



► ILO WAEMU Youth Country Briefs

May 2026

Youth Labour Market Trends in Côte d'Ivoire¹

Key points

- Following conflict and instability in the first decade or so of the new millennium, economic growth has been impressive in the country. Since 2021, the country has maintained annual real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates of 6 per cent or above. Côte d'Ivoire is a lower middle income country, with a purchasing power parity (PPP) adjusted GDP per capita (p.c.) of US\$6,975 in 2025; well above the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) average of US\$5,324. Extreme working poverty is relatively low in the country, standing at 17.7 per cent, well below the SSA average of 40.1 per cent. The country currently ranks highest of all WAEMU in terms of the Global Peace Index, reflecting a rapid improvement visible over the last decade.
- Employment, for both younger and older workers, is predominantly agricultural, especially amongst men. Service sector employment is more the preserve of women of all ages.
- The overall youth (15-29) NEET rate stood at 20.5 per cent in 2022. As in many countries there is a large gap in NEET rates between young men and women with young women experiencing a NEET rate which is more than double that of young men. However, both the overall NEET rate and the NEET gender gap have fallen since 2019.
- There are also significant disparities in NEET rates between young people with and without disabilities, and these have grown significantly for both young women and young men between 2019 and 2022.
- In contrast to some other countries, NEET rates are higher amongst young people with higher levels of educational attainment – and this disparity has also increased between 2019 and 2022 suggesting the existence and deepening of educational mismatch.
- Despite its importance for employment, the agricultural sector in Côte d'Ivoire remains characterized by low productivity and low incomes: nearly 90% of farmers are in the lowest income decile, and a large share of cocoa producers live below the national poverty line, limiting the sector's capacity to provide decent and stable jobs.²

¹ This brief was prepared by Niall O'Higgins and Vipasana Karkee (ILO) with AI editorial support developed by Dibyaudh Das (ILO). The authors are grateful for the very helpful comments provided by ILO colleagues Jonas Bausch, Yacouba Diallo, Sara Elder and Ali Madai Boukar as well as those provided by colleagues at the Mastercard Foundation including participants at a webinar organised by MCF on January 27, 2026.

² <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/2025/06/01/cote-d-ivoire-agriculture-et-politique-agricole?>

► 1. Introduction: Contextual indicators

Following conflict, instability and economic stagnation in the country during the first decade of the new millennium, Côte d'Ivoire has had a strong macroeconomic performance with the result that, over the last twenty-five years as a whole, economic growth has significantly outpaced population growth. Between 2000 and 2025,³ Côte d'Ivoire reported an average real growth rate (local currency) of 4.1 per cent, compared to an annual population growth rate of 2.8 per cent. Very poor, or even negative, growth rates in the early part of the century were more than offset by average growth rates in the early 2010s, which sometimes exceeded 10 per cent per annum. Following a pandemic related slowdown in 2020, since 2021, annual real economic growth has consistently been above 6 per cent p.a. and sometimes over 7 per cent. Overall, in the new millennium, economic growth has been a little below that of Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) as a whole, but significantly 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.

Côte d'Ivoire is now a relatively prosperous lower-middle country⁴ with a PPP adjusted GDP per capita of US\$6,975 in 2025⁵ which is significantly (31.0 per cent) above the corresponding average for SSA as a whole of US\$5,324. Compared to other countries in the region it is also relatively stable and is now ranked highest in the WAEMU region according to the Global Peace Index (GPI)⁶; although this places it at just 16th position (out of 44) in SSA and 94th (out of 163) globally. It's worth emphasizing that the relatively peaceful situation of Côte d'Ivoire in the region is a recent development. In all but one of the years between 2008 and 2013 inclusive, Côte d'Ivoire was ranked last amongst WAEMU countries according to the GPI, and up to and including 2018, the country was invariably in the lower half of the WAEMU GPI rankings. Since 2019, it has consistently been ranked amongst the first four WAEMU countries in terms of peace and stability.⁷ The country has made

³ IMF (2026).

⁴ UN estimates and projections, July 2024 (UN, 2024; data also reported in [ILOSTAT](#)).

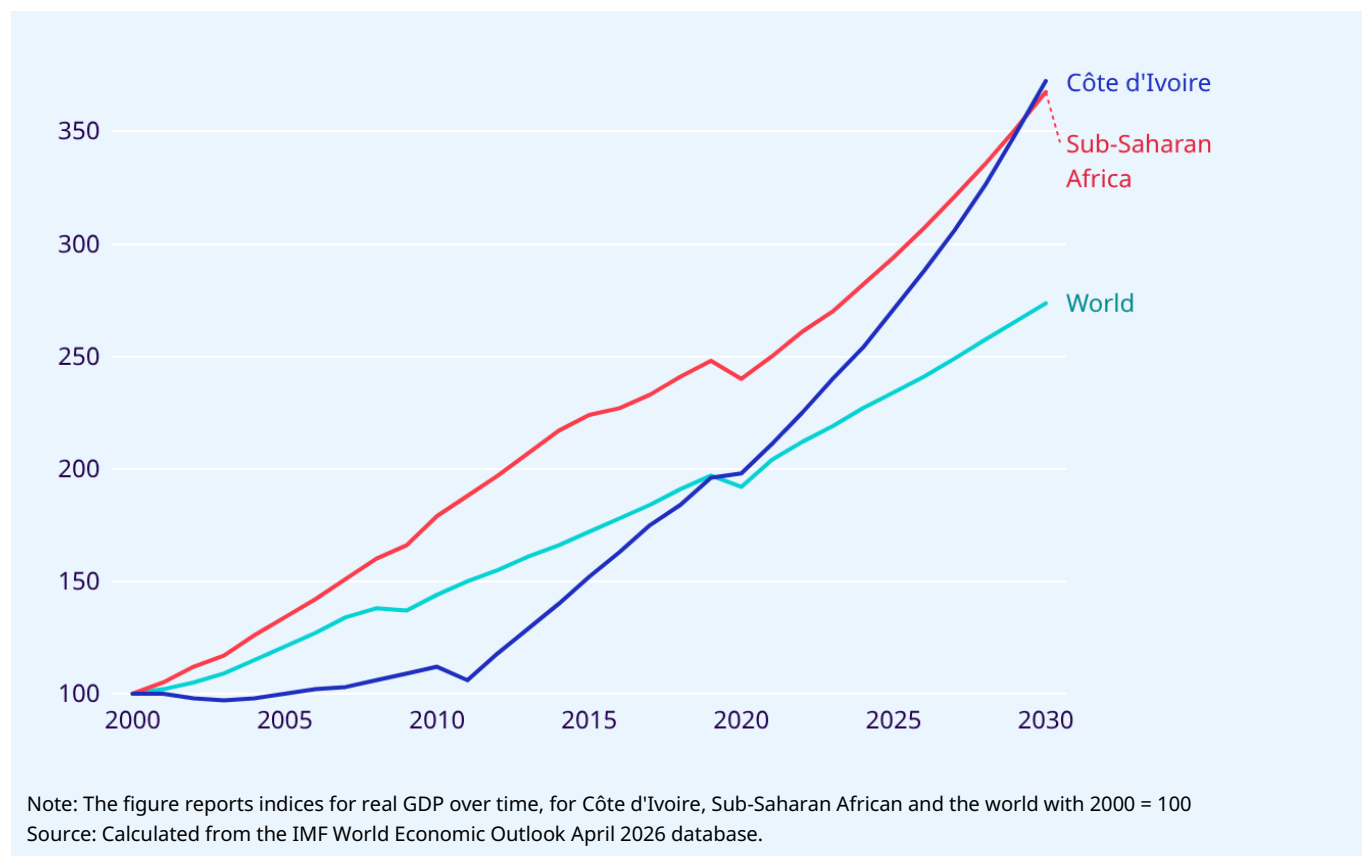
⁵ The PPP adjusted GDP p.c. estimates used in this brief are from the [IMF April 2026 WEO Database](#) (IMF, 2026). [Purchasing Power Parity \(PPP\)](#) adjusted GDP converts a country's GDP into (usually) USD using exchange rates that equate the cost of a representative basket of goods and services in different countries.

