



# **NEXT GENERATION KENYA**

Listening to the voices of young people

## **Disclaimer**

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## **Next Generation**

Next Generation is a series of global British Council research focusing on the attitudes and aspirations of young people, and the policies and conditions that support them in becoming creative, fulfilled and active citizens.

Research is initiated in countries that are experiencing a period of significant change, with the purpose of ensuring that young people's voices are heard and their interests properly represented in decisions that will have lasting implications for their lives.

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# CONTENTS

> Acknowledgements	03	> Chapter 3 – The employment challenge	36
> Forewords	05	Key findings	36
> Executive summary	07	Aspirations...	36
Introduction	07	...versus reality	37
Who are the Kenyan youth?	07	An unfair system	40
Education and skills	09	The entrepreneurial alternative	42
The employment challenge	10	> Chapter 4 – Youth, society and politics	46
Youth, society and politics	11	Key findings	46
Recommendations	13	The voiceless	46
Relationships, marriage, sex and pregnancy	13	Participation in the community	48
Accessing quality education	13	Participation in politics	48
Levelling the employment playing field	13	The cost of failure	51
Increasing voice and expanding civic engagement	14	> Recommendations	56
> Introduction	15	Relationships, marriage, sex and pregnancy	56
Youth in Kenya: a burgeoning population	15	Accessing quality education	56
Next Generation Kenya methodology	17	Levelling the employment playing field	57
Report structure	18	Increasing voice and expanding civic engagement	57
> Chapter 1 – Who are the Kenyan youth?	20	> Appendix – Quantitative research methodology	58
Key findings	20		
Proud to be Kenyan...	20		
...but also engaged with the outside world	21		
Future fears	24		
Future challenges	26		
> Chapter 2 – Education and skills	28		
Key findings	28		
The value of education	28		
Educational attainment	29		
Education quality	31		
Technical and vocational education and training	33		





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# > FOREWORDS

Kenya has the largest and most diverse economy in eastern Africa, characterised by a strong private sector, progressive market policies and an advanced human capital base. It has a population that is strongly enterprising, highly techno-savvy, globally connected and young – with more than 70 per cent being below the age of 30.

The legacy of Kenya's economic leadership depends on how the country taps into its blooming youthful population. In spite of impressive economic growth, Kenya continues to perform poorly on youth welfare indicators, such as unemployment, which currently stands at 39 per cent, the highest in eastern Africa. And Kenyan youth face a range of challenges beyond employment. This is why we, the Next Generation Kenya Youth Task Force, are thrilled about this report and believe it will not only spark dialogue, but also action around key themes.

As young people, we live in an environment of competition and scarcity. The path that should prepare us – our education – does not give us the tools we need for the workplace, making it difficult for us to secure and sustain gainful livelihoods. Those of us lucky enough to obtain jobs find they are most likely to be poorly paid, low-skilled, insecure and informal. We can see that the more stable and well-paying jobs are not always acquired through merit. The frustrations we experience are exacerbated by the lack of space to meaningfully voice our concerns.

However, we are hopeful, aspirational and tenacious. As the custodians of the future, we have a strong desire to drive Kenya's growth potential and make our country a better place to live in.

We know we possess the energy, vision, knowledge, skills and national values to realise our dreams; however, we need the tools, resources and platforms to thrive. That is why we urge you to read this report and recognise its focus on action. We are calling for policy dialogue that is grounded in our lived reality and that builds on our collective optimism. We appeal for collective action by making specific recommendations targeted at policy reform.

We are confident that through our inclusive and meaningful participation in the affairs of our society, Kenya will remain an icon of eastern Africa. We strive for a Kenya where young people have access to quality education, decent jobs and democratic spaces for youth expression and participation. If critical reforms are carried out, we can imagine a safe, just and prosperous country where current and future generations enjoy their rights, freedoms and economic opportunities. This is our vision for the great nation of Kenya.

**Next Generation Kenya  
Youth Task Force**





I am delighted to provide a foreword to this latest publication in our global Next Generation research series. Next Generation Kenya aims to understand youth attitudes and aspirations, amplify youth voices and, in turn, make a contribution towards improved youth policy. The voices of Kenya's burgeoning youth are now added to young voices from Pakistan, Nigeria, Bangladesh, the UK, Ukraine, Tanzania, Turkey, Colombia and South Africa.

Kenya's youth are passionate about their country and eager to contribute to its future. Like young people around the world, they hold strong views and are keen for their opinions to be heard, heeded and acted upon. They are a generation anxious to use their talents, creativity and entrepreneurial drive to propel Kenya's economy to new heights, and at the same time, build a more inclusive and equitable future for all Kenyans. They are, however, a generation not without their fears and concerns. They are lucid in articulating the challenges young people have to navigate in order to exercise their agency. Education, the most powerful tool we have to change our world, is seen as a vital necessity for the next generation in Kenya. And yet there are grave concerns that the education young people are accessing, in increasingly large numbers, may fall short in equipping the next generation with the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to thrive in the 21st century.

Employment and under-employment also preoccupy this committed generation. Pervasive corruption, and what young people describe as a 'broken system', are seen to be holding back their promise and potential. Violence and gender inequality are also thwarting progress. Above all, Kenya's next generation are crying out for greater support in helping them chart a brighter future for the country they are so passionate about.

Africa has been called the last young continent. Kenya's demographics bear this out. As this report makes abundantly clear, Kenya has a unique window of opportunity to harness what demographer David E Bloom has called a demographic dividend: a burst of prosperity, lasting only a few decades, brought on by the creativity, talent and energy of so many young people, entrepreneurs and productive workers. Bloom points out, however, that 'demography is not destiny' – countries like Kenya can reap this dividend only if government policies have readied the country's workforce with the proper education, infrastructure and policies to fulfil their economic potential. Governments have the power to seize the moment. Young people in Kenya are ready to share their insight and use their agency to recommend what needs to be done to realise this potential, to harness the youth dividend and to capitalise on their boundless creative energy.

Listening to the voices of young people is crucial if Kenya is to avoid the flip side, and far less palatable scenario: a demographic disaster. Nobody wants to see such an educated, talented, globally connected and optimistic generation have their hopes squandered through lack of opportunity – leading to growing resentment and diversion of their energy into more destructive, destabilising activities. Kenya's youth are crying out to steer their country towards a brighter and more equitable future, not only for their own, but also for future generations.

In commissioning this Next Generation Kenya Research, together with our funding partners, the UK's Department for International Development, the British Council is renewing its commitment to work with young people, partners and stakeholders across Kenya, to support the changes being called for by Kenya's youth. In addition, we hope this report stimulates dialogue among a range of state and non-state actors to press for policies that harness the full potential of Kenya's next generation.

**Tony Reilly OBE**

Director Kenya, British Council



# > EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kenya's recent past has tested the nation's resolve, stability and unity. These moments have, however, presented the country with an opportunity to reflect on the role and place of its youth.

## Introduction

More than one in every five Kenyans is between 15 and 24 years of age. This fast-growing, almost ten-million-strong youth cohort is vital to the country's future – if the government is to achieve its goal of Kenya becoming a middle-income country by 2030, empowering its most energetic, ambitious generation to realise its economic and social potential will be crucial.

Countries with Kenya's youthful population structure are well placed to capture a 'demographic dividend', whereby a burgeoning working-age population, less encumbered than were previous generations by large numbers of non-working dependants, drives a country forward and sparks transformative social and economic progress. East and South East Asia's leap out of poverty was made possible by just such a 'youth bulge', and by policies that enabled young people to maximise their capabilities and fulfil their dreams.

Next Generation Kenya, a British Council project jointly funded with the UK Department for International Development, follows similar Next Generation initiatives in other countries undergoing significant social, political or economic change, including Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, Pakistan, Turkey and the UK. Its objective is to listen to young people and ascertain how such change affects the way they view their lives, their futures and their relationships within their country and with the wider world. By giving a voice to youth and helping to ensure that their interests are

represented in national decision-making, the project aims to assist Kenyan policymakers, influencers and youth themselves to support young people to achieve their ambitions.

Research for Next Generation Kenya comprised a systematic review of the academic literature; focus group discussions and in-depth interviews in four sites across the country; and a nationally representative, face-to-face household survey of 4,014 Kenyans aged 15–24 from each of the country's 47 counties. This report first synthesises the main findings from the three research strands. It then presents a set of recommendations made by Kenyan youth on the changes required to improve their own prospects of success and their country's prospects of capturing a demographic dividend.

## Who are the Kenyan youth?

Young people have a strong sense of pride in Kenya – 91 per cent of those who responded to our household survey love their country, and 86 per cent agree that the heritage and identity of the country are important to them. The majority feel the country has made progress in recent decades – 62 per cent of respondents believe their generation's lives are better than those of their parents' generation. Young people see nationality as their strongest source of identity, ahead of family, religion and ethnicity.

As well as loving their own country, Kenyan youth have a growing interest in the outside world, with 71 per cent

willing to move from where they live if they had the opportunity. Some of these want to move within Kenya, mostly to towns and cities (young Kenyans are already more likely than the general population to be based in urban settings). But more would like to move abroad. Overall, 38 per cent of young Kenyans would be willing to relocate overseas given the opportunity. Most would like to move outside Africa, with the USA by far the most popular target for relocation.

This desire to emigrate is partly spurred by the youth's increasing connectivity with the outside world. Traditional media such as television and radio remain the most important sources of local and global news for young people, but Facebook and other social media applications are becoming an ever more important part of their lives. Forty per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds have access to the internet, mostly through their mobile phones, and the majority of these use social media. Young people believe social media is helping them to integrate with the global community; 88 per cent say it makes them more tolerant of other people's points of view, and 84 per cent that it has made them feel more of a global citizen. Those with internet access are much more likely to want to move overseas than those without. This increased openness is also reflected in a high level of tolerance for foreigners – three-quarters say foreigners from other countries in Africa and elsewhere who live in Kenya are not a problem.

There are push factors, too, behind the desire to relocate, for many young Kenyans are deeply worried about the future of their country. Corruption, violence, crime and unemployment are their key concerns, and as well as causing them anxiety now, they believe these problems will become more serious in future.

*'There is no safety. Because our leaders are corrupt, the whole system is corrupt, meaning that even those people who are supposed to be protecting us like the cops are also corrupt. In institutions like the police, money becomes power.'*

Female focus group participant,  
Nairobi, aged 16

*'If you want to be successful in Kenya, you have to give up some morals.'*

Male focus group participant, Turkana

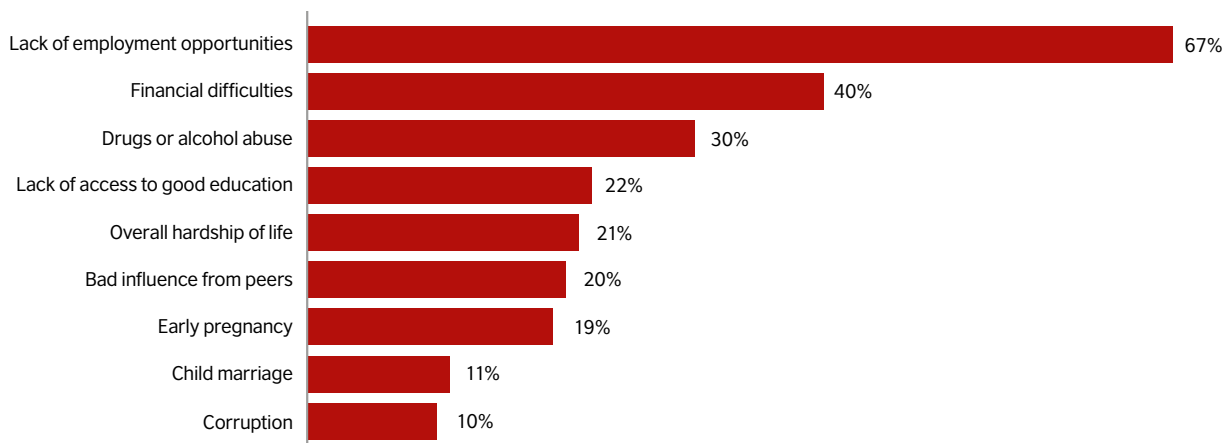
Young women face their own set of challenges. Young Kenyans' attitudes towards gender equality are generally positive. More than 80 per cent of both males and females believe women and men should have equal responsibilities in the home and in social and economic life. Implementation of equality, however, is mixed. Young women face discrimination – and often violence – in school, the workplace, the community and at home. They feel they bear the main burden of domestic chores and child-rearing, and they see early pregnancy and early marriage as prominent obstacles in the way of achieving their educational and career ambitions.

Many young Kenyans would like to delay having a family until they are financially stable and have made progress towards attaining other life objectives, but this is more difficult for women than men. Among our sample, 24 per cent of young women are married, compared

with only five per cent of young men. This suggests that many women are marrying older men. Female youth are also much more likely than male youth to be unemployed – 49 per cent of young women we interviewed reported being neither in school nor employed, compared with 37 per cent of young men.

Young women and young men both identified finding employment as their biggest personal concern. Sixty-seven per cent of young people cited this, unprompted, as the main challenge they face in life. Relatedly, 40 per cent cited financial difficulties, with substance abuse and lack of access to good education the next most widely cited challenges. Across all respondent groups – male and female, urban and rural, younger and older youth, and in all regions of Kenya – the lack of employment opportunities dominates young people's thoughts about the future.

**Figure 1:** What are the challenges you face?



## Education and skills

Young Kenyans place a high value on education. Eighty-seven per cent of household survey respondents agree that a good education is the key to success, and while 47 per cent agree that their country will support them even if they do not get a good education, 45 per cent disagree.

School enrolment in Kenya has increased in recent years, and 99 per cent of those we surveyed have received some level of formal education. Among 19- to 24-year-olds (who should in theory have finished primary and secondary schooling), 89 per cent had completed primary school and 62 per cent secondary school. Twenty-one per cent went on to college or university.

Most of those young people who drop out of primary or secondary school would like to complete their education if given the opportunity. However, financial constraints and, for women, early marriage and pregnancy stand in their way. A lack of funds is the key barrier to educational progress, not only preventing children from attending school but making it harder for them to study if they make it into the classroom. As a female focus group participant in

Mombasa put it:

***'Education is the key to my success. But you cannot go to class without food in your stomach. If you do, by 10 or 11am your stomach is rumbling so much that you can't even pay attention to the teacher.'***

Most young Kenyans believe that while the quality of education is improving, it is not yet up to international standards. Sixty-three per cent of survey respondents agree that the level of education in Kenya cannot match that in other countries, while 38 per cent agree that you need to move to the West to obtain a good education.

There are three main areas where quality is lacking. The first is school facilities. Promises of investment in upgrading classrooms and other amenities often do not materialise, with funds allocated for such projects frequently disappearing:

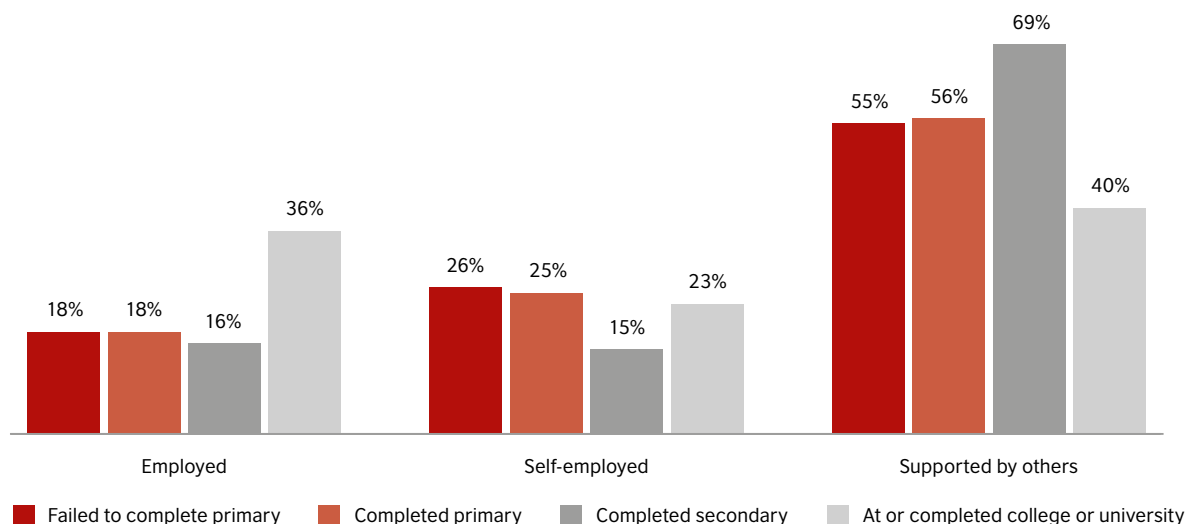
***'I went to watch the election in my auntie's house. I saw the president voting in a school. The school he voted in had a mud floor. What does that say? He should be focusing on helping those schools.'***

**Female focus group participant, Siaya**

The second area for improvement is safety. Only one in five young people feel completely safe from violence at school. Young women in particular report being at risk of school-based violence, including sexual abuse at the hands of their teachers.

The third area where educational quality is lacking is in preparing pupils for the workplace. Those who complete primary education are no more likely to find jobs than those who fail to complete. Both groups are more likely to find work than those who complete secondary school. Many of those who are not in work believe they lack the requisite education and skills to find jobs. Large numbers of young people are unable to perform basic job-seeking tasks such as preparing a CV, searching for employment opportunities or filling out a job application. Of those young people who are in work, meanwhile, 62 per cent told us that the education they had received did not match at all the skills required in their jobs.

**Figure 2:** Employment status by highest level of education attained (among those no longer in school)



Enrolment in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, which should help fill the gap between traditional school curricula and the needs of the labour market, has increased much more slowly than that in universities. Young people are willing to consider vocational training, but most regard the sector as backward and irrelevant to labour market demands:

*'In university you get to define yourself, to know who you are and interact with many different people. Most people in Siaya believe that polytechnic schools are for failures.'*

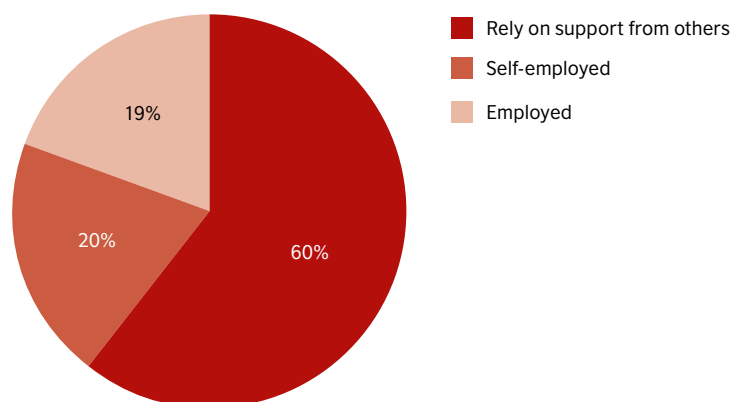
Female focus group participant, Siaya

### The employment challenge

Young Kenyans are much less happy with the employment situation than with the education system. Asked whether their expectations have been met regarding progress in the area of employment, only 13 per cent of household survey respondents replied in the affirmative, with 64 per cent saying their expectations had not been met. More young people are pessimistic than optimistic about the future of employment.

These concerns are borne out in reality. For a demographic dividend to be captured, a country needs its young people to be supporting dependants rather than relying on others for their income. In Kenya, however, the reverse is the case. Seventy-three per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds rely on support from others for their livelihoods. Only 27 per cent rely on income from work. Even among those who have left school (and are potentially looking for work), 60 per cent rely on support from others. Youth unemployment is both higher than the Sub-Saharan average and, unlike in the continent as a whole, has increased since 2000.

**Figure 3:** Source of livelihood of youth who are not in school





Young people perceive two reasons for their failure to find employment. The first is the absolute lack of jobs. Sixty-one per cent believe there are not enough job prospects in the country. Those jobs that are available (whether salaried or self-employed) are usually of low quality – insecure, informal, part-time or temporary, unskilled and poorly paid.

The second reason is the unfairness of the labour market. Young people can see that there are opportunities – 66 per cent agree that there is a wide range of employment opportunities in the country – but they are unable to access them. As a consequence, two-thirds of respondents said they would like to migrate elsewhere in Africa in search of better job opportunities. A similar proportion would like to migrate beyond Africa's borders.

