

GHANA YOUTH BAROMETER 2024

EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE
OF GHANA'S YOUTH



YOTA

Youth Opportunity
& Transformation
in Africa

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JUNE 2024

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FOREWORD

It is with immense pride and a profound sense of responsibility that I present to you the “Ghana Youth Barometer 2024: Education and the Future of Ghana's Youth”. This youth-led research, undertaken by Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa (YOTA), encapsulates the voices, aspirations, and concerns of young Ghanaians regarding their education and future. Conducted by young researchers themselves, thanks to the able support of senior researchers, this study provides an authentic and comprehensive perspective that is both timely and crucial for shaping youth policy and development strategies in Ghana.

This groundbreaking research delves into the perceptions of Ghanaian youth about their education, their preparedness for the future, and their involvement in decision-making processes. It uncovers significant insights into the disparities in education quality, the barriers young people face in accessing education, and their optimism for the future despite these challenges. The data highlight the urgent need for reforms in the education sector to make it more inclusive, practical, and aligned with the labour market's demands.

One of the most striking findings of this research is the high level of dissatisfaction among the youth with the current education system. Many young people perceive the system as overly theoretical and not adequately preparing them for the practical demands of the job market. This disconnect between education and employability is a significant barrier to youth development and economic progress. Addressing this issue requires a collaborative effort from all stakeholders to ensure that the education system is responsive to the needs of the labour market and the aspirations of the youth.

Furthermore, the research highlights the barriers to accessing quality education, particularly for youth in rural areas. Financial constraints and the lack of education infrastructure are some of the key challenges identified. These barriers not only hinder educational attainment but also exacerbate inequalities within the society. It is imperative that we work towards creating an equitable education system where every young person, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed.

The Ghana Youth Barometer 2024 is thus a clarion call to all stakeholders in the youth sector— government bodies, educational institutions, non-governmental organizations, and development partners. The insights gained from this research provide a roadmap for addressing the systemic issues that hinder the educational and professional aspirations of our youth.

I urge all stakeholders to embrace the findings of this report, commit to the necessary reforms, and work collaboratively to create an enabling environment where the potential of every young person can be fully realized. By doing so, we not only address the immediate concerns of our youth but also lay the foundation for a more prosperous and inclusive future.

Together, let us transform the insights from this research into actionable strategies that will shape the progress of our youth, our nation, and our continent.

For us at YOTA, the Ghana Youth Barometer 2024 is not just a report; it is a pivotal tool for evidence-based advocacy, planning, and action. On the one hand, it builds on our exemplary work in the youth policy space in Ghana, including convening the Voices of Youth Coalition which crowdsourced the Ghana Youth Manifesto in 2012 and the People's National Youth Policy in 2016. On the other hand, we believe that the Ghana Youth Barometer 2024 research escalates our leading contribution to shaping youth policy.

Ultimately, it is imperative that we establish the youth barometer research as a permanent feature in youth development effort. This will ensure that the voices of the youth are continually amplified and integrated into policy-making and development agendas, not only in Ghana, but also across Africa.

#LeaveNoYouthBehind

Emmanuel Edudzie

Executive Director, YOTA



YOTA

Youth Opportunity
& Transformation
in Africa

OUR VISION

and sustainable world
every young person

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
FCUBE	Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GES	Ghana Education Service
GETFund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
GNPC	Ghana National Petroleum Corporation
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MMDAs	Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NTC	National Teaching Council
SHS	Senior High School
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
YOTA	Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



BACKGROUND

To effectively contribute to addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including increasing unemployment and disruption to education, among others, the Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa (YOTA) launched its 'Youth on Board' project in 2022 to engender youth voices in Ghana's education response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The project's goal is to refocus attention on critical issues of access to quality education and investment interventions necessary for a post-pandemic recovery and improved access to quality education by duty bearers and other stakeholders. The Ghana Youth Barometer study is one of the key activities of the Youth on Board project.

PURPOSE, OBJECTIVE, AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Ghana Youth Barometer study explored the perceptions of young Ghanaians regarding their education and the level of preparedness and confidence they have about their future.

The objective is to provide a pathway for including youth voices as a standpoint in policy-making regarding Ghana's education system by the government and development partners. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- (i) What are the perceptions of youth about the education system in Ghana?
- (ii) What are the perceptions of youth about their education and future in Ghana?
- (iii) What are the views of youth on changes required in the current education system in Ghana?
- (iv) To what extent are the youth involved in decision-making processes concerning education issues in Ghana?
- (v) What are the aspirations of the Ghanaian youth regarding their future? and
- (vi) To what extent are the youth prepared and confident about their future?

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a concurrent mixed method design involving the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analysed separately, and interpreted conjointly. Quantitative data were gathered from 1,940 youths aged 15-35 years across 32 Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) in the 16 administrative regions of Ghana using a well-structured survey questionnaire with both closed and open-ended questions. Qualitative data collection involved 48 semi-structured interviews (28 males and 20 females) and four (4) focus group discussions conducted with young men and women nationwide. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and chi-square tests of associations between variables of interest and demographic characteristics. At the same time, thematic and discourse analyses were employed to analyse the qualitative data.

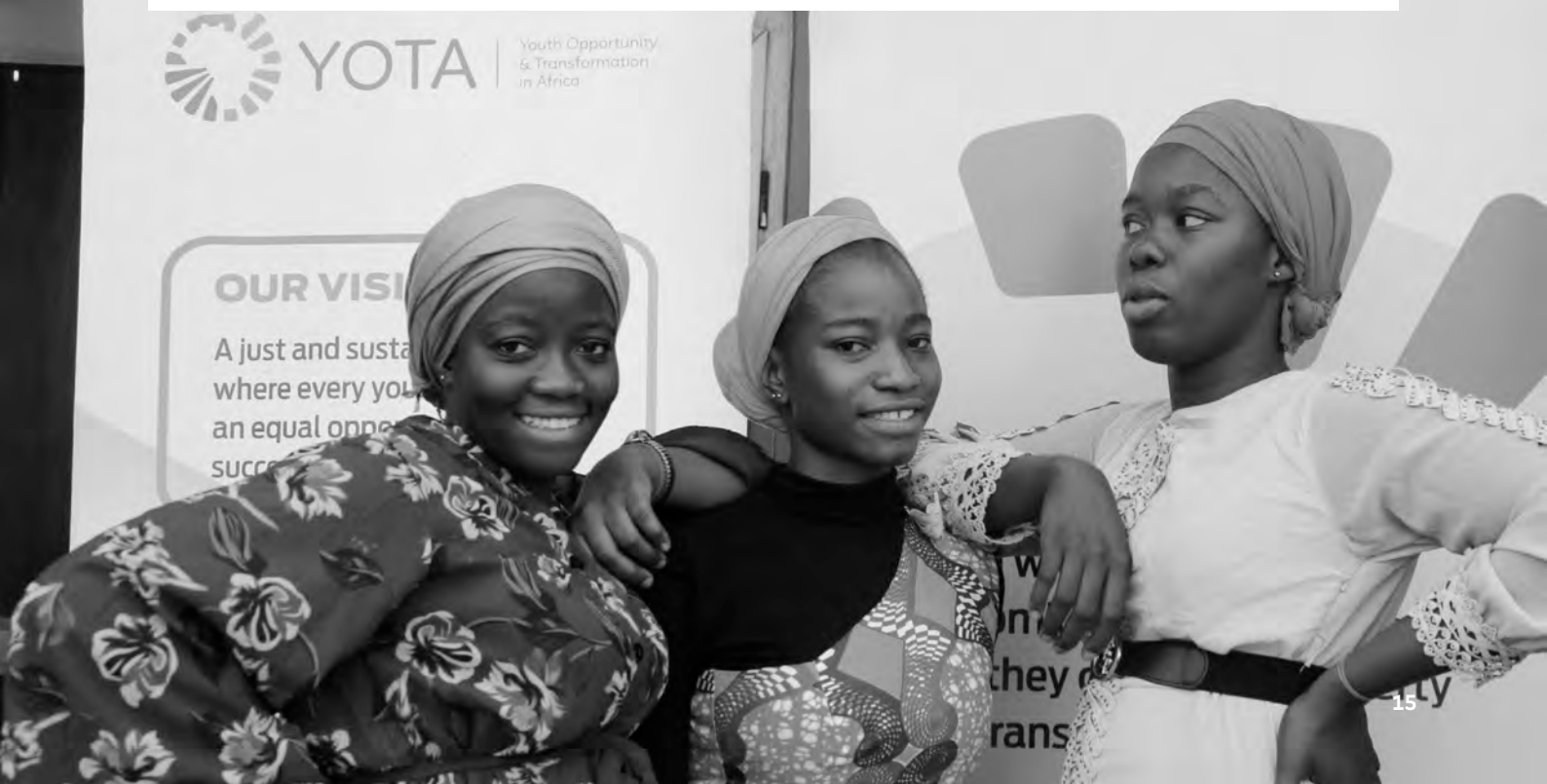
KEY FINDINGS

WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA?

A section of the youth surveyed 833 (42.9%) perceived that the education system in Ghana was retrogressing. The key reason reported by the youth for this situation includes the overly excessive focus on teaching theories rather than practical and experiential learning, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. A majority of the youth surveyed described the education system in Ghana as either fairly bad, 477 (24.6%) or, neither good nor bad, 475 (24.5%), owing largely to disparities in education infrastructure between urban and rural areas, gradual fall in standards in the quality of education compared to what is happening in the developed world, limited disciplinary mechanisms, and poor quality of education delivery in terms of teaching and learning.

Most of the respondents either agreed, 748 (38.4%) or, strongly agreed, 202 (10.4%) that, the education system in Ghana gives preferential treatment to certain people in society (e.g., students in urban areas, students with social connections and influence etc.).

However, there were mixed views regarding the perceptions of youth about access to education. On one hand, many of the youth, 635 (32.7%), disagreed that access to education depended on the individual's background. On the other hand, a good number of the youth, 564 (29.1%), agreed that access to education had no relationship with an individual's background. The youth perceived that urban youth have more opportunities for quality education (teaching and learning) than their rural counterparts. It was found that the top three constraints to accessing education by young people in Ghana include limited financial resources 1,581 (88.1%), higher cost of education 1,273 (65.9%), and lack of family support 1,135 (58.7%). Other barriers mentioned include long distance to school, frequently falling sick, peer influence, teenage pregnancy, and lack of interest in education. However, the study found a strong sense of optimism on the part of the youth, many of whom reported that they expected their access to education to increase marginally, 714 (36.6%), or increase significantly, 450 (23.2%), in the years ahead.



WHAT ARE THE PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH ABOUT THEIR EDUCATION AND FUTURE IN GHANA?

According to this study, 782 (40.3%) of young people agreed and strongly agreed, 263 (13.6%), with the statement that "the education system in Ghana prepares the youth for the future". However, more young women (45%) than young men (36%) indicated that the education system prepares the youth for the future. A very significant proportion of the youth, 786 (40.5%), agreed that the education system has adequately prepared them for their work life in the future. Furthermore, most young people, 931 (48.0%), agreed that the education system in Ghana has prepared them for the future. However, the findings from the qualitative data highlight that the current education system in Ghana does not provide the youth with soft and practical skills and knowledge, such as critical thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills needed to prepare them for the future.

The results indicate that many young people, 896 (46.6%), expect to be working in the next five years to gain financial independence. Many of these youth, 373 (42.0%), were between the ages of 20 and 25 years. Others, 434 (22.6%), noted that they will study because the occupation they want requires them to acquire certificates or degrees. The findings highlight a strong sense of optimism on the part of the youth regarding their future, with a very high proportion of them indicating that they are very optimistic, 1924 (66.7%), and, somewhat optimistic, 497 (25.6%), about the future. However, the qualitative findings highlight that the future looked uncertain, with many youths indicating that opportunities and prospects that they can tap to help them succeed in the future appear to be quite limited.





WHAT ARE THE VIEWS OF YOUTH ON THE CHANGES REQUIRED IN THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA?

The research highlights mixed perceptions regarding the level of youth satisfaction with the current education system. On the one hand, a very significant proportion of the youth highlighted that they were somewhat satisfied, 720(37.6%), or satisfied, 489(25.5%), with the current education system. On the other hand, nearly a third, 567(29.9%), of the youth surveyed expressed their dissatisfaction with the current education system. There were gender and location differences in the level of satisfaction with more young women, 267 (27.9%), being satisfied compared with young men, 222 (23.1%). Also, the study found that more urban youth 297(26.9%) were satisfied with the education system compared to their counterparts in the rural areas, 192(23.6%). Another key finding is that nearly all the youth surveyed, 1869 (96.7%), thought that the education system required some changes or improvements. The reported specific changes needed include innovation through the use of flexible teaching and learning modalities to enhance creativity, developing the skills of young people by providing them with practical and global skills to make them internationally competitive, providing relevant knowledge and skills, and the acquisition of practical work experience while in school at the secondary and tertiary levels.

The most reported challenges with the current education system in Ghana by the youth surveyed include i) lack of infrastructure, 1412 (73.0%), with a wide infrastructure deficit in rural areas; ii) school curriculum not being practical enough, 1348 (69.7%); and iii) limited supply of teaching and learning materials, 1191(61.6%). Therefore, many of the youth mentioned that the most significant improvement needed in the education system is changing the school curriculum, 392 (20.2%), and making education more practical rather than the current focus on theoretical and rote learning, 333 (17.2%).

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE YOUTH INVOLVED IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES CONCERNING EDUCATION ISSUES IN GHANA?

The research findings establish a high degree of awareness among the youth regarding their knowledge about their rights to participate in national decision-making issues. The findings show that a greater proportion of the youth surveyed either agreed, 726 (37.6%), or strongly agreed, 585 (30.3%), that they have the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education. Despite this strong sense of awareness, overall, the study found that a greater proportion of the youth are to some extent, 439 (22.7%), involved in decision-making regarding education issues. The youth expressed concerns that their voices are side-lined in decision-making, and in instances where they are invited or get the opportunity to interact with policymakers, they only become mere participants during discussions as their views or suggestions may find no place in the government's policy agenda setting or decisions regarding education and other policies that matter to the youth.

The research established that the youth in Ghana are far from holding duty-bearers accountable for their actions and inaction. This is evident in the findings, which suggest that 759 (39.2%) of the youth disagreed that they could hold duty bearers accountable. A section of young women, 385 (39.8%), young men, 374 (38.6%), as well as urban, 446 (39.8%), and rural youth, 313 (38.4%), also disagreed with the assertion that the youth can hold the government and duty bearers accountable.

However, there are mixed perceptions regarding whether the youth can voice their concerns about national development issues, including education. While over a third of the youth, 629 (32.5%), agreed that they can voice their concerns about national development issues, including education in Ghana, nearly the same proportion, 621 (32.1%), disagreed with this statement. Platforms such as student associations, digital and social media, and, to some extent, the youth parliament provide important avenues for the youth to voice their concerns on national development issues, although many of the

youth indicated non-participation in such platforms. The inability of the youth to better organise themselves has also stymied efforts to voice their concerns over national development issues. While the youth may have the opportunity to voice their concerns in some instances, a greater proportion of those surveyed, 796 (41.3%), disagreed that the views of the youth are taken seriously by policymakers concerning improving the education system and things that matter to the youth.

It was observed that rural and urban young men and women hold the view that either the government has to some extent, 406 (21.5%), or not at all, 409 (21.2%), created opportunities for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development.

According to the findings, the top four most effective actions voted by the young people to make their voices heard by decision-makers are:

(i) organising youth dialogue with policymakers or politicians, 1397 (72.0%); (ii) engaging in social media by expressing opinions, 1178 (60.7%); (iii) voting in local and national elections, 1108 (57.0%); and (iv) taking part in public consultation on proposed political initiatives (online or offline), 910 (46.9%). In addition, the qualitative findings highlight the need for youth representatives in decision-making and administrative structures at the local and national levels, revamping and resourcing the youth parliaments to make them more effective and organising forums to elicit youth views on key national issues.

WHAT ARE THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE GHANAIAN YOUTH ABOUT THEIR FUTURE?

Many young men, 554 (57.8%), and young women, 522 (54.4%), in both rural and urban areas in Ghana would be interested in technical and vocational education followed by formal education among young women, 503 (52.5%), and men, 428 (44.7%). Interestingly, many youths interested in formal education would want to pursue postgraduate degrees at the PhD and master's levels in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM-related) courses. However, the proportion of young men, 432 (45.4%), who favoured STEM was nearly twice that of young women, 229 (24%). The youth linked their interest in pursuing higher education to their career ambitions of obtaining well-paid professional employment and positively contributing to their families, society, and nation. The study found that the top three (3) constraints to realising future education and skills training aspirations include a lack of financial resources to fund higher education, 1023 (81.4%), frequent illness, 418 (33.3%), and a lack of connections or acquaintances, 405 (32.2%), that can support gaining admissions. Findings from the qualitative data also highlight the lack of financial capital as a key barrier to realising education aspirations.

Generally, the respondents demonstrated a great interest in learning about soft skills as they deem them crucial for their careers and future. The findings demonstrate that the key soft skills training in which the youth would be interested revolve around good communication skills, 1378 (71.3%), problem-solving skills, 1097 (56.8%); teamwork, 1061 (54.9%); leadership skills, 1036 (53.6%); and time management skills, 1010 (52.3%).

In terms of employment aspirations, the findings of this study highlight that many Ghanaian youth, 965 (54.6%), would want to engage in multiple jobs by combining formal and informal sector employment. This is mainly because they want multiple income streams to fulfil their social and material needs. However, there is a strong preference for self-employment, 1,194 (67.5%) followed by public sector employment, 580 (48.6%), and private sector employment (e.g., corporate organisations and family-owned companies), 413 (35.3%). However, empirical evidence from the qualitative data suggests that many youths would want to secure professional salaried employment in addition to self-employment. Again, findings from the qualitative interviews highlight a lack of social or personal connections ('whom you know') together with limited financial resources as key barriers or hindrances to realising the employment aspirations of young people in Ghana.



TO WHAT EXTENT ARE THE YOUTH PREPARED AND CONFIDENT ABOUT THEIR FUTURE?

The findings highlight positive views regarding the preparedness of youth for the future. More than a third of the youth, 697 (36.4%), suggested that they are somewhat prepared for the future. Additionally, nearly a third of the youth surveyed, 542 (28.3%), argued that they are adequately prepared for the future. Thus, despite the challenges faced, this finding underscores the positive outlook with which the youth view their future. It is evident from the study that the youth are making every effort for example through being focused on life and pursuing their education to ensure that they succeed in the future.