⁶ Institute for Economics & Peace (2025) and GPI raw data, 2008-2023.

⁷ One might observe that a similar picture emerges from the [Fragile States index](#), according to which, in 2024, Côte d'Ivoire was ranked fifth most fragile of the eight WAEMU countries.

improvements to human development in the 21st century, ranking first amongst the eight WAEMU countries, and improving its relative global position by ten places between 2015 and 2023 (to 157th of 193 countries worldwide).⁸

► **Figure 1. Real GDP, Côte d'Ivoire, Sub-Saharan Africa and the World, 2000-2030; 2000=100**



The employment-to-population⁹ ratios in the country are in line with the ILO's modelled estimates for Sub-Saharan Africa and, due primarily to higher employment rates amongst women, significantly above the African and Global estimates (table 1).

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

	Female	Male	Total
Côte d'Ivoire	58.1	73.9	65.6
Sub-Saharan Africa (ILO Modelled Estimates)	59.7	71.8	65.6
Africa (ILO Modelled Estimates)	50.5	69.9	60.1

⁸ [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>

⁹ This set of briefs 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).

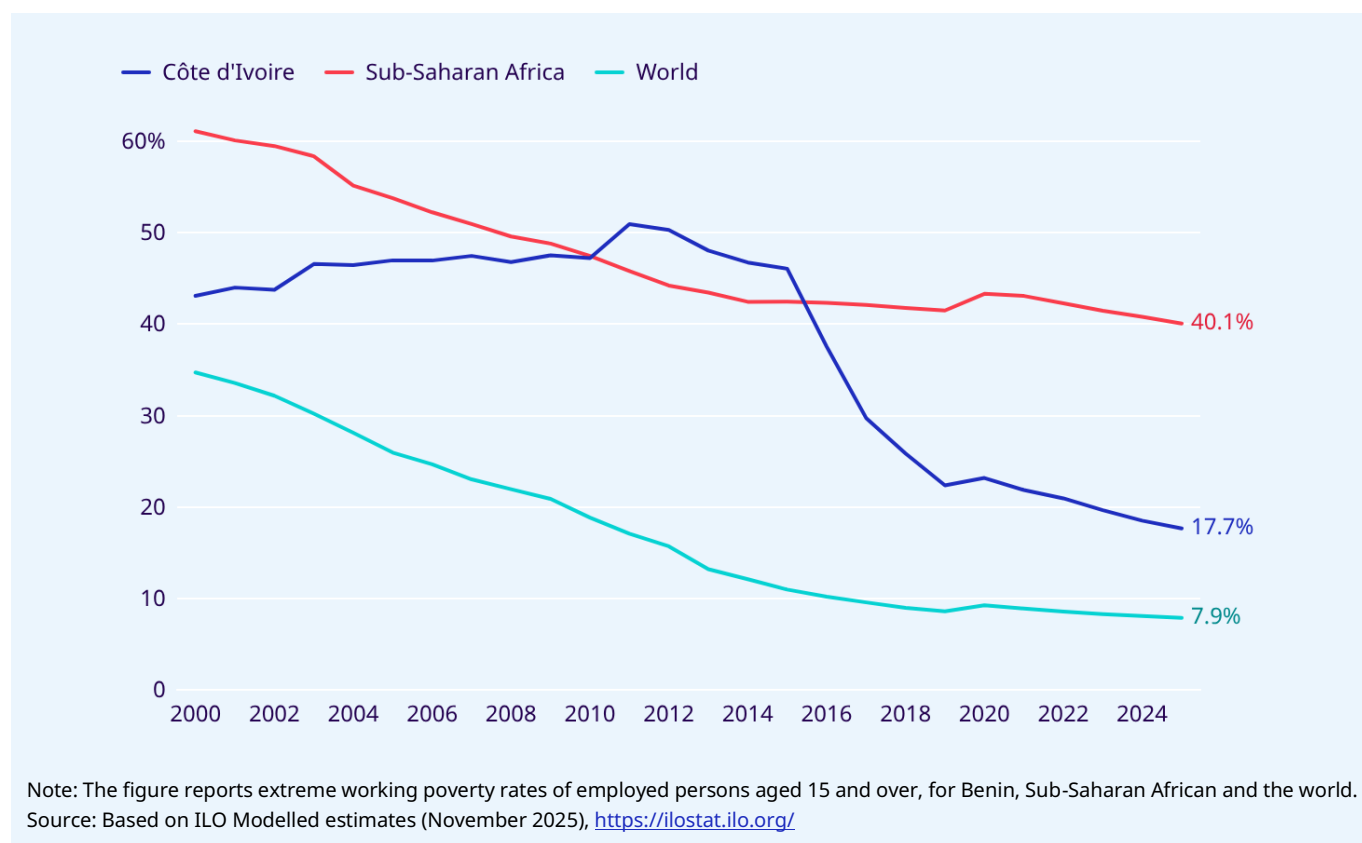
World (ILO Modelled Estimates)	45.7	69.4	57.5
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Source: Author's calculations based on the Harmonized Survey of Household Living Conditions (EHCVM), held in the ILO Harmonized Microdata Repository; ILO Modelled estimates (November 2025), <https://ilostat.ilo.org/>