The disconnect between young people's perception that jobs exist and their pessimism about their own employment prospects suggests there are blockages that prevent them from realising their career potential. Many believe the system is stacked against the youth and in favour of their elders. The unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is almost triple that among older adults. Sixty-three per cent believe it was easier for their parents' generation to have a good career.

*'Getting people to employ us – it's like a dream that you will probably die without achieving. Our youths have so much talent – youth need to be given access to employment.'*

Male focus group participant,  
Mombasa

Within this overall pattern of a system rigged against youth, there are even worse prospects of accessing decent work for women, people with disabilities and people from unfavoured ethnic groups than for youth as a whole. Young women are both less likely to be able to find jobs and more vulnerable to workplace abuse, including sexual abuse. Young people with disabilities are excluded from the workplace either because of cultural norms that doubt their ability to work or because employers are unwilling to invest in making the working environment disability-friendly. Ethnicity, meanwhile, can either help or hinder your prospects of success. Although 61 per cent of young respondents agree that there are equal employment opportunities regardless of ethnicity, 29 per cent disagree. Ethnic discrimination is felt most keenly by young people in Nairobi and the North Eastern and Western sub-regions.

*'I have worked really hard to get good grades and I am a well-read, smart person. It's so incredibly demoralising that some guy who is related to some politician and barely finished high school is probably going to steal my dream job!'*

Female focus group participant,  
Nairobi

*'Office jobs in Kenya are SUCH a boys' club – I wouldn't feel safe or comfortable being one of the only women in an office.'*

Female, Nairobi

*'Someone can go to the government to look for a job, and you find that when you go, you are told that you cannot look for a job. You say your name and your name betrays you. Someone else will go for the job and be given it because they are from a particular tribe. Even in the cities, you find that most of the people who get the jobs are people who know each other.'*

Male, Siaya

## Youth, society and politics

Young people's sense of being marginalised from Kenyan life is not limited to the realm of employment. Many also feel that society denies them a voice and excludes them from playing a full part in community and political decision-making.

Forty-nine per cent of survey respondents believe Kenyan society does not listen to the youth. Only 44 per cent believe they are listened to. In the focus groups, not a single young person felt that the youth had a voice, or that they did as individuals. Young women and those who have disabilities or who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds feel their opinion is even less valued than those of their peers. In Nairobi, only 26 per cent of young respondents feel that youth are listened to.

*'I don't think there's anything you can do to be heard as a youth. There's no way to air your views and have people listen to you.'*

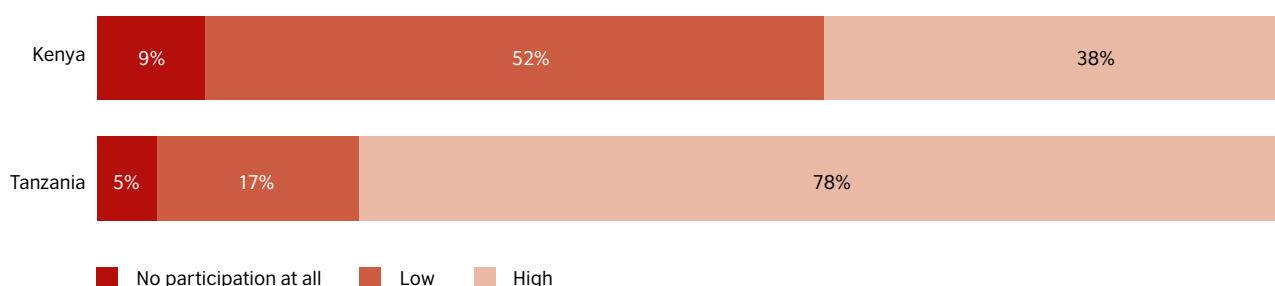
Male focus group participant,  
Mombasa

The household survey asked about young people's participation in their communities and in politics and decision-making. In both areas, young Kenyans felt much less involved than

youth interviewed as part of Next Generation Tanzania. In Tanzania, more than 70 per cent of young people believe young people's participation in both their community and in political

decision-making is high. In Kenya, less than 40 per cent believe participation in either area is high.

**Figure 4:** Perceived level of youth participation in politics and decision-making



Young Kenyans' participation in their community is often limited to attending ceremonies such as weddings and funerals. When it comes to community decision-making, their age bars them from being taken seriously by their elders since they are seen as too inexperienced to participate usefully.

***'When we try to say something, we are told "not now, we are discussing adult things".'***

**Male focus group participant, Turkana**

Young people yearn for greater engagement in their communities and in politics. Nearly half say they discuss politics frequently, and 44 per cent would be willing to stand for public office. Despite well-documented problems surrounding recent elections in the country, moreover, 84 per cent of young people believe it is important to vote.

When we asked young people for their views on the current government's performance, 44 per cent were satisfied and 56 per cent dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction was sharpest in the

North East and Nairobi – in these sub-regions, 39 per cent and 27 per cent of respondents respectively were completely dissatisfied with the government, giving it a score of one on a satisfaction scale of one to ten. Sixty-five per cent of survey respondents believe the government does not provide youth with enough support, and only 24 per cent of survey respondents are aware of any policy or programme to empower young people.

If young Kenyans continue to feel excluded from social and political life as well as from employment, there is a risk of demographic disaster, where instead of helping to drive their country forward they turn, in their frustration, to less constructive activities.

Already, young people perceive signs that discontent and unrest are increasing. The cutthroat competition for jobs is causing disillusionment and frustration, and making it difficult for youth to show solidarity to each other or to their elders. Drug and alcohol use are increasing, and violence and crime have become normalised in the

lives of many young people. In the Next Generation Tanzania study in 2016, only two per cent of respondents cited violence or crime as things they were unhappy about; in Kenya, 35 per cent cited violence and 25 per cent crime.

***'Young people are bored out of their minds so they go and look for any form of entertainment possible, even if that's getting into unnecessary fights.'***

**Female focus group participant, Nairobi**

Religious and ethnic tension are also of increasing concern to young Kenyans. Young people themselves are generally tolerant of other religions and ethnicities, and they believe their generation is more tolerant than their parents' generation. However, many fear that religious and ethnic divisions are growing wider. Fifty-seven per cent of those we surveyed believe bad feeling between religious groups is getting worse, and 72 per cent believe bad feeling between ethnic groups is getting worse. That this intensifying of tension is occurring despite young people being

more tolerant than previous generations suggests that Kenyan youth feel their elders are largely responsible for ethnic and religious conflict.

## Recommendations

Young Kenyans have a range of recommendations for strengthening the education system and increasing youth participation in the labour market and in society. They cover each of the thematic areas discussed in the report, and are presented below.

### Relationships, marriage, sex and pregnancy

To help youth to avoid early pregnancy and harmful relationships, young people called for greater government investment in supporting sexual and reproductive health. In particular, they recommended:

- reorienting sexual and reproductive health education towards a more holistic approach that encompasses communities, schools and peer groups
- the provision in schools of education and support to foster mutually respectful, supportive and non-violent relationships between the genders
- investment in leisure and sport, especially in rural areas and under-privileged urban settings where there are few opportunities for positive youth social engagement
- the establishment of safe spaces where young people can develop life skills and find support and mentorship from their elders and peers.

### Accessing quality education

Young people had the following recommendations for improving educational access and quality:

- mechanisms should be developed so that members of the public can track the distribution of both student bursaries and funds allocated for investment in school infrastructure
- research is needed to identify gender-specific and region-specific interventions that will address the non-economic factors that keep children out of school
- for those who do not proceed along the traditional education continuum from primary to tertiary school, alternative paths such as adult education courses and polytechnics should be expanded
- school curricula should be adjusted to include life skills training, including job search and entrepreneurship training
- Kenya's TVET system should be redesigned with a focus on improving the quality of teaching and infrastructure, opening up pathways from TVET to university, providing soft skills training, and tailoring the curriculum to workplace needs by involving labour market stakeholders in curriculum design and in training and mentoring programmes
- a framework is needed to hold universities and colleges to account for the quality of graduates they produce, including requirements to label courses according to their labour market success, and to conduct and publish annual tracer studies on the workplace success of graduates by skill area. Tertiary education policymakers should also explore the use of formulas based on student outcomes when allocating public resources

- tertiary education will be made more attractive and relevant if structured internships, early contact with industry, apprenticeships and volunteering are incorporated into the core learning experience.

### Levelling the employment playing field

Young people had a number of recommendations for reforming the labour market so that it better enables youth to maximise their potential:

- financing programmes for young entrepreneurs should be reviewed and redesigned to respond to structural and perception challenges that inhibit uptake
- research is needed to identify means of directing the youth preference for self-employment towards labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture
- young people called for platforms for peer learning and business mentorship for aspiring entrepreneurs, within and outside formal learning structures
- to improve conditions in the workplace, young people called for professional standards against discrimination to be enforced so that favouritism based on gender, age, ethnicity and disability is stamped out. Government should encourage businesses to comply with anti-favouritism measures by, for example, offering incentives to business leaders who can show their firms have representative employment pools.

### Increasing voice and expanding civic engagement

Young people had recommendations both for increasing the amount of youth participation in public life, and for improving its quality and impact. They suggested:

- ensuring the involvement of diverse youth perspectives in policy dialogues via both stronger compliance with the public participation requirements set out in the Constitution of Kenya, and the creation of policy dialogue platforms that are safe spaces for all youth to contribute
- investing in youth-targeted mentorship programmes – both in and out of school – to enable access to the knowledge, skills, tools and resources needed for meaningful political and civic engagement
- expanding basic provisions to enable young people with disabilities to get out of the house and into the world, and thereby to participate in community decision-making. In addition, existing services should be promoted more proactively in order to increase uptake
- involving young people in the design and implementation of all of the policies recommended in this section. Youth involvement in programme design is currently lacking, and programmes are therefore not responsive to youth needs. As one young woman in a Nairobi focus group wryly put it:

*‘You can just imagine a bunch of old people sitting in a room going “hmm what do the youth of today want?” and of course getting it totally wrong. They should just ask us.’*





# > INTRODUCTION

With one in every five Kenyans being between the age of 15 and 24, the country's future lies in how it harnesses the potential of this age group.

More than one in five Kenyans is aged 15–24. As this burgeoning youth generation reaches adulthood and, as fertility continues to fall, the number of those depending on them for support declines, the country has the opportunity to reap a 'demographic dividend.' If young people can find productive employment, the reduced number of child and elderly dependants will allow them greater freedom than previous generations had to invest in businesses, employ others, buy each other's products and services, save for the future, educate and nurture the health of their children, and develop the policies and programmes that will ensure a better future for all Kenyans.

Conversely, if there is no access to jobs for young people and if they are not allowed to play their full part in all aspects of society, 'demographic disaster' is possible, where growing resentment at the lack of opportunities turns youthful energy not to productive purposes but to discontent and unrest.

Next Generation Kenya follows similar Next Generation initiatives in other countries undergoing significant social, political or economic change, including Tanzania, South Africa, Nigeria, Pakistan and the UK. Its objective is to listen to young people and ascertain how such changes affect the way they view their lives, their futures, and their relationships within their country and with the wider world. It is hoped that the findings from the project will guide policymakers as they attempt to make a space for youth in the economy and in society, and to enlist and assist young people in taking the country forward.

## Youth in Kenya: a burgeoning population

Kenya's youth-heavy population is already placing strains on the labour market, which is struggling to accommodate the fast-growing numbers of young people. Society, moreover, is not yet allowing young people the voice

and influence in decision-making that they desire. In the coming decades, the number of young people is projected to increase sharply, meaning that finding outlets for youth to express their potential will become an ever more pressing challenge.

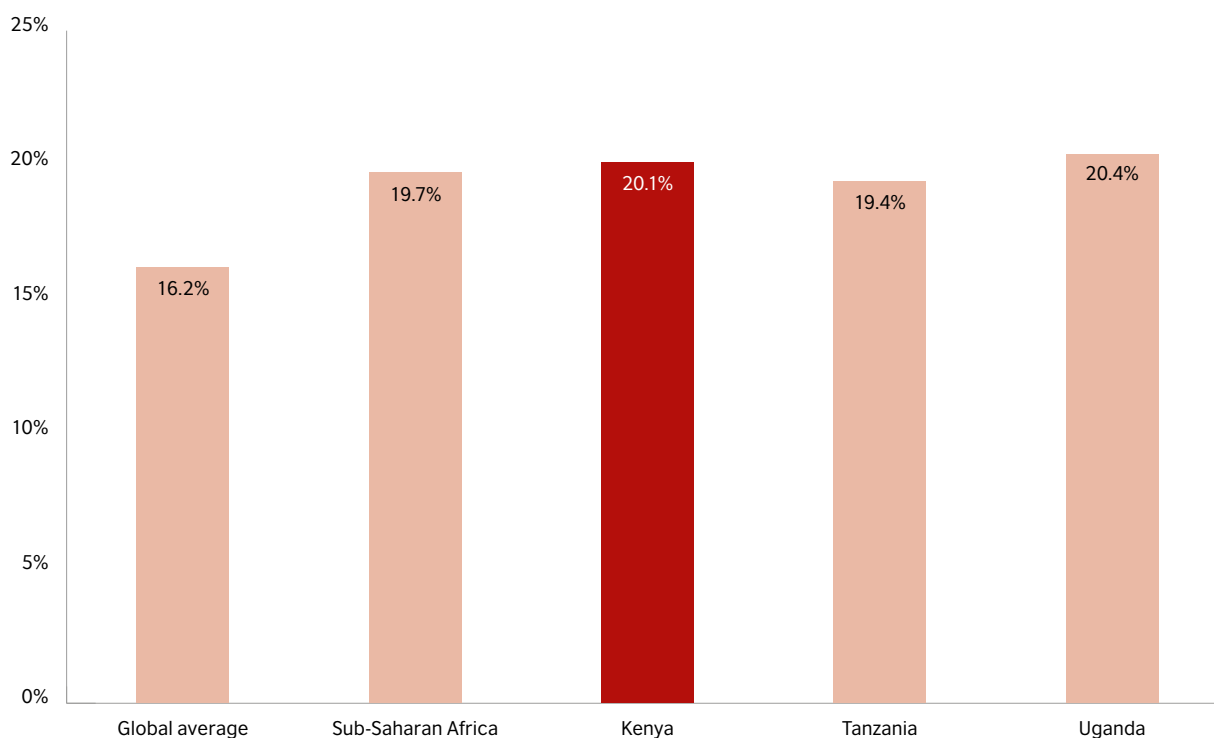
The 15–24 age group accounts for 20.1 per cent of the country's population. Such a large share of youth mirrors the demographic picture in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole.<sup>1</sup> It is significantly higher – and Kenya's population correspondingly significantly younger – than the global average of 16.2 per cent (see Figure 5).

As Kenya's population increases from 48 million today to a projected 100 million by 2050,<sup>2</sup> much of the increase will occur among younger age groups. The number of Kenyans aged 15–24 is expected to almost double from 9.5 million today to 17.1 million by 2050.<sup>3</sup>

1 > United Nations (2015) Youth population trends and sustainable development. Population Facts, May 2015.

2 > United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015) *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*.

3 > *Ibid.*

**Figure 5:** Youth population, based on UN estimates for 2015 (UN 2017)

As they reach adulthood, the burgeoning numbers of young people will swell the labour force. The share of the working-age population in the total population is projected to rise from 56 per cent in 2014 to 62 per cent by 2050.<sup>4</sup> As the working-age cohort grows, the dependency ratio – that is, the ratio of those aged 0–14 years and aged 65 and over to people of working age – is projected to decline from 79 dependants per 100 people of working age today to 61 by 2050.<sup>5</sup>

Kenya therefore faces the opportunity and challenge presented by a youth bulge. In contexts such as East and South East Asia in the second half of the

20th century, worker-heavy populations proved to be a great economic asset. It has been estimated that in East Asia, where between 1965 and 1990 the number of people of working age grew four times faster than the dependant population, this demographic dividend accounted for more than one-third of the region's rapid economic growth over the period.<sup>6</sup> In South East Asia, similar demographic developments are estimated to have accounted for one percentage point of the region's annual per capita income growth in the latter quarter of the last century.<sup>7</sup>

If Kenya can provide jobs to its youth population and allow young people to play their full part in social and political life, it too will have the opportunity to experience a demographic dividend. However, with nine million young people in the next decade projected to enter a labour market which currently employs only 2.3 million in the formal sector,<sup>8</sup> such a dividend is far from guaranteed. If the youth population continues to experience the high levels of unemployment and underemployment it faces currently, there is a risk of creating a 'lost generation', which languishes in a stagnating economy and continues to depend on the older generation for financial support.

4 > World Bank (2016) *Kenya – Country Economic Memorandum: From Economic Growth to Jobs and Shared Prosperity*. Washington, DC.

5 > *Ibid.*

6 > Bloom, DE and Williamson, JG (1998) Demographic transitions and economic miracles in emerging Asia. *The World Bank Economic Review* 12/3: 419–455.

7 > Bloom, DE, Canning, D and Malaney, PN (2000) Population dynamics and economic growth in Asia. *Population and Development Review* 26 (Supplement): 257–90.

8 > Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2014) *Kenya Facts and Figures 2014*.

In 2013, amid increasing concern about youth unemployment and associated risks of political instability, the government of Kenya pledged to enhance employment opportunities for youth as part of its 'Vision 2030'. The government committed to create one million new jobs,<sup>9</sup> to encourage entrepreneurship through providing loans, and to earmark 30 per cent of public procurement for youth-led businesses.<sup>10</sup> It is in this context that the Next Generation Kenya research took place.

## Next Generation Kenya methodology

Next Generation Kenya employs a twin-pronged approach, combining policy-relevant research with a strategic communications campaign to disseminate the findings widely and use them to enhance young people's ability to influence the policy environment.<sup>11</sup> The research comprised three phases:

- **Phase 1:** a literature review conducted by the Kenya-based consultancy Samuel Hall. This phase involved a systematic, critical review of the literature on youth in Kenya, focusing on demographic trends, education and employment (throughout the project, youth were defined as those aged 15–24, as per United Nations criteria). It drew on academic studies as well as reports by bilateral and multilateral institutions and other research organisations. The literature review findings were used to develop the

topic guides and questionnaires used in the second and third phases of the research, and provided the knowledge base on which the project was developed. The review was conducted between August and October 2017.<sup>12</sup>

- **Phase 2:** qualitative research conducted by the UK-based market research agency 2CV. This phase included focus group discussions, individual in-depth interviews, community immersion sessions and follow-up WhatsApp sessions with a total of 61 young people across four locations – Nairobi, Mombasa, Turkana and Siaya. The research explored in depth young people's daily lives; their hopes and fears; their thoughts on key challenges and barriers to achieving good lives; and the support they wanted from government and their communities to help them carve a path to a better future. Findings from the qualitative phase were used to help develop the questionnaire for the quantitative research in phase 3.<sup>13</sup> The fieldwork for this research took place in November 2017.
- **Phase 3:** quantitative attitudinal and behavioural research carried out by Kenya-based market research agency Ipsos. It conducted 4,014 face-to-face interviews with randomly selected young Kenyans aged 15–24 from across the country, covering young people's social and economic status; their views on their career and life prospects; their opinions on the

political, economic and employment situation in Kenya; their attitudes towards gender, ethnicity, religion and other countries; their views on Kenyan education; their opinions of how government and society view youth; their sources of information; and their use of and attitudes towards new technologies, including social media. The research, administered through a door-to-door household survey, also asked young people how they would address the challenges in the areas identified above. As well as being nationally representative, respondents were also representative by sub-region, with the 12 sub-regions defined as the former provinces of Central, Nairobi, North Eastern, Coast and Western plus Nyanza North and South; Rift Valley North, South and Central; and Eastern Lower and Eastern Upper. Interviews were conducted in January 2018. (For a detailed description of the research methodology and a list of counties in each sub-region, see the appendix.)