In terms of the extent to which education has prepared the youth for the future, the study found that a sizable proportion of the youth surveyed, 714 (37.3%), indicated that their education has prepared them for the future to some extent. A very good proportion of the youth, especially those with secondary and tertiary education, 577 (30.1%), also suggested that their education has somewhat done little to prepare them for the future. Overall, while the youth indicated several challenges of the current education system, they also suggested that they had gathered important knowledge, skills, and analytical capabilities in preparation for their future through their education. Nevertheless, many young people suggested that they would require financial support, 1,523 (91.9%), skills training, 1,012 (61.1%), network and interactions, 863 (52.1%), and education (either restart or further education), 778 (47%), to help them better prepare for their future. The findings further suggest that the surveyed youth maintain a positive outlook about the future, and many suggested that they are confident, 927 (48.3%), or strongly confident, 685 (35.7%), about succeeding in the future.

CONCLUSION

The youth in Ghana appear to have their voices missing in education policy decisions that require significant modifications to meet their future career aspirations.

However, the current state of affairs does not seem to favour their preparations for the future regarding how knowledge and skills are imparted to them. Their optimism about better prospects presents an opportunity for policymakers to engage them in crafting strategies to meet their education and career development needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the study offers the following suggestions for policies aimed at improving access and quality of education and enabling the youth to realise their education and employment aspirations.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNMENT

1. **Make the education curriculum more practical or practically oriented.**
2. **Address the high cost of education at all levels that puts education out of the reach of young people, especially in rural areas, both now and in the future, through the GETFund scholarship and other public education financial schemes to support the education of more Ghanaian youth in need.**
3. **Increased public investment in the basic education sector to promote equity and lay a strong foundation for many young people across the various geographies in Ghana.**
4. **Incorporate soft skills training as a compulsory module in schools starting from senior secondary school and enhance teachers' pedagogical capacity to integrate soft skills into the teaching and learning process. This requires the Ghana Education Service to provide targeted capacity development for teachers.**
5. **Provide an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurship or self-employment drive to thrive.**
6. **Create awareness about, revamp, and resource existing national youth parliaments.**
7. **Strengthening TVET Education by investing in the skills development of young people through TVET in the formal sector and apprenticeship training in the informal sector**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. **Youth voices must be represented in policy decision-making and must be a key requirement for funding government and civil society initiatives.**
2. **Provide funding support for the capacity strengthening of youth parliaments in terms of technical expertise, organisation, advocacy skills and competencies in using effective communication tools in formulating their messages clearly and engaging in policy decision- making**



RECOMMENDATIONS TO YOUTH-LED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

- 1. Create avenues for youth to network with potential employers and relevant stakeholders.**
- 2. Support the revitalisation of existing youth parliaments by, strengthening their capacities for collective voice to influence education and other policies that matter to the youth.**
- 3. Organise youth forums that bring together different youth groups, including the marginalised, and create opportunities for their concerns to be heard within the policy space.**
- 4. Intensify advocacy to promote equitable access to education and ensure that the voices, concerns, and issues that matter to the youth are factored into the design and implementation of government policies.**
- 5. Build a national coalition of CSOs in youth development to maximize their collective power and voice by partnering with young people in the youth policy space.**
- 6. Support in mobilising young people to form a National Youth Federation, which gives young people the space and voice for policy inputs and expands the space for their participation in the decision- making process.**

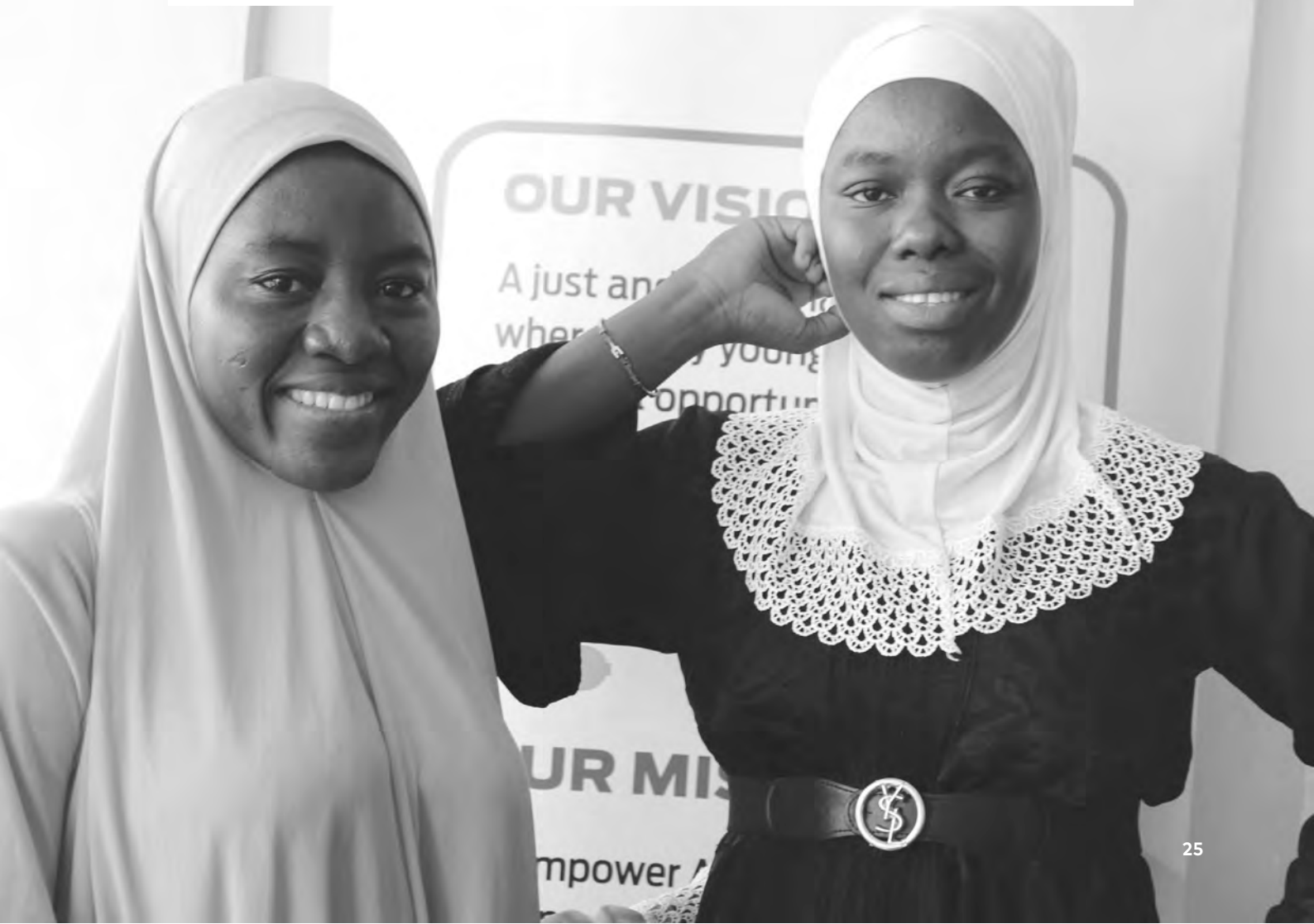
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INTRODUCTION



This Ghana Youth Barometer report presents the findings of a nationwide survey of youth (i.e., 15-35 years) focusing on education and their future in Ghana. The report documents the perspectives of the youth (i.e., young men and young women) in rural and urban areas in relation to how they perceive Ghana's education system and issues related to access and quality education in Ghana. It examines the perceptions of the Ghanaian youth concerning their education and future and in particular the views, concerns, and perspectives youth on the reforms needed in the current education system in Ghana to enable them to advance their future career prospects. The report further examines the extent to which the youth are involved in decision-making processes concerning their education and national development issues. It explores the education and employment aspirations of the youth, including what they consider to be the potential barriers limiting them from achieving their aspirations around education and employment. The report also analyses the perspectives of the youth regarding the extent to which they are prepared and confident about their future and, what they would need to help them better prepare for the future.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows. The next section provides the background and context of the study, including the goals, purpose, objectives, and research questions. Subsequently, it presents the methodology focusing on the research design, data collection methods and analysis. The penultimate section provides the key research findings, while the last section concludes and offers some suggestions and recommendations for policy directions.



2.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY



The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted every aspect of our daily lives. In Ghana, the pandemic has had severe socioeconomic impacts, including increasing unemployment, disruption to businesses, and loss of income and assets, among many others (Schotte et al., 2023). These impacts are still being experienced by people in different forms, particularly the youth. For instance, the COVID-19 crisis has posed considerable risks in the fields of education, employment, and health. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the difficulties faced by young people in the labour market (International Labour Organisation, 2022). In the area of education, the pandemic's impact on young people's access to quality education has been monumental, particularly due to the closure of schools, which occurred without any sufficient alternative education services to all young people, especially in Ghana (UNICEF, 2021). This has resulted in inequities in education and further intensified the prevailing access barriers for deprived and marginalized rural communities (Anas and Musah, 2023; Wolf et al., 2022). Although Ghana has made progress in enhancing access to education for all through interventions such as the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) and the Free Senior High School Policy, many young people in Ghana are still unable to go to school following the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to education inequality (Afoakwa et al., 2023; Asante et al., 2024).

According to UNICEF (2021:11), before the COVID-19 pandemic, 50.9% of children in Ghana aged 12-14 years, and the majority (83.3%) of young people aged 15-17 years were either not attending school or did not achieve the correct level of schooling. The report further shows that before the COVID-19 pandemic, the quality of education in Ghana was impoverished due to unfavourable learning environments, overcrowded classes, inadequate water and sanitation facilities, and an inadequate supply of trained teachers and education materials. More so, in terms of gender balance in schools in Ghana, there was a huge gender gap at the secondary level of education as compared to the primary level before the pandemic. For example, a higher rate of boys (35%) complete upper secondary school than girls (34%) which, highlights gender inequities in education (UNICEF, 2020).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified these existing challenges. For instance, reports from the Ministry of Education (2020) highlight that the closure of schools affected approximately 9.25 million students from kindergarten to Senior High School in both public and private schools, 500,000 tertiary education students, and 450,000 teachers in public and private institutions. Furthermore, during school closures, many young girls encountered issues such as early pregnancy, early marriage, and gender-based violence (UNFPA, 2020; UNICEF, 2022; Owusu-Addo et al., 2022). These issues prevented many young girls from returning to school after the reopening of schools in 2021. Again, many young people have been reported to find it difficult to return get to school after the COVID-19 pandemic (Wolf et al., 2021). Furthermore, many young people were left out of education due to inadequate digital skills among both teachers and students during the COVID-19 pandemic (Baidoo-Anu et al., 2023; Kumi-Yeboah et al., 2023).

As a result of these developments, Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa (YOTA) launched its 'Youth on Board' project in 2022 to engender youth voices in Ghana's education response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The overall goal of the project was to increase attention and investment in critical issues of access to and quality of education that have been escalated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the project, the organisational capacity and skills of the Voices of Youth Coalition will be improved, thereby enabling youth-led organisations to connect better, collaborate and self-organise. Across the participating municipalities, coalition members are producing collective reviews of the performance of their local governments in addressing the inequalities that impede young people's progress in education attainment. The project's end goal is to amplify the voices of the youth in policy spaces, thereby influencing local and national policies, programmes, and budgets in favour of more equitable and inclusive access to education. However, relatively little is known about the perspectives of young people on their education and future in Ghana. Thus, our understanding of young people's perceptions about their education and their preparedness for the future is limited, which represents a knowledge gap.

Informed by this, the Ghana Youth Barometer survey aims to obtain a nationwide perspective of young people regarding their education and future.

This will mark an important milestone in Ghana's youth development trajectory – a ground-breaking effort to scientifically survey youth perspectives on a national scale. The final deliverable of this project will be the Ghana Youth Barometer Report, which is designed to serve as a foundational document for youth advocacy and efforts aimed at shaping policies.



PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore how young people perceive their education and how prepared and confident they feel about their future. The is to help amplify youth voices to ensure that their aspirations and concerns are taken into consideration as the government and development partners seek to adapt Ghana's education system to new and emerging challenges.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research was guided by the following specific questions:

1. What are the perceptions of youth about the education system in Ghana?
2. What are the perceptions of youth about their education and future in Ghana?
3. What are the views of youth on changes required in the current education system in Ghana?
4. To what extent are the youth involved in decision-making processes concerning education issues in Ghana?
5. What are the aspirations of the Ghanaian youth regarding their future?
6. To what extent are the youth prepared and confident about their future?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



RESEARCH DESIGN

The Ghana Youth Barometer study employed a concurrent triangulation mixed method design involving the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data at the simultaneously. In doing so, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and interpreted conjointly. The purpose of the concurrent triangulation mixed methods design was to confirm, cross-validate, or corroborate the research findings from the qualitative and quantitative data within a single study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This helped in offsetting the weaknesses within each method with the strength of the other. Thus, the use of the concurrent triangulation mixed method design helped validate and cross-check the findings of each data collection and analysis method. The use of mixed methods design was premised on the assumption that the combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods provides a better understanding of the research problem than either approach alone. It therefore allowed for triangulation, convergence, complementarity, and validity of data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

The Ghana Youth Barometer study was also informed by a participatory youth-led approach. Thus, the study drew insights from the Restless Development youth-led research methodology, where young people between the ages of 15 and 35 years were partnered throughout the research process to capture their key insights, needs, and lived experiences of issues that matter most to them (Restless Development, 2020). The participatory youth-led research approach adopted in this study ensured the meaningful participation of young people and recognised them as experts in their rights. For this reason, the youth were involved in the conceptualisation of the research idea, the design of the research instruments, data collection, and analysis and validation of the research findings. The youth were engaged as partner researchers, drawing on their expertise and leadership throughout the research process. This helped us to ask the right questions, and capture and generate better insights.

In line with the underlying research design, we employed three main data collection methods namely:

- i) desk review;
- ii) survey questionnaire;
- iii) semi-structured in-depth interviews; and
- iv) focus group discussions.

These are explained in detail below.



DESK REVIEW

The research started with a desk review to examine several of academic, policy and grey literature on youth, education, and the future of young people with a focus on Ghana. The research team considered literature from other countries to learn best practices of how education shapes the future of the youth. The key documents reviewed included the Australian Youth Barometer, the Finnish Youth Barometer, the Youth Barometer by Credit Suisse, the Eurobarometer on Youth and Democracy, and the Wise Global Education Barometer. The insights from these youth barometer studies were used to design the survey questionnaires and the interview guides.

In addition to the youth barometer studies, the research team also reviewed the academic literature on education and youth in Ghana.

The rationale was to gain a better understanding of the current education system of Ghana, the perspectives of youth on their education, challenges of access to and provision of quality education, current policy initiatives to promote access and quality education, and the relationship between education and youth transitions to the labour market. The review provided a better context to position this research and a better framework on key outcome variables and indications that guided the design of the research instruments. The grey and academic literature was sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, working papers, books, policy briefs and project reports.

In undertaking such an exercise, electronic databases including Scopus, EBSCO, Web of Science, Elsevier, Springer, Taylor and Francis, and Google Scholar were used.

QUANTITATIVE DATA: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Quantitative data were gathered through the administration of a survey questionnaire.

The objective of the survey questionnaire was to collect quantitative data on various indicators of youth access to education, changes in the education system, the ability of the youth to hold duty bearers accountable, and the perspectives of the youth regarding their education and employment aspirations as well as the preparedness and confidence of youth about the future.

DATA COLLECTION FOR THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

A well-structured survey questionnaire with both closed (including Likert style) and open-ended questions was developed based on the objectives, research questions, and insights from the desk review to collect quantitative data. Specifically, as mentioned earlier, the design of the survey questionnaire was informed by insights from existing literature, such as the WISE Global Education Barometer and existing youth barometers from other countries.

The survey questionnaire consisted of seven sections and focused on questions pertaining to the following: i) Socio-demographics of the youth; ii) Youth perceptions of education and access to education in Ghana; iii) Youth perceptions of education and their future in Ghana; iv) Changes required in the education system in Ghana; v) Youth participation in decision-making in Ghana; vi) Youth aspirations around education and employment in Ghana; and vii) Youth perspectives on how prepared and confident they feel about their future. In total, the survey questionnaire consisted of 56 questions (see Appendix A).

RECRUITMENT OF ENUMERATORS AND TRAINING

A competitive application process was used in selecting the youth to act as research assistants or enumerators who administered the survey questionnaires¹. The rationale for using the youth as research assistants was that the study was youth-led and for this reason, the youth were best placed to understand and appreciate the perspectives of the youth respondents. A total of 2500 applications were received from the youth, out of which 32 (10 Females and 22 Males) were selected from the 16 regions of Ghana after an assessment by the staff of YOTA based on the experience and qualifications (i.e., minimum qualification of undergraduate degree) of the youth. Thus, for each region, two youth researchers were selected for this study. It is worth mentioning that some of the youth researchers were part of the Voices of Youth Network and had prior engagements with YOTA. A two-day workshop was organised for the 32 youth researchers in Kumasi between 8-9th December 2023 to solicit their input in designing the survey questionnaire and semi-structured in-depth interview guide. The workshop also served as a platform for offering capacity-building training to the youth researchers, focusing on how to effectively administer the research instruments, community entry and exit protocols, and ethics of conducting research with young people.

The survey questionnaire was administered using the KoBO Collect toolbox, which was deployed on Android tablets to facilitate quality and efficient data collection². The survey questionnaires were administered using a face-to-face data collection approach in the selected districts and communities (Table 2). Data collection for the survey questionnaire took place between 13th December and 5th January 2024. On average, the survey took approximately 90 minutes and was administered by the youth researchers using both a combination of English language and local languages (e.g., Twi, Fante, Ga, Dagbani, Frafra, Ewe, Sefwi, Bono etc.) in the selected districts and communities. It is worth mentioning that the youth researchers who administered the survey were natives of various districts and communities; hence, they were able to speak and understand the local languages and had local contextual knowledge such as the community terrain.

Prior to the main data collection, the survey questionnaire was piloted in a nearby community called Donaso in the Ejisu Municipality in the Ashanti region of Ghana on 9th December 2023.

The choice of the pilot community was based on access, geographical proximity and convenience. The rationale for the piloting was to test the feasibility of the research instruments. In all, 32 questionnaires were administered during the piloting. The feedback from the pilot was used in making the needed modifications to the survey questionnaire.

Before administering the final survey questionnaire, appropriate community entry procedures were followed. Key stakeholders, including community leaders (e.g., traditional rulers, assemblymen and women, unit committee members, etc.), were informed about the purpose of the study. Their approval was also sought for data collection because they acted as gatekeepers to the communities by providing direct access to community members.

SAMPLING APPROACH AND SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION

Given the nationwide nature of this study, the sample size was considered nationally representative and was estimated using Yamane's formula for sample size determination (Yamane, 1967). In doing so, the sampling frame for this study included the entire youth population of Ghana. According to the Ghana Statistical Service (2022), the youth population (defined as those between 15 and 35 years) is estimated at 11,782,614. Table 1 presents the regional distribution of the youth population in Ghana by sex.