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

The relatively high income levels in Côte d'Ivoire compared to its neighbours are also reflected in relatively low working poverty rates which in 2025 were estimated at 17.7 per cent. This rate, although higher than the global average rate of 7.9 per cent, is well below the corresponding estimate for Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole of 40.1 per cent (figure 2).¹⁰ This was achieved despite the significant increases in working poverty experienced by the country in the first decade or so of the new millennium which accompanied instability and slow growth. Overall, between 2000 and 2025 working poverty fell considerably faster in Côte d'Ivoire than in SSA as a whole, however, in percentage terms, the reductions over the first quarter century of the new millennium are quite modest when compared to other countries in the WAEMU region.

► **Figure 2. Extreme working poverty rates, Côte d'Ivoire, Sub-Saharan Africa and the World, 2000–2025**



As noted above, Côte d'Ivoire's strong macroeconomic performance over the past decade has led to net gains in per capita income; however, these gains largely reflect robust export-oriented agriculture and value-added agro-processing, rather than widespread access to stable, decent employment. Côte d'Ivoire's moderate and sustainable public debt provides the government with resources to invest in infrastructure, agriculture, and agro-processing, potentially supporting higher-

¹⁰ [ILO modelled estimates](https://ilostat.ilo.org/), 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/>.

value jobs and structural transformation; however, the challenge remains to ensure that these investments translate into stable, decent employment for the broader population rather than primarily benefiting already productive sectors.

In fact, in 2025, according to the World Bank, Côte d'Ivoire's public debt is estimated at around 55–59 per cent of GDP, well below the 70 per cent ceiling set by WAEMU, reflecting prudent fiscal management and providing room to finance structural investments. However, translating these investments into stable, decent employment for the broader population remains a key challenge.

► **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 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.

Agriculture remains the major employer in the country with Industry accounting for a relatively modest 13.6 per cent of total employment. Men predominate slightly in Agriculture and Industry, whilst women are significantly more likely than men to work in Services (table 2).

► **Table 2. Employment distribution by economic activity and sex, Côte d'Ivoire, 2022 (age 15+) (percentage)**

	Female	Male	Total
Agriculture	44.0	51.4	48.0
Industry	12.0	14.9	13.6
Services	44.0	33.7	38.4

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 widespread, especially among women. According to EHCVM survey data for 2022, over 90 per cent of workers in the country were informally employed; over 95 per cent of female and just under 90 per cent of male workers.¹¹ Among young people this incidence is even higher with over 97 per cent of young workers in informal jobs. This prevalence is, however, close to – or even slightly lower than – the typical situation in other WAEMU countries

Despite strong growth in the country since 2011, Côte d'Ivoire remains a primarily agricultural economy. The labour market is dominated by informal agricultural and service sector work.

¹¹ 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.

► 2. Youth labour market trends

Africa is a relatively young continent, with a youth population which continues to grow with the potential and challenges that come with it (ILO, 2020a; box 3). Between 2015 and 2025 the Ivorian youth population (aged 15–29) grew by 2.5 per cent per annum,¹² somewhat less than the annual growth rate (2.9 per cent) 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 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 of 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.

