disability that affects their ability to work. There is clear evidence of labour market disadvantage for this group, and it appears to have worsened in recent years (figure 6).¹⁵

► **Figure 6. NEET rates of young people (aged 15–29) by disability status and sex in Burkina Faso, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**



In 2022, young women with disabilities in Burkina Faso had NEET rates around 6 percentage points (p.p.) higher than those of young women without disabilities. For young men, the disparity was even larger: young men with disabilities had NEET rates approximately 45 p.p. higher than those without disabilities. Moreover, between 2019 and 2022 the relative situation of young people with disabilities deteriorated, primarily driven by worsening NEET rates of young men with disabilities. Among young women, the NEET rate for those with disabilities decreased by 9.4 p.p. over the period, whereas it increased by 19.1 p.p. for young men. This further widened the NEET gap between young people with and without disabilities, particularly among men. The result is that by 2022, disability had become a significant contributor to youth labour market vulnerability in Burkina Faso, compounding the challenges that they already faced.

¹⁴ For a more detailed analysis of the disparities in the labour market outcomes faced by people with disabilities, see, for example, Annanian and Dellaferrera (2024).

¹⁵ The sample size of persons with disabilities is typically rather small in the household surveys, and even smaller for the age group of 15 to 29. This small sample size means that the estimates of indicators for youth with disabilities are necessarily relatively imprecise.

3.3 Educational attainment

The gender gap in educational participation and attainment was already observed above. One way in which this is important is that it determines young people's access to labour markets. Globally, NEET rates are significantly higher among young people with lower levels of educational attainment (O'Higgins et al. 2023). This relationship, however, tends to be less pronounced in low and lower-middle income countries with quite some variation across countries. In Burkina Faso in 2022, NEET rates among young adults (aged 25–29) with advanced levels of education were higher than those of young adults with less than basic education – roughly 23.9 per cent versus 19.0 per cent, respectively (figure 7).

► **Figure 7. NEET rates of young adults (aged 25–29) by educational attainment and sex in Burkina Faso, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**

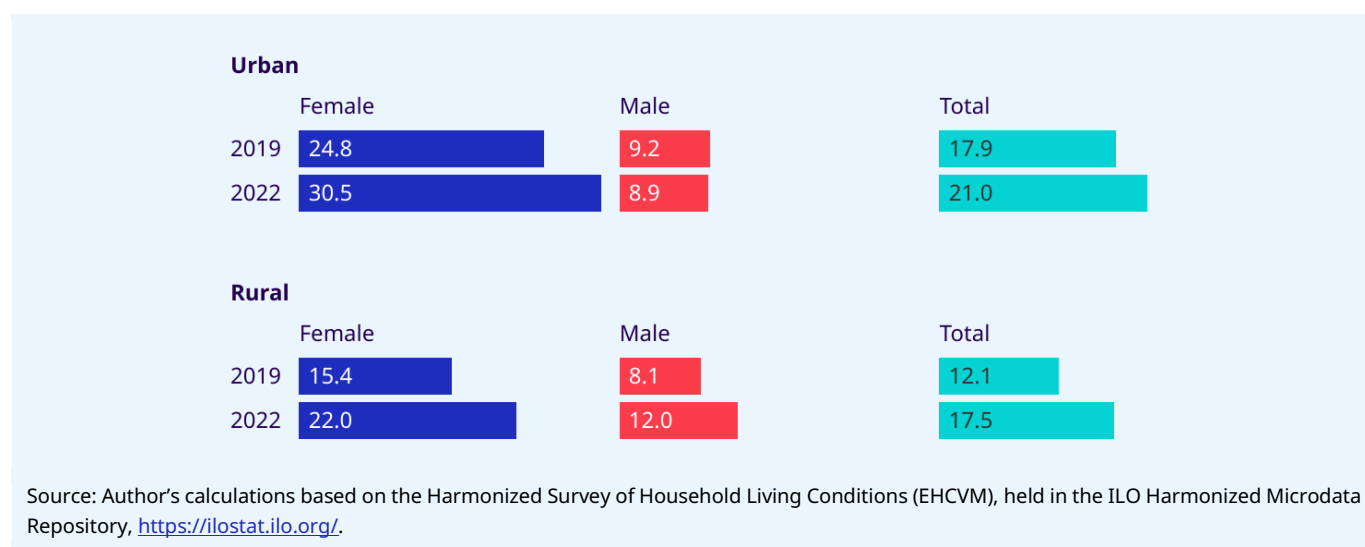


Young women with advanced education saw their NEET rates rise sharply between 2019 and 2022; meanwhile, NEET rates for their male counterparts fell over the same period. Although youth with intermediate education saw lower NEET rates in 2022, they remain higher than those of young people with basic and less than basic educational attainment. Young people with higher qualifications are finding it increasingly difficult to secure suitable employment, and the country's labour market shows signs of a growing educational mismatch, as discussed in recent ILO analyses (ILO, 2020b; ILO, 2024).