¹For details on the call for Youth Barometer Researchers, see <https://yotaweb.org/ybarometer/>

²For details of the survey, see <https://ee.kobotoolbox.org/x/QOWdNYGb>

SAMPLING APPROACH AND SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION

TABLE 1:
REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION OF GHANAIAN YOUTH BY SEX

Region	Male	Female	Total
Western	417,553	402,644	820,197
Central	519,798	552,748	1,072,546
Greater Accra	1,076,901	1,144,820	2,221,721
Volta	283,233	305,468	588,701
Eastern	516,481	543,706	1,060,187
Ashanti	1,043,220	1,084,244	2,127,464
Western North	171,276	169,766	341,042
Ahafo	104,760	106,257	211,017
Bono	233,398	237,488	470,886
Bono East	228,801	230,765	459,566
Oti	133,952	130,868	264,820
Northern	405,598	437,987	843,585
Savannah	123,367	124,381	24,7748
North East	114,950	123,476	238,426
Upper East	235,659	240,656	476,315
Upper West	168,879	169,514	338,393
TOTAL	5,777,826	6,004,788	11,782,614

SOURCE: PHC DATA, GSS (2022).

To determine the sample size from Ghana's total youth population, we applied Yamane's formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where: N = population,

n = sample size and

e = sampling error (a measure of the accuracy of the results), expressed as a decimal. In this study, we set the margin of error to 0.025. However, in social science, a common choice for e is 0.05 for a 5% margin of error, which provides a reasonable balance between accuracy and the size of the sample needed. Using e=0.025

$$n = \frac{11,782,614}{1 + 11782614(0.000625)}$$

$$n = \frac{11,782,614}{7,364.13375}$$

$$n=1,600$$

However, we added 10% of 1600 (i.e.,160) to the sample size to cater for potential non-responses.

Therefore, $n=1600+160=1,760$. This meant that the initial sample size was estimated at 1,760 youth aged between 15 and 35 years. However, following the administration of the survey questionnaire, 1,940 were sampled. This was mainly because the researchers gave every youth participant who was willing to be involved the opportunity to participate in the research. For this reason, the final sample size used for the analysis was 1,940 (see Table 2 on the selected sample). This enhanced the representativeness of the sample.

With respect to the sampling technique, stratified random sampling was used where the sample was distributed in proportion to the youth in each of the 16 administrative regions of Ghana.

For this reason, region, sex, and place of residence (urban and rural) were considered a stratum³. Purposive sampling was then used in selecting specific districts and communities for the study (see Table 2). The rationale for selecting these districts was that the Voices of Youth Coalition (i.e., a youth-led platform for advocacy and action for youth participation in promoting inclusive policies for national development) was very active in the districts at the time of data collection. For this reason, the districts were regarded as areas where YOTA had an active existing presence and youth-led advocacy initiatives or programmes (see Table 2 for the list of districts and communities selected). The communities or towns were also selected to reflect rural-urban dynamics. Thus, for each district, a predominantly rural and urban community or town was selected to elicit the perspectives of the youth. The inclusion of rural and urban communities ensured that the views of rural and urban youth were included in the study to provide nuanced perspectives. The proportion of urban and rural youth was 1122 (57.8%) and 818 (42.2%), respectively.

In selecting the respondents, simple random sampling was used to select the youth between the ages of 15 and 35 years.

The respondents were randomly selected, and each respondent had an equal chance or the probability of being selected. Thus, the use of simple random sampling ensured that the selection of respondents was unbiased, thereby enhancing the validity and generalisability of the research findings. Moreover, the random selection of the respondents was also based on their willingness to participate in the study by answering the survey questions. To ensure that there were equal gender perspectives of young men and young women, we employed a 50:50 male-female ratio (i.e., 970 females and 970 males) to capture an accurate picture of the gendered responses (see Table 2).

³Based on information from the Ghana Statistical Service, a community is described as rural if the population is less than 5,000 people in addition to the availability of social and economic services (e.g., electricity, school, hospital etc.). On the other hand, a community or settlement is considered urban if the population is more than 5,000 people.

TABLE 2:

SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACROSS REGIONS, DISTRICTS, PLACES OF RESIDENCE, AND SEX

Regions	Metropolis/ Municipality/ District	Place of residence		sex		Total youth Surveyed
		Rural	Urban	M	F	
Ashanti	Asokore Mampong Municipal Assembly	Not Applicable	Asokore Mampong	98	99	197
	Kwabre-East Municipal Assembly	Safo	Mampong	93	82	175
Total						372
Bono	Sunyani Municipal	Kwasi Nfuom	Sunyani	19	27	46
	Sunyani West Municipal	Odumase	Dumasua	18	19	37
Total						83
Bono-East	Techiman North District	Koase	Twimia Nkwanta	23	25	48
	Techiman Municipal	Aban Mu	Dwomor	13	11	24
Total						72
Eastern	Akwapim North Municipal	Adukrom	Aseseso	48	30	78
	Abuakwa North Municipal	Obodanase	New Koforidua	42	38	80
Total						158
Greater Accra	La-Nkwantanang Municipal	Not Applicable	Abokobi	83	83	166
	Ledzokuku Municipal	Not Applicable	Manet	73	107	180
Total						346

Regions	Metropolis/ Municipality/ District	Place Of Residence		Sex		Total Youth Surveyed
		Rural	Urban	M	F	
North-East	East Mamprusi Municipal	Sakogu	Gambaga/ Nalerigu	33	33	66
	West Mamprusi Municipal	Nagbo	Walewale	6	6	12
Total						78
Savannah	West Gonja District	Achubunyo	Damongo	4	0	4
	Bole District	Namuo	Bole	18	15	33
Total						37
Upper East	Bolgatanga Municipal	Sumbrugu	Bolgatanga	16	17	35
	Bongo District	Namoo	Bongo	13	19	32
Total						67
Upper West	Wa Municipal	Kperisi	Wa	21	22	43
	Nadowli-Kaleo District	Gbankor	Kaleo	12	13	25
Total						68
Western	Shama District	Bobkorkope	Shama	24	21	45
	Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis	Mampong	Takoradi	38	42	80
Total						125
Western North	Sefwi Wiawso Municipal	Old Adiembra	Wiawso	15	15	30
	Sefwi Akontombra District	Kofikrom	Nsawora	10	11	21
Total						51

Regions	Metropolis/ Municipality/ District	Place of residence		Sex		Total youth Surveyed
		Rural	Urban	M	F	
Northern	Tamale Metropolitan	Not Applicable	Zogbeli	29	33	70
	Sagnarigu Municipal	Sognaayili	Sagnarigu	34	22	56
Total						126
Oti	Krachi Nchumuru District	Zongo	Chinderi	10	10	20
	Krachi West District	Monkra	Kete-Krachi	9	11	20
Total						40
Ahafo	Tano North Municipal	Yamfo	Duayaw Nkwanta	8	8	16
	Asunafo North Municipal	Bedabour	Goaso	5	11	16
Total						32
Volta	Ho Municipal	Klepe	Bankoe/ Dome	60	49	109
	Ketu North Municipal	Kpenoe	Dzodze	-	-	-
Total						109
Central	Cape Coast Metropolitan	Anafo	Kakumdo/ Kwaprow	96	80	176
	Komenda – Edina – Eguafu – Abirem Municipal	Brabeze	Elmina	-	-	-
Total				970	970	1940

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

QUALITATIVE DATA: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS AND SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

As part of the qualitative data collection process for the study, four Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with young men and women in three regions namely Ashanti, Eastern, and Bono regions by the lead researchers and the youth researchers. The participants for the FGDs were purposively selected because they were youth within the age bracket of 15-35 years who were willing to speak detail about the issues discussed during the administration of the survey questionnaire. The first FGD was made up of five young males within the age range of 27-35 years from the Sunyani Municipality in the Bono region. The second FGD had six young females with ages ranging between 22 and 26 years from the Asokore Mampong Municipality in the Ashanti region. The third FGD comprised five young males within the age range of 18 and 20 years whereas the fourth FGD comprised five females. The third and fourth FGDs were conducted in the Yilo Krobo Municipality in the Eastern region. In total, 21 participants (11 females and 10 males) participated in the four FGDs conducted between 13th December 2023 and 5th January 2024. The FGDs were deliberately conducted based on gender (young men and young women) to understand the gender dynamics and gendered perspectives of the youth regarding their education and future. Thus, the young men and women were separated to ensure inclusivity and provide opportunities for the youth to freely express themselves. This also helped in understanding the gender differences in the perspectives and attitudes of the youth regarding their education and future. Therefore, the use of FGDs helped in capturing the collective insights from young men and women, which provided nuanced perspectives by allowing for more interaction and exchange of ideas.

An FGD guide was designed to elicit the perspectives of young men and women. In doing so, the guide focused essentially on the main issues covered during the survey, including youth perceptions of education and access to quality education, the benefits of education for the future, barriers to education, changes required in the education system to prepare the youth for the future, participation of the youth in the decision-making process, youth aspirations about education and their employment, preparedness for the future, and their confidence about the future. All the four FGDs were conducted face-to-face with young men and women. The discussions were open-ended, relaxed and engaging, guided by a set of questions. On average, each FGD lasted for approximately 90 minutes and was moderated using a mixture of English and local languages such as Twi as preferred by the participants.

All FGDs were audio-recorded with verbal informed consent from the young women and men. Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any time if they wished to do so. The purpose and objectives of the study were also clearly explained to the participants.

SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

As part of the qualitative data collection, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with young men and women across the 16 regions of Ghana. In total, 48 semi-structured interviews (28 males and 20 females) were conducted with young men and women across the 32 selected Metropolitan, Municipal, and District Assemblies (MMDAs) (see Table 2). The respondents were purposively selected to understand the perceptions of the youth regarding their education and future. The inclusion criteria for selecting the respondent were as follows: i) the respondent must be a youth aged between 15 and 35 years, and ii) the respondent was readily accessible and willing to participate in the interviews.

Similar to the FGDs, an interview guide was developed to solicit the views of the youth. The interview guide was divided into seven sections and drew insights from the survey questionnaire. The rationale of the interview guide was to understand the 'back stories' of the quantitative survey data. Thus, the qualitative interviews sought to confirm or cross-validate the responses provided in the survey data. This was because some responses could not be captured adequately using survey questionnaires, hence the need for semi-structured interviews to obtain an in-depth understanding of the nuances and intricacies of the responses. The interview guide focused on issues such as the perceptions of youth of education and access to quality education, the benefits of education for the future, barriers to education, changes required in the education system to prepare the youth for the future, participation of the youth in the decision-making process, youth aspirations about education and their employment, preparedness for the future, and their confidence about the future (see Appendix B).

Data collection for the semi-structured interviews occurred concurrently with the FGDs between 13th December 2023 and 5th January 2024.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using face-to-face interactions with respondents and on average lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted using a mixture of English and local languages. Before the start of every interview, verbal informed consent was sought from the respondents, which allowed for audio-recording of all interviews. In addition, respondents were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality and were informed about the voluntary nature of their participation in the study. The purpose of the study was also clearly explained to the respondents. It is worth mentioning that while it would have been useful to involve key informants, particularly stakeholders such as government officials, getting access to them proved to be a challenge; hence, their views were not included in the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTEGRATION

QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

As part of the data analysis process for the quantitative data, quality checks were conducted on the 1,953 survey responses to ascertain the quality of the data. During this process, a few survey responses with questionable quality (e.g., missing values, incomplete responses etc.) were deleted during data cleaning. Following data cleaning, 1,940 responses were deemed to have met the quality criteria and were used for the final analysis and reporting.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and, chi-square tests of association between variables of interest and socio-demographic characteristics. Specifically, chi-square tests were performed on variables such as gender, level of education, employment status, and place of residence (i.e., urban and rural) to check for associations in the perspective of the youth. Therefore, the chi-square tests report statistically significant associations at the 95% confidence level. The survey data was analysed using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, SPSS (version IBM SPSS Statistics 25).





QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

All FGDs and semi-structured interviews were recorded with the verbal informed consent of the respondents. The recorded audio recordings were transcribed for data analysis. The FGDs and interview data were analysed manually using thematic analysis. The use of thematic analysis helped identify emergent themes and patterns in the data. It is worth mentioning that the thematic analysis was inductive and iterative, involving the reading, revising, and the re-organisation of codes based on emerging data from the transcripts. The procedures used in conducting the thematic analysis included familiarisation of the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and writing reports (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

As part of the qualitative data analysis, discourse analysis was also employed to understand how young people frame their perceptions and experiences of the education system in Ghana, their aspirations, and their preparedness for the future. Discourse analysis was useful for understanding the differences and commonalities in young people's perspectives on their future.

Given the concurrent mixed methods research design underpinning this study, the findings from the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated simultaneously. Thus, the quantitative and qualitative data were brought together by merging different data. The rationale is that it helped in synthesising, validating, and confirming the findings from the quantitative and qualitative methods.

4.0

KEY FINDINGS



DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The socio-demographic characteristics of the survey respondents included gender, age, marital status, religious affiliation, area of residence, educational attainment, and number of children born to the youth.



SEX AND AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE YOUTH

Table 3 presents the sex and age distribution of the young men and women who participated in the study. In all, a total of 1,940 youth, including 970 young men and 970 young women, were surveyed. The minimum age of the youth was 15 years, while the maximum age was 35 years, with an average age of 22.9 years (See Table 3). The average age of young men and women was 23 years and 22.7 years, respectively. The age range of the participants reflects the definition of young people put forward by the revised Ghana National Youth Policy, which considers all persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years as youth (Government of Ghana, 2022).

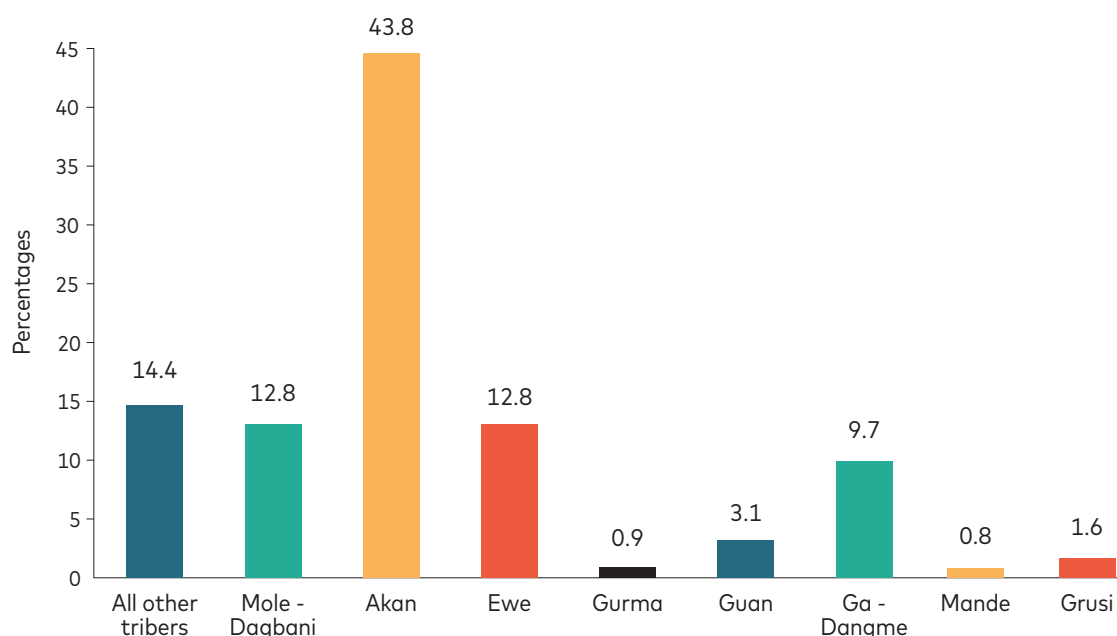
TABLE 3:
SEX AND AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

Sex	Age in years			
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Male	23.0	5.33	15	35
Female	22.7	5.02	15	35
Total	22.9	5.18	15	35

ETHNICITY OF THE YOUTH

Figure 1 presents the results for the ethnic background of the youth participants. The majority (43.8%) were Akans. The Mole-Dagbani and Ewe ethnic groups constitute 12.8% each. Ga-Adangbe represented 9.7%, while (14.4%) constitute the minority ethnic grouping (i.e., all other ethnic groups).

FIGURE 1:
ETHNIC GROUPS OF RESPONDENTS (n=1940)

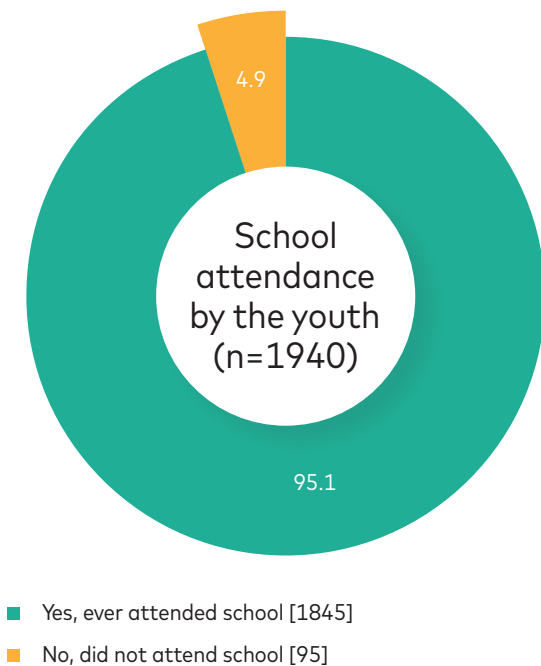


SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION AMONG THE YOUTH

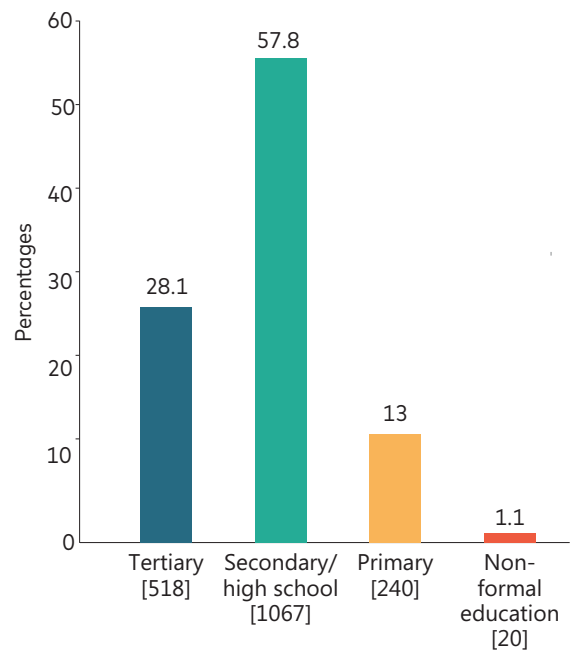
Figure 2 presents the results of school attendance. An overwhelming majority of the youth 1845 (95.1%) reported having ever attended school. The high rate of school attendance among the youth may be attributed to several policies, including the Capitation Grant, Ghana School Feeding Programme and Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), which was launched in 1996 to provide an opportunity for every school-age child in Ghana to receive quality basic education.