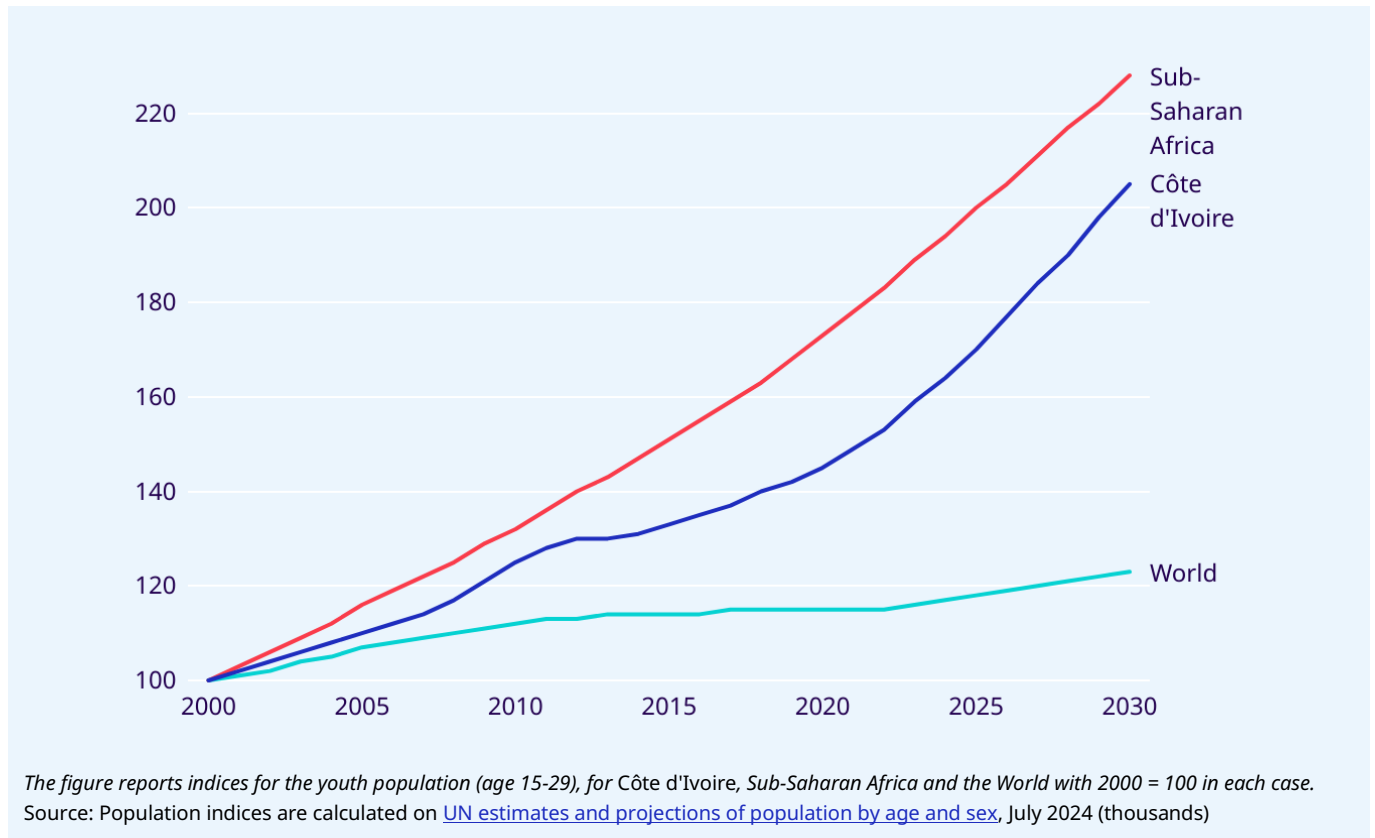
In 2021, UNESCO estimates that 65.2 per cent of children completed primary education in Côte d'Ivoire which is almost identical to the completion rate in SSA, at 65.5 per cent.¹³ The primary completion rate has almost doubled since 2000 when it stood at 35.9 per cent, marking significant progress in this area in the country.¹⁴ Improvements have been especially marked amongst girls who experienced an increase in the primary completion rate of nearly 35 percentage points (p.p.) from 29.7 per cent to 64.1 per cent enabling them to nearly achieve the same completion rates as boys. Once one looks beyond primary education, however, educational attainment is low when compared to SSA averages. The completion rates for lower secondary education – 30.0 per cent for girls and 41.1 per cent for boys – do not compare as favourably with the SSA average (45.0 and 46.9 per cent respectively) in terms of both overall level and gender equality. Similarly, completion rates doubled in the country between 2000 and 2021. Also worthy of note, the gender gap in completion rates tends to increase significantly as one examines completion rates at higher levels of educational attainment. In 2021, the completion rate for upper secondary education was 13.3 per cent for girls, just over half that of boys which stood at 22.4 per cent.

¹² UN estimates and projections, July 2024 (thousands), [ILOSTAT](#)

¹³ <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/> [accessed on 18 August 2025].

¹⁴ For example, in SSA as a whole, UNESCO estimates an average primary completion rate of 47.0 per cent in 2000. Over the new millennium, the gap in primary completion rates between , Côte d'Ivoire and the SSA average has been reduced from over 11 to 0.3 percentage points.

► **Figure 3. Youth (15–29) population in Côte d'Ivoire, Sub-Saharan Africa, Africa and the World, 2000–2030; 2000=100**



Turning to educational participation amongst young people aged 15–29, the gender imbalance found in completion rates is also evident here, although the disparity in participation narrowed slightly following the COVID-19 pandemic (figure 4). In 2019, 21.6 per cent of young women (aged 15–29) were in education or training, compared to 29.2 per cent of young men. Educational participation amongst both young men and young women increased, although slightly less so among young men, so that by 2022, 38.1 per cent of young men and 31.7 per cent of young women were in education.

Much of the increase in educational participation was accounted for by falling employment to population ratios amongst both young women and young men between 2019 and 2022, although in this case, the fall was more pronounced among young men.

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 unemployed¹⁵ (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.

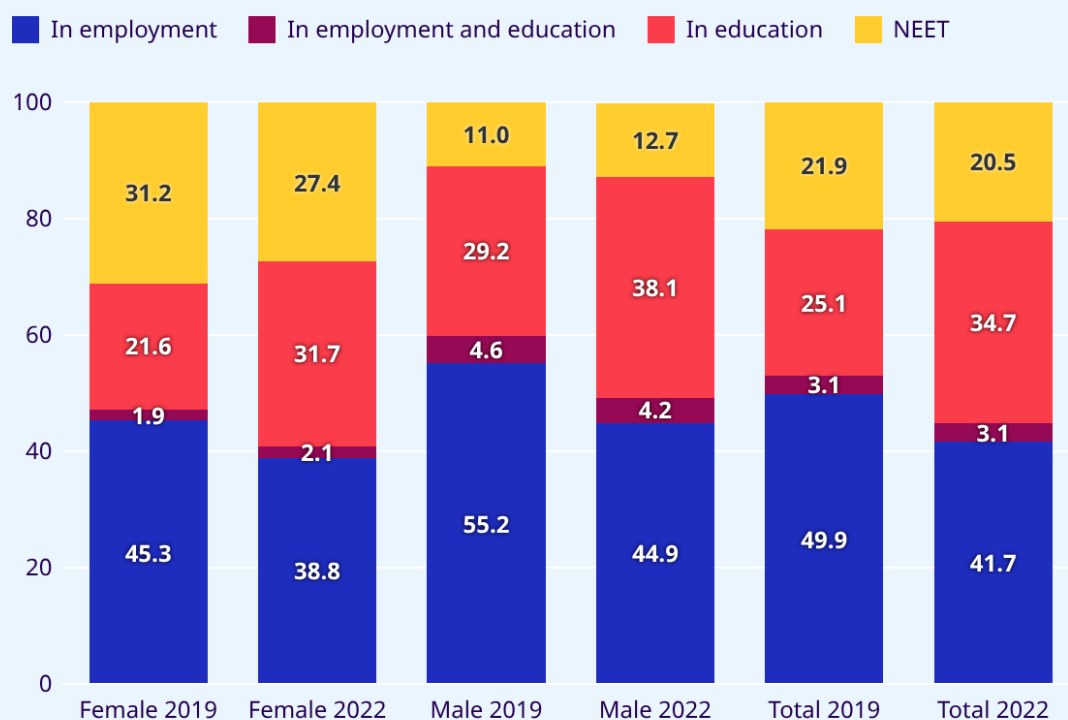
Inter alia, the shift from the youth unemployment rate to the NEET rate as the focus of policies to promote decent work amongst young people leads naturally to a broadening of the scope of such interventions. Reducing the NEET rate can be achieved both by increasing entry into employment, but also by 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.

