



# LABOUR MARKET TRANSITION OF YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN IN JAMAICA

SUMMARY REPORT 2013

The School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) was conducted in 2013 by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica in collaboration with International Labour Organization (ILO). Funding for the survey was provided by the ILO “Work4Youth” partnership with The MasterCard Foundation. Additional information on the global SWTS project may be obtained from <http://www.ilo.org/w4y>.

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# OVERVIEW

## Overview

The School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) is a unique survey instrument that generates relevant labour market information on young people aged 15 to 29 years, including longitudinal information on transitions within the labour market. The SWTS thus serves as a unique tool for demonstrating the increasingly tentative and indirect paths to decent and productive employment that today's young men and women are facing. The 2013 round of the SWTS was the second such survey to be conducted in Jamaica, the first being in 2006. This survey is a critical instrument in assessing the challenges that youth in Jamaica face in the pursuit of decent and satisfactory employment.

The targeted age cohort is of particular interest to researchers and policy makers, as this is the time in a person's life when youth aim to assert their independence and start on a path to realizing their goals. One of the major goals of youth is to be able to obtain decent and satisfactory employment which will facilitate the attainment of their other goals. Obtaining decent and satisfactory employment however continues to be an elusive goal for many especially in light of the global economic crisis which has had far reaching effects especially in small island developing states such as Jamaica.

The findings of this survey aim to shed light on the experiences of youth in Jamaica today as they leave school and seek employment. It also provides insight into the perceptions of today's youth regarding their future prospects, and their life goals and aspirations.

# SAMPLE DESIGN AND SELECTION

## Sample Design and Selection

The SWTS in Jamaica was conducted independently of the quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS). Both surveys however employed the same concepts and definitions thereby facilitating comparison of the results of both surveys. The sample design for the School-to-Work Transition Survey was a multi-stage probability sampling design with the first stage being a selection of geographical areas called Enumeration Districts (EDs) and the second stage a selection of dwellings within the selected EDs. All individuals within the age cohort were selected. The main focus of this design was to select a nationally representative sample that would provide estimates on the transition of youth from school to work at both the national and the regional (urban/rural) levels.

The target population for the sample comprised usual residents, aged 15-29 years who were living in private dwelling units at the time of the survey. Excluded from the survey were non-private dwellings including group dwellings, e.g. military camps, mental institutions, hospitals and prisons.

The sample was stratified by urban and rural areas and by parish. There are 852 EDs in the Master Sample Frame, from which a total of 187 EDs were selected. Twenty-five dwellings were selected from each ED yielding a total of 4,675 dwellings in the sample. From each of the selected dwellings all individuals within the age cohort were surveyed. A total of 2,690 persons (1,325 males and 1,365 females) within the target age group were identified. Of this amount, 2,584 persons (1,270 males and 1,314 females) were successfully interviewed.

# MAIN FINDINGS

## Main Findings

### DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

According to the 2012 population estimates, youth 15-29 years old in Jamaica account for 27.9 per cent of the total population, of which 49.8 per cent were females and 50.2 per cent males. The mean age of respondents was 21.9 years and the median age was 21 years. More than one half of youth (53.6 per cent) lived in urban areas while the remaining 46.4 per cent were from rural areas.

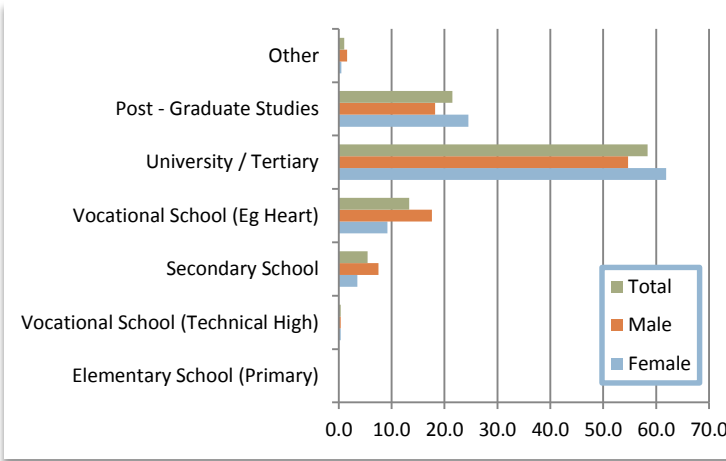
More than one-half of the youth (52.8 per cent) reported that they were the children of the head of the household. Twenty-four per cent were other relatives and 10.7 per cent were the 'Head' of their households. For the purpose of this survey 'union status' was divided into six categories namely: single/never married; engaged to be married; married; divorced or legally separated; widowed; and common-law relationship. The majority of youth (89.9 per cent) were single or never married while 6.8 per cent were living in common-law relationships. A mere 2.3 per cent of the youth were married.