FIGURE 2:
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE BY THE YOUTH (n=1940)



current level of school attendance was secondary or senior high school, 1067 (57.8%), education followed by tertiary 518 (28.1%), primary education, 240 (13%) and non-formal education, only 20 (1.1%) (Figure 3). According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2017-2018 Round 6, the dropout rate among youth who should be in secondary school is 25%, while that of the number of school-going children at the primary level is 19% (Yusif, 2019).

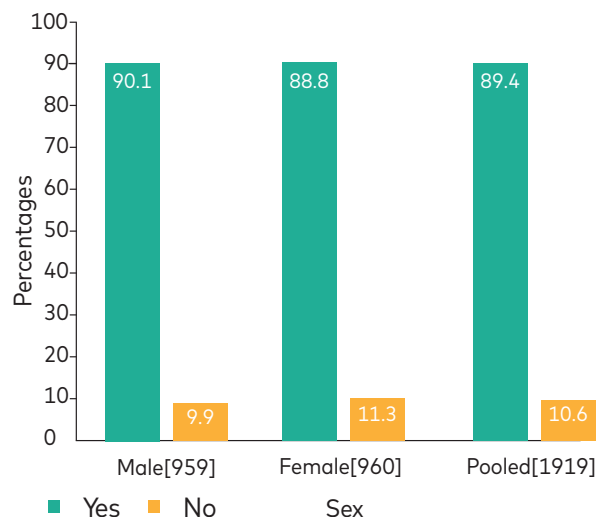
FIGURE 3:
CURRENT LEVEL OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE OF THE YOUTH (n= 1845)



SEX AND LITERACY RATE AMONG THE YOUTH

Figure 4 presents the results on whether the youth can read or write in English or any other language by sex. The majority, 1725 (89.4%), indicated that they could read or write in any language. The proportion was high for both young men 864(90.1%) and young women 852(88.8%). The results suggest that the literacy rate among the sampled youth is high.

FIGURE 4:
DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH WHO CAN READ AND WRITE IN ANY LANGUAGE BY SEX (N=1919)



LITERACY BASED ON THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF RESPONDENTS

Figure 5 presents the results of the distribution of literacy rate among the youth by place of residence. Many young people in the urban and rural areas of Ghana can read and write in any language. However, the proportion of urban youth 1004(90.6%) who can read and write in language was slightly higher than their counterparts in the rural areas 712(87.8%). The findings on the high rate of literacy among young men and women in both rural and urban areas are unsurprising, given that there is high school attendance among the youth.

FIGURE 5:
LITERACY BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1919)

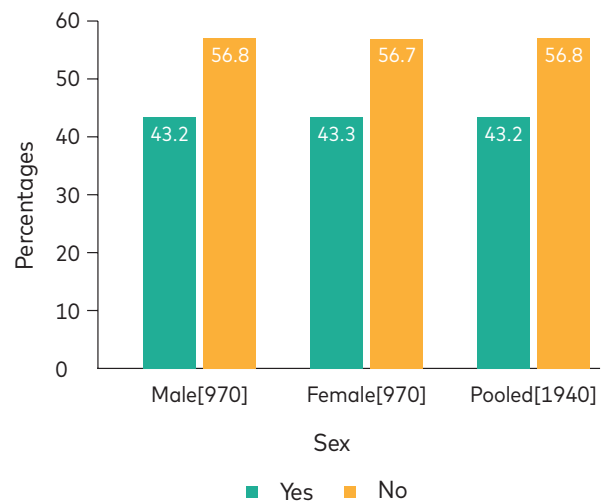


EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF THE YOUTH

Unemployment among the youthful population is a major developmental challenge in Ghana.

Therefore, this research sought to explore the employment status of the youth in Ghana. To do this, we asked the youth to tell us whether they were currently employed at the time of the research. It is evident from Figure 6 that unemployment is a challenge for the youth. Overall, more than half of the youth, 1,101(56.8%), reported not being in employment, and the proportion of unemployment was nearly the same for both the young men, 551(56.8%), and young women 550 (56.7%).

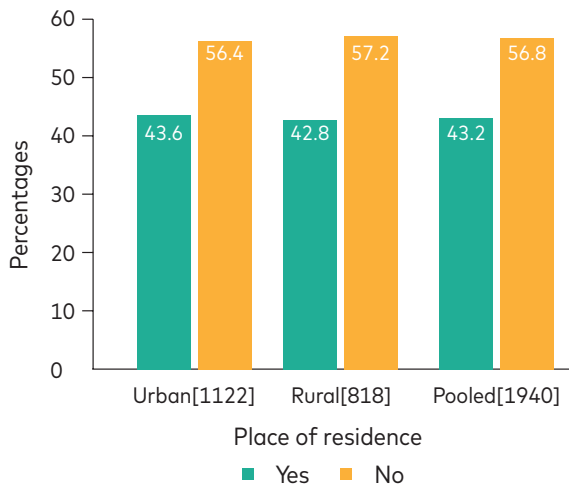
FIGURE 6:
EMPLOYMENT BY SEX (n=1940).



We are on a mission to empower one million African youth with social and economic opportunities so that they can escape poverty and transform their lives.

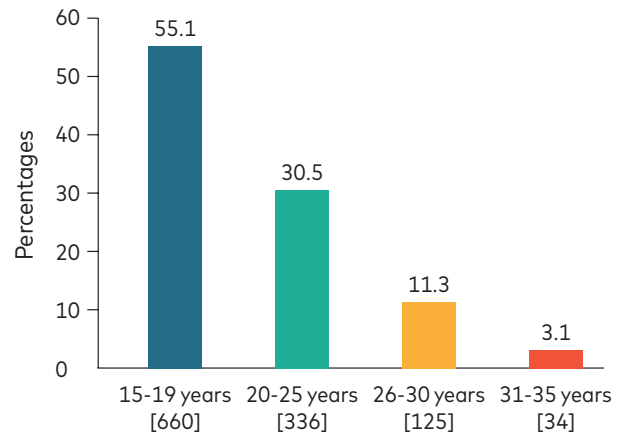
The results further show that more than half of the urban youth, 633 (56.4%), and rural youth, 469 (57.2%), reported not being employed at the time of data collection (Figure 7). The findings on the high rate of unemployment among young men and women in both urban and rural areas collaborate with a recent Ghana Statistical Service (2021) report, which highlights that of all young people in Ghana, 19.7% are unemployed, suggesting that nearly one in five youth in Ghana is unemployed. According to the 2023 Annual Household Income and Expenditure Survey, youth unemployment between the first three quarters of 2022 and 2023 increased by 14.6% from 1,199,509 to 1,374,329 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2024).

FIGURE 7:
EMPLOYMENT BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1940)



Among the youth who reported being unemployed, a majority, 606 (55.0%) were aged between 15 and 20 years, while a significant proportion, 336(30.5%) were also between 21 and 25 years. On the other hand, a small proportion of the youth aged 26-30 years, 125 (11.3%) and 31-35 years, 34(3.0%), reported being unemployed respectively (Figure 8). This finding corroborates the observation by the Ghana Statistical Service (2024) that the unemployment rate is higher among youth aged between 15 and 24 years than among those aged between 30 and 35 years.

FIGURE 8:
UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG THE YOUTH BY AGE (n=1101)



The results further show that most of the youth, 645 (60.7%), who reported being unemployed were persons with secondary education, while those with tertiary education were 311(29.2%). Youth unemployment was relatively lower among those with primary education 102(9.6%) and non-formal education 4(0.4%) (Figure 9).

FIGURE 9:
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE AMONG THE YOUTH BY LEVEL OF EDUCATION (N=1062)

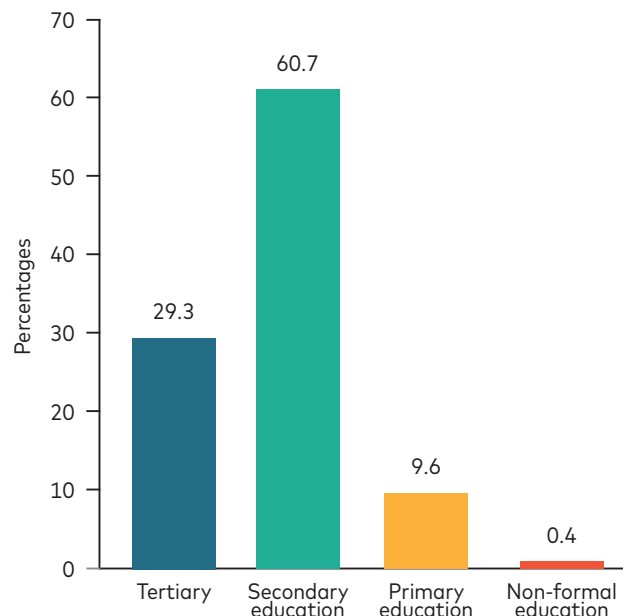


Figure 10 presents the results for youth employment based on region of residence.

The results show that the number of unemployed youth is highest in four regions: Greater Accra, 169 (15.3%);

Ashanti region, 160 (14.5%); Central 136 (12.3%); and Eastern, 112 (10.1%). The regions with the lowest number of unemployed youth are Oti, 21(1.9%), Ahafo, 21 (1.9%), and Savannah, 31 (2.8%).

FIGURE 10:
UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG THE YOUTH BY REGION OF RESIDENCE (n= 1101)

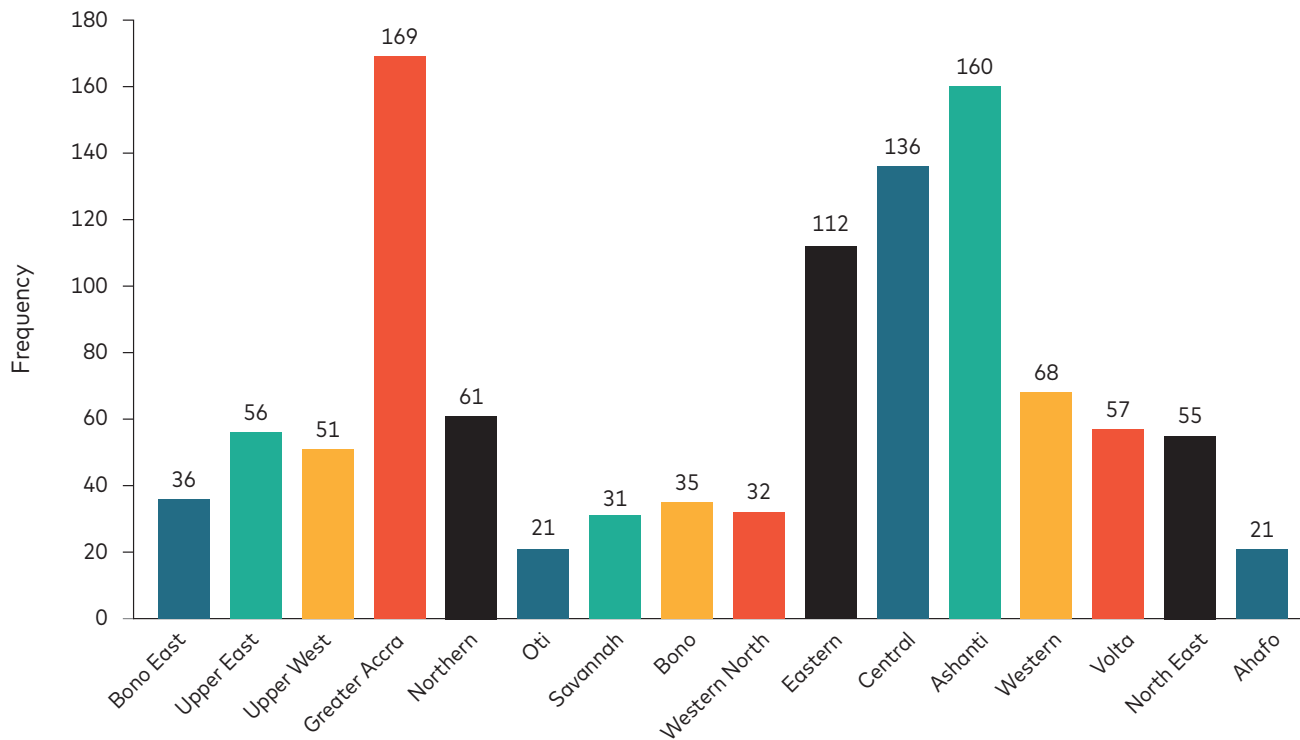
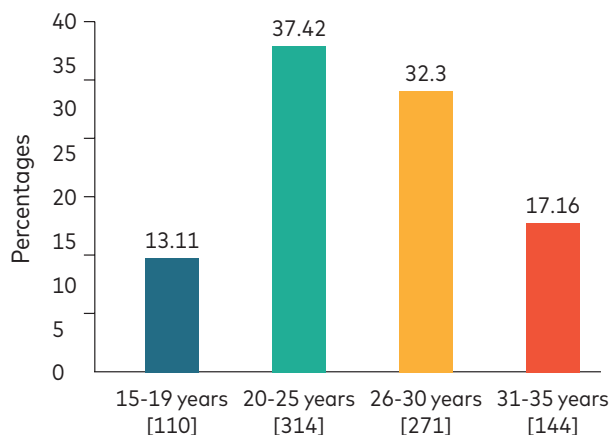


Figure 11 presents the results for the youth who are employed based on age categories.

The results show that among the youth that were employed (i.e., 839), a majority, 314 (37.42%) were between the ages of 20 and 25 years, while those aged between 26 and 30 years represented, 271(32.3%). On the other hand, a small proportion 110(13.11%) of the youth aged between 15 and19 years reported being employed.

FIGURE 11:
EMPLOYMENT AMONG THE YOUTH BASED ON AGE (n=839)



SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT

Table 4 presents the results of the sectors of employment/occupation of the youth at the time of data collection. Overall, the top five sectors of employment/occupation of the youth include trading, 132 (15.8%), others engage mainly in galamsey (artisanal mining) and informal sector work, 94 (11.2%), fashion/garment making, 87 (10.4%), and construction-related works, 55 (6.6%). Despite the common policy proposal that agriculture is the key to promoting youth employment in Africa, it is striking to note that the proportion of youth engaged in the agriculture sector or agribusiness-related employment is quite low (see Table 4).

TABLE 4:
SECTORS OF EMPLOYMENT/MAIN OCCUPATION (n=838)

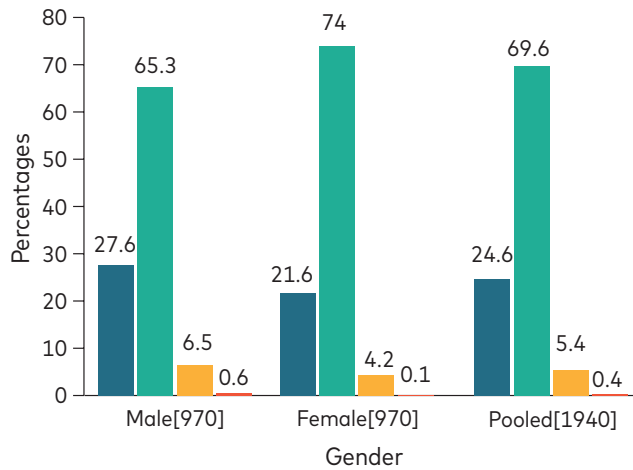
	Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Main Occupation	Journalism	7	0.8
	Security Services (e.g., Military, Police etc.)	16	1.9
	Information communication technology (ICT) related	13	1.6
	Automotive/Electricity	46	5.5
	Teaching – Basic Education	64	7.6
	Health	43	5.1
	Fashion/garment	87	10.4
	Trading	132	15.8
	Construction related works	55	6.6
	Financial service	31	3.7
	Teaching – Secondary education	14	1.7
	Social and community worker	10	1.2
	Lawyers	4	0.5
	Agric Business	11	1.3
	Transportation (e.g., driver)	30	3.6
	Cosmetology	38	4.5
	Factory worker	29	3.5
	Domestic worker	38	4.5
	Agriculture (Modern or traditional)	19	2.3
	Handicraft maker	22	2.6
	Hotel/tourism-related	20	2.4
	Teaching – Tertiary education	4	0.5
	Religion (Priest, Nun etc)	4	0.5
	Politician	5	0.6
	Football player	2	0.2
	Others, specify	94	11.2
	Total	838	100

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Figure 12 presents the living arrangements of the youth surveyed. The results show that the majority (69.6%) reported living at home with their family. More young women (718 or 74%) reported living at home with family than young men (633 or 65.3%). Moreover, a proportion of the young men, 268 (27.6%), and young women, 210 (21.6%), reported living independently.

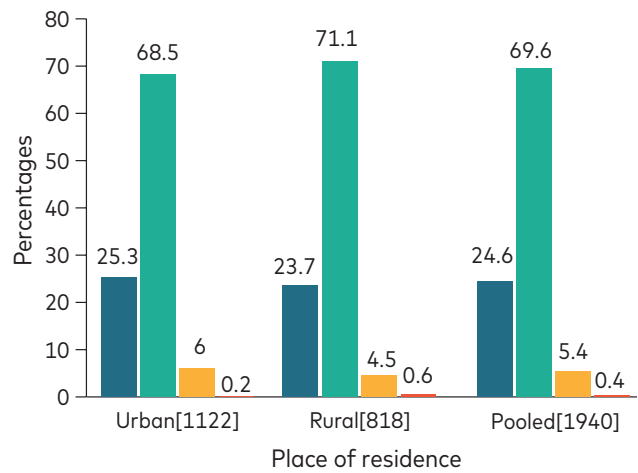
FIGURE 12:
LIVING ARRANGEMENT BY GENDER (n=1940)



- Living Independently
- At home with family
- With friends/in a shared house
- Others

The living arrangements of the urban and rural youth follow a similar trend. However, the proportion of rural youth (71.1%) who reported living at home with family is higher than that in urban areas (68.5%). Slightly more urban youth (25.3%) than rural youth (23.7%) reported living independently (Figure 13).