The employment-to-population ratio (EPR) of young people aged 15 to 29 (including young people in both employment and education) in the country has declined from 53.0 per cent in 2019 to 44.8 per cent in 2022. Although the EPR in this age group has fallen by 8.2 p.p., the share of those currently in education has increased by nearly 10 p.p. from 2019 to 2022, and the share of young people in both education and employment has remained unchanged. This means that although youth EPR has declined, the subsequent increase in educational participation more than offsets this, resulting in lower NEET rates in 2022. Like its WAEMU neighbours, EPR and educational participation are lower among young women than young men. Although young men experienced a greater decline in employment participation, young women are still less likely to be employed than their male counterparts. Although the overall shares are quite low, young men were twice as likely to be in both education and employment than young women.

¹⁵ Excluding a relatively small but increasingly significant group of young people who are both unemployed and in education.

► **Figure 4. Youth status (age 15–29) in Côte d'Ivoire 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/>.

Young men (aged 15–29) are less likely to work in agriculture – and more likely to work in industry – than their older counterparts, whereas the sectoral shares of female youth employment are almost identical to those of working-age women as a whole (table 4). As a result, the gender differences in sectoral employment found in the working age population as a whole, especially as regards industrial employment, are more pronounced amongst youth. Specifically, young men are much (around 50 per cent) more likely to find employment in industry than are young women. Whilst the gender difference in agricultural employment in the adult population as a whole is less pronounced than amongst young people.

► **Table 3. Youth (age 15–29) employment distribution by economic activity and sex in Côte d'Ivoire, 2022 (percentage)**

	Female	Male	Total
Agriculture	43.9	48.9	46.4
Industry	12.2	18.5	15.5
Services	43.9	32.6	38.1

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 share of young people who are employees, as opposed to self-employed, is relatively high and increasing indicating some improvement in working conditions. ¹⁶By 2022 nearly half of young male workers (aged 15–29) were employees (table 5). This is significantly above the share of adult male (aged 30+) employees and close to the regional leader in this respect, Senegal which is the only country in the WAEMU region with a majority of young male workers who are employees.

► **Table 4. Youth (age 15–29) employment distribution by status in employment and sex in Côte d'Ivoire, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**

	Female		Male		Total	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Employees	19.8	28.7	36.8	45.4	28.6	37.3
Self-employed	80.2	71.3	63.2	54.6	71.4	62.7

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/>.

Although the share of youth employment accounted for by employees increased significantly between 2019 and 2022 – from 36.8 to 45.4 per cent for young men and from 19.8 to 28.7 per cent for young women –, this does not reflect a major expansion of wage employment. As we already saw, the employment population ratio fell between 2019 and 2022 for both young women and young men. Overall, although in 2022 more young people were in wage employment than in 2019, the increase in absolute terms was in fact modest – less than one half of a percentage point for young men and a little over 2 percentage points for young women.

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

Sector	Employment by sector		Prevalence of self-employment		Prevalence of informality
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2022
Agriculture	46.4	46.4	88.7	84.3	99.8
Manufacturing	10	10.7	65.6	39.1	98.4
Construction	3.0	4.0	23.4	19.3	94.9
Mining and quarrying; Electricity, gas and water supply	0.8	0.8	28.7	19.7	84.1
Market Services (Trade; Transportation; Accommodation and food; and Business and administrative services)	28.9	26.1	64.0	56.9	97.8
Non-market services (Public administration; Community, social and other services and activities)	10.9	12.0	38.5	30.3	87.9

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/>.

¹⁶ 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 (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 which in the past was in fact used as a proxy for informal employment.

Informal employment is even more common among young people than among older workers. This is a pattern often found in Africa and indeed elsewhere (ILO, 2020a). Almost 97 per cent of young male workers and 98 per cent of young female workers aged 15-29 are in informal employment. This is compared to under 87 per cent of male workers and under 95 per cent of female workers aged 30 and above, respectively. This, in part, reflects a high share of self-employed in the youth population. In 2022, 54.6 per cent of young male workers and 71.3 per cent of young female workers were self-employed. Prevalence of informality among the youth does not vary significantly across sectors as nearly all employed youth across almost every sector are in informal employment. Agriculture, which hosts a large share of mainly self-employed youth, has the highest share of informality at 99.8 per cent. Still, young people in the industry sector (mining, quarrying; electricity, gas and water supply) and the non-market services sector have lower shares of informal employment.

One important implication of the changes, which will be discussed further below, is that NEET rates among young men increased between 2019 and 2022, while NEET rates among young women fell. However, this made only a modest impact on the huge gender disparity in NEET rates – a disparity that one finds all too often in youth labour markets in low- and middle-income countries (O'Higgins et al. 2023). In 2019, 11.0 per cent of young men and 31.2 per cent of young women in Côte d'Ivoire were NEET, whilst in 2022, the corresponding NEET rates were 12.7 per cent and 27.4 per cent respectively. In other words, the gender disparity was reduced from over 20 p.p. to a little under 15 p.p. over the period.