9 > Lagat, C and Omar, C (2013) Kenya's presidential candidates promise, security, jobs in manifestos. *African News* 4 February 2013. Available online at: <http://english.sina.com/2013/0204/557665.html>

10 > Odhiambo, A and Otuki, N (2013) Youths set to gain in Uhuru's public tenders promise. *Business Daily* 15 April 2013. Available online at: <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/news/Youths-set-to-gain-in-Uhuru-public-tenders-promise/539546-1749420-1070aqz/index.html>

11 > Reports from earlier Next Generation studies are available here: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/society/governance-civil-society/next-generation>

12 > For a detailed methodology of the literature review, see Samuel Hall (2017) *Youth Employment in Kenya: Literature Review*. Report for the British Council Next Generation Kenya project. Nairobi.

13 > For a detailed methodology, see 2CV (2018) *The Next Generation Kenya Qualitative Research Findings*. Report prepared by 2VC for the British Council. London.



## Report structure

Full reports from the first two research phases are available on the website of the British Council, Kenya. This summary report synthesises findings from all three phases. It supplements the household survey data with in-depth findings from the qualitative discussions and with data from the academic literature. Where possible the research is disaggregated by gender and geographic location, and compared to recent Next Generation research in Tanzania.<sup>14</sup> The report draws on these findings and on the suggestions of young people themselves to produce concrete recommendations for action by policymakers.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 1: Who are the Kenyan youth?** introduces the young Kenyans who were interviewed for our research. It discusses how they feel about their identity and their country, their perceptions of the outside world, their sources of information, and the main challenges they believe they face as they enter adulthood.
- **Chapter 2: Education and skills** looks at one of the most important of these challenges, the education system. It describes survey respondents' educational status and discusses the obstacles that prevent many from completing their schooling. It presents young people's perceptions of whether the education system is equipping them for the demands of the labour market, and discusses their views of non-traditional forms of education such as vocational training.
- **Chapter 3: The employment challenge** delves into the theme of employment, which was identified by two-thirds of young people as the main challenge they face. It describes young people's career ambitions and shows the extent to which these are being fulfilled. It discusses young people's perceptions of labour market challenges including corruption, ethnic favouritism, gender discrimination and inadequate preparation, and looks at how young people are responding to these challenges by setting up their own businesses or planning relocation to other counties or countries to seek a livelihood.
- **Chapter 4: Youth, society and politics** assesses whether young people feel that they are a part of their communities and their society. It asks whether youth in Kenya have a strong voice and an influence on the decisions and policies that shape their lives, and analyses the extent of young people's enthusiasm for greater social engagement. It also elicits young people's views on Kenyan politics, and asks how far they feel the political arena is receptive to youth voices.
- The **Recommendations** section draws on all the research strands to present young people's recommendations for action by policymakers.

<sup>14</sup> > Next Generation Tanzania surveyed 2,583 Tanzanians aged 15–24. Unlike the Kenya survey, it was not nationally representative – it covered five regions of the country plus Zanzibar. Comparisons are therefore presented only as a general guide, rather than a concrete picture of the differences between young people in the two countries.





# > CHAPTER 1 – WHO ARE THE KENYAN YOUTH?

Young Kenyans have a strong sense of pride in their country. They are, however, deeply worried about the future of the country, with corruption, violence, crime and unemployment their key concerns.

## Key findings

- Ninety-one per cent of young Kenyans say they love their country. Most believe it has made progress in recent decades, with 62 per cent saying young people's lives are better than those of their parents' generation.
- Young Kenyans are also engaged with the outside world. Thirty-eight per cent would be willing to emigrate if they had the opportunity, and youth exhibit a high level of tolerance of foreigners living in Kenya.
- The internet and social media appear to be increasing openness. Forty per cent of young Kenyans have access to the internet, and most use social media. The latter is seen as a major factor in integrating young Kenyans into the global community.
- Another factor behind young people's willingness to emigrate is their growing concern over corruption, violence, crime and the employment situation. These problems are already causing deep anxiety to young Kenyans, and most believe they will become more serious threats to the country in future.

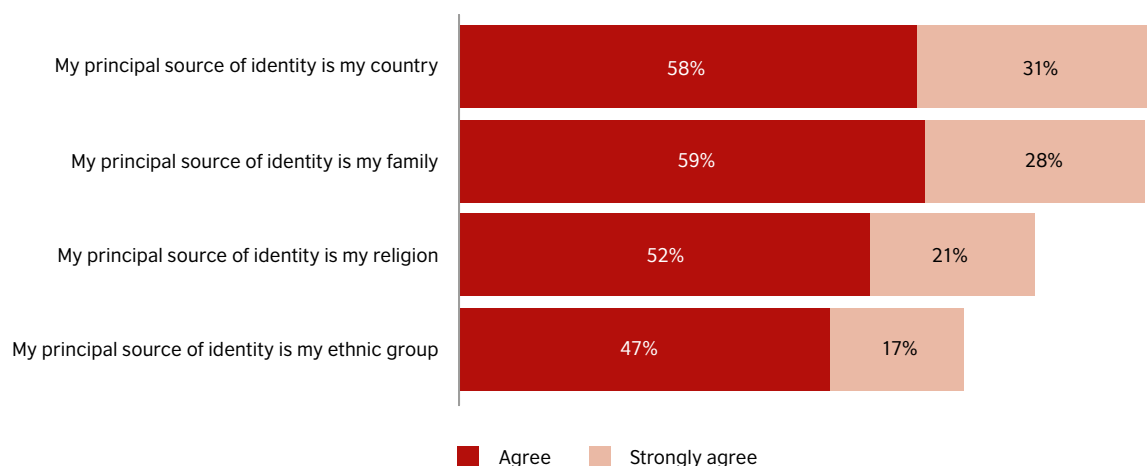
- For young women, early marriage and early pregnancy are further major obstacles in the way of achieving their dreams. Both young women and young men have positive attitudes towards gender equality, but young women bear the brunt of domestic and child-rearing duties and it is more difficult for them to delay having a family until they are ready. Twenty-four per cent of young women are married, compared with only five per cent of young men, suggesting that many women are marrying older men.

## Proud to be Kenyan...

Chapter 1 of the report provides a short introduction to the lives and perspectives on life of those interviewed for the Next Generation Kenya research. It paints a picture of a cohort of young people who love their country and believe it has made progress in recent decades, but who are also enthusiastic about other countries and their people, and would consider relocating if it improved their prospects of success in life. Young Kenyans' general optimism about the future is tarnished by their dissatisfaction with and pessimism over corruption, violence, crime and the employment situation. They see the last of these in particular as a large potential obstacle that stands in the way of achieving their aspirations.

Young Kenyans have a strong sense of pride in their country. Eighty-six per cent of respondents to the household survey agreed that the heritage and identity of their country were important to them, and 91 per cent agreed that they 'love Kenya, even with all its problems'. When we asked about how they view their identity, young people told us that their strongest loyalties are to their country and their family. Thirty-one per cent of survey respondents strongly agreed that their principal source of identity was their country, and 28 per cent their family.<sup>15</sup> Religion and ethnicity were also seen as powerful aspects of identity, with 21 per cent and 17 per cent of respondents respectively strongly agreeing that these were their principal sources of identity (see Figure 6).

15 > This question was tested against a five-point scale, from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. For example, respondents were asked how strongly they agreed that their principal source of identity was their country.

**Figure 6:** Young Kenyans' identity

When this question was analysed by geographical location, we found that in most sub-regions, country and family are by far the strongest sources of identity. Identification with country is relatively strongest in the Eastern Lower and Coast sub-regions,<sup>16</sup> and relatively weakest in the North East, where religion is the strongest source of identity, and Nyanza North.<sup>17</sup> Respondents from the North East are also the least happy with the state of their country. Twenty-one per cent of this group responded negatively when asked if they love Kenya, even with all its problems. In no other sub-region was this proportion above 15 per cent.

Ethnicity is a relatively strong source of identity in the Eastern Upper sub-region and in Nyanza South.<sup>18</sup> Ethnic identification is relatively weak in the Nairobi, North Eastern, Rift Valley South and Central sub-regions.<sup>19</sup>

Most young Kenyans believe their country has made progress in recent decades. Sixty-two per cent believe young people's lives are better than their parents' lives. Twenty-four per cent believe that they are worse, and 14 per cent that they are similar. In Tanzania, for comparison, only 43 per cent of Next Generation survey respondents felt their lives were better than those of their parents.

Geographically, the group least likely to believe that life has improved for the younger generation are those from the Nairobi sub-region. In the capital, only half of young people believe youth's lives are better than those of their parents, while 38 per cent believe they are worse. Perhaps surprisingly, given their relative discontent with their country, respondents from the North East are among the most positive in their responses to this question. It may be that although many of them do not feel satisfied with their lives, they acknowledge that their parents' lives were even more difficult.

Their love for their country means that most young people aspire to a future in Kenya. Eighty-one per cent of survey respondents agreed with the statement that 'I see my future in Kenya'. Eleven per cent disagreed. Again, the weakest responses here came from young people in the North East, where only 64 per cent of respondents agreed that their future lies in Kenya, and 23 per cent disagreed. Two of the three North Eastern counties are among the poorest in the country,<sup>20</sup> and as we will see later in the report, young people in the North East are also among the most concerned about violence and conflict. It may be that factors such as these lie behind their responses to this question.

### ...but also engaged with the outside world

As well as feeling a strong loyalty to Kenya, young people are also interested in and engaged with the outside world.

16 > The counties in the Eastern Lower sub-region are: Isiolo, Kitui, Machakos, Makuani and Marsabit. Counties in the Coast sub-region are: Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Mombasa, Taita-Taveta and Tana River.

17 > The counties in the North East sub-region are: Garissa, Mandera and Wajir. In Nyanza North the counties are: Homa Bay, Kisumu and Siaya.

18 > The counties in the Eastern Upper sub-region are: Embu, Meru and Tharaka Nithi. The counties in Nyanza South are: Kisii, Migori and Nyamira.

19 > Counties in Rift Valley South are: Kajiado, Kericho and Narok. Counties in the Central sub-region are: Kiambu, Kirinyaga, Muranga, Nyandarua and Nyeri.

20 > Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2013) *Exploring Kenya's Inequality: Pulling Apart or Pooling Together?* Nairobi.

Although most household survey respondents say they see their future in Kenya, they do not rule out relocating – either within the country or abroad – if they see that there are better prospects for them elsewhere. Overall, 71 per cent of young people said they would be willing to move from where they live – either within or outside Kenya – given the opportunity. Even among those who are in formal sector employment (and are therefore, as we will see in Chapter 3, fulfilling the dream of many of their peers), nearly three-quarters would move if they had the chance.

The most popular targets for relocation within Kenya are big cities, and in particular Nairobi, which was cited by 41 per cent of those who would like to move locally. Mombasa (cited by 17 per cent) and Nakuru (seven per cent) were the next most popular choices. Already, young people are more likely than the

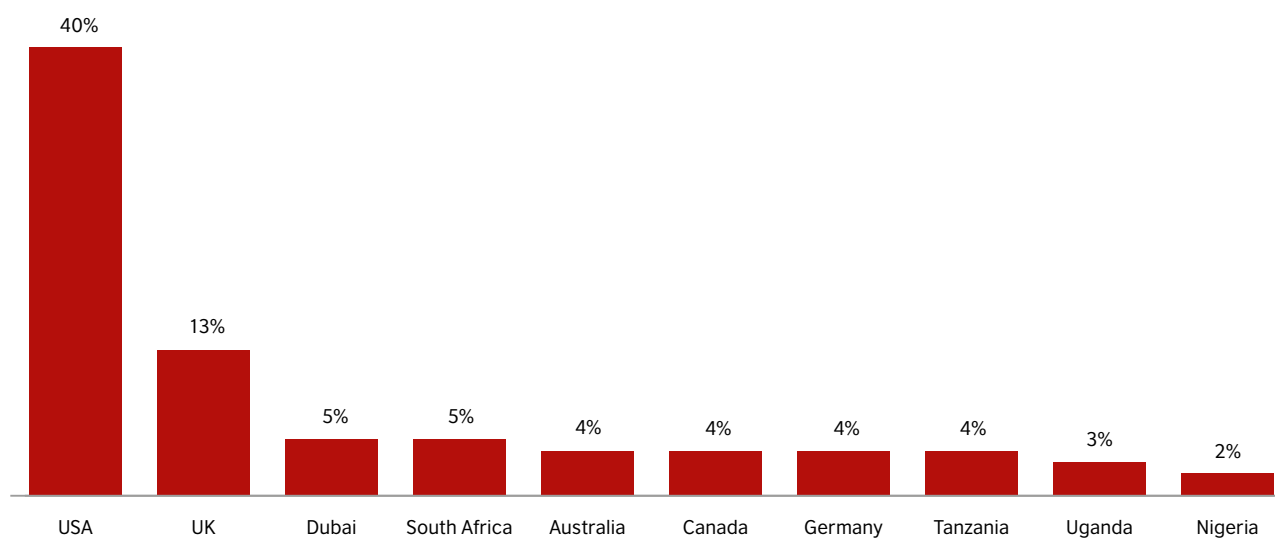
rest of the population to live in urban areas. In Kenya as a whole, 26 per cent of the population live in urban areas, but among young people who responded to our household survey this proportion rises to 35 per cent.<sup>21</sup> Many participants in the focus groups felt that migration to cities was a crucial step towards realising their career goals – although some fear that life in big cities will be more expensive, the allure of the ‘big opportunities’ available there is highly seductive.

Notwithstanding their overall love of their country, those who would be willing to relocate are more likely to want to emigrate than to move within Kenya. Asked where they would move to if given the opportunity, 53 per cent cited overseas destinations, and 47 per cent other places in Kenya. That more than half of those who would move at all would like to move overseas means

that, in total, 38 per cent of young respondents would be willing to emigrate from Kenya if given the chance. Urban respondents were particularly keen to move abroad – 64 per cent of urban youth who would be willing to relocate cited international destinations for relocation, compared with 46 per cent of rural respondents.

Most respondents who would like to move abroad would prefer to leave Africa. The USA (cited by 40 per cent of this group) is by far the most popular relocation target, well ahead of the UK (see Figure 7). Only in the North Eastern sub-region is the UK more popular than the USA as a potential destination. The most popular countries as targets for relocation within Africa were South Africa (cited by five per cent of those who would like to move abroad), Tanzania (four per cent) and Uganda (three per cent).

**Figure 7:** Where would you like to move to internationally?



21 > World Bank (2017) Rural population (% of total population). Available online at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS>



This willingness among young people to migrate appears in part to be a consequence of their strengthening connections with the outside world. Along with more traditional sources of information such as television and radio, the internet and social media are bringing young Kenyans into contact with people, news and culture from elsewhere within their country and from overseas, and at the same time opening their minds to the possibility of new and different experiences.

Traditional media are still the most widely used information sources by young Kenyans, but new sources are making significant inroads into this domination. To obtain news about current events in Kenya, 68 per cent of respondents rely on the radio, and 55 per cent on local television news.<sup>22</sup> Radio (cited by 55 per cent of respondents) and local television news (42 per cent) are also the primary sources of information on global current affairs. When asked how often they are exposed to traditional media, 61 per cent said they listen to the radio daily and 86 per cent listen at least once a week. Forty-three per cent watch

television daily, and 74 per cent at least once a week. Thirty-five per cent read a newspaper once or more each week, although only seven per cent read one daily.

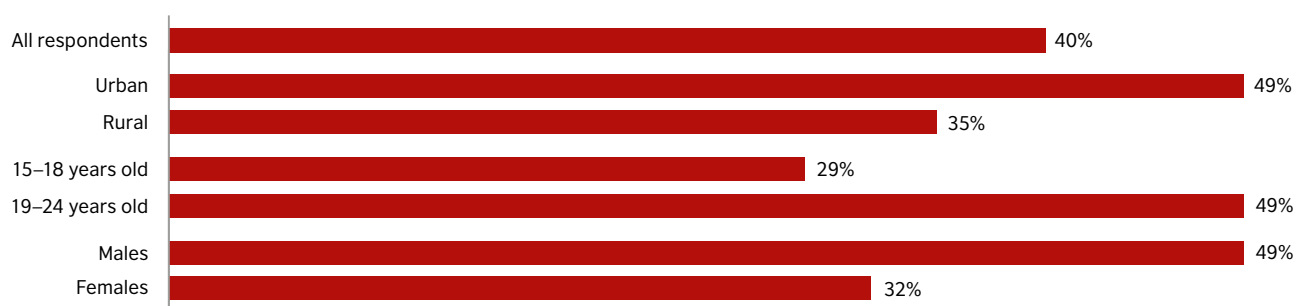
Facebook has become a further important source of information for both local and global news. Twenty-two per cent of young people use Facebook to get information on current events in Kenya, and 19 per cent use it for information on global current events. Facebook has therefore become a more important news source than newspapers. The latter are used by 19 per cent of young people as a source for local news and 14 per cent for global news.

Radio and television are also the most *trusted* sources of news. Forty-one per cent of respondents say that local television news is their most trusted source of information on local news, and 40 per cent say the same of radio. For information on global current events, radio is the most trusted source (36 per cent of respondents cite it as such), ahead of local television news (30 per cent) and international television news such as BBC or CNN (11 per cent). While

usage of Facebook is strong, trust in it as a news source is much weaker. Only four per cent of young people say Facebook is their most trusted source of information on local news, and only six per cent on current events globally.

The growth of Facebook in Kenya has been enabled by increased use of the internet. Forty per cent of young Kenyans who responded to our household survey have access to the internet (see Figure 8), with almost two-thirds of these primarily accessing it through mobile phones. Access is higher among males than females (49 per cent of male respondents have access, compared with 32 per cent of females), and higher among urban than rural respondents (49 per cent versus 35 per cent respectively). The least connected sub-regions are Nyanza North and South, Rift Valley North and the Western sub-region.<sup>23</sup> In each, only approximately 30 per cent of young people have access to the internet. The Nairobi and Central sub-regions (where 65 per cent and 51 per cent respectively have access) are the most connected.

**Figure 8:** Percentage of respondents with access to the internet



22 > Respondents could cite more than one source.

23 > Counties in the Rift Valley North sub-region are Samburu, Turkana and West Pokot. Those in the Western sub-region are: Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega and Vihiga.

Young people use the internet for a variety of purposes. Three-quarters say they use it for Facebook, and half for other social media applications. Half of respondents also say they use it to do research or search for information. Listening to music, gaming, email and Twitter are other commonly cited reasons for using the internet.

Young Kenyans have strongly positive views of social media, and a firm conviction that it makes them a more integral part of the global community. Ninety-two per cent of those who use the internet for social networking agreed with the statement, 'social media helps us experience the wider world', and 88 per cent that it made them 'more open and tolerant of other people's points of view'. Eighty-four per cent said that they 'feel more of a global citizen today after interacting with people from around the globe using social media'.

Increased access to the internet correlates with an increased willingness to emigrate. Among young Kenyans who have access to the internet and are willing to move from where they live, 61 per cent said they would like to move abroad and 39 per cent within Kenya. Among those without internet access, only 45 per cent said they would like to move abroad.

Increased connections with the outside world appear also to be reflected in high levels of tolerance for foreigners. When asked their perception of foreigners from other countries in Africa who live in Kenya, three-quarters of survey respondents said they are not a problem, and that they bring value to the country. Only 15 per cent said that such foreigners are a problem because they take jobs from Kenyans, and only six per cent attributed the increase in crime to immigrants from elsewhere in Africa. Even among young Kenyans who are neither in school nor employed, only 16 per cent said foreigners are a problem because they take Kenyans' jobs. Openness towards foreigners from the rest of the world living in Kenya was equally high. Three-quarters of respondents said the latter are not a problem, and only 13 per cent that they are a problem.