FIGURE 13:
LIVING ARRANGEMENT BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1940)



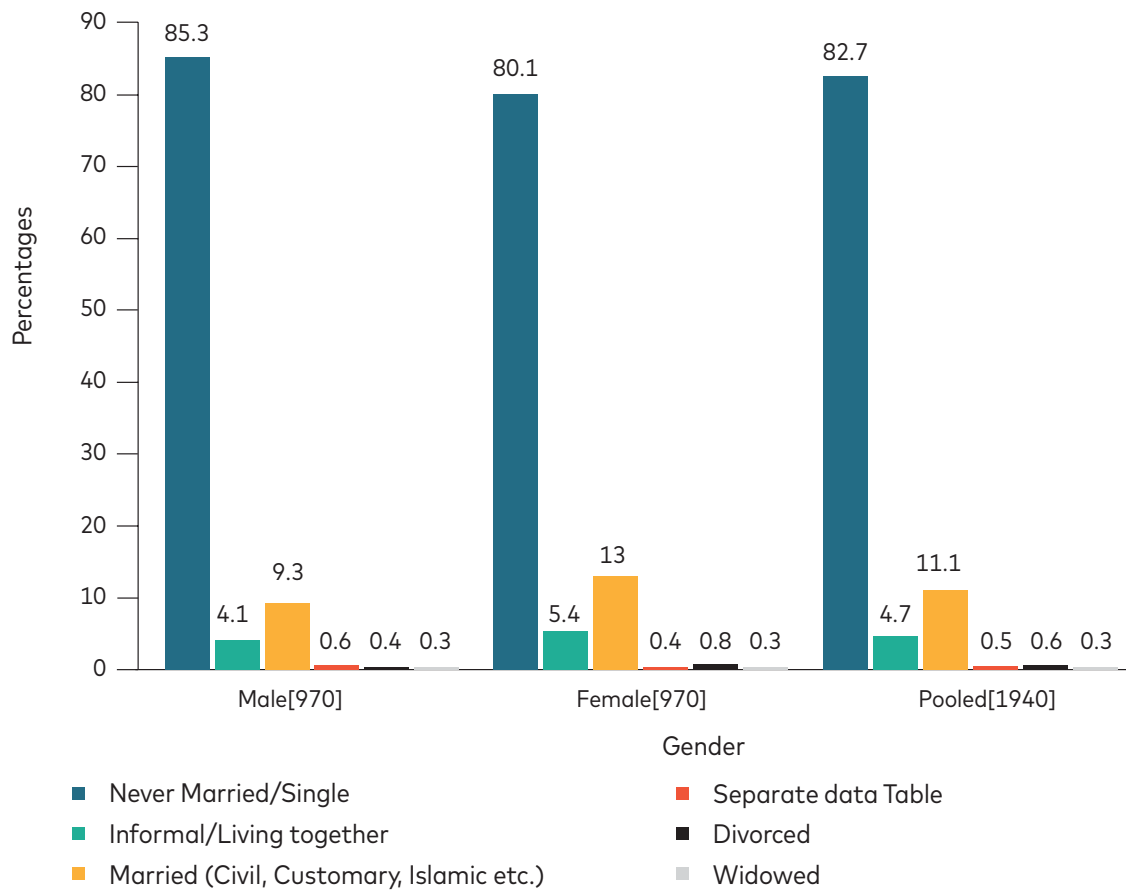
- Living Independently
- At home with family
- With friends/in a shared house
- Others



MARITAL STATUS OF THE YOUTH

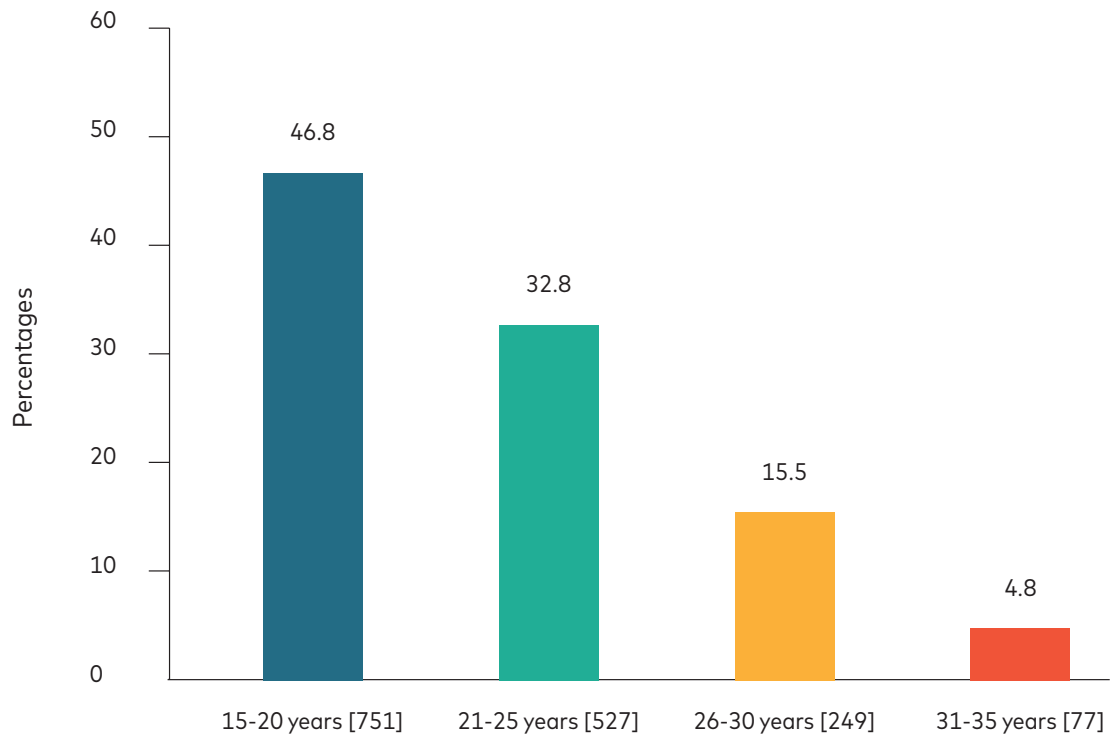
The marriage rate among young women and men in Ghana is low. Of the 1,940 youths surveyed, the vast majority, 1,604 (82.7%), reported that they had never married (Figure 14). More young men, 826 (85.2%), reported that they had never married compared with young women, 777 (80.1%), who reported that they had never married, perhaps an indication of a higher marriage rate among young women.

TABLE 14:
MARITAL STATUS BY SEX (n=1940)



In terms of age category, the results show that most of the youth aged between 15 and 20 years 751 (46.8%) reported that they had never married while those aged between 21 and 25 years was 527 (32.8%). On the other hand, only a few, 77 (4.8%), between the ages of 31 and 35 years said they had never married (Figure 15).

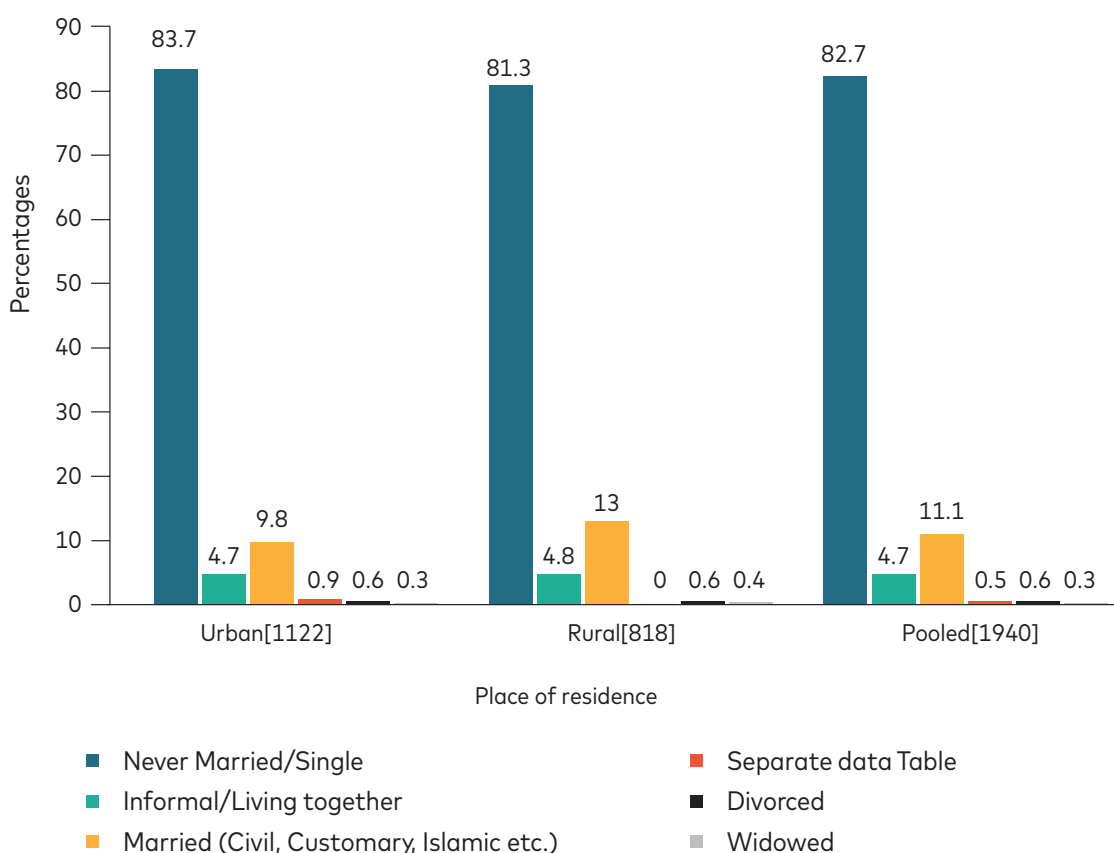
FIGURE 15:
YOUTH WHO HAD NEVER MARRIED BY AGE (n=1604)



The proportion of the youth who reported being married was slightly higher among young women 126 (13%) than young men, 90 (9.3%). A similar trend can be observed for those who reported being in informal relationships/living together but not married, where the proportion was higher for young women, 52 (5.4%) than young men, 40 (4.1%).

Figure 16 also shows the results on the marital status of the youth by place of residence. In all, a greater share of both the urban, youth 939 (83.7%), and rural youth, 665 (81.3%), reported to have never married. The proportion of urban youth (9.8%) and rural youth (13%) who reported being married under either civil, customary, or Islamic marriage is relatively low.

FIGURE 16:
MARITAL STATUS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1940)



CHILDREN BORN TO THE YOUTH

Figure 17 presents the results on whether the youth surveyed had a child(ren) by sex. The results indicate that only a proportion of the youth, 409 (21.1%), reported having children at the time of the survey. However, the proportion of young women, 242 (24.9%), who reported having children was higher than that of young men, 169 (17.2%).

FIGURE 17:
CHILDREN BY GENDER

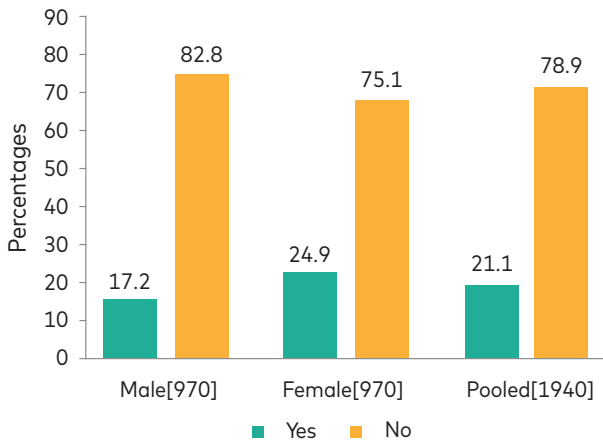


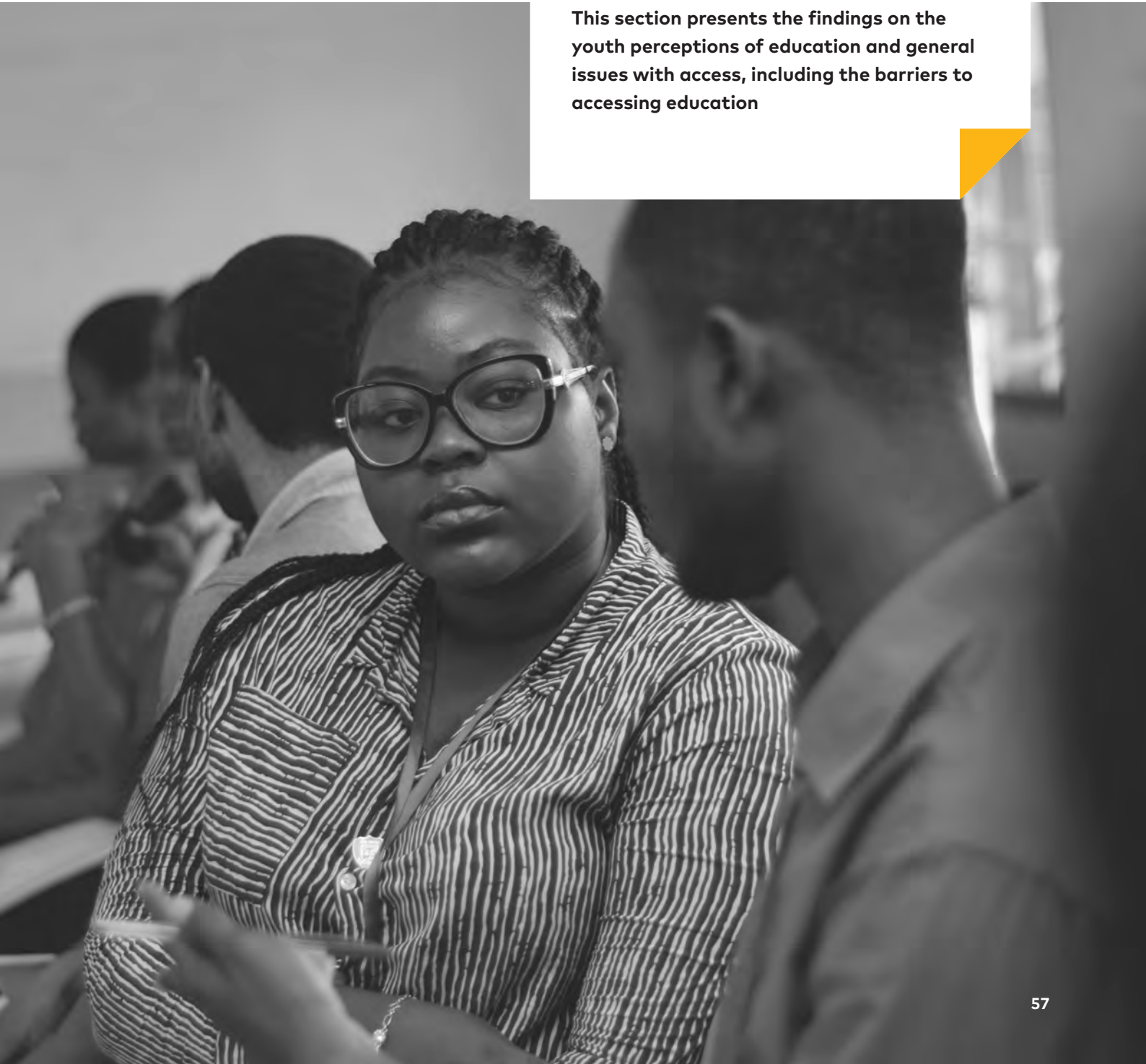
Figure 18 shows the distribution of the youth who reported having children by place of residence. The results show that 186 (22.7%) of the rural youth reported having children compared with 223 (19.9%) of the urban youth.

FIGURE 18:
NUMBER OF CHILDREN BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1940)



YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN GHANA

This section presents the findings on the youth perceptions of education and general issues with access, including the barriers to accessing education



YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA

Table 5 presents the results on the perceptions of young people about the education system and access to education in Ghana. The results show that most young people surveyed, 833 (42.9%), stated that the education system in Ghana is retrogressing. On the other hand, a section of the youth reported that the education system in Ghana is progressing, 480 (24.8%), and stagnating, 533 (27.5%). Analysis of the survey data suggests that there was no statistically significant association ($X^2(3) = 1.98 > p = 0.57$) in the perceptions of young men and young women about the education system in Ghana (see Appendix 1). The results show that more than half of the respondents (455) who reported that the education system in Ghana is stagnating completed secondary or senior high school compared with those with tertiary qualifications (231) and primary school qualifications (120).

TABLE 5:
YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF THE DIRECTION OF GHANAIAN EDUCATION

	Sex		Place of Residence		Pooled [n=1938]
	Male [n=970]	Female [n=968]	Urban [n=1121]	Rural [n=817]	
Progressing	24.1	25.4	25.6	23.6	24.8
Retrogressing	44.2	41.7	41.5	45	43.0
Stagnating	26.6	28.4	28.3	26.4	27.5
Don't Know	5.1	4.4	4.6	4.9	4.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Analysis of the qualitative data indicates that for many young men and women, **in many aspects, the education system has progressed over the years, and this is attributed to factors such as increasing access to education and improvements in infrastructure.** This is how a young man puts it:

- "I think over the years, I've seen some universities making progress in terms of access. Now, there are a lot of distance learning programmes which are being organised by public universities" (Participant, Male, FGD, Sunyani East Municipal, December 2023).

