

B. Higher levels of unemployment among young women

Levels of youth unemployment (15–24 years of age) continue to be an issue of concern. Globally, unemployment affects young women more than young men (figure 6). In almost all regions, young women are more likely to be unemployed than young men.

These trends are most significant in Northern Africa, the Arab States and Latin America and the Caribbean. In Northern Africa and the Arab States, youth unemployment rates have been increasing since 2009 and have peaked at 29.7 per cent in Northern Africa and 28.4 per cent in the Arab States. The female youth unemployment rate has risen to 44.3 per cent in Northern Africa and 44.1 per cent in the Arab States: almost double that for young men, which has remained at 24.0 per cent. Similar, but less marked, trends may be observed in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Youth unemployment has increased in recent years (respectively 10.7 per cent and 11.0 per cent in 2015) and young women are more strongly hit than young men.

In Northern America and in Northern, Southern and Western Europe, young people were strongly hit by the crisis. Youth unemployment peaked in 2010 in Northern America (18.2 per cent) and in 2013 in Northern, Southern and Western Europe (22.9 per cent). In both regions, young men were more affected by the crisis and the unemployment rates of young men have remained higher than for young women, a pattern that is consistent with developments for the total unemployment rate. In the South-Eastern Asia and Pacific region over the last 20 years, unemployment rates for young women have been similar to those of young men. Since 2012, however, unemployment gaps between young women and young men have slightly widened. Eastern Asia represents an exception to this trend, however, with female youth unemployment rates lower than those for male youth.

Overall, in both developed and developing countries young women face obstacles in entering the labour market which are significantly higher than those for young men. These developments point to the school-to-work transition as a crucial stage for young people in developing a successful career.

Studies by the European Commission (European Commission, 2014a) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have singled out education as a key driving force in smoothing the transition from school to work. Young people with higher education have a faster transition to their first job than those with only lower or medium levels of education. Improving access to higher education does not necessarily translate into reduced gender gaps, however. In comparison to men, women have a slower transition to their first job.

A recent report by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016* (UN Women, 2015) and the ILO report *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2015* (ILO, 2015b) both show that young women, independent of their level of education and other household circumstances, are less likely ever to enter the job market after leaving education and, if they do, they face longer transition times than young men. To some extent, this may be related to disparities between males and females in subject choices¹¹ at school, which may in turn lead to women's lower access to technical and vocational education and training that could improve their skills and labour market outcomes.

Other determinants in the school-to-work transition relate to structural factors linked to the economy and the functioning of the labour market itself. Their causes notwithstanding, slow and ineffective transitions for young men and women result in significant losses in terms of forgone income and unused educational investments both at the individual level and for society at large. Assisting young people to make a smoother transition from school to work through a proper mix of policy responses that, among benefits, understand and address young women's barriers to labour market access is high on the policy agenda (see box 1).¹²

.....
11. Women are more likely to study humanities, while men specialize in highly valued technical and scientific fields (UN Women, 2015).

12. The G20 Employment Task Force, with a request for support from the ILO and the OECD, has identified the main strategies and programmes to ease the school-to-work transition. The task force's main conclusions include: first, strengthening quality apprenticeship systems and other school-to-work transition programmes in collaboration with the social partners; second, providing career guidance and facilitating acquisition of work experience with a view to promoting decent work; third, supporting the provision of youth entrepreneurship measures; fourth, exploring voluntary technical cooperation programmes, bilaterally or together with international organizations, as a means of sharing best practices in addressing youth employment; fifth, requesting the ILO, the OECD and other international organizations to work with national institutions in seeking a better understanding of the situation of young people in G20 countries and in implementing national youth employment initiatives with the support of social partners. For more details see ILO and OECD (2014).