Young Kenyans appear to be highly tolerant of foreigners compared with their peers in South Africa. The Next Generation South Africa project, research for which was carried out in 2017, surveyed 15- to 34-year-olds rather than the 15- to 24-year-olds surveyed in Kenya. While not directly comparable, therefore, it is nevertheless notable that 23 per cent of South African

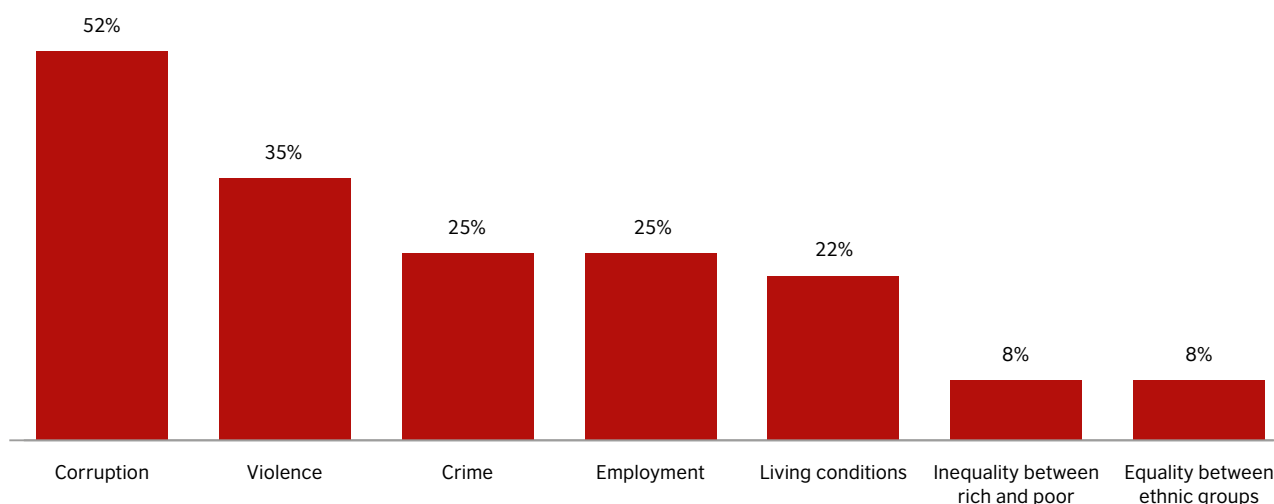
respondents said that foreigners from other African countries took jobs away from South Africans (compared with 15 per cent of young Kenyans), while 21 per cent said foreigners from other African countries were responsible for the increase in crime (compared with six per cent of Kenyans).

### Future fears

There may be push as well as pull factors behind young people's desire to migrate. For while they are proud of their country, they also have a number of serious concerns about the direction it is heading in. These concerns weaken their optimism about the future and threaten to spread disillusionment among youth.

Although they believe life has improved in Kenya in recent decades, young people perceive a number of threats to continued progress. Asked what aspects of Kenyan life they were unhappy about over the past five to ten years, 52 per cent of young people, unprompted, cited corruption as a major cause of dissatisfaction. Thirty-five per cent cited violence, 25 per cent crime and 25 per cent employment (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9:** Looking back to the last five to ten years, what were you unhappy about in your country?



Nor are young people optimistic about the future with regard to these problems. Overall, 88 per cent believe their lives will be better in five years' time (respondents in the Eastern Lower and North Eastern sub-regions were the least optimistic in this area). However, when asked about specific aspects of Kenyan life, this general optimism breaks down. While 20 per cent are optimistic about the corruption situation in Kenya, for example, 59 per cent are pessimistic.<sup>24</sup> On violence, only 27 per cent are optimistic, and 50 per cent pessimistic. Feelings about crime are similar to those about violence, and pessimism also outweighs optimism with regard to the employment situation and overall living conditions.

The above problems cause anxiety to all young people, but two further problems – early pregnancy and early marriage – are of particular concern to young women. Young Kenyans in general have positive attitudes towards gender equality. More than 80 per cent of young men and women believe the two sexes should have equal responsibilities in family life, and equal involvement in social, political and economic life (respondents in the Eastern Lower, Eastern Upper and North Eastern sub-regions are the least likely to agree with these propositions, but even in these regions at least two-thirds of respondents agree).

However, while attitudes towards gender equality are on the whole tolerant, Kenya's performance in *implementing* equality between the sexes is more mixed. Asked whether their expectations

have been met regarding promoting a positive role for women in society, 42 per cent of household survey respondents replied in the affirmative, but 31 per cent said their expectations had not been met (responses from male and female respondents were similar). Similarly, while 53 per cent reported being optimistic about Kenya with regard to a positive role for women, a significant minority – 23 per cent – are pessimistic.

Gender inequality manifests itself at school, in the labour market and in the community, and we discuss these in later sections of the report. It is also apparent at home and in relationships, where young women have less freedom to pursue their goals than young men. Most Kenyan youth see marriage and having children as important goals, but many are keen to delay these events until they are more financially stable or have made greater progress towards realising their dreams. Young men in the focus groups believed marriage and fatherhood would increase the financial burden on them, forcing them to provide for others when it was already hard enough to provide for themselves. Young women fear that since they are likely to bear the brunt of domestic and child-rearing duties, having a family will put an end to their educational and career ambitions and curtail their freedom. Twenty-seven per cent of young women regard early pregnancy as one of the main challenges they face in life (ten per cent of males also see this as a challenge). Only the lack of employment opportunities and financial

difficulties are regarded as greater challenges by young women. Fifteen per cent see child marriage as a major challenge (as do seven per cent of males).

*'I don't want to get married until I'm financially settled. Women in Nairobi expect you to treat them to expensive things! I can't afford that yet.'*

Male focus group participant, Nairobi

*'Boys will just continue with their lives. He might even say "that's not my kid, I don't know where you got it from, his hair isn't like mine." I know one boy, the father looks so much like him, but he denies it. He doesn't even support the kids, and what's worse he has money now and still doesn't support them.'*

Female focus group participant, Siaya

For many young women, these fears are borne out. Marriage rates among 15- to 24-year-olds are much higher for women than men. Only five per cent of young men are married, compared with 24 per cent of young women. The size of this discrepancy suggests that young women are in many cases marrying older men. Female youth are also much more likely than male youth to be unemployed – 49 per cent of young women interviewed in the household survey reported being neither in school nor employed, compared with 37 per cent of young men. As we will see in Chapter 3 of the report, moreover, those young women who find jobs experience many forms of discrimination in the workplace.

24 > Optimism is defined as coded 4 or 5 on a scale of 1–5, and pessimism is defined as coded 1 or 2.

At the extreme, gender inequality spills over into violence against women and girls. Such violence is often sexualised. Young women in the focus groups said they often felt pressured by men into performing sexual acts, and that the threat of violence made them afraid to refuse. They feel at risk in their communities, homes, social spaces, schools and workplaces – a few female focus group participants were unable to name a single place where they felt safe from physical harm.

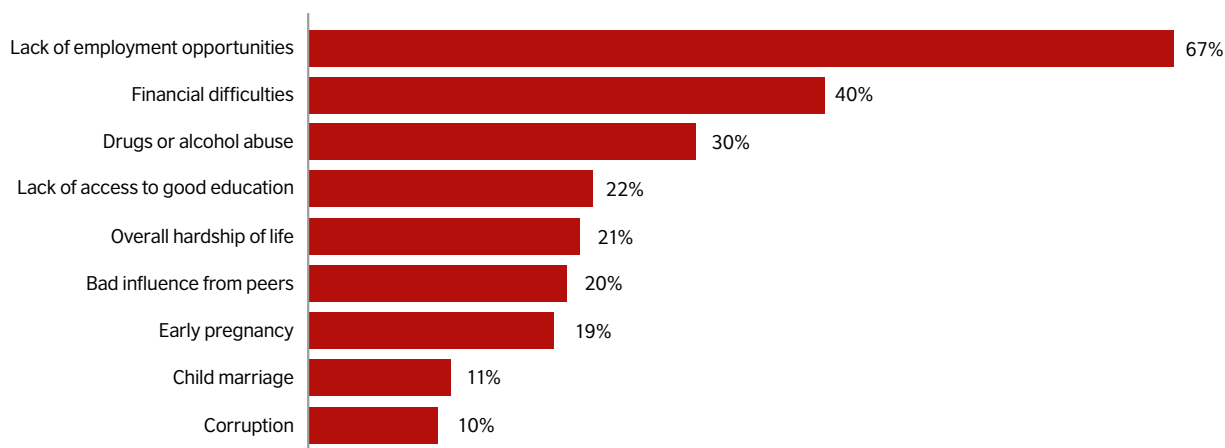
### Future challenges

While corruption, violence and crime are regarded as threats to Kenya as a whole, employment is seen as by far the most important challenge for individual youth. When asked about the main challenges they face, two-thirds cited (unprompted) the lack of employment opportunities. The latter was seen as the main challenge by young people in all respondent groups – male and female, urban and rural, younger and older youth, and across geographic regions. Relatedly, two-fifths of respondents

cited financial difficulties as a major challenge. Almost one-third said that drug or alcohol abuse is a challenge, while more than one-fifth felt that lack of access to a good education was a key challenge (see Figure 10).

In chapters 3 and 4 we will discuss in detail the employment situation and the problem of drug and alcohol abuse, but first, in the next chapter, we look more deeply at another of the most important challenges identified by young people – education.

**Figure 10:** What are the challenges you face?







# > CHAPTER 2 – EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Education is seen as the key to success and young people see the quality of education as having improved. Challenges of quality remain, however – in particular, infrastructure, the safety of institutions and their ability to prepare pupils for the workplace.

## Key findings

- Young Kenyans place a high value on education. Eighty-nine per cent agree that getting the right education is of paramount importance to them. Without education, most believe, their future will be bleak.
- Eighty-nine per cent of 19- to 24-year-olds in our survey had completed primary school. Sixty-two per cent had completed secondary school, with 21 per cent reaching college or university.
- Sixty per cent of those who dropped out of primary or secondary school said they would be willing to go back and complete their education if they had the chance.
- Financial constraints are the main barrier to educational advancement. For young women, early marriage and pregnancy are further important barriers.
- While educational quality is thought to be improving, it falls well short of international standards. The main weaknesses are insufficient investment in facilities, a lack of safety in school (especially for girls), and a failure to equip graduates for the workplace.
- Completing primary or secondary school makes little difference to one's employment prospects. Young people who left education after completing secondary school are less likely to be in work than both those who left after primary school and those who failed to complete primary school.
- Almost two-thirds of employed young people who are in work report that the education they received did not match at all the skills required in their jobs. Many lack basic skills in CV writing and searching for and applying for jobs.
- Young people are willing to consider technical and vocational education and training as an alternative to university, but both they and employers lack confidence in the quality the sector delivers.
- Some young people believe the quality of education is irrelevant. Sixty-seven per cent agreed that personal connections are more important to succeed than educational achievements.

## The value of education

Young Kenyans see attaining a good education as one of the major challenges they face. This section of the report discusses both the amount of education young people receive and its quality. In both areas advances have been made in recent years, but much more improvement is needed if Kenya's education system is to become world-class.

Young people place a high value on education. Eighty-nine per cent of household survey respondents agreed that getting the right education is of paramount importance to them. Eighty-seven per cent agreed that good education is the key to success. The downside of not receiving a good education, moreover, is steep – when asked if they agreed that their country would support them even if they didn't get a good education, only nine per cent strongly agreed. Seventeen per cent strongly disagreed. In the focus groups, lower-income youth in particular said that they could not imagine a positive future for themselves unless they finished secondary school. 'If I don't have an education,' said a young woman in Siaya, 'I won't get a job and then there's nothing to do for me except wait for death.'

There were some regional differences in beliefs about the importance of education. In the Coast sub-region, 54 per cent of young people strongly agreed that getting the right education was of paramount importance, whereas in the Eastern Lower, Eastern Upper and North Eastern sub-regions only approximately 15 per cent felt so strongly. As we will see, the latter responses in part reflect a feeling in these regions that the job market rewards personal connections rather than educational attainment.

### Educational attainment

The amount of education received by Kenyans has increased significantly in recent decades, but there are still large shortfalls in secondary and tertiary enrolment and completion. According to UNICEF, net primary enrolment stood at 84 per cent in 2012 and net secondary enrolment at 50 per cent.<sup>25</sup> 3.3 per cent of women and 4.7 per cent of men were enrolled in tertiary education.<sup>26</sup>

When considering the highest level of education that respondents to the Next Generation Kenya household survey have achieved so far, it is more instructive to analyse the responses of 19- to 24-year-olds – who are theoretically old enough to have completed secondary or in some cases tertiary school – than those of 15- to 18-year-olds, who in most cases should still be studying.

Nearly all young Kenyans receive some formal education, and 89 per cent of 19- to 24-year-olds in our survey had completed primary school (see Table 1). Sixty-two per cent had completed secondary school, with 21 per cent reaching college or university.

Compared with the UNICEF data from 2012, the latter figure suggests that tertiary education enrolment may be increasing, and this is supported by the fact that ‘access to higher education and

skills’ is one of the aspects of life that young Kenyans are most satisfied with and optimistic about. Twenty-seven per cent of survey respondents cited this as one of the things they were happiest about over the past five to ten years, while 41 per cent said it is an area in which their expectations have been met (31 per cent said their expectations have not been met). More than half, moreover, are optimistic that access to higher education and skills will continue to improve.

**Table 1:** Highest level of education attained by 19- to 24-year-olds

<b>No formal education at all</b>	1%
<b>Dropped off in primary</b>	9%
<b>Still in primary</b>	1%
<b>Completed primary</b>	12%
<b>Dropped off in secondary</b>	9%
<b>Still in secondary</b>	6%
<b>Completed secondary</b>	41%
<b>At or completed college</b>	13%
<b>At or completed university</b>	8%

25 > UNICEF (2018) Info by country: Kenya. Available online at: [https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kenya\\_statistics.html](https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/kenya_statistics.html)

26 > Escudero, V and López Mourello, E (2013) *Understanding the drivers of the youth labour market in Kenya*. ILO Research Paper No. 8. Geneva: International Labour Office.

An indicator of Kenya's progress in improving educational enrolment is that only one per cent of our sample, in all age groups, had received no formal schooling at all (for comparison, among respondents surveyed for Next Generation Tanzania, three per cent had received no education). This tallies with trends in gross primary enrolment, which increased from 92 per cent in 2002 to over 100 per cent today.<sup>27</sup> Among female respondents, two per cent had never attended school, while in the North East and Rift Valley South sub-regions, nine per cent and six per cent respectively had never attended.

Many of those who dropped out of school before completing primary or secondary level would like to resume their education. Sixty per cent said they would be willing to go back and complete school if they had the chance. Female respondents (66 per cent) are more interested than their male counterparts (52 per cent) in resuming school.

Standing in their way, however, are three key barriers – financial constraints, early marriage and early pregnancy. The most important barrier is a lack of funds. Among those who had received no formal education, the most commonly cited reasons for never attending school are poverty and parents not taking their children to school. Among those who dropped out of school, too, by far the most cited reason for dropping out was financial difficulties. Fifty-seven per cent of respondents of all ages who had dropped out of either primary or secondary school said they had done so because they could not afford to continue (other than pregnancy,

discussed below, no other reason was cited by more than seven per cent of those who dropped out).

In the focus group discussions, too, participants reported that poverty made it difficult to afford school fees and supplies. Those in lower-income groups in particular said that a lack of finances not only made it hard to attend school, but also to learn effectively while in class. Bursaries aimed at helping poor children through school often do not reach their targets. 'I hear people talking about bursaries for Ksh 80,000, Ksh 70,000, but we didn't get them,' reported a young woman in Mombasa. 'If you do get one, it's maybe for Ksh 13,000. We don't know where all that money goes – or we do. He has given them to his children, his advocates, his family.'

***'Education is the key to my success. But you cannot go to class without food in your stomach. If you do, by 10 or 11am your stomach is rumbling so much that you can't even pay attention to the teacher.'***

**Female focus group participant, Mombasa**

When families have a choice between buying food and paying for school, it is often young women whose education suffers. As well as being more likely to receive no education at all, female children are also more likely to drop out of school. While 15 per cent of 19- to 24-year-old males in the household survey had dropped out of primary or secondary school, the proportion among females was 22 per cent. Many girls and women in the focus group discussions in rural Siaya and

Turkana feel that they are a burden for their families, and are desperate to go to school so that they may contribute to the family's funds and, eventually, relieve the burden by getting married. However, when money is tight, they reported, their education is the first to be sacrificed:

***'Here in Lodwar, you will find that if a girl child wants to go to school, she will be told no, yours is to stay here at home so that she can look after other siblings.'***

**Male focus group participant, Turkana**

***'Education for a boy child is still more important than for the girls, but we want to have jobs too.'***

**Female focus group participant, Turkana**

The other two major barriers to continuing education apply primarily to female respondents. We saw in Chapter 1 of this report that young women see early marriage and early pregnancy as things that threaten to prevent them from achieving their dreams. This fear is rooted in reality – 33 per cent of female respondents who had dropped out of primary or secondary school said they did so because of pregnancy, while 11 per cent ceased studying because they got married. Given that 89 per cent of female respondents saw a good education as key to success in life, it is clear that early marriage and pregnancy are thwarting many girls' prospects.

As is suggested by young people's perception that society will not support them if they do not receive a good education, many of those who have dropped out of or never attended school face a bleak future. The

27 > Gross enrolment figures include students who are of secondary school age but still in primary school, and can therefore exceed 100 per cent.

qualitative researchers noted that ‘out of school youth report feeling lost and hopeless ... the struggle to get through education can tempt youth to give up on long-term visions of success and accept their situation. For some, this can involve engaging in “bad” and sometimes illegal behaviour to make money and alleviate boredom – examples of bad behaviours included drug use, parties, sex and stirring up fights in the community.’

*‘There are a lot of street kids who have dropped out of school and are selling drugs and engaging in bad behaviour in the community – they are always fighting with the police’*

Male, Turkana, aged 17

### Education quality

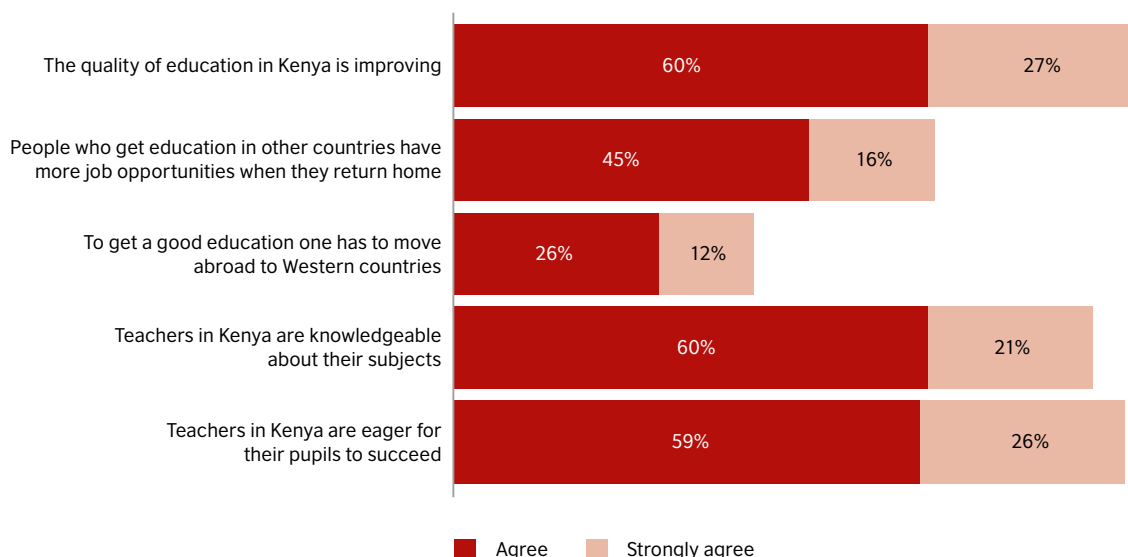
In an effort to match advances in educational enrolment with improvements in educational quality, the Kenyan government has begun to reform the school curriculum to make it more competency-based, with a stronger focus on individual learners’ needs and abilities and on promoting critical thinking and creativity.<sup>28</sup> The reform process and the consultations that are part of it are not yet complete, however, and the views of young people on this topic will therefore, it is hoped, be of interest to policymakers.

On the whole, the young Kenyans we spoke to as part of our household survey have positive views of the quality of the education they receive. Eighty-five per cent agreed that teachers are eager for their pupils to succeed, and

81 per cent agreed that they are knowledgeable about their subjects. There is a general consensus, moreover, that the education system is making headway in terms of quality. Eighty-seven per cent of respondents agreed that education quality is improving, with only eight per cent disagreeing.