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

	Female		Male		Total	
	2019	2022	2019	2022	2019	2022
Active NEET	7.1	6.6	20	16.3	10.1	9.4
Inactive NEET	92.9	93.4	80	83.7	89.9	90.6

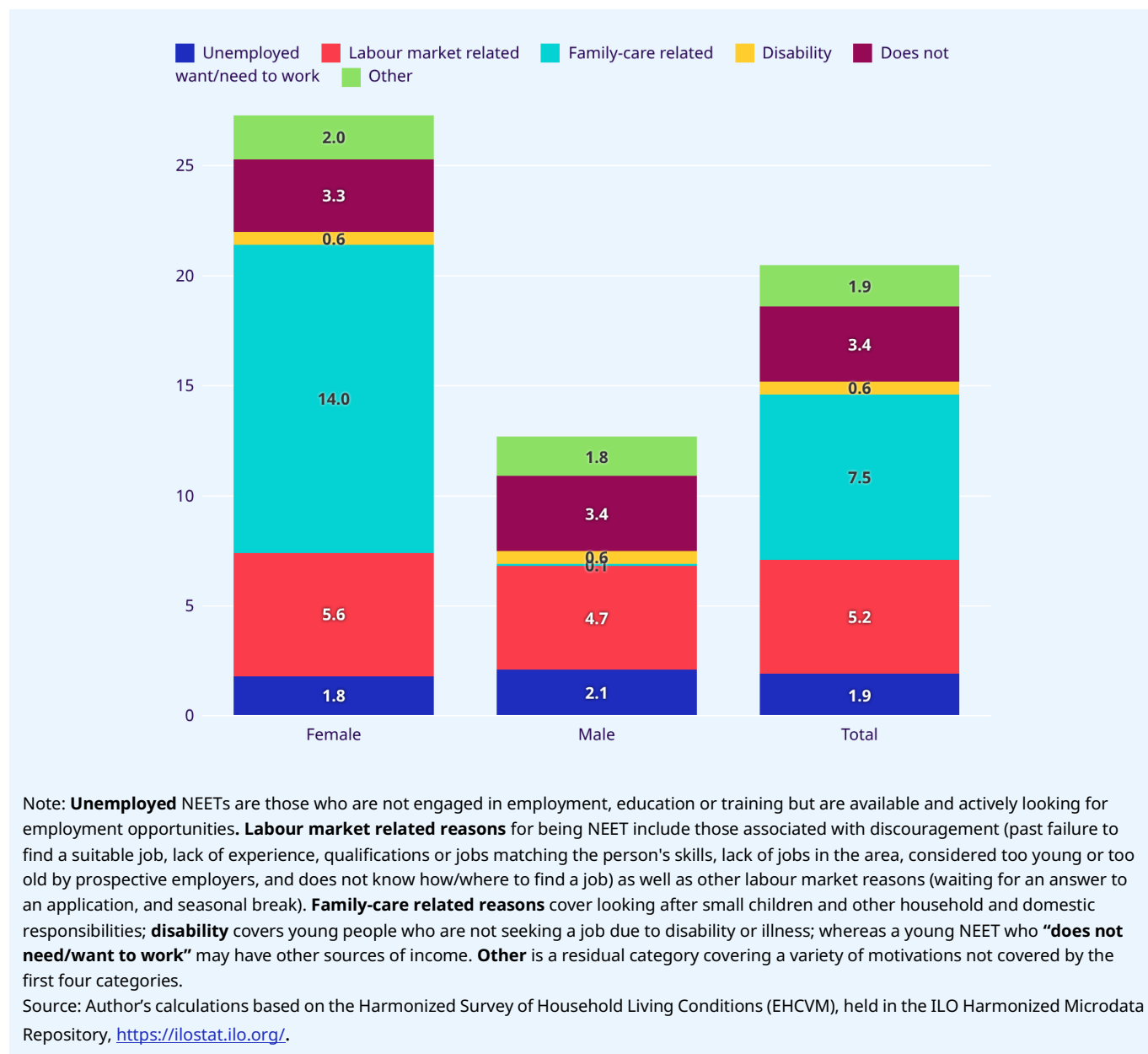
Note: Active NEETs are those who are not engaged in employment, education or training but are available and actively looking for employment opportunities, whereas inactive NEETs are also not engaged in employment, education or training but are not available or actively looking for employment.

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/>.

The lion's share of young NEETs in the country fall into the category of inactive NEETs; over 90 per cent of young female, and over 80 per cent of young male NEETs (table 3). Moreover, the share of NEETs who are not actively looking for work increased between 2019 and 2022, among both young women and, even more so, young men. Even so, the fact that nine out of ten young NEETs are not actively looking for work is clearly an issue of some concern but is also typical in the WAEMU region.

Most young NEETs in Côte d'Ivoire are either discouraged from seeking jobs, 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. Consistent with other countries in the region, 14.0 per cent of young women in Côte d'Ivoire 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. While all other reasons for being NEET show little or no difference between young women and men, family-care responsibilities account almost entirely for the NEET gender gap.

► **Figure 5. NEET rates of young people (aged 15–29) decomposed by reason for being NEET, Côte d'Ivoire, 2022 (percentage)**



► 3. Vulnerable groups in the youth labour market

3.1 Gender

Young women clearly face many more challenges than young men in gaining entry to youth labour markets in the country. NEET rates amongst young women are more than twice as high as they are for young men and employment-population ratios and educational participation rates (as well as education attainment) are all lower for women. At the same time, some improvement has been achieved in recent years, with a reduction in gender differences in core youth labour market

