

Box 1 Gender aspects of the school-to-work transition

The labour market transition of young people relates not only to the length of time between their exit from education (either upon graduation or at an early stage without completion) to their first entry into any job, but also to qualitative elements, such as whether the job is stable, thus allowing for other transition processes such as starting a family. For young women, in particular, the pathway to the labour market can be influenced by multiple dimensions that lie outside the individual's realm of choice or action.

A recent ILO publication uses the unique datasets from school-to-work transition surveys implemented in 34 low- and middle-income countries over the last four years to assess the labour market disadvantages that young women all too often still encounter in their pathways to employment and economic empowerment. The report notes that the interpretation of transition data is far from simple, but that, regardless of the measure used, the role of gender remains firmly fixed as an independent variable of a young person's labour market transition. Some highlights from the report include:

- For the age group 25–29, at which a young person would be most expected to have completed the transition, a young male adult is 1.9 times more likely to have completed his labour market transition than a young adult female. The largest gap by region is the Middle East and Northern Africa, where young male adults are nearly four times more likely than their female counterparts to complete the school-to-work transition.
- For young women, the higher education–transition link is especially strong: a tertiary-educated female is 1.9 times more likely to complete the transition to employment than a less educated (primary level) female.
- In the majority of countries, the average length of the school-to-work transition for young females exceeded the male transition period by at least one month (up to four months). It was only in the three Eastern European or Central Asian School-to-Work Transition countries where durations proved to be significantly longer for young males (Armenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Russian Federation).
- In the countries in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa covered by the school-to-work transition survey, young people tend to have a more turbulent transition path. In Latin America and the Caribbean in particular, one half of all young women and men had at least one other labour market experience beyond the first job before gaining their current stable or satisfactory jobs.
- The datasets confirm that movement from inactivity back to activity among young females is limited, which does not bode well for the future labour utilization of this segment of the population. With a few exceptions, the majority of countries show that the young women who dropped out of the labour market remained inactive. More than two in three young women who left the labour market for family reasons remained inactive in Armenia, Egypt, El Salvador, Jordan, Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Source: Elder and Kring, 2016.