Youth were asked to describe their household's overall financial situation. Most youth (46.2 per cent) described their household financial situation as being 'around the national average', 20.7 per cent thought that they were 'poor' and 19.2 per cent 'fairly poor'. The remaining 13.8 per cent believed they were 'well off or fairly well off'. A Wealth Index constructed from data collected on household assets and housing quality was used as a proxy for the socio-economic status of youth. The distribution of youth by socioeconomic status shows that a marginally higher proportion of males (21.2 per cent) than females (19.6 per cent) were in the wealthiest quintile, while a higher proportion of females (19.5 per cent) than males (17.9 per cent) were in the poorest quintile.

### JAMAICAN YOUTH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Young Jamaicans understand the importance of gaining an education. The survey found that 50.1 per cent of youth were better educated than their fathers and 43.9 per cent were better educated than their mothers. Additionally, the results show that the majority of young students (58.4 per cent) indicated that "University/ Tertiary" level education was the highest level that they expected to complete, with another 21.5 per cent expected to complete post-graduate studies. Interestingly, females had a greater expectation of completing higher education than their male counterparts. Approximately 62 per cent of females relative to 55 per cent of males expect to complete university/tertiary level education. Additionally, 25 per cent of females compared to 18 per cent of males expect to complete post-graduate studies. Males (17.6 per cent) were however more inclined to pursue post-secondary vocational training than their female counterparts (9.2 per cent).

Figure 1: Percentage Distribution of the Highest Level of Education that Youth Expect to Complete



## MAIN FINDINGS

Despite the desire to obtain higher education, 64.8 per cent or approximately 491,200 youth were not enrolled in a school or training programme at the time of the survey. Of this amount, more than a half (53.5 per cent) were educated to the secondary level. Less than 9 per cent (8.9 per cent) had tertiary or higher level education, and 18.6 per cent had post-secondary vocational training. Among youth not enrolled in school, 26.2 per cent were early school leavers and did not complete their education or training programme. Economic reasons was the primary response (45.1 per cent) when asked to identify the main reason for not completing their education or training.

### GOALS AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE JAMAICAN YOUTH

Jamaican youth largely desired career and personal success. When asked, the majority (39.5 per cent) of Jamaican youth indicated that their main goal in life was to be successful at work. “Having a good family” was the second most popular goal (21.4 per cent), while “making a contribution to society” was the third (14.0 per cent) most popular goal.

Youth enrolled in school or training were asked to indicate their ideal job. The majority of in-school youth aspired to become “Professionals” (54.3 per cent), “Service workers and shop and market sales workers” (13.0 per cent), “Technicians and associates professional clerks” (10.3 per cent) and “Legislators, senior officials and managers” (9.6 per cent). Most young students also indicated that they would ideally like to work for the “Government” (51.2 per cent), themselves (26.5 per cent), and for a “Private Company” (17.7 per cent).

**Table 1: Ideal Occupation and Desired Employer of Young Students**

	Sex		
	Female	Male	Total
<b>Ideal Occupation of Young Students</b>			
Professionals	61.5	46.7	54.3
Service Workers and Shop and Market Sales Workers	14.7	11.1	13.0
Technicians and Associate Professionals	9.8	10.8	10.3
Legislators, Senior officials and Managers	6.8	12.5	9.6
Craft and Related Trades Workers	0.6	14.5	7.4
Elementary Occupations	2.5	2.5	2.5
Clerks	3.9	0.8	2.4
Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers	0.2	0.8	0.5
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	0.0	0.3	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Desired Employer of Young Students</b>			
Myself	22.6	30.7	26.5
Work For Government	59.0	43.1	51.2
Work For A Private Company	14.1	21.4	17.7
Work For An International Or Non-Profit Organization	4.3	4.3	4.3
Work For Family Business / Farm	0.0	0.6	0.3
Do Not Wish To Work	0.0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF THE JAMAICAN YOUTH

The survey found that 59.5 per cent of Jamaican youth were economically active, using the strict definition of unemployment. Of this amount, 39.9 per cent were employed and 19.6 per cent unemployed. Using the relaxed definition, 72.3 per cent of youth were economically active of which 39.9 per cent were employed and 32.5 per cent unemployed.