3.4 Urban-Rural location

Globally, NEET rates tend to be higher in rural areas than in urban ones. This tendency, however, is more marked in higher income countries. (O'Higgins et al., 2023). In Burkina Faso, this pattern does not hold true: in 2022, youth NEET rates in urban areas were 3.5 p.p. higher than those in rural areas (figure 8). This is driven by the fact that, while young urban men had lower NEET rates compared to young rural men, young women in urban areas had very high NEET rates; in 2022 this stood at 30.5 per cent. While urban young men benefited somewhat from better access to schooling and some job opportunities, their female counterparts could not reap the same benefits. For young men, NEET rates were relatively low in both urban and rural settings. Young men in rural areas typically engage in subsistence farming or other work, keeping their NEET rate relatively low; urban young men, on the other hand, may experience periods of unemployment but many do find informal work, keeping their NEET rate modest. Overall, the urban-rural gap in Burkina Faso's youth NEET is driven mainly by the situation of young women in urban locations.

► **Figure 8. NEET rates of young people (aged 15–29) by geographical location in Burkina Faso by sex, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**



► 4. Summary and conclusions

Burkina Faso's youth labour market situation reflects the country's broader challenges of fragility and limited structural transformation. Despite having largely avoided major conflict and unrest in the early 2000s, the country has been severely impacted by rising instability in the past decade. Economic growth has been relatively strong since 2000, despite security crises and the pandemic; however, Burkina Faso remains a low-income country, with a GDP p.c. of a little over half the SSA average.

Working poverty remains high: the extreme working poverty rate is estimated at around 38.5 per cent in 2025, comparable to the SSA average of 40.1 per cent but higher than the global rate of 7.9 per cent, and higher than that of all other countries in the region except Niger. This in part reflects the fact that employment – especially for the adult population – is still concentrated in agriculture, much of it low-productivity subsistence farming. The gradual shift into services and wage employment is apparent mainly among young people, but this has not yet translated into a broad-based reduction in poverty or informality. Indeed, both agriculture and the growing services sector are dominated by informal employment, which account for approximately 78.1 per cent of all youth jobs in Burkina Faso.

Educational attainment in Burkina Faso has seen an improvement since the early 2000s in all levels. While primary school completion has increased significantly, almost reaching the SSA average, upper secondary attainment rates are still low, and a considerable gender gap persists, emerging strongly after the lower secondary level, where far fewer girls than boys progress. Paradoxically, however, even those youth who do achieve higher education are finding it difficult to obtain suitable employment, as evidenced by rising NEET rates among tertiary graduates. This suggests a growing mismatch between the supply of educated youth and the demand for skilled labour in the economy.

Young women in Burkina Faso face particularly acute disadvantages. Their NEET rate increased from 2019 to 2022, worsening the gender gap in NEET. Young women also are overwhelmingly confined to informal work, often unpaid family work or self-employment with low earnings.

Other dimensions of vulnerability are also evident. Young people with disabilities in Burkina Faso experience substantially higher NEET rates than their peers, and worryingly, the gap between disabled and non-disabled youth grew between 2019 and 2022. This trend is especially pronounced for young women with disabilities, whose labour market exclusion has intensified. Geographic disparities add another layer: urban youth, particularly young women, face a scarcity of opportunities with higher NEET rates than their rural-based counterparts.

► References

- Annanian, S. and G. Dellaferrera. 2024. [A study on the employment and wage outcomes of people with disabilities](#). ILO Working paper 124. Geneva.
- Institute for Economics & Peace. 2025. [Global Peace Index 2025: Identifying and Measuring the Factors that Drive Peace](#). Sydney.
- ILO. 1982. II. [Labour force, employment, unemployment and underemployment](#). 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 18–29 October 1982.
- ILO. 2013. [Resolution I: Resolution concerning statistics of work, employment and labour underutilization](#). 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 2–11 October 2013
- ILO. 2020a. [Report on Employment in Africa: Tackling the youth employment challenge](#). Geneva.
- ILO. 2020b. [Global employment trends for youth 2020: technology and the future of jobs](#). Geneva
- ILO. 2024. [Global employment trends for youth 2024](#). 20th anniversary edition. Geneva
- ILO. 2025a. [“Advancing Disability Inclusion in the Global Labour Market.”](#) 4 April, 2025. Geneva
- ILO. 2025b. ILO modelled estimates database, [ILOSTAT](#), November. [accessed on 15 April 2026]. Geneva.
- ILO. 2026. [ILOSTAT database](#). Geneva.
- IMF. 2026. [World Economic Outlook Database](#), April, Washington DC
- O’Higgins, N. et al. 2023. [“How NEET are developing and emerging economies? What do we know and what can be done about it?”](#), chapter 3 in D. Kucera and D. Schmidt-Klau (eds) [Global Employment Policy Review 2023: Macroeconomic policies for recovery and structural transformation](#). ILO. Geneva.
- O’Higgins, N. 2025. [Measuring what matters: NEET vs youth unemployment](#). ILO Blog. 12 August, 2025.
- UNDESA. 2024. [World Population Prospects](#), 28th edition. New York.
- UNDP. 2025. [Human Development Report 2025: A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of AI](#). New York.
- UNESCO. 2025. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). <https://databrowser.uis.unesco.org/> [accessed on 18 August 2025]. Montreal.



Licensed under [CC BY 4.0](#) © International Labour Organization 2026

ILO. *Youth labour market trends in Burkina Faso*, ILO WAEMU Youth Country Brief, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2026. © ILO. <https://doi.org/10.54394/00034390>

Contact details

International Labour Organization

Route des Morillons 4
CH-1211 Geneva 22

Switzerland

Employment, Labour Markets and Youth
Branch

E: emplab@ilo.org

W: www.ilo.org

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54394/00034390>