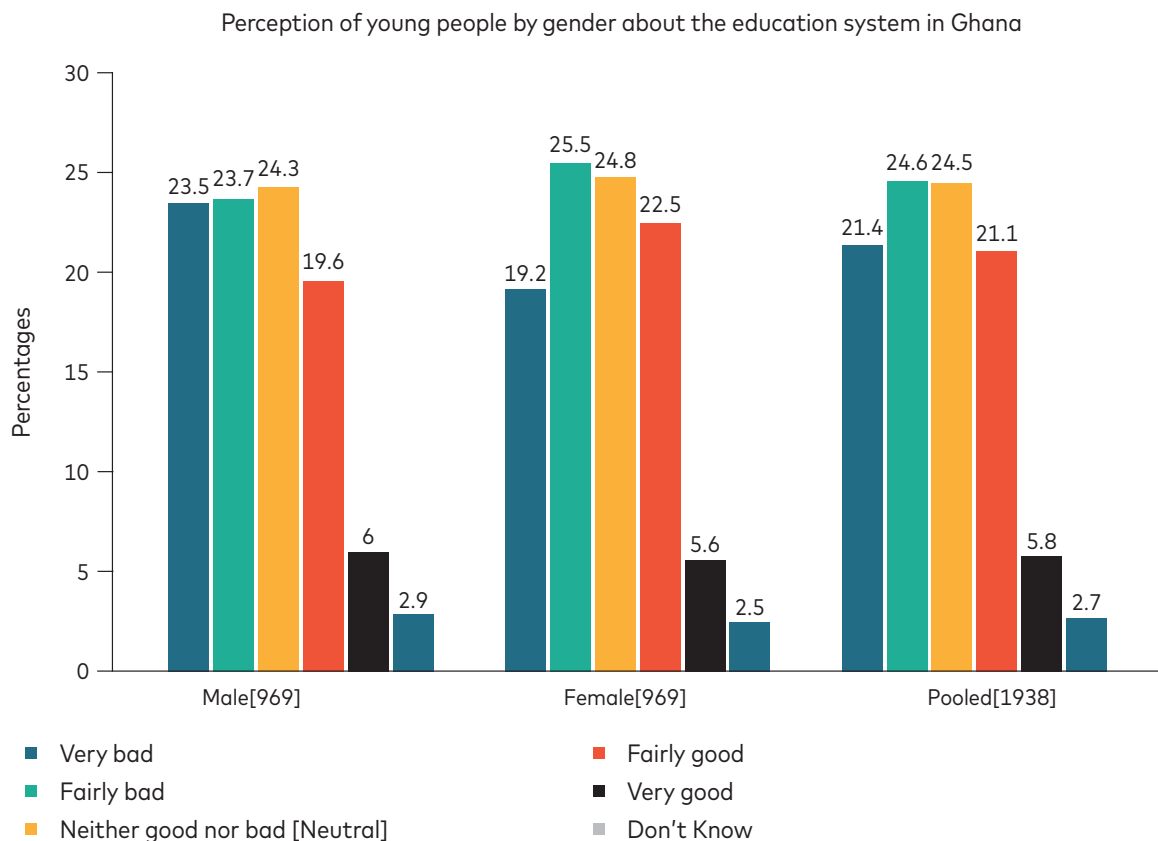
Notwithstanding the progress made, some young men and women also raised concerns about how the education system has stagnated and, in some instances, retrogressed in recent years. For example, the results show a statistically significant association ($X^2(9) = 42.90 < p = 0.00$) between the level of education and perceptions about the education system (see Appendix 2). Specifically, more youth with secondary education, 456 (56.0%) and tertiary education 231 (28.3%) reported that the education system is retrogressing compared to a few 120 (14.7%) with primary or basic education. According to a section of the interviewees, what has accounted for the stagnation and retrogression is that the education curriculum is "too theoretical and makes it difficult to blend what you have learnt in class to what you experience in daily life" (Participant, Female, FGD, Techiman Municipal, December 2023). The consensus among interviewees, especially those with secondary and tertiary education, was that curriculum development in Ghana is devoted more to theory rather than practical, hence, the acquisition of practical and experiential skills is limited. Similar findings have been highlighted in the literature (Nudzor et al., 2015; Okrah et al., 2020). In explaining how curriculum development in Ghana's education sector has become non-realistic and irrelevant to the needs of young people and preparing them for the future, some argued that:

- "[...] We should not always be in the classroom, and they will be drawing and then labelling parts, while the real thing is out there that we can go and then take a little bit of time and then experience how it is in the world instead of being in the classroom learning, some parts of insects (Interview, Female, Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan, December 2023).
- "Most people just go to school for theories and when they come home there is nothing to apply, which makes those behind them see education as though it has no value and it's only theoretical" (Interview, Male, Bongo District, December 2023).
- "The education system does not prepare us for the future because most of the tuition is based on theory, and no skills are involved. So, I think it does not prepare us for the future as we are supposed to" (Participant, Female, FGD, Asokore Mampong, December 2023).
- "My general impression is that students think more about the theoretical aspects than the practical. So, we produce graduates who lack the requisite skills to make them competitive for work in the job market" (Interview, Male, Tamale Municipal, December 2023).

Figure 19 presents the results of how young people describe Ghana's education system. It is evident that, in general, most of the young people, 477 (24.6%), reported that the education system is fairly bad,

while 475 (24.5%) said it is neither good nor bad. Only a small proportion, 112 (5.8%), reported that the education system is very good.

FIGURE 19: PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE BY GENDER ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA (n=1938)



Some respondents mentioned that comparatively, the standards for education in Ghana are not the same as those of developed or advanced countries; hence people with certificates from universities abroad have more opportunities compared to their Ghanaian counterparts. For instance, in sharing her experiences, a 20-year-old young woman said:

“The education system does not prepare us for the future because most of the tuition is based on theory, and no skills are involved. So, I think it does not prepare us for the future as we are supposed to” (Participant, Female, FGD, Asokore Mampong, December 2023).

Other respondents attributed their ‘negative perceptions’ about the Ghanaian education system to challenges such as the introduction of a double track system associated with the Free Senior High School Policy, lack of infrastructure, and changes in curriculum and disciplinary mechanisms in schools. According to many interviews, these challenges have affected quality education, as shown in the following quotations:

“The double track system where some students will go to school for three months and others will stay at home for three months. Those who stay in the house will forget everything they have learnt in school, and it is not everyone who can afford to pay for extra classes to learn during those three-month breaks... Because of this double-track system, the education system is not well organised” (Interview, Male, Sunyani Municipal, December 2023).

■ “To me, the education system is very bad. The system where they change the students is not good at all because when we were schooling, we never saw that. Now they brought Free Education and what bothers me is how the students are being tossed. Today, one will stay at home and another set will be in school, one will go for a week and the other set will be at home. So, it doesn’t help all and it makes our education system not good [...] The education system is not good and if they could go back to the old system, it would have helped (Interview, Female, Techiman South, December 2023).

■ “In time past, when a child does not do his/her homework, that child is whipped [disciplined]. But now they say we do not whip any child in school [...] Also, when we get to school, we have something called mental or dictation and it helps the child refresh his or her brain but now they have been turned into extra classes, but it is not all parents that can afford the classes” (Interview, Female, Sunyani South Municipal, December 2023).

Despite the issues highlighted above, a section of the young people reported that the education system is fairly and very good because there have been improvements in areas such as the provision of infrastructure and access to education.

This, according to the respondents, has helped in improving quality education and access to education for all, as highlighted below:

■ “I think the government has made strides regarding the quality of education in Ghana. Now we can say right from basic school, you can see more infrastructure for education. So, my impression is that we are doing quite well [...]. Now when you come to my village, we have more deprived children having access to education than before because more schools are being built” (Participant, Female, FGD, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023).

In contrast, some young people explained that while the Government of Ghana and other stakeholders in the education sector have made efforts to improve infrastructure and the learning environment, particularly for the youth in Ghana, there are disparities between rural and urban areas. In particular, the analysis of the interview data suggests that there are huge infrastructural differences between rural and urban areas, which negatively affect access to quality education. For instance, some respondents argued that the concentration of the government’s infrastructure projects in education is largely concentrated in urban areas, compared to the neglect of rural areas:

■ “I would say that governments usually focus on the urban centres[areas] in terms of resource allocation such as textbooks, teachers and other education infrastructure. This makes access to quality education in rural areas a bit challenging [...]. I feel governments always prioritize the urban centres [areas] to the detriment of the rural areas. It is only during elections that they try to do something for us” (Participant, Male, FGD, Yilo Krobo Municipal, December 2023).

■ “There are some schools in my district which do not have classrooms, they do not have teachers and access to infrastructure come to talk of technology. So, it’s not equal! You cannot compare a student in East Legon, Accra to a student in Sefwi Wiawso. It is never equal” (Interview, Female, Sefwi Wiawso Municipal, December 2023).

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE YOUTH IN GHANA

According to the survey, a greater proportion of young people, 748 (38.4%), agreed and strongly agreed, 202 (10.4%), that the education system in Ghana gives preferential treatment to certain groups in society (e.g., students in urban areas, students with social connections and influence (i.e., whom you know) etc.). Specifically, more males, 385 (39.6%), compared to females, 360 (37.1%), agreed with the statement. Interestingly, many young women, 285 (29.3%), disagreed compared to a small proportion of young men, 204 (21.0%).

On the other hand, when it comes to perceptions about access to education, the survey results indicate that 635 (32.7%) and 134 (6.9%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed, respectively, that access to education was based on the background of the individual (see Figure 20). That notwithstanding, the results show that a large proportion of the youth agreed, 564(29.1%), and strongly agreed, 199(10.3%), that access to education is influenced by an individual's background. A few respondents, 360 (18.6%), expressed a neutral view.

FIGURE 20:
ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN GHANA DEPENDS ON THE BACKGROUND OF THE INDIVIDUAL (n=1931)

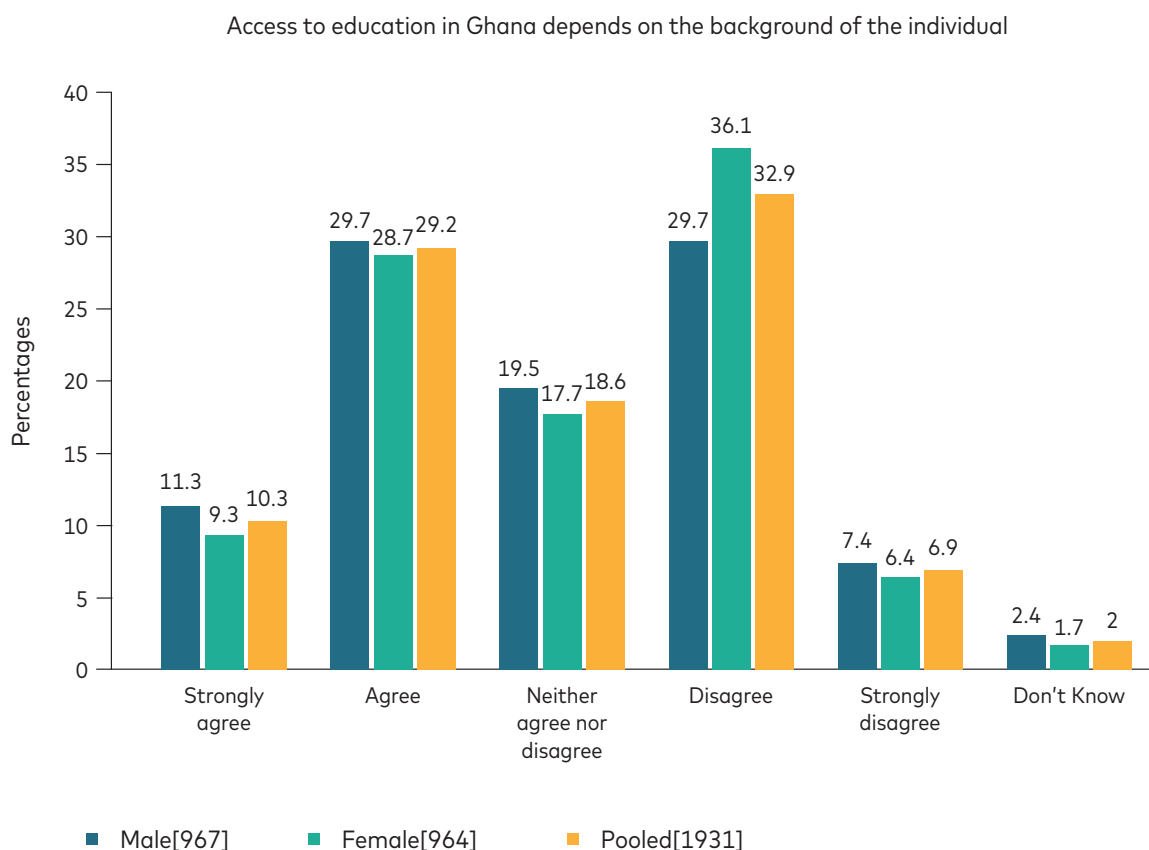
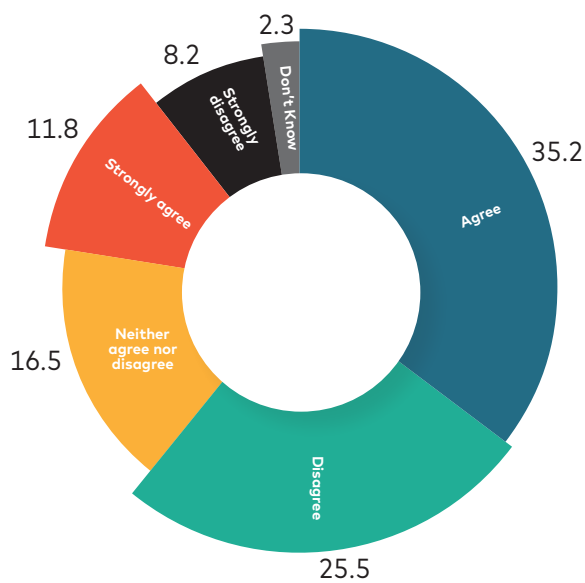


Figure 21 presents the results of the perceptions of young people regarding whether the education system provides equal opportunities for them. Most young people surveyed 683 (35.2%) agreed with and strongly agreed 228(11.8%) with the statement that "the education system provides equal opportunities for young people irrespective of their background". However, a section of the young people surveyed also disagreed 494 (25.5%) and strongly disagreed 160(8.2%) with the statement, while a proportion of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement 320(16.5%).

FIGURE 21:
PERCEPTION THAT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA PROVIDES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL IRRESPECTIVE OF BACKGROUND (n =1940).

The education system in Ghana provides equal opportunities for all irrespective of background



- Agree
- Disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Strongly agree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't Know

There were significant associations ($X^2(5) = 19.47 < p = 0.00$) in the perceptions of young men and women that the education system provides equal opportunities irrespective of one's background (Appendix 3). Slightly more young women (19.3%) agreed with the statement that "the education system provides equal opportunities for young people irrespective of their background" compared to young men (16.0%).

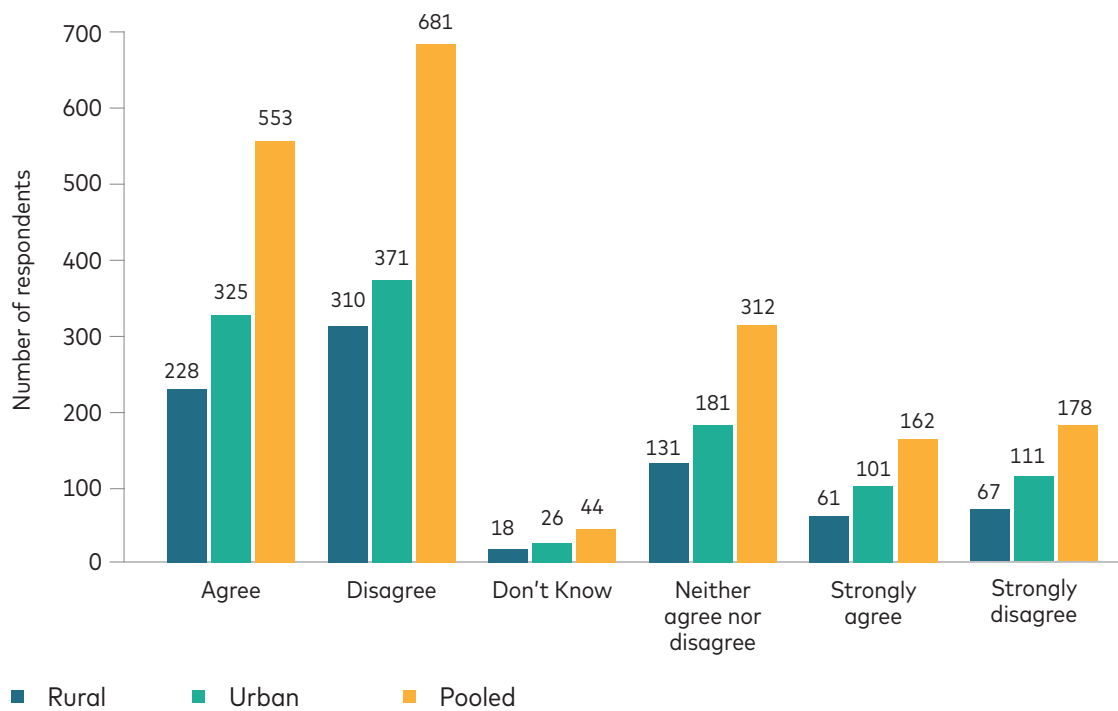
On the other hand, the qualitative data also suggest differences in the perceptions of rural and urban young people. Interviews with rural youth highlight challenges with equal education opportunities, especially for young people who tend to find themselves in rural communities. Thus, as one interviewee puts it:

"Equal opportunities to education in Ghana are a bit low, when comparing the rural areas to the urban areas [...]. Although the government has made efforts in this regard, still people in rural areas are being deprived" (Participant, Male, FGD, Sunyani East, December 2023).

Figure 22 shows the results of the respondents' perceptions about equal opportunities for all. Many young men and women 681 (35.1%) disagreed with the statement "young men and women from rural and urban areas are given equal opportunities for education in Ghana". A small proportion of urban young men and women 111 (9.95%) strongly disagreed, while about a third 325 (29.1%) also agreed with the statement that equal education opportunities exist for urban and rural young people in Ghana.

FIGURE 22:
PERCEPTION THAT BOTH SEXES FROM URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION (n=1930).

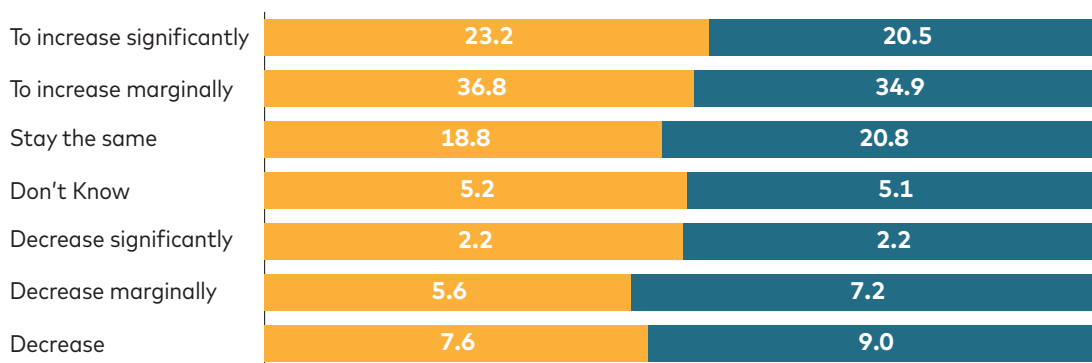
Young men and women from rural and urban areas are given equal opportunities for education in Ghana



PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH ABOUT ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEXT 24 MONTHS

Figure 23 presents the results of young people’s perceptions of their access to education and equal opportunities in Ghana over the next 24 months. **The results indicate that a greater proportion, 714 (36.6%) and, 450 (23.2%), of young people reported that they expect their access to education to increase marginally, 714 (36.6%), and increase significantly, 450 (23.2%).** Only a few respondents, 43 (2.2%), reported that they expected their access to education to decrease significantly. A small proportion of them, 364 (18.8%), indicated that their access to education will remain the same or will not change in the next 24 months.

FIGURE 23:
YOUNG PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NEXT 24 MONTHS (n=1932).