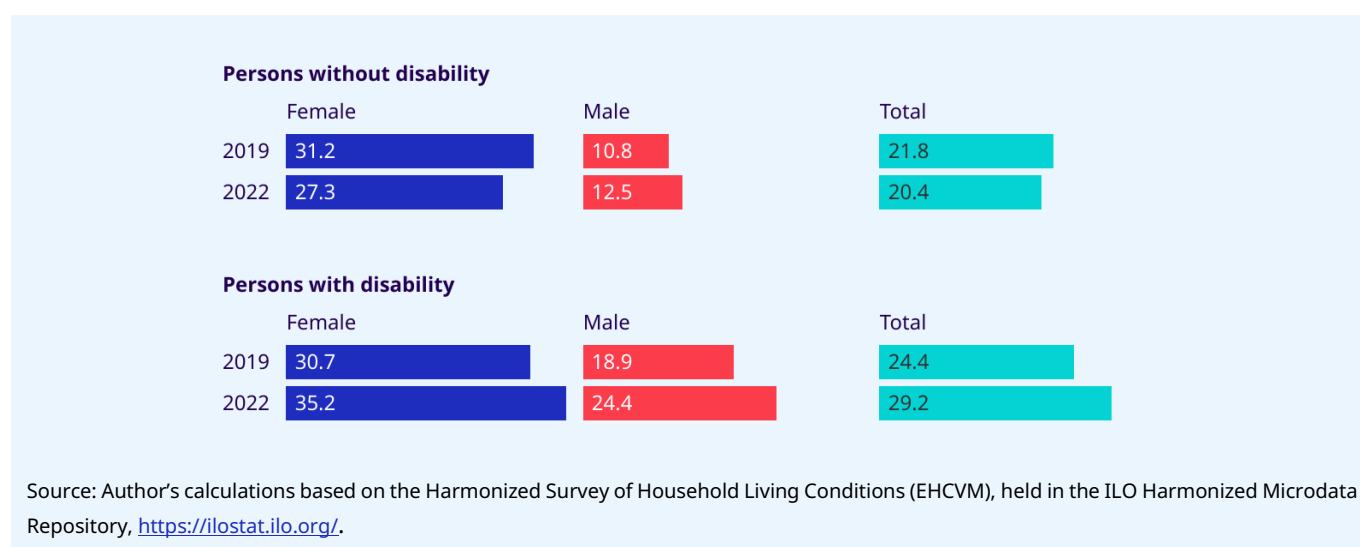
indicators. Between 2019 and 2022, the NEET rates of young women fell and the educational participation rates of young women aged 15–29 increased significantly. Although the employment-population ratio of young people fell over this period too, it did so less for young women than for young men. Moreover, the share of the self-employed amongst young female workers also fell significantly. In what follows we look in more detail at what happened to other vulnerable groups and how these factors interact with gender in determining youth 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 which are twice those of their non-disabled peers.¹⁷ In Côte d'Ivoire 1.7 per cent of the youth population record having an illness or disability which affects their ability to work and there is some evidence of disadvantages facing this group, however, such disadvantage is much less pronounced than in other countries (figure 5).¹⁸

In 2022, young women with disabilities faced NEET rates which were around 8 p.p. higher than those without. For young men the disparity was much larger. In common with the global average, young men with disabilities experienced NEET rates which were almost double those of young men without disability – a difference of almost 12 p.p. The relative situation of both young women and young men with disability worsened considerably between 2019 and 2022, which is of concern. Amongst young women, NEET rates of those with disabilities increased by 4.5 p.p. over the period while at the same time NEET rates of those without disability fell by 6 p.p. creating a significant gap, whereas previously there had been roughly parity. Amongst young men, NEET rates increased for both those with and without disability, however, it did so considerably more for those with disability – by 5.5 p.p. compared to an increase of 1.7 p.p. for those with no disability.

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



3.3 Educational attainment

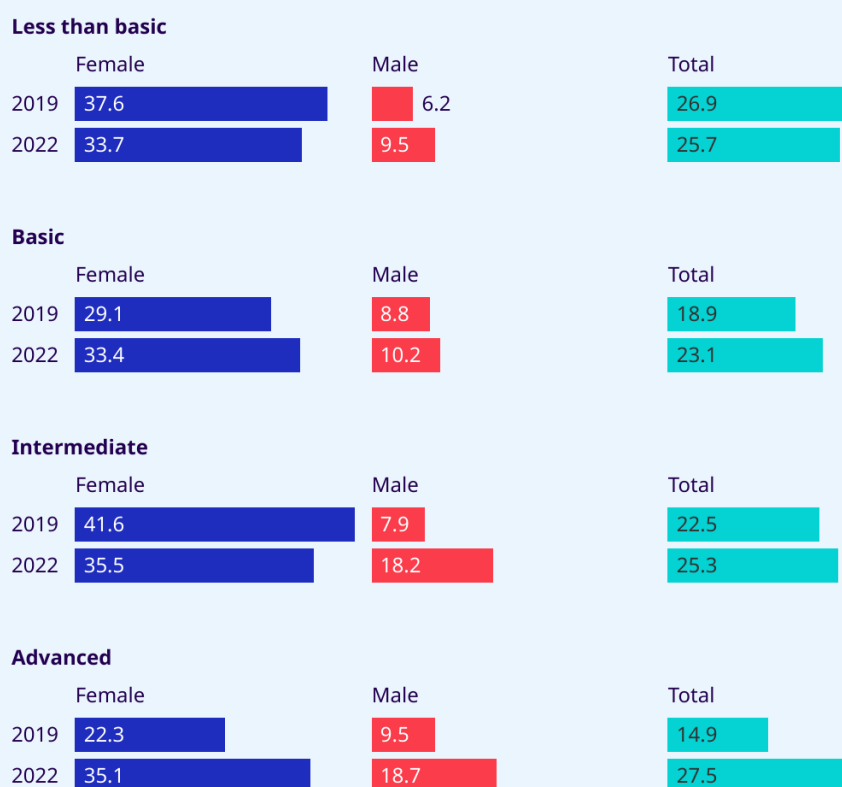
The gender gap in educational participation and attainment was already observed above. One way in which this is important is in determining young people's access to labour markets. Globally, NEET rates amongst young people are

¹⁷ 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).

¹⁸ 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.

significantly higher amongst 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. Indeed, in 2022 in Côte d'Ivoire the NEET rate of young adults (aged 25–29) with advanced levels of education was slightly higher than the NEET rate of young people with less than basic educational attainment – 27.5 per cent compared to 25.7 per cent (figure 6).

► **Figure 7. NEET rates of young people (aged 25–29) by educational attainment in Côte d'Ivoire by sex, 2019 and 2022 (percentage)**



Note: Youth is defined as young people aged 25-29 when analysing educational attainment. Educational attainment is defined here based on the [ILO aggregation of the International Standard Classification of Education \(ISCED\)](https://ilostat ilo.org/) designed to produce a simple classification of individual educational attainment which is comparable across countries. Broadly speaking: **Basic** educational attainment corresponds to the completion of primary or lower secondary education; **Intermediate**, to the completion of upper secondary education; and **Advanced**, to the completion of tertiary educational studies.