**Table 2: Distribution of Youth by Economic Activity Status and Economically Active Students**

	Sex			
	Female	Male	Total	
<b>Economic Activity Status</b>				
Employed	33.4	46.3	302,300	39.9
Unemployed	22.3	17.0	149,000	19.6
Outside the Labour Force	44.3	36.7	307,200	40.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>758,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Economic Activity Status with Relaxed Unemployment Definition</b>				
Employed	33.4	46.3	302,300	39.9
Unemployed (relaxed)	36.9	28.1	246,300	32.5
Outside the Labour Force	29.7	25.7	209,800	27.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>758,500</b>	<b>100.0</b>

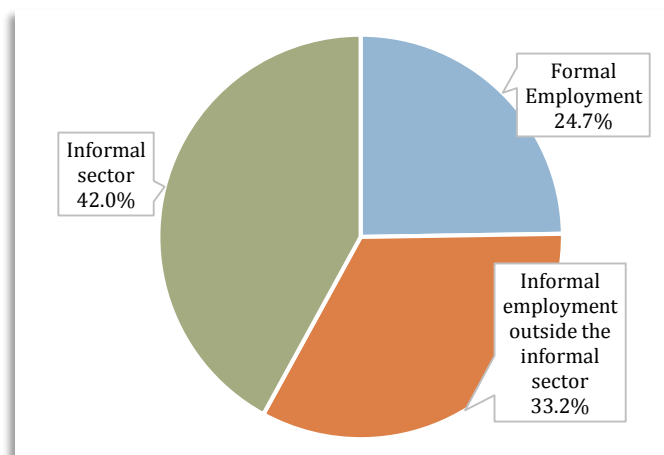


# MAIN FINDINGS

Among the employed, the majority were male (58.2 per cent), aged 25-29 years old (46.6 per cent) and from urban areas (57.9 per cent). Employed youth primarily worked as “Service workers and shop and market sales workers” (28.1 per cent) in the services sector of the economy (75.1 per cent). Youth were working mainly in the informal sector (42.0 per cent) and in informal employment outside the informal sector (33.2 per cent).

Approximately 25 per cent of youth were entrepreneurs. Of this amount, 23.1 per cent were own account workers and 1.7 per cent employers. Youth entrepreneurs were asked to give the main reason for choosing to be self-employed rather than working for someone else. The inability to find a wage or salaried job (38.1 per cent) and the desire for greater independence (34.2 per cent) were the two main reasons cited.

**Figure 2: Percentage Distribution of Employed Youth by Informal Employment**



Unemployed youth were mainly females (56.6 per cent) and in the 20 – 24 years age group (46.9 per cent). The same pattern was evident using the relaxed definition. The unemployment rate for Jamaican youths was 44.9

**Table 3: Percentage Distribution of the Youth Unemployment Rate by Level of Formal Education Completed**

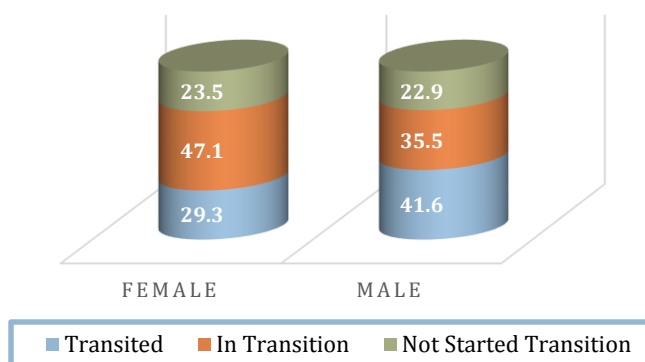
	Strict	Relaxed
<b>Elementary School (Primary)</b>	35.3	48.9
<b>Vocational School (Technical High)</b>	34.6	47.7
<b>Secondary School</b>	35.1	45.4
<b>Vocational School (e.g. HEART etc.)</b>	31.5	37.0
<b>University / Tertiary / Post Graduate</b>	21.8	25.4
<b>Youth Unemployment Rate</b>	<b>44.9</b>	<b>33.0</b>