- Looking ahead, do you expect the youths' access to education in Ghana to increase or decrease in the next 24 months?
- Looking ahead, do you expect young people or the youth access to equal opportunities to increase or decrease in the next 24 months?

Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that the increased expectation for access to education could be partly attributed to the government’s policy of providing free education at Senior High Schools as highlighted by one interviewee who explained that:

“For me, the Free SHS has reduced the financial burden on my parents, and it has made it more accessible for everyone that I have even been able to complete SHS” (Interview, Female, Shama Metropolitan, December 2023).

Other young interviewees added:

"Initially, some students may pass their exams but because of financial issues, they may not go to school. But now because of the Free SHS, they can attend school and so everyone now has access to education. So now, our education system gives everyone an equal opportunity to education from Creche to Senior High School" (Interview, Female, Techiman Municipal, December 2023).

"[In Ghana], it is easy to access basic education because of the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education. It is inclusive and everybody must attend school" (Interview, Male, Gambaga District, December 2023).

When asked about access to equal opportunities, the number of young people who reported that they expected a marginal increase and a significant increase reduced slightly to 677 (34.9%) and 397 (20.5%), respectively. This suggests that while many young people have high hopes for their access to education, the same cannot be said of access to equal opportunities in the next 24 months. This is reflected in the number of young people who reported that they expected their access to equal opportunities to decrease marginally 139 (7.2%). The qualitative data offers some intriguing perspectives on what accounts for these dynamics. **The data suggests that while access to education is increasing, partly thanks to the Free SHS policy, many young people also reported that wide disparities exist in quality education between rural and urban areas.** In explaining how this limits access to equal opportunities for young people in Ghana, two interviewees lamented that:

"The education system in Ghana does not provide equal opportunities for the youth because people in the cities or urban areas are provided with quality education than those in the rural areas" (Interview, Female, Techiman South Municipal, December 2023).

“For the Free SHS policy, although they are doing well, it is not working properly because you see a big gap in infrastructure between the rural and urban areas” (Participant, Male, FGD, Sunyani East Municipal, December 2023).

Another young man argued that the high cost of education especially at the tertiary level, limits access to opportunities, especially for those in rural areas. This is how the respondent puts it:

“Some young people in the rural areas are deprived of opportunities because of the higher cost of education [...] My friend was admitted to study a Master’s programme at the University but he could not afford it. People in rural areas like us, do not have much money to afford so it makes access to education at the higher level a very difficult thing almost for all those in the rural areas [...] When you look at our community, I do not know how many doctors we have here [...] There are limited opportunities for the youth in Ghana to succeed” (Interview, Male, Gambaga District, December 2023).

A similar sentiment was shared by another young man who argued that:

“The education system in Ghana provides limited equal opportunities for the youth in the country” (Interview, Male, Techiman South, December 2023).

BARRIERS TO ACCESSING EDUCATION AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN GHANA

It is worth mentioning that the barriers to education are not categorised based on the different subsectors of education (i.e., basic, education and tertiary) but focused on barriers to accessing education among young people in general. The survey results on barriers to accessing education among young people are presented in Table 5. **The results suggest that for most young people surveyed, 1581 (88.1%), limited financial resources remain their topmost barrier to accessing**

education, especially at the tertiary level. This was followed by higher cost of education, 1273 (65.9%), and lack of family support, 1135 (58.7%). Other barriers mentioned by young people include gender disparities between young men and women, limited access to basic resources (e.g., school uniforms, bags and shoes), family obligations, feelings of being too old to attend school, and peer influence. **Analysis of the survey data indicates that among all the barriers mentioned, sex disparities between young men and females have a statistically significant association with access to education** ($X^2(1) = 6.61, < p = 0.01$) (Appendix 4).

TABLE 5:
PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN GHANA (n=1932)

	Sex of respondent		Place of residence		Pooled (n=1932)
	Males (n=966)	Females (n=966)	Urban (n=1116)	Rural (n=816)	
Higher cost of education	63.7	68.1	65.2	66.8	65.9
Limited financial resources	81.9	81.8	81.3	82.6	81.8
Gender disparities between young men and young women	11.8	15.8	12.5	15.6	13.8
Lack of family support	56.7	60.8	56.1	62.4	58.7
Family obligations	24.3	26.0	24.6	25.9	25.2
Work or time pressure	17.1	13.9	15.3	15.7	15.5
Limited access to basic resources (e.g., food, school uniform, shoes, bags)	39.8	44.1	42.5	41.2	41.9
Child labour	27.1	29.8	25.8	32.1	28.5
Feelings of being too old	21.0	17.8	19.9	18.8	19.4
No barriers at all	1.3	0.9	1.3	0.9	1.1
Other barriers	6.9	7.9	8.4	6.0	7.4

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Analysis of the interview data confirms the observations from the survey. In particular, many young men and women interviewed mentioned the perceived lack of financial resources as a key limitation to accessing education in Ghana. They explained that the limited financial resources act as a disincentive for attending school as their parents or family are unable to provide their basic education needs including, for example, the payment of school fees, buying school uniforms, books, and bags etc. Some interviewees highlighted that these financial challenges impede their educational pursuits:

“

You know lack of financial resources or finance is one of the greatest barriers we face as young people from developing countries. Especially, having access to quality education, if you don't have financial resources, you will not be able to have access to education. Even the Senior High School that is perceived to be free, if you don't have financial resources, you will not be able to afford the other things apart from the fees. For Tertiary education, you have to pay school fees, rent, food and other upkeep. So, the lack of financial resources I think is one of the key barriers to education in Ghana (Interview, Male, Wa Municipal, December 2023).

Aside from the barriers to accessing education shown in Table 6, many young people mentioned other factors, including the lack of social and personal connections or 'whom you know'. They maintained that social connections influence the opportunities available to an individual in accessing education especially regarding meeting the entrance or admission requirements. For instance, **an interviewee shared his experience of social connections or "who you know" and how it acts as a barrier to accessing education by saying:**

“

In Ghana, social connections too matter because you might meet all the requirements to further your education but because of protocol list, [you will not be selected]. So, you will meet all their requirements but you will not be offered any chance because you don't know anyone (Interview, Male, East Mamprusi Municipal, December 2023).

A similar sentiment was shared by other young interviewee who argued that:

“

Now it's mostly whom you know or who knows you. So now, even attaining education, somebody has to know you before you can get the necessary connections to where you want to go [academic institution]. Even after school... you will finish service for one year and come and stay home for six years [because you don't have any connections] [...] So if you don't have anybody at the top, it is one of the factors (Interview, Female, Wa Municipal, December 2023).

Some young people also mentioned long distances to school, frequent sicknesses, peer influence, teenage pregnancy, and lack of interest in education as factors that sometimes hinder access to education. **Overall, the results from the survey and interview data suggest that the barriers to accessing education by young people are multidimensional.**

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE

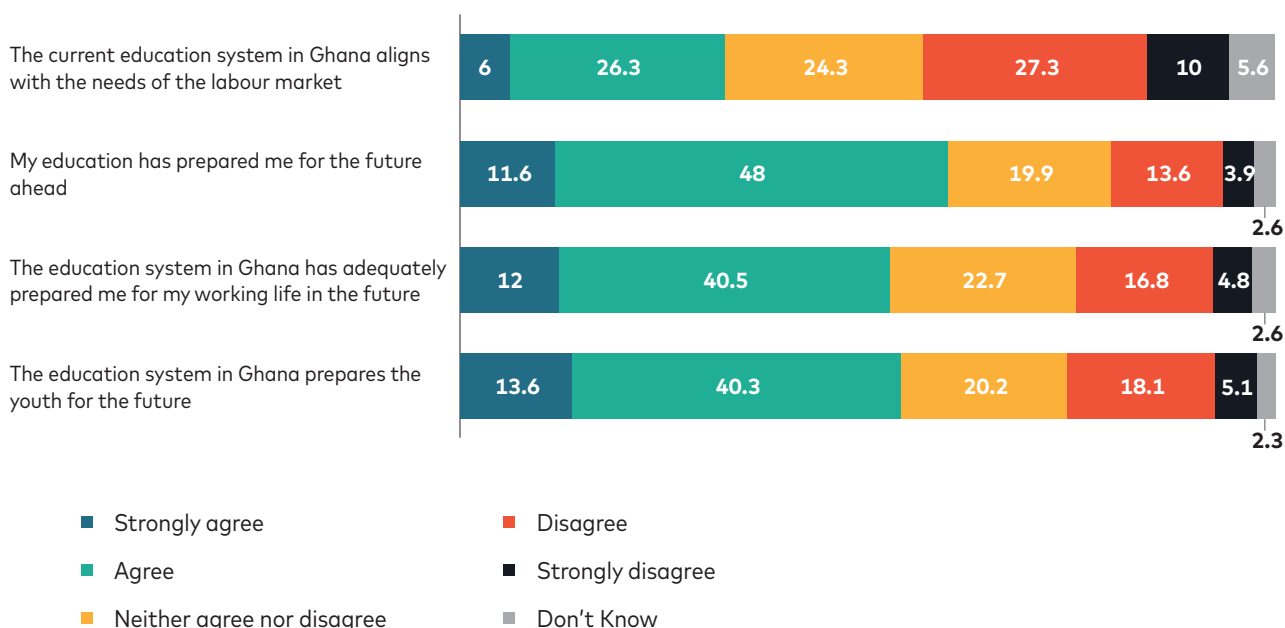


YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF HOW THE EDUCATION SYSTEM HAS PREPARED THEM FOR THE FUTURE

The results of the perceptions of the Ghanaian youth about the education system and their future are presented in Figure 24. The results show that the majority of young people, 782 (40.3%), agreed, and strongly agreed, 263 (13.6%), with the statement that “the education system in Ghana prepares the youth for the future”. However, a section of young people 391 (20.2%), reported that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement, while 352 (18.1%) disagreed. The survey data further suggests that a greater proportion of young people 786 (40.5%) agreed and strongly agreed, 233 (12.0%) that the education system has adequately prepared them for their working life in the future.

On the other hand, only a few 326 (16.8%) disagreed and strongly disagreed, 92 (4.7%) that the education system has adequately prepared them for their working life in the future. Furthermore, a majority of young people 931 (48.0%) agreed or strongly agreed 79 (3.9%) that the education system in Ghana has prepared them for the future ahead, while a few, 263 (13.6%) disagreed and, strongly disagreed 76 (3.9%). The results further show that many young people disagreed, 529 (27.3%), and strongly disagreed, 194 (10.0%), with the statement that the current education system in Ghana aligns with the needs of the labour market. On the other hand, a greater proportion of young people, 510 (26.3%) agreed and strongly agreed, 117 (6.0%) compared to those who neither agreed nor disagreed, 471 (24.3%).

FIGURE 24 :
YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF HOW EDUCATION HAS PREPARED THEM FOR THE FUTURE (n=1929).



The survey results were triangulated from the qualitative data. In terms of the education system preparing young people for the future, many young people during the interviews and focus group discussions argued that their education has equipped them with the knowledge to prepare for the future. For instance, in sharing his experience of how the education system has adequately prepared him for the future, a young man during a focus group discussion articulated the following:

"So, I will say to some extent, the education system prepares us for the future in the sense that, we are first equipped with knowledge to be able to make decisions regarding our future" (Participant, Male, FGD, Sunyani Municipal, December 2023).

Other young people also suggested that their education has enhanced their creativity and broadened their perspectives, especially on entrepreneurship. Additionally, some young people further explained that the education system has helped and prepared them to achieve their dreams. For instance, one young woman said:

"Personally, the education system has helped and prepared me so well. It has helped young men and women to achieve their dreams [...]. I can say confidently that I am prepared for my future to a very large extent" (Interview, Female, Sagnarigu Municipal, December 2023).



The consensus among interviewees was that the education system only focuses on helping students acquire grades and certificates rather than providing them with skills and knowledge for their future. For this reason, many young people mentioned that the education system promotes rote learning; hence, they lack critical thinking skills, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills to prepare them for the future because the focus is on "chewing, pouring, passing and forgetting". In expressing their frustrations with the rote learning practised in Ghana, this is what some young people had to say:



In our schools, we are only to learn and pass exams. So, I have to just do the chew and pour to be able to pass exams. At the end of the day, you just forget virtually everything you have learnt and that is what the current school system is. It does not prepare you at all and sometimes, you are frustrated because you do not know how to solve problems, you don't have communication skills, even preparing a simple presentation slide. Most students from some universities in Ghana do not even know what is a CV or resume, let alone use it to find jobs (Interview, Male, Wa Municipal, December 2023).



Our teaching and learning are just chew and pour, but we don't understand anything and we are unable to grasp what is being taught. If we can break it [lessons] down for the students to know and understand, it will stick in their minds for a longer time rather than chew and pour (Participant, Male, FGD, Sunyani Municipal, December 2023).



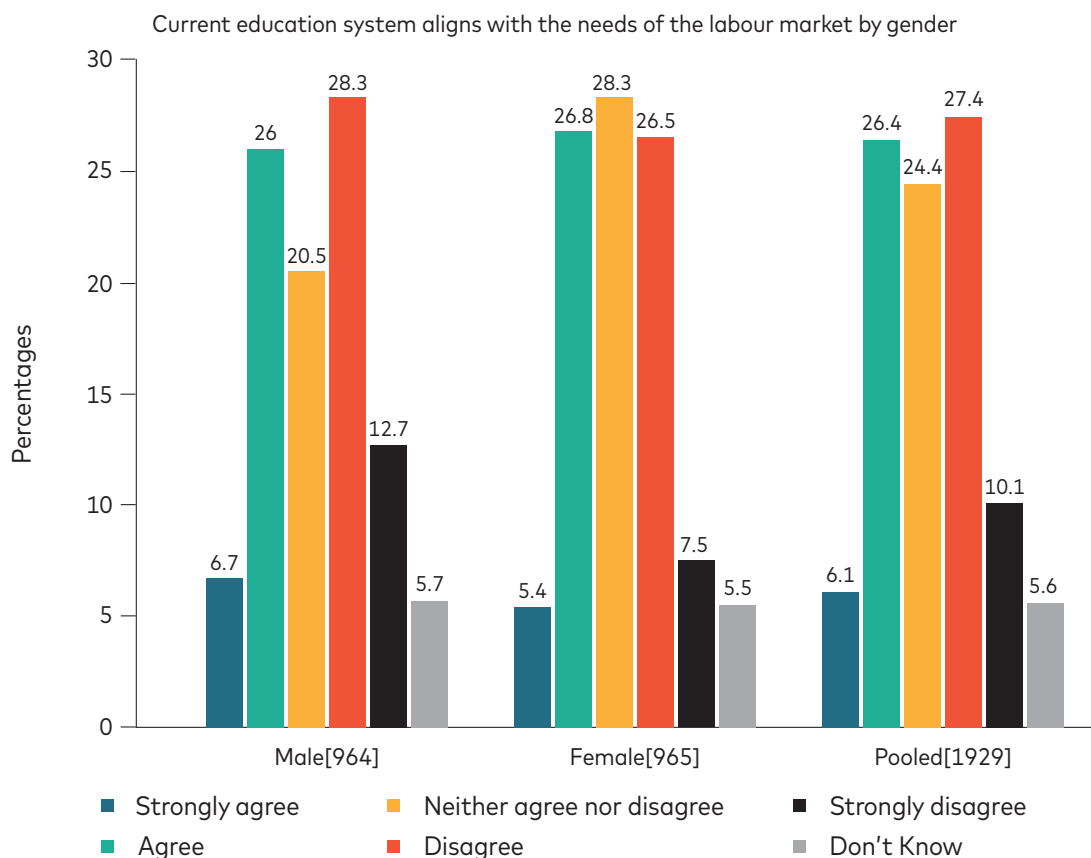
Now the way of teaching and learning is 'chew and pour' because it is theoretical. You can't use it to do anything. But if it is practical, if you have the idea, you will be able to create something meaningful (Interview, Female, Techiman, December 2023).

The above statements suggest that the chew-and-pour pedagogical framework, which focuses on memorisation and repetition, does not adequately help young people to develop their problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills, which are essential requirements for the future and the labour market.

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET

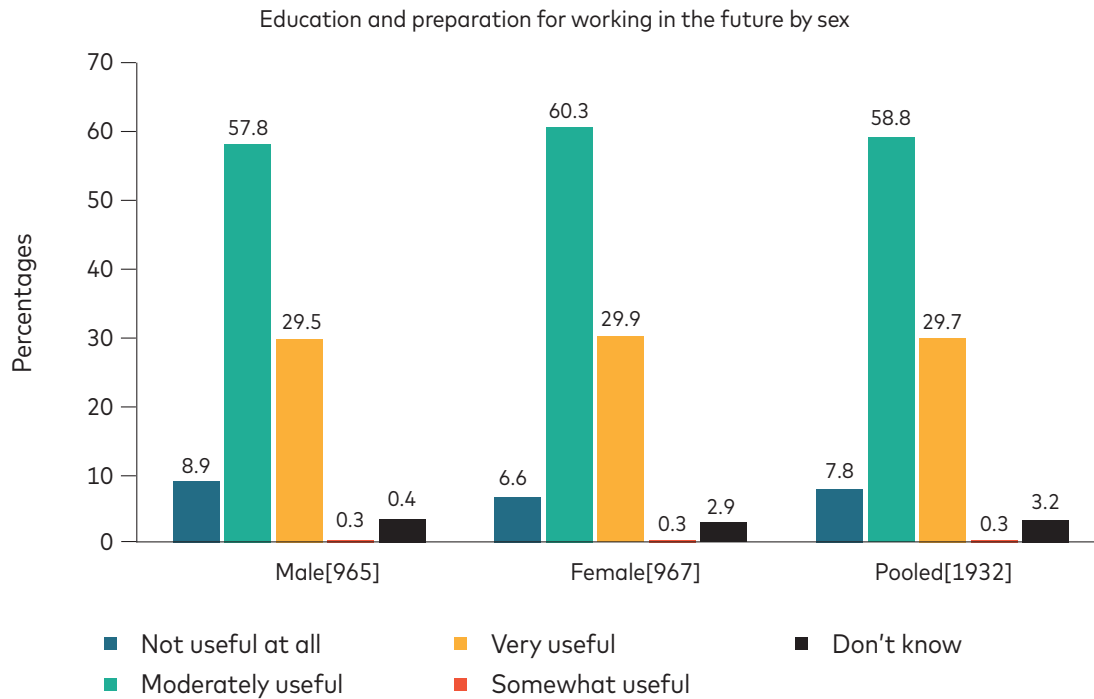
Mixed results were found on whether the education system aligns with the needs of the labour market. The results did not show a marked difference in the perspectives of the young people who disagreed with 529 (27.3%) and agreed 510 (26.3%) with the assertion that the current education system aligns with the needs of the labour market. About a quarter of the young people 471(24.3%) were neutral in their responses. The results show that more males (12.7%) compared to females (7.5%) strongly disagreed that the education system aligns with the needs of the labour market (see Figure 25). Sex ($X^2(5) = 26.98, <p= 0.00$) (Appendix 5) and place of residence (i.e., urban and rural) ($X^2(5) = 12.36, <p= 0.03$) (Appendix 6) were also found to be significantly associated with young people's perceptions about how the education system aligns with the needs of the labour market.