There is room, however, for more improvement yet. When young people were asked to compare education in Kenya to that available elsewhere, responses were less positive. Sixty-three per cent of survey respondents agreed that the level of education in Kenya cannot match that in other countries, with 25 per cent disagreeing. And while a small majority of respondents (53 per cent) disagreed that one has to move to the West to get a good education, 38 per cent agreed with this statement (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11:** Agreement with statements on educational quality



In the focus group discussions, we delved deeper into the specific areas where quality needs to be improved. Three in particular were mentioned. The first was school facilities. Many focus group respondents believe that funding which is supposed to be improving facilities is being diverted instead into politicians' and administrators' pockets. Promises of investment often do not materialise – the money, they said, 'disappears,' and the hoped-for improvements do not happen:

*'I went to watch the election in my auntie's house. I saw the president voting in a school. The school he voted in had a mud floor. What does that say? He should be focusing on helping those schools.'*

Female, Siaya

The second area where quality improvements are needed relates to the safety of students. Many young students do not feel physically safe. When asked whether they feel safe from violence at school, only 20 per cent of male and female survey respondents strongly agreed. Fourteen per cent disagreed

and five per cent strongly disagreed. This problem is more serious for young women. Several female qualitative research respondents spoke openly about sexual harassment by teachers. Requests such as asking young women to stay behind after class are common. 'We all know what happens when they ask that,' focus group participants agreed.

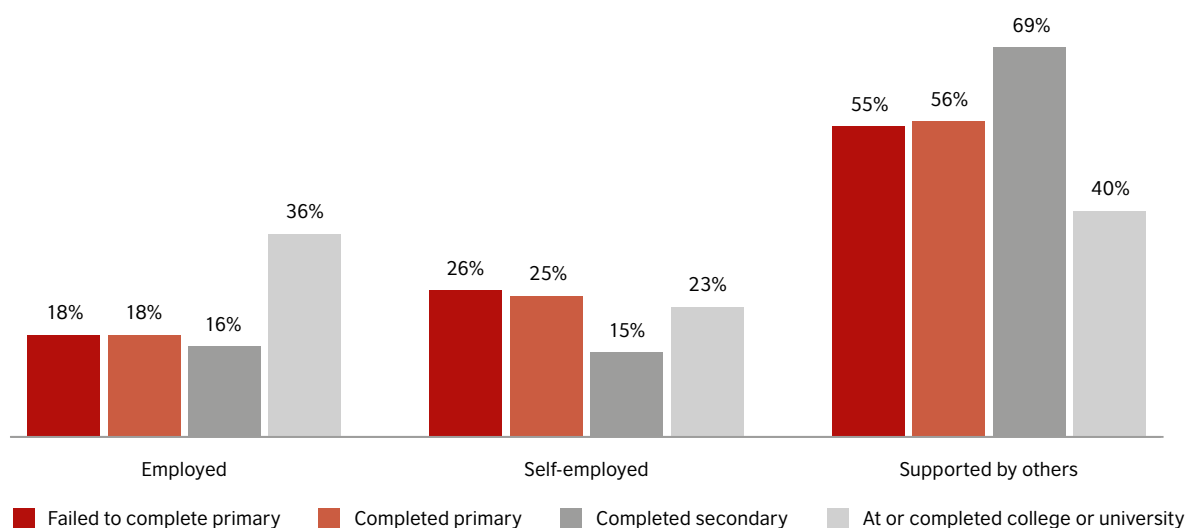
The third aspect of quality where there is significant room for improvement is in preparing students for the workplace. At present, education seems to have only a limited impact on whether or not young people find work. Those who do obtain jobs often find that their schooling has left them ill-equipped to perform them effectively.

Being employed in the formal sector is the aspiration of most young Kenyans, and those with tertiary education are better placed than others to attain this goal. Among respondents aged 19–24 who were no longer in school, those who had studied at university were much more likely (albeit still unlikely) to have a formal sector job than those with lower education levels. Twenty-eight per cent of those who had been to university

are in formal employment, as are 17 per cent of those who had studied at college. Of those who left education after completing either primary or secondary school, on the other hand, just four per cent are in formal sector employment.

To a limited extent, therefore, tertiary education improves graduates' prospects of finding formal employment. Education at lower levels, however, appears to have no impact on employability. Among young people who are no longer in school, those respondents who failed to complete primary school are equally likely to be in work (either employed or self-employed) as those who left education after completing primary school. Moreover, both those who failed to complete primary level and those who left education after completing primary school are more likely to be in work than those who left education after completing secondary school (see Figure 12). This reflects a weakness in the quality of primary and secondary schooling, and a serious failure of education institutions to prepare their graduates for the labour market.

**Figure 12:** Employment status by highest level of education attained (among those no longer in school)





That the education system is perceived as not well tailored to labour market demands was a finding of both the quantitative and qualitative strands of research. When we asked 19- to 24-year-old respondents to the quantitative study who were not in work whether they believed they had an education that would enable them to get a job, 37 per cent said they did not. Forty-two per cent said they did not have a skill they had mastered well enough to make a living. Many among this group also said they lacked the skills needed to search for work. Approximately one-third said they were unable to carry out tasks such as finding out about job vacancies or preparing a CV. One-quarter said they lacked the ability to fill out a job application. Moreover, when we asked those who were employed in the formal or informal sectors whether the education they had received matched the skills required in their work, 62 per cent said they did not match at all, and only 14 per cent said they matched to a large extent.

For some young people, the quality or otherwise of education is irrelevant, since the labour market, they believe, is ruled more by nepotism than by merit. Sixty per cent of respondents agreed that society does not adequately reward educational attainment. Sixty-seven per cent agreed that personal connections are more important to succeed than educational achievements. Possibly as a consequence of this cynicism about the labour market (which we will discuss further in Chapter 3), 13 per cent of respondents agreed that education is ‘a waste of time and money’. In the Eastern Lower, Nyanza North and North Eastern sub-regions, 20 per cent of young respondents feel this way.

*‘There are so many people with good education and degrees. We believe coastal people should at least have a chance to build local things. If there is a building built here, it will not be a local person. Jobs are there – but it’s difficult for us to access. Or they offer rates that are lower than they should be – Ksh 250 a day for building work, for many hours of work. Can you eat from that? Pay rent? The income is so small. There’s no balance. Instead, they bring people from the western communities in and they get the jobs.’*

**Male focus group participant, Mombasa**

*‘I had a big fight with my mum because I told her there was no point in me going to university – I might as well just start hustling now!’*

**Male focus group participant (high school graduate), Nairobi**

*‘In Kenya education means both everything and nothing.’*

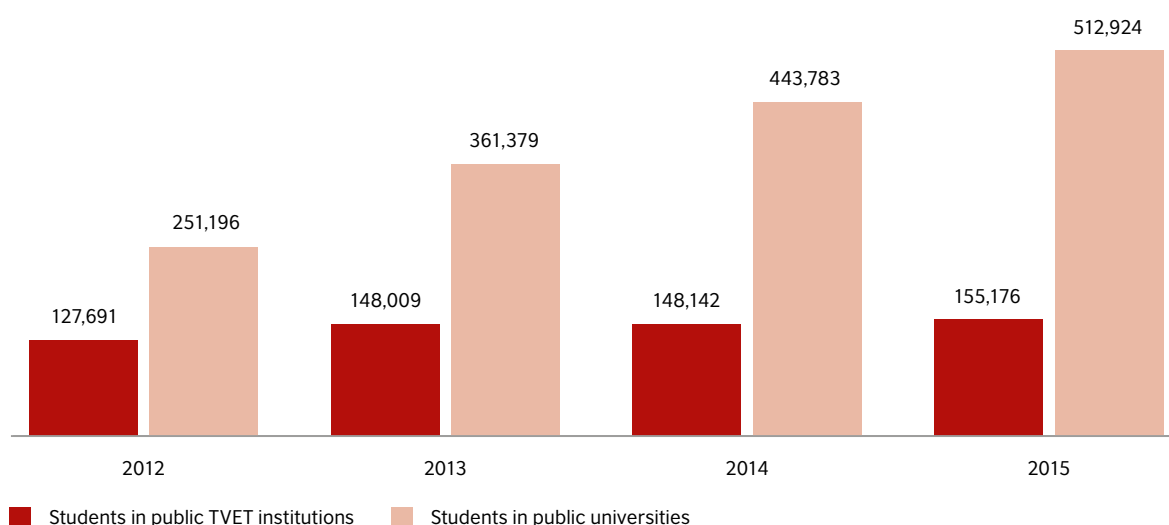
**Male focus group participant, Nairobi**

### **Technical and vocational education and training**

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should theoretically help to fill the gap between traditional curricula and the needs of the workplace. However, young Kenyans are currently not persuaded of TVET’s merits, and while enrolment in public universities has increased rapidly in the last few years, enrolment in TVET institutions has remained static (see Figure 13).



**Figure 13:** Student enrolment in public TVET Institutions and in public universities in Kenya from 2012 to 2015 – based on official numbers from KNBS<sup>29</sup>



Young people interviewed for Next Generation Kenya had mixed feelings about TVET. While 58 per cent of respondents to the household survey agreed with the statement, 'university education is more valuable for my career than vocational or technical colleges', 31 per cent disagreed. This suggests that there is some openness towards technical training as a possible education path. Until now, only 21 per cent of respondents have ever taken a technical or vocational course, but among those who have not done so, 81 per cent say they would be willing to take such a course.

In the focus group discussions, young people were critical of the quality of TVET. Many, the researchers reported, 'equated it with a lack of intellectual prowess and, ultimately, failure.' They feel the TVET system needs an overhaul and a 're-brand', with facilities upgraded, teacher training improved, and curricula modernised and made more relevant. Such a finding tallies with evidence from the literature review of employers' perspectives on TVET. The latter, too, feel that vocational training in Kenya is of inadequate quality. They bemoan in particular the outdated instructional methods, poorly maintained equipment,

weak training of teachers, inflexible and outdated curricula, and a lack of life skills training.<sup>30</sup> As well as failing to respond to the demands of local employers, moreover, TVET courses are seen as failing to equip graduates for the requirements of the global labour market.<sup>31</sup>

*'In university you get to define yourself, to know who you are and interact with many different people. Most people in Siaya believe that polytechnic schools are for failures.'*

Female focus group participant, Siaya

29 > KNBS (2017) *Economic Survey 2017*. Nairobi: KNBS. Information or data on enrolled students in private institutions (TVET and universities) in Kenya is not available.

30 > Nyerere, J (2009) *Technical & Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Sector Mapping in Kenya*. Edukans Foundation.

31 > Ngure, S (2015) An Empirical Evaluation of Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (Tvet) Processes In Kenya. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 2/12: 159–173.





# > CHAPTER 3 – THE EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGE

Employment is a major concern for young people in Kenya. They are frustrated both by the lack of jobs and by inequitable access to the jobs available.

## Key findings

- Sixty-seven per cent of young Kenyans identify finding employment as the main challenge they face in life.
- The problem of employment is not just about the dearth of jobs, but about inequitable access to the jobs that exist.
- Young people feel that they are discriminated against in the labour market because of their youth. The unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is almost triple that among older adults, and 63 per cent of survey respondents agree that it was easier for their parents' generation to have a good career.
- Far from supporting dependants and helping their country capture a demographic dividend, 60 per cent of young people who have left school continue to rely on support from others for their livelihoods.
- Many feel that only the corrupt or well connected have any chance of attaining decent work. Seventy-five per cent of young Kenyans agree that 'knowing people in high places is critical to getting a job'.
- Gender, ethnicity and physical ability are further key determinants of whether young people are likely to find work. Those on the wrong side of these divides have even worse career prospects than do youth as a whole.

- Almost two-thirds of young Kenyans say they would like to emigrate either within or outside Africa in search of better job opportunities.

## Aspirations...

While young Kenyans are broadly satisfied with the education system, they are much less happy with the employment situation in the country. There are two aspects to this challenge – the first is the dearth of jobs, particularly in the formal sector, and the second is inequitable access to those jobs that do exist, with many youth feeling that they are excluded from employment in favour of older generations or in favour of better-connected peers.

Young Kenyans are pessimistic about the employment situation. Without prompting, 67 per cent of those who responded to our household survey told us that finding work is a major challenge they face. When asked whether their expectations have been met regarding progress in the area of employment, only 13 per cent replied in the affirmative, with 64 per cent saying they had not been met. Kenyan youth are more pessimistic than their Tanzanian peers about employment. Twenty-six per cent of young Tanzanians said their expectations had been met on employment – twice the proportion in Kenya. Forty-three per cent of Tanzanians, meanwhile, were optimistic about the future of employment in their

country, compared with only 34 per cent of young Kenyans. And while 41 per cent of young Kenyans are pessimistic about the future of employment, only 28 per cent of Tanzanians felt the same.

In the focus group discussions, too, employment and income-earning emerged as major preoccupations for young people. 'Whether in school and dreaming of the future or out on the streets trying to make a living,' reported the researchers, 'the need to secure financial stability was a matter of pressing urgency and concern for Kenyan youth: they knew that the stakes were high, and hoped they would be able to "game the system" enough to achieve their employment dreams.'

***'Jobs are so important. If you have no job, no home, your voice will not be heard. If you call the police with a problem, they will ignore you. Without a job you will just be living, nothing more.'***

**Male focus group participant, Mombasa**

Given the insecurity they face, many young people view stable, formal sector jobs as the ideal. Seventy-three per cent of household survey respondents said they would prefer to work in the formal sector than in the informal sector, with only 16 per cent preferring the latter.

### ...versus reality

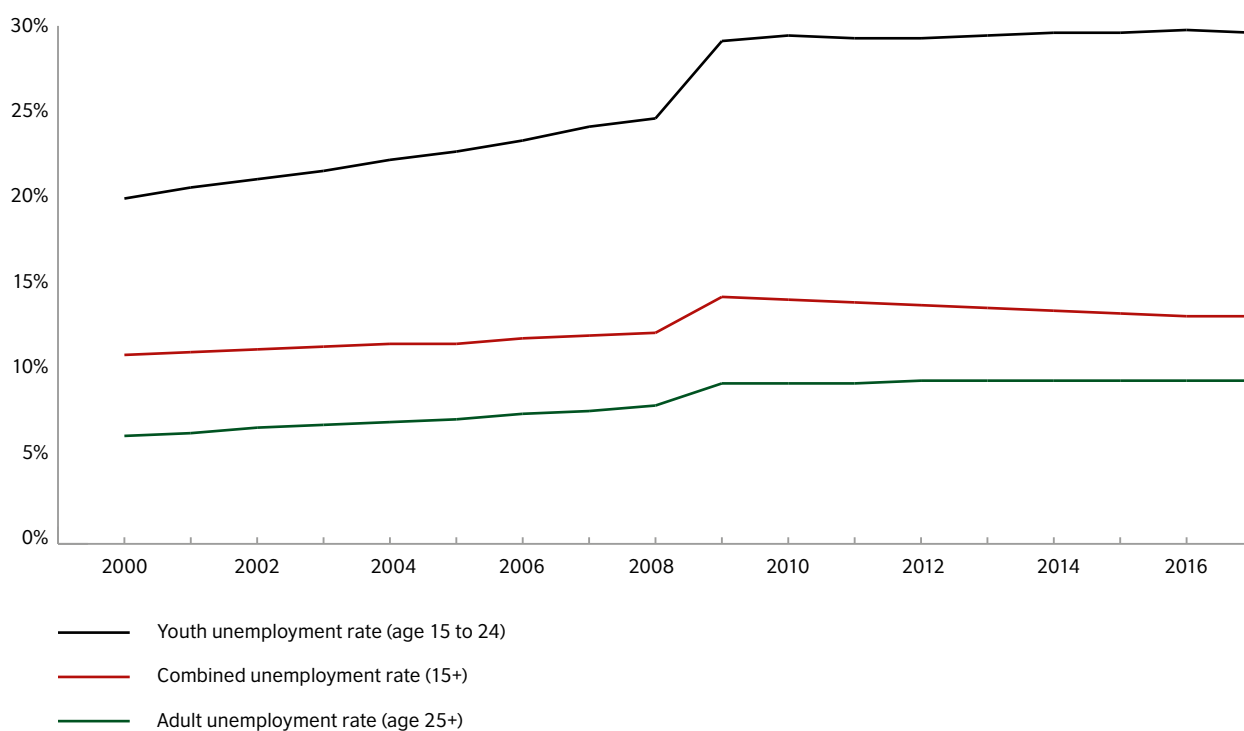
Whatever their aspirations, however, for most young Kenyans the likelihood of attaining their dream job is remote. The literature review conducted for Next Generation Kenya found that

although the country's economy has performed quite strongly in the past two decades, with annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth regularly exceeding five per cent, the youth employment rate 'has shown

little to no positive development.'<sup>32</sup>

As Figure 14 shows, the unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is almost triple that among older adults.

**Figure 14:** Unemployment rates in Kenya, 2000–17 – based on ILO estimates<sup>33</sup>



32 > KNBS (2009) Kenya Population and Housing Census 2009 – Single and Grouped Ages in Years by County and District. Available online at: [www.knbs.or.ke/download/single-and-grouped-ages-in-years-by-county-and-district](http://www.knbs.or.ke/download/single-and-grouped-ages-in-years-by-county-and-district)

33 > ILO (2016) Unemployment rate – ILO modelled estimates, November 2016.

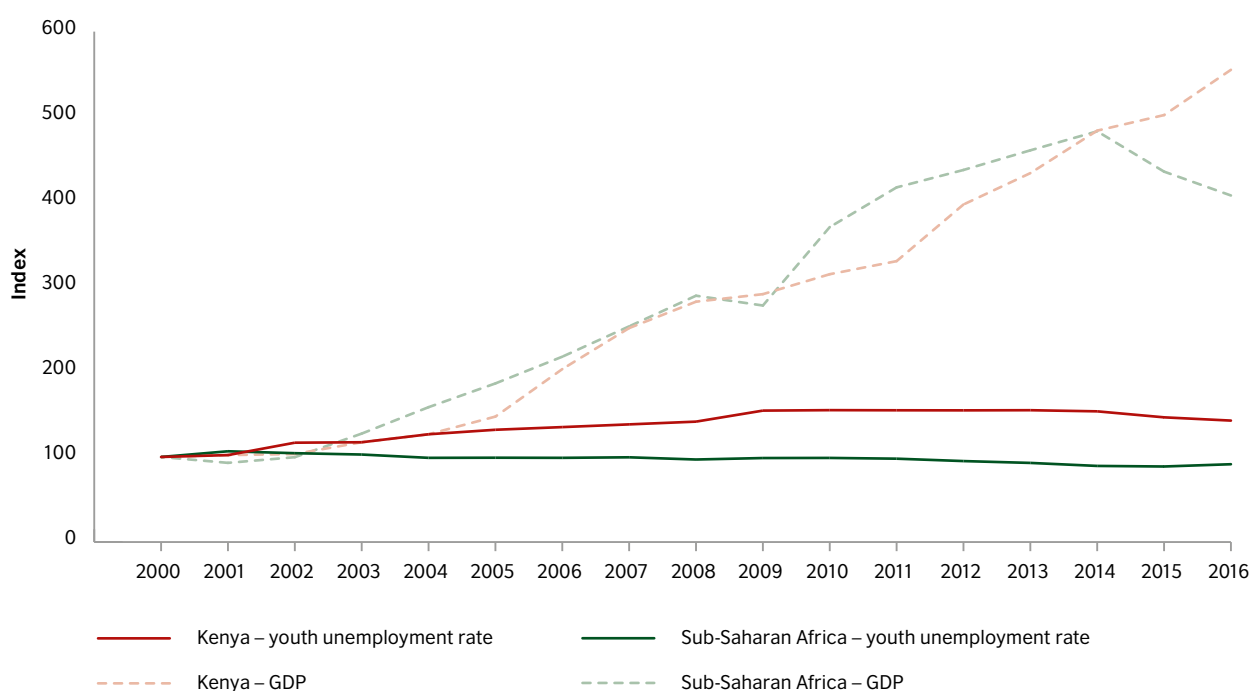


Young Kenyans fare poorly on employment in comparison with their peers elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Although Kenya's economy has grown faster than the continental average since 2000, youth unemployment is both

higher than the Sub-Saharan average and, unlike in other African countries, has increased over the period (see Figure 15).