per cent using the relaxed definition and 33.0 per cent using the strict definition. The data also shows that the unemployment rate decreases as the level of education increases. Unemployed youth were asked to state how long they were without work and actively seeking employment. Thirty-eight per cent of unemployed youth were seeking work for over

two years. Another 23 per cent were available and actively seeking work for one year, but less than two years and 18.5 per cent were unemployed and seeking work for six months to less than one year.

Of the estimated 307,200 youths who were outside the labour force (strict), approximately 207,800 or 67.6 per cent were in school or training. The remaining 99,400 youths were neither seeking work nor enrolled in school/ training. These inactive non-students cited “Family responsibilities or housework” (31.5 per cent), “Pregnancy” (20.2 per cent) and “Illness, injury or disability” (20.3 per cent) as the main reasons for their inactivity.

**Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of the Stages of Transition by Sex**



## THE LABOUR MARKET TRANSITION

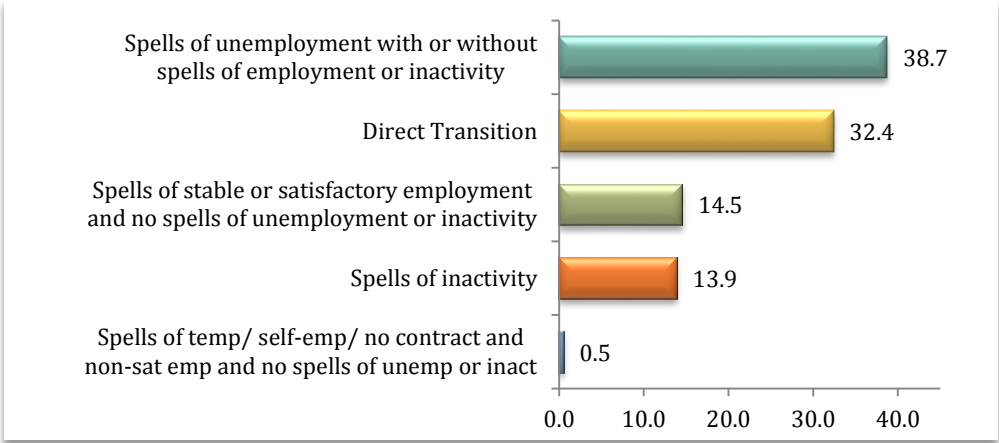
An estimated 269,000 or 35.5 per cent of Jamaican youths have successfully transitioned from School to Work. Another 310,800 or 41.0 per cent are still in transition and the remaining 23.5 per cent have not yet

# MAIN FINDINGS

started the transition. The survey shows that a higher proportion of males (41.6 per cent) than females (29.3 per cent) have transitioned, while a higher proportion females (47.1 per cent) than males (35.5 per cent) are still in transition.

There is indication that education impacts the ability to transition, as the proportion of transitioned youth increases with educational attainment. Most transitioned youth did not have a smooth or direct transition (32.4 per cent), but instead experienced “Spells of unemployment with or without spells of employment or inactivity” (38.7 per cent). On average, it took youths 33 months to successfully transition from school to stable or satisfactory employment, with the average length of transition for females (33 months) being longer than their male counterparts (32 months).

**Figure 4: Percentage Distribution of Paths of Transition**



Youths who were still in transition were largely unemployed (78.6 per cent) or inactive, non-students with future work aspirations (10.7 per cent). On average, youths who were in-transition were in this stage for 68 months, almost three years longer than transitioned youth. Disaggregated by wealth index quintiles, the data shows that in-transition youths from the poorest two quintiles had the longest current duration of transition. The current duration of transition declines from 73 months for the poorest quintile to 50 months for the wealthiest quintile.

**Figure 5: Percentage Distribution of Categories of Youths Who Are Still In Transition**