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/>.

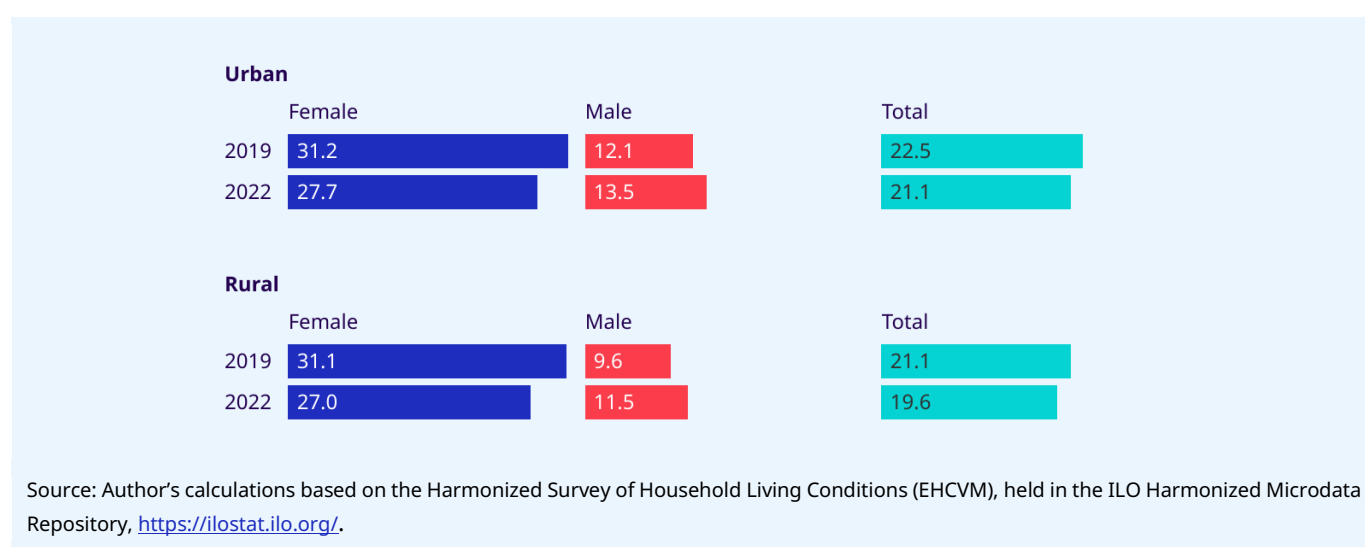
This marked a change in the situation from 2019 when, broadly speaking, NEET rates tended to fall with educational attainment. The change is primarily attributable to a significant increase in the NEET rates of young people – both young women and young men – with advanced levels of educational attainment. In part, this may reflect the strong increase in educational participation of young people between 2019 and 2022 remarked upon above. More education in itself does

not create more jobs. There are some signs of the emergence of educational mismatch in the country, as discussed in recent editions of the ILO's Global Employment Trends for Youth (ILO, 2020b, 2024).

3.4 Urban-Rural location

Globally, NEET rates tend to be higher in rural areas compared to urban ones. However, this tendency is more marked in more developed, higher-income countries (O'Higgins et al., 2023). In Côte d'Ivoire, however, this is not true. Indeed, in the country, NEET rates in 2022 were a little higher in urban areas than in rural ones although the difference is small.

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



► 4. Summary and conclusions

Côte d'Ivoire has now largely overcome the conflict, instability and economic stagnation which marked the first decade of this century. Since the end of the second civil war in 2011, economic growth has been impressive and recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic was swift with average real economic growth of over 6 per cent since 2021. Thus, despite a labour market dominated by informal employment and an agricultural employment structure similar to other countries in the region, Côte d'Ivoire has a relatively high per capita income. This is thanks to a combination of commercial export-oriented agriculture, limited but efficient industrial processing, strong infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, and favourable market prices. Informality remains high, but average incomes are lifted by the value added in these sectors.

Working poverty is relatively low in the country with the extreme working poverty rate estimated to be 17.7 per cent in 2025 which is close to the global rate of 7.9 per cent, and well below the SSA average of 40.1 per cent. At the same time, employment – especially among older men – is still dominated by agriculture, driven by cocoa bean production. Service sector employment, particularly among young women, is on the increase. Both sectors are dominated by informal employment, which accounts for nearly 98 per cent of all youth jobs.

Despite significant improvements during the new millennium, educational attainment remains relatively low in the country compared to the SSA average; and there is a significant gender gap that emerges at secondary education levels.

Young women have particularly high NEET rates – nearly fifteen percentage points above those of their young male counterparts, although again the gap has narrowed significantly since before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vulnerability, as measured by differences in NEET rates, is also significant when one looks at the situation of young people with disabilities. In this case, the direction of change is much less positive; the gap in NEET rates between young people with and without disabilities grew significantly between 2019 and 2022. Especially amongst young men.

In contrast to some other countries, NEET rates do not fall markedly with educational attainment in Côte d'Ivoire. Looking at young adults aged 25–29, among young men with Intermediate qualifications, as well as among young women and young men with advanced attainment levels, NEET rates increased dramatically between 2019 and 2022, suggesting the emergence of significant educational mismatch. Clearly rising educational attainment in the country has not necessarily been accompanied by the sufficient expansion of employment opportunities to meet the expanding supply of young job seekers with higher educational attainment levels.

Despite its strong macroeconomic performance, structural transformation in the country remains limited due to the low labour absorption capacity of the industrial sector, the dominance of informality, and incomplete agro-industrial value chains. As a result, most workers, especially young people, remain trapped in low-productivity agricultural and informal activities, preventing a large-scale shift towards higher-value, stable industrial employment.

Policy priorities could focus on developing labour-intensive agro-industrial value chains, scaling up SMEs, and gradually formalizing the economy to improve productivity and job quality. Aligning skills development with industry needs and strengthening industrial clusters will be essential to facilitate a sustainable transition from low-productivity agriculture to higher-value employment.

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