**Figure 15:** Comparative change in GDP and youth unemployment rates in Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa from 2000 to 2016; the respective numbers for 2000 have been levelled at 100 – based on ILO estimates and World Bank Data<sup>34</sup>

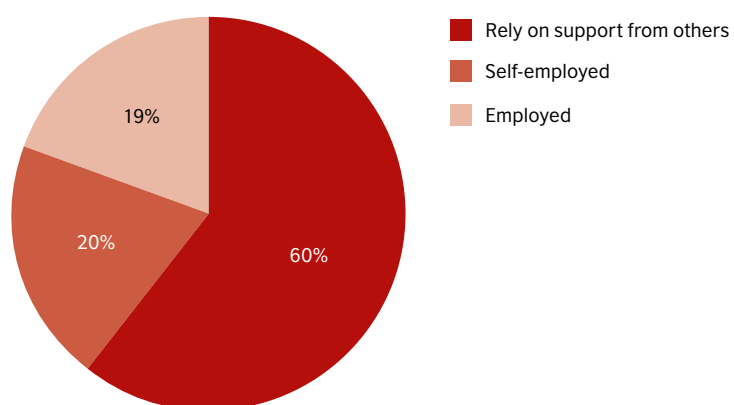


For a country to capture a demographic dividend, it needs its young adults to be supporting child and elderly dependants rather than relying on support from others. In Kenya, 73 per cent of 15- to 24-year-olds continue to rely on others for their livelihoods. Only 13 per cent reported that their main source of livelihood was employment, and only 14 per cent that it was self-employment.

Urban respondents are more likely to be in work than rural respondents. Among urban youth, 29 per cent are in work, compared with 25 per cent of their rural peers. In terms of gender, significantly more males are in work than females. While 32 per cent of males are either employed or self-employed, the proportion among females is just 21 per cent.

When this question is looked at only among those young people who are no longer in school (and are therefore potentially looking for work), it emerges that 19 per cent are employed and 20 per cent self-employed. Sixty per cent rely on support from others (see Figure 16). That such a high proportion of young people are out of work and out of school suggests that the ILO statistics cited above may significantly underestimate youth unemployment.

34 > *Ibid.*; World Bank (2017) GDP (current US\$). Available online at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>

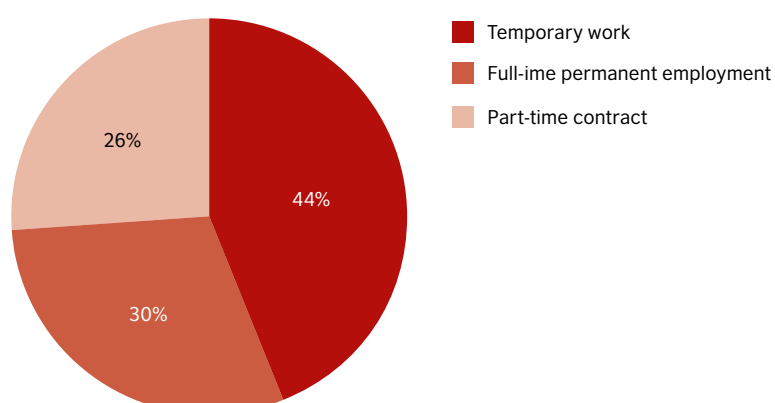
**Figure 16:** Source of livelihood of youth who are not in school

At a geographical level, the highest proportion of young people who are employed is found in the Eastern Upper sub-region (25 per cent), followed by Nairobi (22 per cent) and Eastern Lower (21 per cent). The Coast, Western, Nyanza North and Rift Valley Central sub-regions have the highest shares of

young people who rely on support from others. In each of these sub-regions, around four in five respondents falls into this bracket.<sup>35</sup>

Even for the lucky few who find salaried employment, work is generally precarious and of low quality. More than

two-thirds of those who are employed are either on part-time contracts or in temporary work. Only 30 per cent are in full-time permanent employment (see Figure 17).

**Figure 17:** Type of jobs held by those who are employed

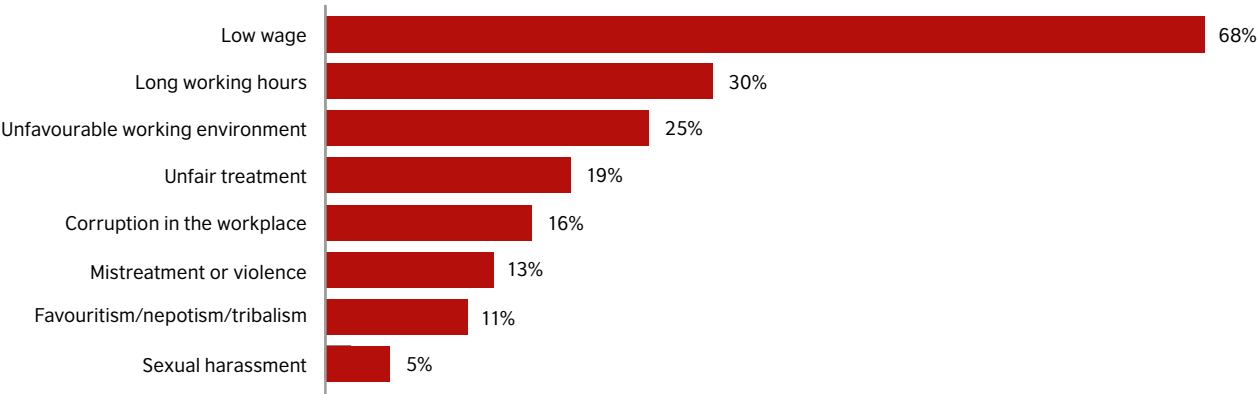
35 > Counties in Rift Valley Central are: Baringo, Bomet, Elgeyo Marakwet, Laikipia, Nakuru, Nandi, Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu.

Most of the work young employed people do requires only minimal training. Sixty-one per cent of those in work describe it as semi-skilled or unskilled manual work for which they were not trained. Eighteen per cent carry out skilled manual work for which they were trained, with only 11 per cent performing work that requires professional qualifications, and seven per cent employed as technical

specialists. The main sectors that employ young people are the *jua kali* sector (informal, small-scale manufacturing), where 18 per cent of those who are employed work; building and construction (13 per cent); and agriculture (12 per cent).  
  
Around the world, low-skilled labour is less rewarding than high-skilled work, and Kenya is no exception. When we asked about the challenges faced by

young employees, 68 per cent cited low wages, 30 per cent long working hours, and 25 per cent an unfavourable working environment (see Figure 18). Other challenges included unfair treatment, corruption in the workplace, and mistreatment or violence. Among female respondents, nine per cent of those who are employed reported sexual harassment as a challenge in the workplace.

Figure 18: Challenges faced by employees



An unfair system

Kenyan youth perceive two aspects to the employment problem. The first is the dearth of jobs – 61 per cent of household survey respondents agreed that ‘there are not enough job prospects in my country’, and only 28 per cent disagreed. Perhaps more important, however – and certainly easier for policymakers to tackle in the short-term – is the second aspect of the problem: the unfairness of a labour market that is stacked against youth.

Young Kenyans can see that there are opportunities in the labour market, but they are unable to access them. Two-thirds agreed that there is a ‘wide range of employment opportunities’ in the country (compared with only one-third of Tanzanians). More than two-thirds agreed that ‘there is a wide choice of different industries and sectors’, and that ‘there are opportunities in my areas of interest’.

Despite this, however, a majority of respondents feel that they will have greater prospects of obtaining employment if they leave Kenya. When asked if they would like to migrate to another country within Africa for ‘better job opportunities’, 65 per cent replied in the affirmative, compared with 30 per cent who disagreed. Asked if they would like to migrate outside Africa, the proportions were similar.

This disconnect between young people's perception that there are jobs in the Kenyan labour market and their pessimism about their own employment prospects suggests there are blockages preventing them from seizing the opportunities. Young people have a strong sense that the labour market is rigged against them and in favour of older adults. As discussed above, unemployment rates among 15- to 24-year-olds are triple those among older Kenyans, and youth believe they are being denied opportunities that are open to their elders. Sixty-three per cent of survey respondents agreed that it was easier for their parents' generation to have a good career, with only 24 per cent disagreeing:

*'Getting people to employ us – it's like a dream that you will probably die without achieving. Our youths have so much talent – youth need to be given access to employment.'*

**Male focus group participant, Mombasa**

Many young people believe that it is only the corrupt who can bridge this inter-generational gulf. Whatever their credentials, and however hard they work, they believe they will only succeed in their careers if they have either the right connections to benefit from nepotism or enough money to pay bribes to access jobs or start-up funds. 'It's about witnessing a corrupt and unequal system,' as one young woman in Nairobi put it. Of respondents to the household survey, 75 per cent agreed that 'knowing people in high places is critical to getting a job'. Twenty-six per

cent strongly agreed with this statement. Across genders, in both urban and rural areas and across sub-regions, young people agreed that who you know is crucial to finding salaried employment.

*'I have worked really hard to get good grades and I am a well-read, smart person. It's so incredibly demoralising that some guy who is related to some politician and barely finished high school is probably going to steal my dream job!'*

**Female, Nairobi**

*'When you have money, you can get away with anything.'*

**Female, Nairobi, aged 17**

*'It's not working hard, it is working smart.'*

**Male, Nairobi**

*'If you want to be successful in Kenya, you have to give up some morals.'*

**Male, Turkana**

While young people believe the labour market discriminates against youth in general, some segments of the youth population fare worse than others. Gender, ethnicity and physical ability are the main dividing lines determining whether, as a young person, you have even a slim prospect of decent employment.

Women suffer discrimination both in accessing jobs and once they are in the workplace. Female participation in the workforce stood at 30 per cent in 2013, six percentage points lower than that of males.<sup>36</sup> Among the reasons for

this, as discussed in the Next Generation Kenya literature review, are unequal educational outcomes, policies such as mandatory paid maternity leave that make employers reluctant to hire women, social norms that expect women and not men to perform domestic duties, and the patriarchal culture that gives women little prospect of owning or inheriting land or of obtaining credit.<sup>37</sup>

A significant minority of young women interviewed for our research had experienced gender discrimination in their efforts to find work. Although 64 per cent of those who responded to the household survey agreed with the statement, 'there is equal opportunity employment for young men and young women', 24 per cent disagreed. Some women in the focus groups reported being asked for sexual favours as a condition of employment. Others reported being sexually harassed at work by customers, colleagues and bosses. Even highly educated women, moreover, feel there is a glass ceiling that stops them advancing to the highest echelons of companies:

*'I have experienced getting a job and the boss had his own interests. He wanted me to be his mistress, not just his employee.'*

**Female, Siaya, aged 19**

*'Office jobs in Kenya are SUCH a boys' club – I wouldn't feel safe or comfortable being one of the only women in an office.'*

**Female, Nairobi**

36 > Escudero, V and López Mourello, E (2013) *Understanding the drivers of the youth labour market in Kenya*. ILO Research Paper No. 8. Geneva: International Labour Office; Omolo, J (2012) *Youth Employment in Kenya: Analysis of Labour Market and Policy Interventions*. FES Kenya Occasional Paper, No. 1; Owino, EA, Owino, JO and Odundo, PA (2016) Social Barriers to Female Youth Employment in the Private Formal Sector in Kenya: Case of Kawangware Location in Nairobi County and East Kanyada Location in Homa-Bay County. *International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection* 4/7: 57–69; Wamuthenya, WR (2010) *Determinants of Employment in the Formal and Informal Sectors of the Urban Areas of Kenya*. Nairobi: African Economic Research Consortium.

37 > Samuel Hall (2017) *op. cit.*

*'We claim to be all about gender equality now, but women never become CEOs.'*

**Female, Mombasa**

*'You find there's no equality in business leadership: it's all one gender, most of them are men. And you can see from government even that there is no balance. Or you find a male boss employing a female because he knows he can take advantage of her. This issue of balance is so important. Girls are asked to sleep with people to get a job; it's an injustice.'*

**Male, Mombasa**

A second manifestation of the unfairness of the labour market is ethnic favouritism. The latter is of slightly more concern to young respondents – including to young women – than is favouritism based on gender. Overall, 61 per cent of household survey respondents agreed that 'there are equal employment opportunities regardless of which ethnic group you belong to'. Twenty-nine per cent disagreed. When asked if their expectations have been met over reducing inequality between ethnic groups, however, only 26 per cent said they had been met, compared with 49 per cent who said they had not.

Frustration with ethnic favouritism is stronger in some parts of the country than others. In Nairobi, 51 per cent of respondents disagreed that there are equal employment opportunities for all ethnic groups (compared with 29 per cent nationwide). In the North Eastern and Western sub-regions, 37 per cent disagreed.

Many participants in the focus groups echoed these concerns – jobs and promotions, they felt, too often depend on one's ethnic origins rather than on merit. As one young man in Siaya summarised:

*'Someone can go to the government to look for a job, and you find that when you go, you are told that you cannot look for a job. You say your name and your name betrays you. Someone else will go for the job and be given it because they are from a particular tribe. Even in the cities, you find that most of the people who get the jobs are people who know each other.'*

The third group that experiences inequitable access to jobs are young people with disabilities or who are in poor health. Such is the competition for jobs that any physical vulnerability is seen as imperilling employment prospects and potentially destroying any hope young people may have had of career success.

Youth with disabilities reported in the focus groups that they are excluded from job opportunities either because of cultural norms that consider them incapable of working or because employers are unwilling to make alterations to the working environment to accommodate their needs. For example, one young woman with mobility issues told the researchers that she dreamed of becoming a doctor or a CEO, which would allow her to give back by creating jobs and wealth within her community. However, lack of basic provisions in her community like ramps to get up the stairs meant that she knew she had to be very realistic in her job choices – and her 'likely' job goal was to work in a local hotel which was accessible to someone with mobility issues... She knew she presented 'more work' for employers, who may choose not to hire her at all, or to pass her over for promotions against able-bodied staff.

## The entrepreneurial alternative

Although they are faced with a highly competitive and at times deeply unfair labour market, many young Kenyans are determined to find ways to thrive professionally. Their resilience is demonstrated by the fact that despite the challenges, 83 per cent of those interviewed for the quantitative research strand agreed with the statement, 'I am confident that I will be able to realise my full potential in my career'.

That many young Kenyans see employment in the form of a salaried job as a remote prospect is a realistic assessment in the current labour market. Undeterred, many choose or plan to set up their own businesses instead. When they were given a list of possible ideal jobs, 53 per cent of survey respondents said that in a perfect world they would like to be a self-employed businessperson. A further six per cent would like to be self-employed farmers. Self-employment, as the qualitative researchers observed, is regarded as 'a way to work around the corrupt structures and hierarchical systems of traditional office jobs and create your own future.' Even young people who are still in school, they added, have often begun to hustle on the side, to support their education, fund their leisure or simply to put food on the table at home.

*'If I start my own business, it's my responsibility and no one can take that away from me – no one can say "oh you're too young, you don't know what you're doing" because I will be the owner!'*

**Male, Nairobi**

*'The idea of having to fight my way to the top of a hierarchical company is exhausting to even think about – I'd rather start something fresh and innovative with like-minded people my own age.'*

**Male, Nairobi**



Although interested in self-employment, however, few young people have successful careers as entrepreneurs. Of those who responded to the household survey, only 14 per cent reported being self-employed, with the proportion rising to 20 per cent among 19- to 24-year-olds. The main obstacle preventing young people setting up as entrepreneurs is a lack of capital. When we asked all survey respondents what they saw as the main barriers to starting a business, 65 per cent cited a lack of access to start-up finance. The second most important barrier – lack of skills and experience – was cited by only 16 per cent. When we asked those respondents who were already in self-employment what they regarded as their main challenges, lack of capital – cited by 34 per cent – was again by far the most important.

Young people in the focus groups remarked that existing financial support is too often difficult to access or corruptly distributed. The following comments are indicative of young people's frustrations with current financing initiatives:

*'My friend applied for a procurement tender and the officer told him he wanted 80 per cent of what he was going to make. He complied and then the officer said he wanted to take 90 per cent.'*

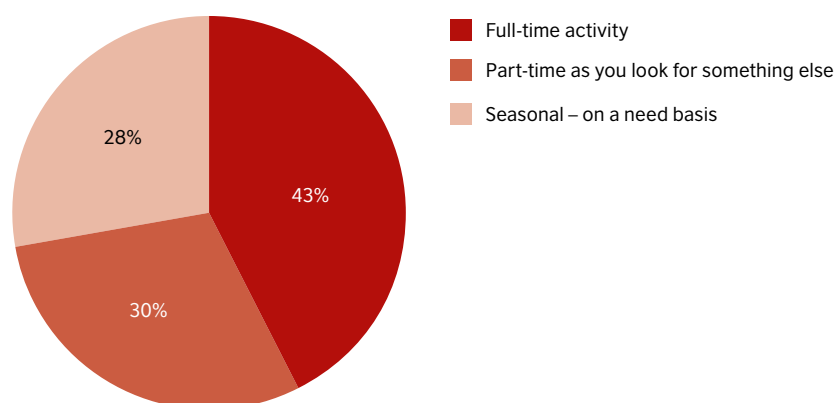
Male, Nairobi

*'I heard that to access the YEDF [Youth Enterprise Development Fund] you have to form a group of at least 20 people to go into business with you, but I don't even know 20 people!'*

Male, Siaya

As is the case for young Kenyans in jobs, self-employed work is often precarious and of low quality. Only 43 per cent of young entrepreneurs work full-time, with the remainder working seasonally or part-time as they look for something else (see Figure 19). Perhaps as a consequence, self-employment – at least, the kinds of self-employment that young people can realistically aspire to – is sometimes a last resort rather than a concrete choice. When asked what had influenced them to seek self-employment, 40 per cent cited an interest in becoming an entrepreneur or businessperson, but 34 per cent said they had not been able to find any other job to do and 12 per cent that they had not possessed the right qualifications to seek employment.

**Figure 19:** Work status of the self-employed



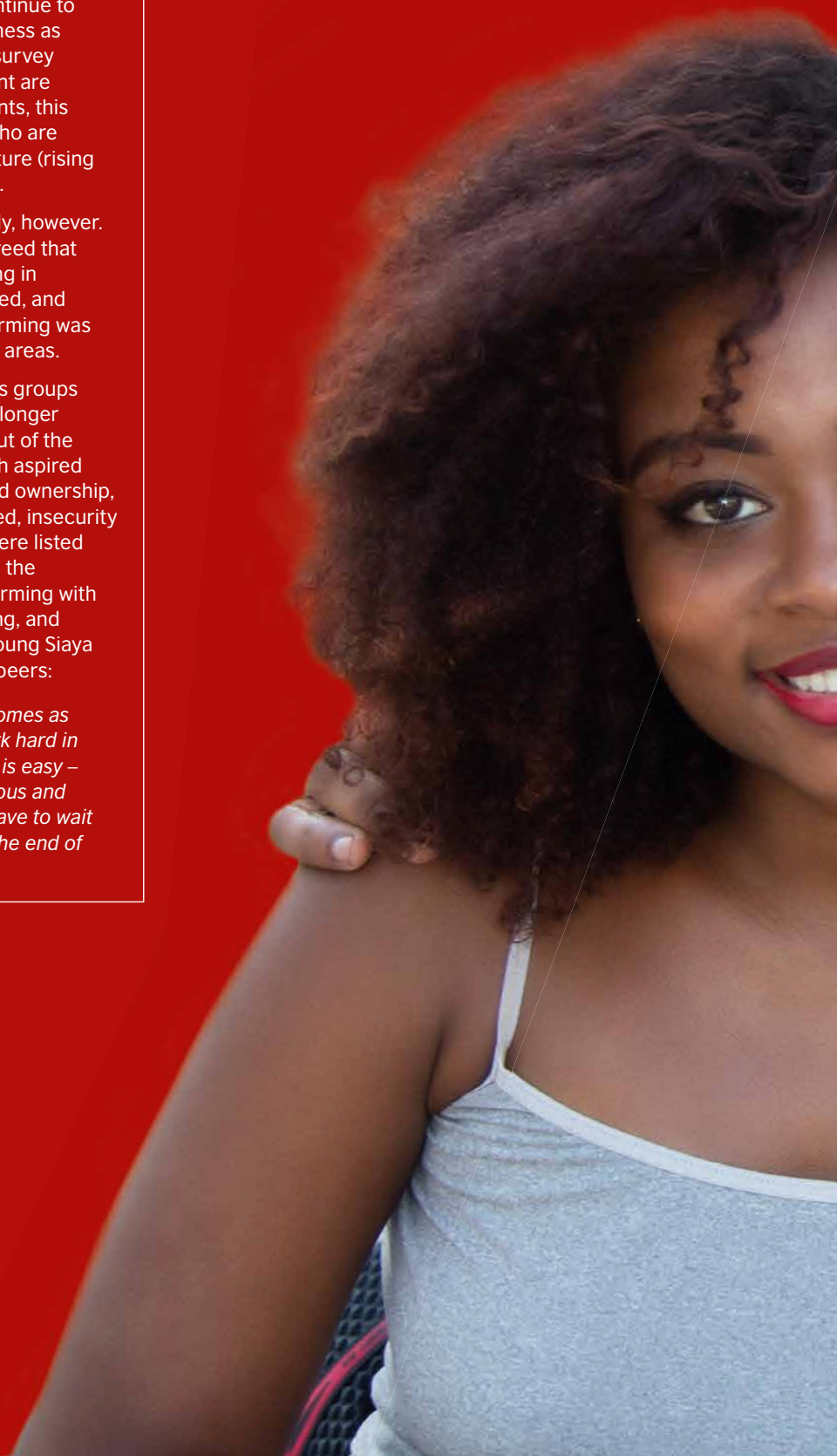
### Forgotten farming

While large numbers of young Kenyans continue to work in agriculture, the sector's attractiveness as a career option is waning. Of those of our survey respondents who are employed, 12 per cent are working in farming. Among rural respondents, this proportion rises to 16 per cent. Of those who are self-employed, 26 per cent work in agriculture (rising to 32 per cent among rural entrepreneurs).

This career choice is often made reluctantly, however. Respondents were asked whether they agreed that their generation 'is not interested in working in agriculture'. Twenty per cent strongly agreed, and a further 39 per cent agreed. Interest in farming was only slightly stronger in rural than in urban areas.

Young people who participated in the focus groups were also of the opinion that farming is no longer attractive for youth. Only two individuals out of the 61 who took part in the qualitative research aspired to work in the sector. Concerns around land ownership, the harshness of the manual labour required, insecurity surrounding crop yields, and the climate were listed as the main deterrents. 'Even in lush Siaya,' the researchers reported, 'youth associated farming with subsistence rather than commercial farming, and equated agricultural work with failure.' A young Siaya man summarised the views of many of his peers:

*'For people in this community agriculture comes as a last option ... Maybe people who don't work hard in school settle in agriculture. In office work it is easy – you just sit and work online. Farming is tedious and hard work. And when you plant crops you have to wait for them to mature. In white-collar jobs, at the end of every month you are assured of some pay.'*





# > CHAPTER 4 – YOUTH, SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Young people are eager to participate in building their communities. They want their voices to matter, but they face multiple forms of exclusion, mostly based on hierarchy and patriarchy.

## Key findings

- Young Kenyans feel marginalised by their elders not just from the workplace but from society and politics. Only 44 per cent feel Kenyan society listens to youth. Forty-nine per cent believe it does not. In the focus groups, not a single young person felt that youth had a voice in Kenya, or that they did personally.
- Women, people with disabilities and young people from lower socio-economic groups feel their opinions are even less valued than those of youth in general.
- Youth participation in the community and in politics is seen as much weaker in Kenya than in Tanzania. In Tanzania, more than 70 per cent of young people believe young people's participation in both their community and in politics and decision-making is high. In Kenya, less than 40 per cent believe participation in either is high.
- Young Kenyans are eager for greater engagement in the community and political decision-making that shapes their lives and their country's future. Forty-four per cent, for example, would consider standing for public office. Because of their age, however, they feel they are not taken seriously by those in authority.
- Sixty-five per cent of young people feel the government does not provide enough support to youth. Only 24 per cent are aware of any policy or programme that empowers youth.
- Many young people are disillusioned with being excluded from their economy and their society. They are resentful of peers who are successful, and of their elders. Drug and alcohol use, unsafe sex, crime and violence appear to be on the increase.
- Thirty-five per cent of young people are worried about the level of violence in society, and 25 per cent about the level of crime (in Tanzania, just two per cent were similarly worried).
- Religious and ethnic conflict are further sources of concern. Although generally tolerant of other religions and ethnicities themselves, 72 per cent of young people believe bad feeling between ethnic groups is getting worse. Fifty-seven per cent believe bad feeling between religions is getting worse.

## The voiceless

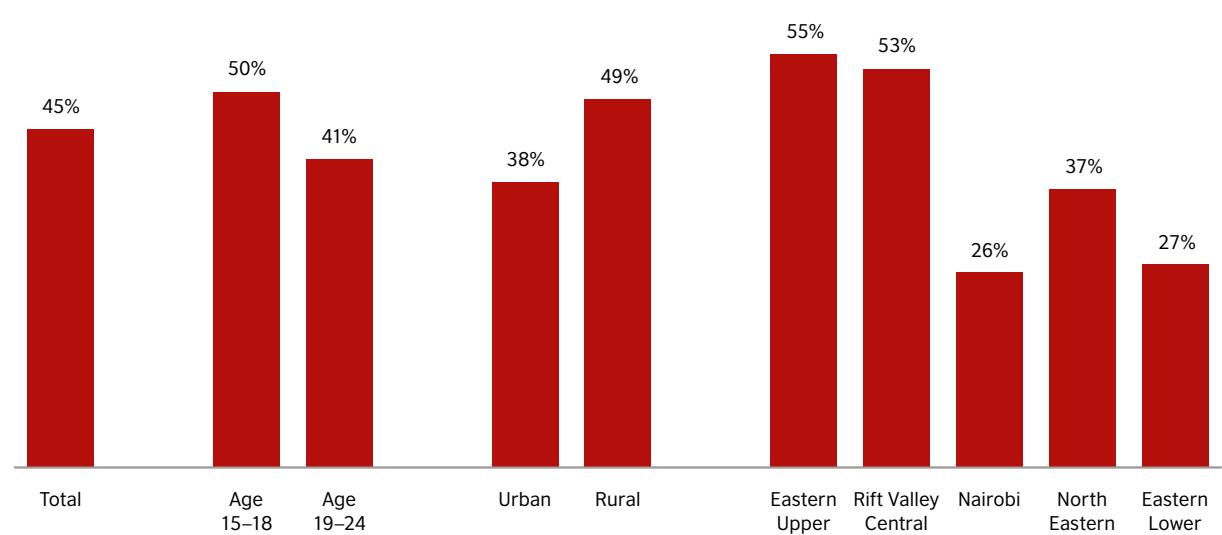
Exclusion from employment opportunities is one manifestation of young people's marginalisation in Kenyan society. Equally important is their exclusion from public life. Kenyan youth are not just side-lined in the labour market, but in their communities and in the political sphere too. If these multiple forms of exclusion persist, demographic disaster becomes ever more likely. In this part of the report, we assess the extent to which Kenyan society listens to youth, and ask whether young people are encouraged and enabled to play their full part in the decisions and initiatives that shape their lives.

Young people have a strong sense of voicelessness. Forty-nine per cent of respondents to the household survey feel that Kenyan society does not listen to young people. Forty-four per cent believe they are listened to.

As young people grow older, they become more convinced that they are not listened to. Fifty per cent of 15- to 18-year-old respondents believe Kenyan society listens to youth, but this proportion falls to 41 per cent among 19- to 24-year-olds. Urban youth, and those from the Nairobi, Eastern Lower and North Eastern sub-regions are the most cynical in this respect (see Figure 20). In Nairobi, only 26 per cent of respondents believe they are listened to.



**Figure 20:** Agreement that Kenyan society listens to young people



In the focus group discussions, there was also a strong sense that youth were not taken seriously. Young people are eager to be heard, and for their views to be taken into account by decision-makers. They believe that with their talent and creativity they have much to contribute to their country, but in what has traditionally been a hierarchical culture, age and experience continue to outweigh education and knowledge. Not a single young person in any of the qualitative discussions felt that young people had a voice in Kenya, or that they did personally. ‘From the gated communities of Loresho to the streets of Kapedo,’ the researchers

wrote, ‘youth agree on one thing: they do not feel their voices are heard.’ Instead, voice and influence are seen as the preserve of the privileged few – the affluent and those close to power:

*‘Our voices have been assumed, not heard.’*

Male, Nairobi

*‘I don’t think there’s anything you can do to be heard as a youth. There’s no way to air your views and have people listen to you.’*

Male, Mombasa

The problem of young people’s lack of voice is multi-layered. As one young person in Nairobi observed, ‘it isn’t just bloated government structures, it exists at every level of our society – in our education, our jobs and even our families.’ When focus group participants were asked what they would say if they could give a message to those in power, the following responses were typical:

*‘I would tell the people in power to listen to our ideas and take us seriously!’*

*‘Stop ignoring us!’*

*‘Appreciate the young people, we know more than you think we do.’*



Some groups feel more excluded than others. Women, people with disabilities and youth from lower socio-economic groups feel their opinions are even less valued than those of young people in general. Young women in lower-income groups told the qualitative research team that even when they report instances of harassment or abuse to their own parents, for example, they are not taken seriously, but instead are quickly dismissed and silenced. A young man in Turkana, meanwhile, reported that young people with disabilities 'are usually locked up and not allowed to leave their house because of the shame on the family.'

### Participation in the community

To examine this feeling of voicelessness in more depth, the household survey questionnaire broke down engagement with society into community participation and political participation. We will discuss each in turn.

Youth participation in the community is perceived to be much weaker in Kenya than in neighbouring Tanzania. Seventy-three per cent of respondents to the Next Generation Tanzania survey felt that youth participation in the community was high. In Kenya, only 30 per cent felt the same. Sixty-one per cent of young Kenyans said that participation is low, and nine per cent said there was no participation at all.

When asked about their own participation as individuals, on the other hand, 85 per cent of Kenyan respondents said they felt part of the community (in Tanzania, 97 per cent of respondents felt the

same). Most engaged were rural respondents and those from the Coast, Nyanza North and Nyanza South sub-regions, while urban respondents and those from Nairobi and the North East were the least engaged.

In seeking to understand the discrepancy between most individuals' sense that they are part of the community and their feeling that youth as a whole do not participate in community activities, it appears that while young people are invited to and expected to attend ceremonial activities – which gives them some sense of being part of the community – they are often excluded from more responsible roles involving decision-making and implementing development plans. Those young people who felt part of the community mostly felt this way because they attended social activities such as weddings and funerals. Sixty-one per cent of them, unprompted, said this was why they felt part of the community. Thirty-one per cent said they participated in community development activities such as cleaning the local environment or repairing roads and bridges, but only nine per cent said they were involved in planning and decision-making.

Young people in the focus groups also noted that when it comes to important community decisions and projects, youth are not involved. For example, they spoke of community meetings (known as *barazas*), which are an important part of social life and a site for community decision-making. Youth are often explicitly told they cannot participate in these meetings because they are too young. 'When we try to say

something,' reported a young man in Turkana, 'we are told "not now, we are discussing adult things"'. This is a source of great frustration to young people.

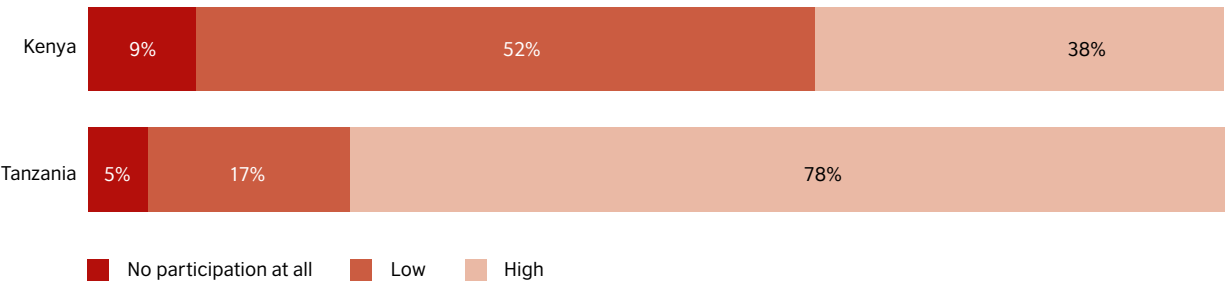
While most young Kenyans feel the community provides them with sufficient support, a significant minority feel that it is not supportive, and Kenyans are less satisfied than Tanzanians in this regard. Fifty-seven per cent of those we surveyed feel the community is supportive to youth, and 43 per cent that it is not supportive. In Tanzania, 75 per cent of young respondents felt the community was supportive.

Even if they were given more opportunities to participate in the community, some young people say that the education they received has left them ill-equipped to engage productively. In focusing on rote learning, schools fail to teach youth to think critically and to find their unique voice. As a young woman in Nairobi put it, 'youth are really good at reciting facts but are unable to tell you how they feel about important issues in our society.'

### Participation in politics

As with engagement in the community, youth involvement in politics is regarded as much weaker in Kenya than in Tanzania. Seventy-eight per cent of young Tanzanians said that youth participation in politics and decision-making was high, compared with only 38 per cent of young Kenyans. Nine per cent of young Kenyans felt that such engagement was non-existent, and 52 per cent that it was low (see Figure 21).

Figure 21: Perceived level of youth participation in politics and decision-making

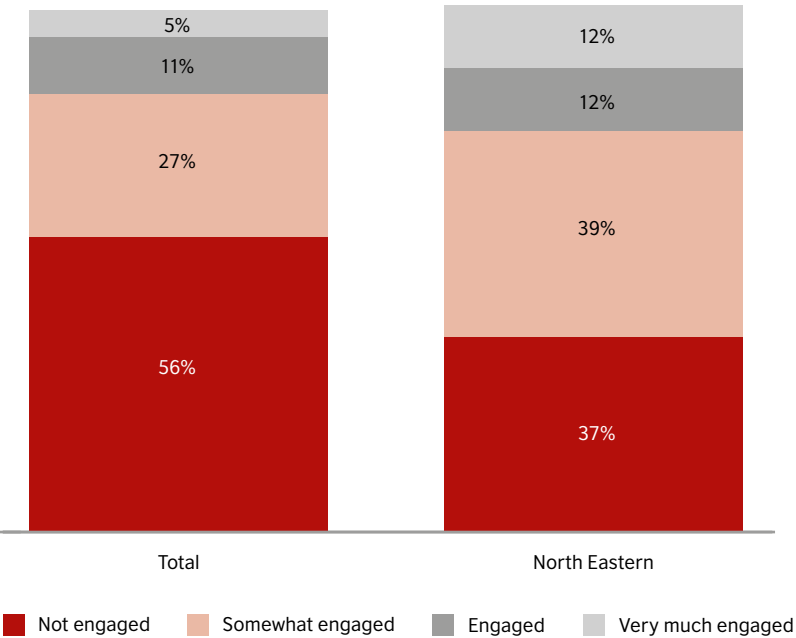


When asked about their own engagement with government and politics, 56 per cent of respondents said they were not engaged. Only five per cent were ‘very much engaged’ and a

further 11 per cent were ‘engaged’. Much the most engaged respondent group were young people from the North Eastern sub-region (comprising the counties of Wajir, Mandera and

Garissa – see Figure 22). Here, only 37 per cent described themselves as not engaged, while 12 per cent were very much engaged.

Figure 22: To what extent are you engaged with government and politics?



There is an unmet demand among young Kenyans for greater engagement in politics. Currently, their interest in the subject is greater than their involvement. Only one-quarter of respondents, for example, said they never discussed politics, with 41 per cent saying they discuss the subject quite often or very often. Almost half of respondents (44 per cent), moreover, would consider standing for public office. In the North East and Nyanza North sub-regions, more than half would consider such a move.

The research for Next Generation Kenya took place in late 2017, when the country held two general elections. When we asked young people about their enthusiasm for today's electoral system and its main players, responses varied widely between different sub-regions. Overall, 84 per cent of household survey respondents feel it is important to vote in elections, but this high figure masks quite large differences between respondent groups. In the Coast, Central and Rift Valley Central sub-regions, more than 90 per cent said voting is important. In Nairobi, Nyanza South and the North East, on the other hand, this proportion falls below 80 per cent, and in the Eastern Lower sub-region to just 66 per cent.

When we asked whether respondents were satisfied with the current government's performance, responses also varied by sub-region. Patterns of satisfaction and dissatisfaction to a large extent mirrored those regarding the importance of voting. Overall, 44 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the government's performance and

56 per cent dissatisfied.<sup>38</sup> In the Central and Rift Valley Central sub-regions, where enthusiasm for voting is strong, more respondents were satisfied with the government than dissatisfied, whereas in every other region the reverse was the case. Dissatisfaction was sharpest in Nairobi, the North East and Nyanza North sub-regions. In the North East, 39 per cent of respondents were completely dissatisfied (giving a score of one out of ten), and in Nairobi 27 per cent were completely dissatisfied. Young people in the latter two sub-regions are also among the most cynical about the importance of voting.

These mixed perceptions of the government may reflect young people's perception that it is not supportive of youth. Sixty-five per cent of survey respondents felt the government does not provide enough support to young people. In the Nairobi and Eastern Lower sub-regions – two of the areas where cynicism over voting was strongest – more than three in four respondents felt it does not do enough. Only 24 per cent of young people, moreover, are aware of any policy or programme that empowers youth (of these, 54 per cent are aware of the National Youth Service, and nine per cent of the Youth Fund, with no other programme recalled by more than one per cent of these respondents). Knowledge of youth programmes is unevenly distributed, with young people in those regions furthest from Nairobi less aware of government efforts. In the North Eastern, Western, Rift Valley North and Coast sub-regions, fewer than one in five young people is aware of a programme.

Many Kenyans of all ages hoped that devolving power to county level would make for a fairer distribution of resources and allow for officials to be held to account for delivering on their promises. Young people's perceptions of the new system, however, are mixed. A few focus group participants felt that their voice had become more influential since the introduction of devolved government, and also since the installation of youth and women's representatives:

*'The MCA<sup>39</sup> here is a youth – and you know when you speak to him that he will understand you. He is someone we went to school with and he will help us. He comes and listens to groups – women, youth – and tells us what is available. People have applied for loans for example to apply for water taps in the community. People didn't know that money was available. He helps create bursary forms, helps connect you. The door is always open. Some are so old and they do not want to listen, so you do not open up and say what you need to say.'*

Female focus group participant, Mombasa

*'It is good that we have the woman's representative; I aspire to be like her when I grow up. She speaks for women in the area.'*

Female focus group participant, Siaya

38 > With satisfaction defined as a score of between six and ten out of ten, and dissatisfaction by a score of between one and five.

39 > Member of the County Assembly.

Participants elsewhere, however, felt that MCAs were corrupt and self-serving, or that they lacked the courage or influence to effect change:

*‘Even in our county government now there is a youth, but he just does what the others tell him; he doesn’t speak up for us.’*

Male, Turkana

*‘MCAs don’t listen to the typical young person in Siaya, although they can sometimes help on issues like employment and job opportunities. The national government is no help at all. But the MCAs give job opportunities to their families only. It is biased – it is favouritism. He does not consider the people he is serving. He is thinking five years away – he wants to move to a bigger post and have more power. He doesn’t consider the youths. And the people around the MCA – you go to them to see the MCA and they ask for money. You have to bribe them to see the MCA.’*

Male, Siaya

*‘They are all the same people – the police, the MCAs. They just call each other and say to keep collecting money from us. The people are not heard. If you raise an issue nothing will be followed up. The police are being influenced too.’*

Male, Mombasa

## The cost of failure

The converse of a demographic dividend, where burgeoning youth generations cannot be accommodated into the workforce or into decision-making structures and turn their energies instead to less constructive activities, is demographic disaster. If over the next two decades young people are unable to find a place in the social, economic and political fabric of Kenya, there is a risk of increasing discontent and unrest. This section explores potential outcomes if young people continue to be excluded.

The cutthroat competition for jobs is already taking a toll on relations between young people themselves. Many of those interviewed for the qualitative research feel disillusioned with the unfairness of the labour market, and with the consequent bleakness of their career prospects. A number of young Kenyans admitted that competition between them risks becoming unhealthy and weakening the bonds between youth – in a zero-sum game, a friend’s success can mean the closing off of one’s own opportunities. One young man in Nairobi explained: ‘Unfortunately, because competition is so fierce you never really feel anyone is happy about your successes – there’s a lot of jealousy and backstabbing. If you become successful, your friends will try to drag you down and put you back in your place.’ A young man in Turkana was more succinct: ‘If you become successful in Turkana, someone will put a spell on you and try to bring you down!’

If young people continue to feel that the system is rigged against them, their resentment could eventually be turned towards the older generation. As we have seen, unemployment and underemployment affect young people more than their elders. Almost two-thirds of young people believe it was easier for their parents’ generation to have a good career, and a significant minority felt their parents’ lives were better than those of young people today.

Young people have complex relationships with the concept of age. As the qualitative researchers reported, ‘On the one hand, they have great respect for their elders and feel they can learn a lot from them – they do, after all, have more life experience. On the other hand, youth feel frustrated at being “dismissed” by the older generation – they possess different and important skills the older generation lack. Some youth even report feeling that the older generation are threatened by the potential of young people and want to “keep them in their place”.’

Some resentment of the authority generation is already evident from the focus group discussions. Young people believe the authorities discriminate against youth. The police, for example, are seen as unfairly targeting young people. Focus group participants ‘felt that police “picking on” youth showed that the police and government think youth have no power. For example, youth noted that police officers will often pull them over or threaten them in order to get bribes, and when youth refuse, they retaliate. They feel they suffer this abuse of power more severely than their elders do, as police know youth lack the voice and power to do anything about it.’

***‘We really have problems with the police, particularly just after an election period. After the elections when people were demonstrating they were abusing the youth.’***

**Male, Nairobi**

Those young people who cannot find the work they aspire to, or who cannot play their full part in social and political life, feel disillusioned. Some are turning to alcohol and drugs as a consequence, and many are worried by a perceived increase in violence. As the qualitative researchers noted, ‘the disconnect between their big ambitions and the very real challenges of finding work was a heavy burden for young people to bear, causing anxiety for all and, for some, making the allure of short-term pleasures harder to turn away from.’ Drug and alcohol use are reportedly common across all the qualitative research sites, and particularly among youth who are unemployed. Thirty per cent of those who responded to our household survey, moreover, cited drug and alcohol abuse as one of the main challenges faced by youth:

***‘If you don’t find yourself busy, you will find yourself busy with drugs.’***

**Male, Mombasa**

Violence is of far greater concern to Kenyan youth than to young people in neighbouring Tanzania. When asked about the challenges they face as young people, nine per cent, unprompted, cited ‘violence and conflict’ (the proportion in Tanzania was only four per cent). When asked what they were unhappy about in Kenya over the past five to ten years, 35 per cent cited

violence, with only corruption ranked higher as a problem. Crime was cited by 25 per cent of respondents. For comparison, the proportion of young people in Tanzania who said they were unhappy about either violence or crime was just two per cent.

Participants in the focus groups noted the link between high levels of unemployment in their neighbourhoods and high rates of violence and theft. Violence, the researchers reported, is already a constant in young people’s lives: ‘Violence was often so normalised that youth didn’t spontaneously raise it as a “problem” for youth in their areas until well into our conversations with them. Then it became clear that self-protection and the risk of harm were factored into daily decisions, their aspirations and fears, and their expectations of success.’

***‘Young people are bored out of their minds so they go and look for any form of entertainment possible, even if that’s getting into unnecessary fights.’***

**Female, Nairobi**

***‘You find that the youth engage in drugs and then when the youth come together, like in a rally, you also find your phone is missing.’***

**Male, Siaya**

A further indication that society is under strain is the growing religious and ethnic division. Young people themselves are quite tolerant of people of other religions. Eighty-six per cent agreed that they would be happy to be friends with someone from a different religion, with nine per cent disagreeing.

Feelings about marrying someone from a different religion were weaker, with 64 per cent agreeing and 28 per cent disagreeing that they would happily marry someone of another faith.

Geographically, religious tolerance is weakest in the predominantly Muslim North East. Here, 70 per cent of survey respondents would be happy to be friends with someone of a different religion (a lower proportion than among the total sample), and most would not marry such a person. Only 34 per cent of North Eastern respondents agreed that they would be happy to marry a person of a different religion, with 61 per cent disagreeing.

While generally tolerant themselves, however, young people believe religious friction in the country is intensifying. Fifty-seven per cent of young people agreed that bad feeling between different religions is getting worse, with only 31 per cent disagreeing.

Ethnic division is seen as an even greater problem than religious discord. Unprompted, eight per cent of survey respondents cited ‘equality between ethnic groups’ as something they were unhappy about (compared with two per cent who cited religious extremism). Almost half said their expectations of progress in this area had not been met, with only one-quarter saying they had been met.

As with religion, young people’s own feelings about ethnicity are in general tolerant, and two-thirds believe their generation’s views on ethnicity are more tolerant than those of their parents’ generation. Ninety-three per cent of young people agreed that they would

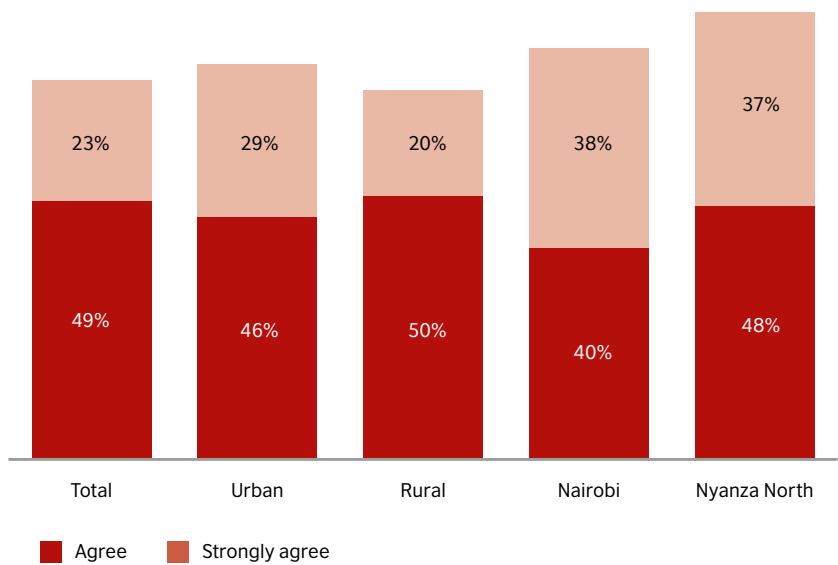


be happy to be friends with someone from a different ethnic group. Seventy-eight per cent would be happy to marry a member of a different ethnic group. On the other hand, 16 per cent of respondents disagreed that they would be happy to marry someone from another ethnic group and five per cent disagreed that they would be happy to be friends with people of different ethnicities. This points to an undercurrent of ethnic friction among a small minority of young people.

Young people have a strong conviction that relations between ethnic groups are deteriorating. Twenty-three per cent strongly agreed that bad feeling between Kenya's ethnic groups is getting worse. A further 49 per cent agreed. That they believe ethnic tension is ratcheting up despite the young generation being more tolerant than previous generations suggests that young Kenyans feel their elders bear the main responsibility for ethnic strife.

Concern about ethnic division is deepest in urban areas, where 29 per cent of young respondents strongly agreed it is getting worse. In the Nyanza North sub-region, 85 per cent of respondents agreed that ethnic division is worsening (compared with 72 per cent in the overall sample), and in Nairobi 78 per cent agreed (see Figure 23). Respondents from these two sub-regions are also least satisfied in terms of their expectations on equality between ethnic groups having been met.

Figure 23: Agreement that bad feeling between ethnic groups is getting worse



### The business of sex

In a context where other pleasures are unaffordable, sex is a diversion. It is also, for some young people, a means of earning income in an environment where jobs are hard to come by.

Young people in the focus groups told us that unemployment bred recklessness and increased the risk of early pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases:

*'You know you shouldn't do it [risky sex], but it's one of the only fun activities we have here in Turkana.'*

Male, Turkana, aged 16

Sex is also a business option, a solution to daily financial worries. Many young people in the focus groups said that payment for sexual favours was common in their communities. This occurs along a spectrum, from full-time prostitution to 'sponsorships' where young women are paid by male partners in return for regular sex in what is a partly commercial and partly romantic relationship. These practices are reportedly widely

accepted in communities – parents often turn a blind eye to what their daughters are doing so long as it brings in money to cash-strapped households. That these relationships often involve multiple sexual partners increases transmission of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS and heightens the risk of early pregnancy.

*'It starts around 12 years old ... Most people have around five sponsors: one for your shoes, one for facial products, one for your hair, and one genuine one. You marry the genuine one.'*

Female, Siaya

*'If the girl starts coming home with a bit of money, the parents don't ask where it comes from. You wouldn't ask where it comes from if your girl comes home with food that you can't provide yourself. And then one day she comes home pregnant.'*

Male, Mombasa

### The North East and Nairobi: similar extremes

Respondents to the household survey from the three North Eastern counties of Garissa, Mandera and Wajir are in general less content and more worried about the future than their peers elsewhere in Kenya. They are more likely than others to believe education is a waste of time and money and less likely to attend school at all (nine per cent have received no formal education). They are more worried about the lack of job prospects, less confident about realising their full career potential, and among the most likely to feel society does not listen to them. Although they are very interested in politics, moreover (the most likely to discuss politics and to consider standing for public office), they are cynical about voting and among the least satisfied with the current government.

Perhaps as a consequence of their frustration, young people from the North East are less fond of their country than others. One in five say they do not love Kenya, compared with less than one in ten among the overall sample. Instead they identify most strongly with their religion, and although most would be happy to be friends with someone from another faith, only one in three would be happy to marry outside their own religion.

Although distant geographically and in some ways behaviourally, North Easterners and youth from Nairobi are similar in their frustrations with life. Young people from the capital are much more likely to be employed and to be connected to the outside world via the internet than their North Eastern cousins, but like the latter, they are more worried than those from other sub-regions about what they see as worsening ethnic divisions, violence and local conflict. Half of survey respondents in both Nairobi and the North East see violence as a major challenge in their lives (compared with 35 per cent of the overall sample). More than one-quarter cite local conflict as one of their fears for the future.

Like their peers from the North East, young people from Nairobi also have a strong feeling that society does not listen to them. They too are disengaged from their communities and cynical about the importance of voting. And like young North Easterners, they are highly dissatisfied with the government's performance. In the North East, 39 per cent of respondents were completely dissatisfied with the government (giving a score of one on a scale of one to ten), and in Nairobi 27 per cent were completely dissatisfied.



# > RECOMMENDATIONS

The Next Generation Kenya project is not only a research study; it is also an initiative to give young people in Kenya a voice, and to help them begin to influence the decisions and policies that affect their lives. With this in mind, the recommendations for policymakers presented in this concluding section are drawn from the ideas and suggestions of young people who were involved in the qualitative and quantitative research. They were reviewed and ratified by the project's Youth Task Force. The recommendations cover each of the thematic areas discussed in chapters 1–4 of the report.

## Relationships, marriage, sex and pregnancy

To help youth to avoid early pregnancy and harmful relationships, young people called for greater government investment in supporting sexual and reproductive health. In particular, they suggested:

- reorienting sexual and reproductive health education towards a more holistic approach that encompasses communities, schools and peer groups
- the provision in schools of education and support to foster mutually respectful, supportive and non-violent relationships between the genders
- investment in leisure and sport, especially in rural areas and underprivileged urban settings where there are few opportunities for positive youth social engagement, to help stave off boredom and unnecessary risk-taking behaviour, and to give youth a sense of purpose and community
- the establishment of safe spaces where young people can develop life skills and find support. These spaces might include, for example, drop-in centres where youth can access counselling, mentorship from older generations and peer support.

## Accessing quality education

Young people had a number of suggestions for strengthening education in Kenya. These focused on making it more accessible, of higher quality, and of more relevance to the needs of modern society:

- mechanisms should be developed so that members of the public can track the distribution of both student bursaries and funds allocated for investment in school infrastructure. In this way, officials can be held to account for the prompt and equitable distribution of funds and the fulfilment of their promises
- research is needed to identify gender-specific and region-specific interventions that will address the non-economic factors that keep children out of school. Such factors are likely to include hunger, basic female hygiene and physical safety
- for those who do not proceed along the traditional education continuum from primary to tertiary school, alternative paths such as adult education courses and polytechnics should be provided
- school curricula should be adjusted to include life skills training. This should include topics including financial literacy, filing taxes, registering and running businesses, and seeking and applying for jobs
- Kenya's TVET system should be reviewed and redesigned, with a focus on improving the quality of teaching and infrastructure, opening up pathways from TVET to university, providing soft skills training, and tailoring the curriculum to workplace needs by involving labour market stakeholders in curriculum design, and in training and mentoring programmes

- a framework is needed to hold universities and colleges to account for the quality of graduates they produce, including requirements to label courses according to their labour market success and to conduct and publish annual tracer studies on the workplace success of graduates by skill area. Tertiary education policymakers should also explore the use of formulas based on student outcomes when allocating public resources
- tertiary education will be made more attractive and relevant if structured internships, early contact with industry, apprenticeships and volunteering are incorporated into the core learning experience.

## Levelling the employment playing field

Young people had a number of suggestions for reforming the labour market so that it better enables youth to maximise their potential:

- financing programmes for young entrepreneurs should be reviewed and redesigned to respond to structural and perception challenges that inhibit uptake. In particular, they should include governance procedures to ensure fair distribution, including broad communication of opportunities and accountability, and transparency over the distribution of loans. Financial support for business and entrepreneurship should also be made easy to access for individuals, and not only for groups, while requirements for business loans should focus more on business feasibility than on financial provisions such as raising collateral



- research is needed to identify means of directing the youth preference for self-employment towards labour-intensive sectors such as agriculture
- young people called for platforms for peer learning and business mentorship for aspiring entrepreneurs, within and outside formal learning structures
- to improve conditions in the workplace, young people called for professional standards against discrimination to be enforced so that favouritism based on gender, age, ethnicity and disability is stamped out. Government could encourage businesses to comply with anti-favouritism measures by, for example, offering incentives to business leaders who can show their firms have representative employment pools.
- investment is required in youth-targeted mentorship programmes – both in and out of school – to enable access to the knowledge, skills, tools and resources needed for meaningful political and civic engagement
- young people with disabilities called for an expansion of basic provisions that enable them to get out of the house and into the world, and thereby to participate in community decision-making. They noted that services and support exist that many youth are not aware of, unnecessarily restricting lives and opportunities. To increase uptake of these services, they suggested, they need to be promoted more proactively
- young people should be involved in the design and implementation of all the policies recommended in this section. This will make them more responsive to young people's needs and therefore more beneficial to the country as a whole. Youth involvement in programme design is currently lacking. As one young woman in Nairobi wryly put it, in what is a fitting conclusion to this report:

### **Increasing voice and expanding civic engagement**

Finally, young people had recommendations both for increasing the amount of youth participation in public life, and for improving its quality and impact:

- there is a need to ensure the involvement of diverse youth perspectives in policy dialogues via both stronger compliance with the public participation requirements set out in the Constitution of Kenya, and the creation of policy dialogue platforms that are safe spaces for all youth to contribute. These platforms should operate at national, county and community levels

*'You can just imagine a bunch of old people sitting in a room going "hmm what do the youth of today want?" and of course getting it totally wrong. They should just ask us.'*



# > APPENDIX – QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research component of the project was guided by two specially convened bodies. The first was a Research Advisory Group consisting of research experts from the British Council, the Department for International Development and independent Kenya-based research organisations with a focus on youth. These young people were selected following an open application process. The two bodies reviewed the tender documents submitted for each project phase, made recommendations for research questions, provided quality assurance for the research methodologies and peer-reviewed the reports of each phase.

The quantitative research was designed to serve two main purposes. First, it

aimed to collect up-to-date data on topics such as education, employment, internet and social media use, and civil and political participation of youth. Second, it aimed to identify differences and similarities between youth categories based on variables such as age group, gender, location of residence and occupational status to learn more about shared and differing characteristics of youth in Kenya.

Research involved a door-to-door household survey study conducted among a nationally representative sample of respondents aged 15–24 across all regions of the country – a total of 4,014 respondents. The sample of the research involved randomly selected subjects. To provide reliable geographical

disaggregation, we created sub-regions by grouping Kenya's 47 counties into 12 manageable sub-regions based on cultural diversity in Kenya.

Disproportionate sample allocation was used in the sub-regions created. This was done by first obtaining the square-root transformation of the target population at sub-regional level to maintain the rank order of regions in terms of population size while at the same time trying to minimise the big differences between those sub-regions with very high and very low populations (see Table 2). This was distributed to all 47 counties to ensure a proper geographical coverage. The final sample size was  $n=4,014$  (margin of error  $=\pm 1.5\%$  at 95%CL).

**Table 2:** Sub-region and corresponding respondent sample

Sub-region	Total
Central	380
Coast	342
Eastern Lower	344
Eastern Upper	303
Nairobi	306
North Eastern	298
Nyanza North	302
Nyanza South	301
Rift Valley Central	470
Rift Valley North	301
Rift Valley South	299
Western	368
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,014</b>

As required for all disproportionate samples, application of statistical weights was used to correct this sample to the required target population distribution when generating national estimates.

With regard to the sub-regions, the counties which fall into each sub-region are as follows:

- Central: Kiambu, Kirinyaga, Muranga, Nyandarua, Nyeri
- Coast: Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu, Mombasa, Taita–Taveta, Tana River
- Eastern Lower: Isiolo, Kitui, Machakos, Makueni, Marsabit
- Eastern Upper: Embu, Meru, Tharaka Nithi
- Nairobi: Nairobi
- North Eastern: Garissa, Mandera, Wajir
- Nyanza North: Homa Bay, Kisumu, Siaya
- Nyanza South: Kisii, Migori, Nyamira
- Rift Valley Central: Baringo, Bomet, Elgeyo Marakwet, Laikipia, Nakuru, Nandi, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu
- Rift Valley North: Samburu, Turkana, West Pokot
- Rift Valley South: Kajiado, Kericho, Narok
- Western: Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega, Vihiga.

Weighting was computed and applied to correct any imbalances between the sample characteristics and known population parameters. Latest census projections data was used to weight the data. The main characteristics used to compute the weights were regions, urbanisation, gender and age.

A comprehensively structured survey form was designed. It took the form of a questionnaire that used a combination of single- and multi-mention closed questions, with a few open-ended questions. As well as demographics, it covered issues such as perceptions of education and the world of work, perceptions of culture and tradition, questions pertaining to crime and violence, personal agency, lifestyle, volunteering behaviour, interest in politics and perceptions of other countries in Africa, as well as other countries across the globe.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face using tablet computers (CAPI) and took approximately 45 minutes. The data obtained from the survey study was coded and turned into a database. The SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science), Microsoft Excel and primary software programs for the analysis and manipulation of the data were used.

The measures below were taken to ensure data quality and confidentiality:

- surveys were conducted with tablet computers and data from each survey was immediately transmitted to the encrypted database over the internet. Data loss was minimised
- neither the interviewers, nor any third parties had access to surveys conducted on the tablet computers or the online database. The database was analysed by the research team and the personal information of participants was not and will not be shared with any people, institution or organisation
- periodical logic checks of collected data were made during the fieldwork and additional surveys were conducted to replace erroneous surveys in the same geographical area and in a randomised fashion

- a minimum of 20 per cent of each interviewer's work must be back-checked, resulting in ten per cent physical back-checks and ten per cent telephone back-checks of each interviewer.

The study adopted the ESOMAR guidelines for interviewing children and minors. Ipsos Global is a member of ESOMAR and abides by the rules and regulations as well as ethical guidelines of conducting research. Regarding the definition of a young person, the ESOMAR code requires as follows:

- the researcher must conform to any relevant definitions incorporated in any National Code of Conduct Practice and/or in national legislation
- where no such specific national definitions exist, a 'young person' is defined as a person or persons 'aged 15–17' for the purposes of this study
- the welfare of the children and young people themselves is the overriding consideration – they must not be disturbed or harmed by the experience of being interviewed
- the parents or anyone acting as the guardian of any young person taking part in a research project must be confident that the latter's safety, rights and interests are being fully safeguarded
- the interviewers and other researchers involved in the project must be protected against any misunderstandings or possible allegations of misconduct arising from their dealings with the young people taking part in that project
- the authorities, and the public generally, must be confident that all research carried out with young people is conducted to the highest ethical standards and that there can be no question of any possible abuse of the young people involved.





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