FIGURE 25: PERCEPTION THAT THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM ALIGNS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET BY GENDER (n= 1929).



Also, many young people expressed the view that the education system was moderately useful 1141 (58.8%) while 575 (29.6%) said it was very useful. Only a few reported that it was not useful at all 150 (7.7%) in preparing them for work in the future (Figure 26).

FIGURE 26:
PERCEPTION THAT EDUCATION HAS PREPARED THE YOUTH FOR WORK IN THE FUTURE, BY SEX
(n=1932).



YOUTH PLANS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Table 6 presents the results on the expectations of young people for the next five years.

The results show that a large proportion of young people 896 (46.6%) expect to be work because of the need for financial independence. Financial independence was therefore perceived as a key marker of adulthood. A statistically significant association ($X^2(100) = 290.1$, $p < 0.00$) was found between age and the plans of the youth for the next five years (Appendix 7). The results show that for the respondents who mentioned that they expected to be working because of the need for financial independence, the majority 373 (42.0%) were found to be in the age bracket of 20-25 years. Surprisingly, only a few of the 109 (12.0%) respondents aged between 31 and 35 years reported that they expected to be working because of financial independence.

A section of the young people 434 (22.6%) also reported that they will be studying because the occupation they want requires them to acquire certificates or degrees, while a small proportion 269 (13.9%) said they will be studying for other reasons. Only a few 190 (9.8%) reported that they will work in the next five years because their work does not require acquiring a certificate or degree. There was no significant association in the expectations of young people based on their sex ($X^2(5) = 6.85$, $p > 0.23$) (Appendix 8) and place of residence ($X^2(5) = 2.55$, $p > 0.76$) (Appendix 9). However, a significant association was found between the level of education and future expectations ($X^2(15) = 104.5$, $p < 0.00$) (Appendix 10).

TABLE 6:
WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE WILL DO IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS (n= 1921)

	Sex		Place of residence		Pooled [n=1921]
	Male [n=962]	Female [n=959]	Urban [n=1108]	Rural [n=813]	
I will be studying or working for other reasons	14.9	13.1	14.6	13.2	14.0
I will be working because I need to be financially independent	46.5	46.8	47.2	45.9	46.6
I will be studying because the occupation I want requires a study degree (e.g., a diploma or university degree)	21.6	23.6	22.4	22.9	22.6
I will be working because the occupation I want does not require a study degree (e.g., diploma or university degree).	9	10.7	9.2	10.8	9.9
I will be studying because I do not know what I would like to do yet	4.3	3.1	3.6	3.8	3.7
Other reasons	3.7	2.6	3	3.4	3.2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

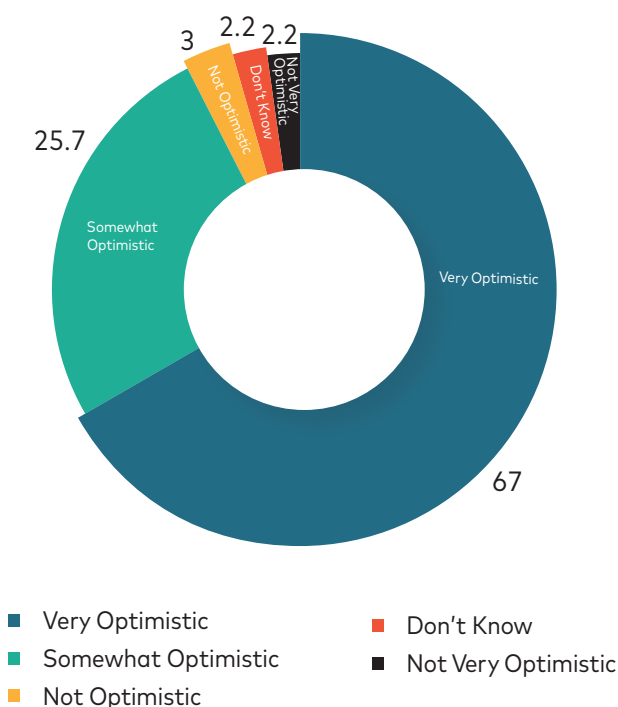
SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

OPTIMISM OF YOUTH ABOUT THE FUTURE

The respondents' optimism about the future is presented in Figure 27. Overall, an overwhelming proportion of young people reported that they were very optimistic, 1924 (66.7%), and somewhat optimistic, 497 (25.6%), about the future. Only a few said they were not optimistic, 57 (2.2%), and not very optimistic 42 (2.2%), about the future. The results show that sex ($X^2(4) = 2.67, >p = 0.61$) (Appendix 11), place of residence ($(X^2(4) = 6.37, >p = 0.17)$) (Appendix 12), and employment status ($X^2(4) = 1.19, >p = 0.87$) (Appendix 13) of young people do not have a significant association with their level of optimism for the future. However, the level of education of the youth was found to be significantly associated with their level of optimism for the future ($X^2(12) = 52.7, <p = 0.00$) (Appendix 14).

FIGURE 27:
OPTIMISM OF YOUTH ABOUT THEIR FUTURE IN GHANA
(n=1932).

How optimistic about your future?



Overall, the analysis of the qualitative data suggests that many young people are optimistic about their future. Many of the interviewees explained that they had confidence in achieving their future goals and ambitions as highlighted as follows: "I am optimistic that in ten years to come, I will be able to actualise or achieve my goals" (Interview, Male, Ho Municipal, December 2023). Another young woman added by saying:



I believe I am going to go high on the academic ladder and have money
(Participant, Female, FGD, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023).

When asked about the extent of their optimism for the future, many respondents asserted that they expect to have a bright future by owning their businesses as stated by one young woman:



I expect opening my bakery shop, bringing on board event planners, and doing my own business and not working for anyone
(Interview, Female, Shama Municipal, December 2023).

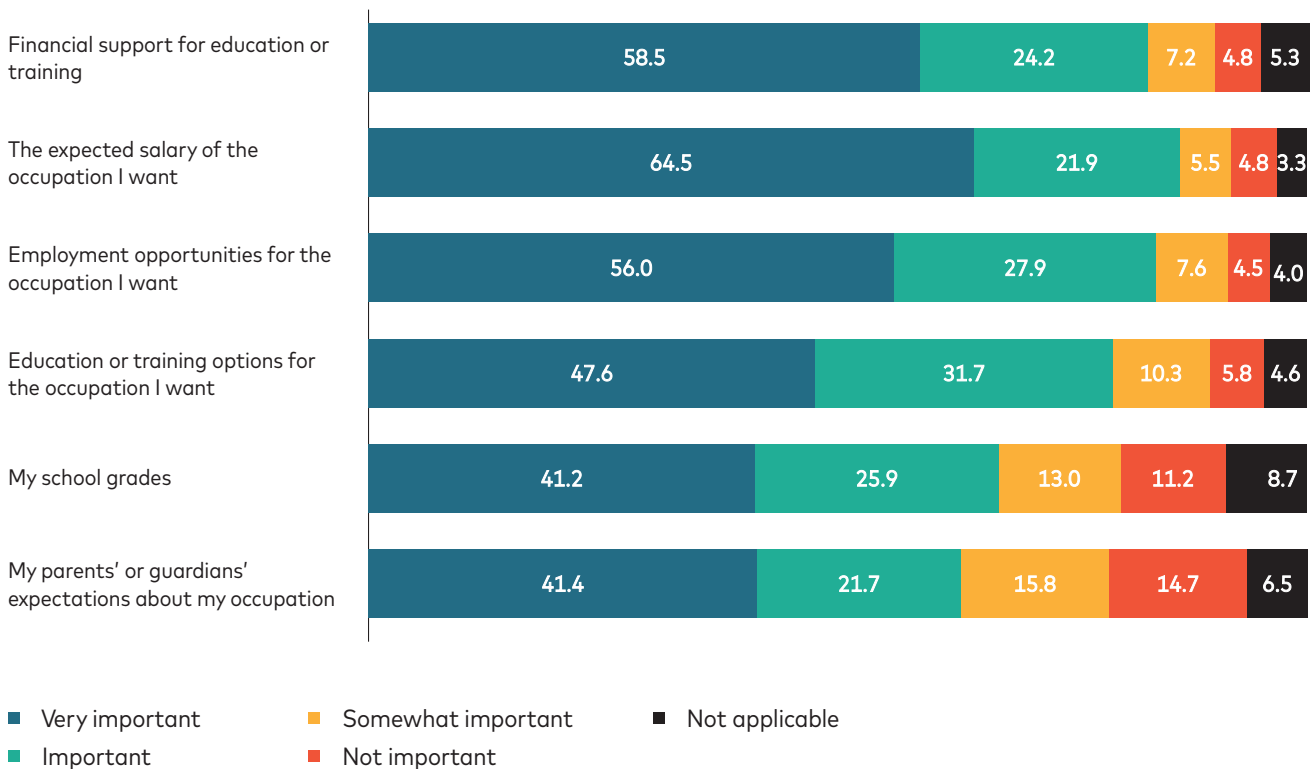
In contrast Notwithstanding the positive optimism about their future, some young people also raised concerns about how their future looked bleak. Thus, some of them expressed the view that they had few life chances and limited prospects for the future. For those young people, they explained that their "future is in God's hands" while others said "it is God who knows so it's in the hands of God. If we will be better, it is in God's hands and if it doesn't become better, it is in God's hands" (Interview, Female, Sunyani Municipal, 2023). This has created uncertainty and insecurity, as lamented by one interviewee who argued that:

Although I am prepared for the future, I cannot rate it because there are so many uncertainties with the future (Interview, Male, Kwabre East Municipal, December 2023).

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S DECISION-MAKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE

Figure 28 presents the results on the factors that influence decision making among the youth for their future occupation. Overall, the perceptions of their parents or guardians about their future occupation 793 (41.4%), expected salary 1218 (64.5%), school grades 773 (41.2%), education or training options 884 (47.6%), and employment opportunities 1063 (56.0%) were considered very important by young people in determining their decisions on future occupation or career. The findings suggest that in order of priority, young people considered salary expectation as the most significant determinant in influencing their decisions about future occupation, followed by employment opportunities, education or training options, and the parents' perception about their future occupation.

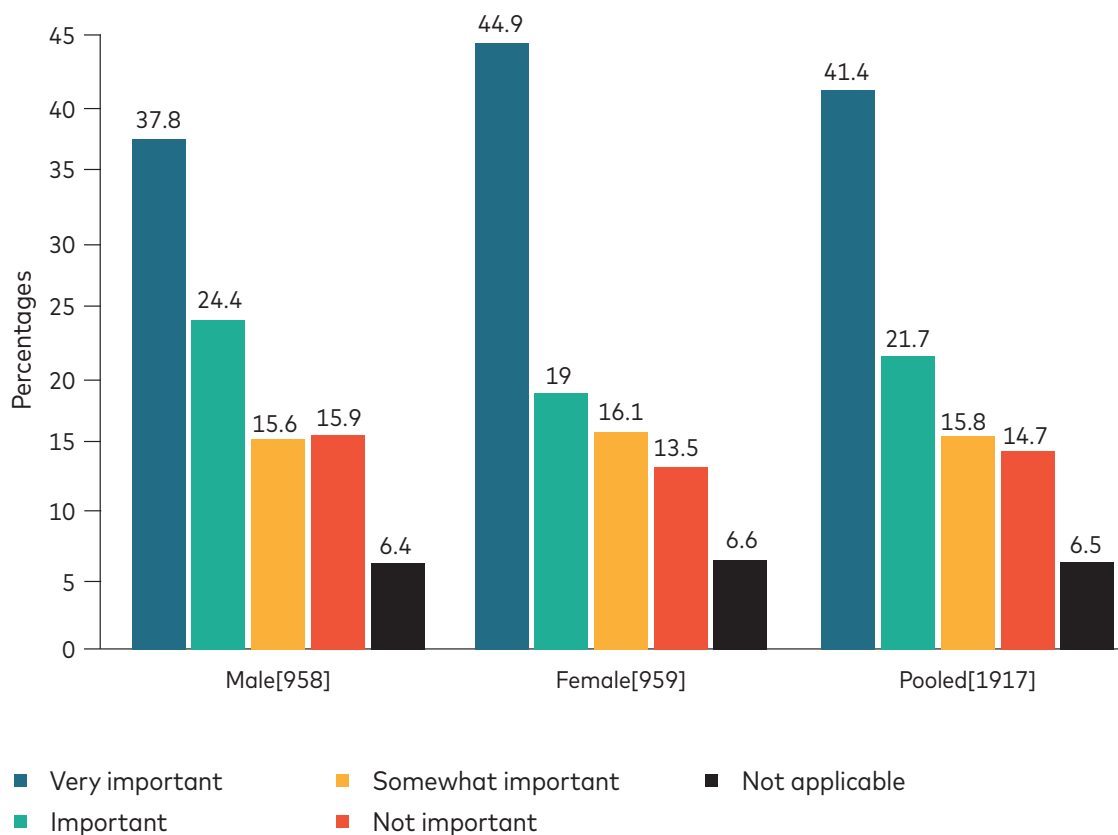
FIGURE 28: DETERMINANTS OF CHOICE YOUTH DECISION-MAKING ABOUT THEIR FUTURE OCCUPATION AMONG THE YOUTH (n=1917).



The results show that many young people did not consider their school as a 'very important factor' that would influence their future occupation decisions.

Importantly, the results further indicate that sex does not have a significant association with the determining factors (i.e., school grades, expected salaries, employment opportunities, job training etc.) except parents' perceptions ($X^2(4) = 14.5, <p = 0.00$) in influencing young people's future occupation (Appendix 15). For instance, females 431 (44.9%) compared with 362 males (37.8%) mentioned that their parents' perception about their future occupation was essential in influencing their decisions (see Figure 29).

FIGURE 29:
IMPORTANCE OF MY PARENTS' OR GUARDIANS' INFLUENCE ON CHOICES OF OCCUPATIONS, BY SEX EXPECTATIONS ABOUT MY OCCUPATION BASED ON GENDER (n=1917).



Likewise, the results show that the age of young people had a statistically significant association ($X^2(80) = 213.1, <p=0.00$) with parents' perceptions in influencing their future occupations (Appendix 16). Specifically, many young people between the ages of 15-26 years considered their parents' perceptions about their future occupation as very important compared to a few within the age bracket of 27-35 years who said their parents' perceptions about their future occupation were very important in influencing their decisions. This could be attributed to the fact that many young people within the age bracket of 15-26 years are not independent and, hence, rely on the advice of their parents in making key decisions in their lives. Thus, parental influence and guidance are key factors in determining the career decision-making and choices of young people. Parents therefore impact the career development of young people.

The analysis of the qualitative data also affirms the findings of the survey.

Specifically, the interview data suggests that some parents influence the career decisions of young people, as explained by one interviewee who said:



The perception of parents that going to a technical school means that one [the child] is not smart [...] They see it as a waste of time (Interview, Male, Techiman North District, December 2023).

Another added:



Now because of unemployment in the system [economy], when young people are going to school, the parents influence the courses they select. They would want them to offer science so they can get nursing school or training college because they will be posted after school [secure jobs] (Interview, Male, Asunafo North Municipal, December 2023).

CHANGES REQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA



SATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Table 7 presents the results on the satisfaction of young people with the education system in Ghana. Only a few of the youth (i.e., young males and females), 90(4.7%), said they were fully satisfied with the education system in the country. Also, about four in ten young people 720(36.6%) said that they were somewhat

satisfied with the education system, while one in four young people 489 (25.5%) were also satisfied. However, three out of ten young people 567(29.9%) reported that they were not satisfied with the education system. The results also show marked differences in the satisfaction of young men and women. Many young women 267 (27.9%) compared to men 222(23.1%) were satisfied with the education system in Ghana. Likewise, younger men and women living in urban areas 297(26.9%) were more satisfied than those in rural areas 192(23.6%).

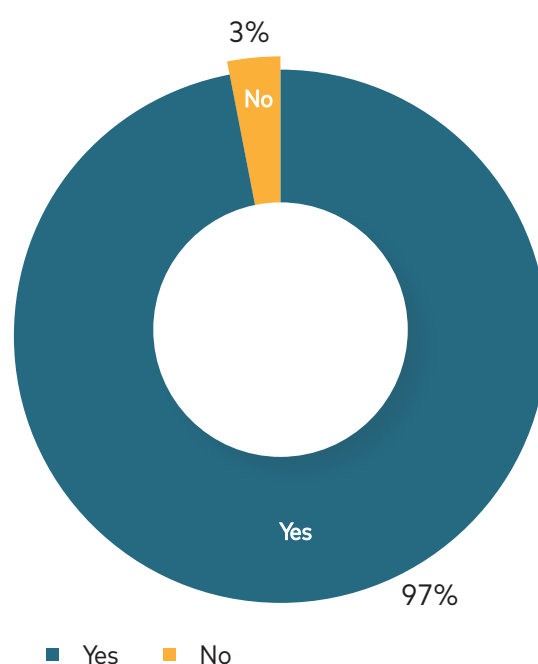
TABLE 7:
SATISFACTION WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA (n=1917).

	Sex		Place of residence		
	Male [n=961]	Female [n=956]	Urban [n=1103]	Rural [n=814]	Pooled [n=1917]
Satisfied	23.1	27.9	26.9	23.6	25.5
Somewhat satisfied	37	38.1	37.6	37.5	36.6
Not satisfied	31.6	28.1	30	29.7	29.9
Not applicable	2.7	2	1.8	3.1	2.3
Fully satisfied	5.5	3.9	3.6	6.1	4.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

As shown in Figure 30, almost all young men and women surveyed 1869(96.7%) thought that the education system required some changes or improvements to respond to their needs and priorities and help them achieve their future aspirations.

FIGURE 30:
EXPRESSION OF A NEED TO MAKE CHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM REQUIRES CHANGES OR IMPROVEMENTS (n=1932)



SPECIFIC CHANGES REQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA.

For many young people, the education system requires changes or improvements to address their priorities. When asked about the specific changes required, the majority of young people strongly agreed, 1145 (61.5%), and agreed, 656 (33.8%), that there should be improvements in education to prepare the youth for the future (Figure 31). Thus, almost 97% of the young men and women surveyed indicated the need for improving the education system to prepare them for the future because, as

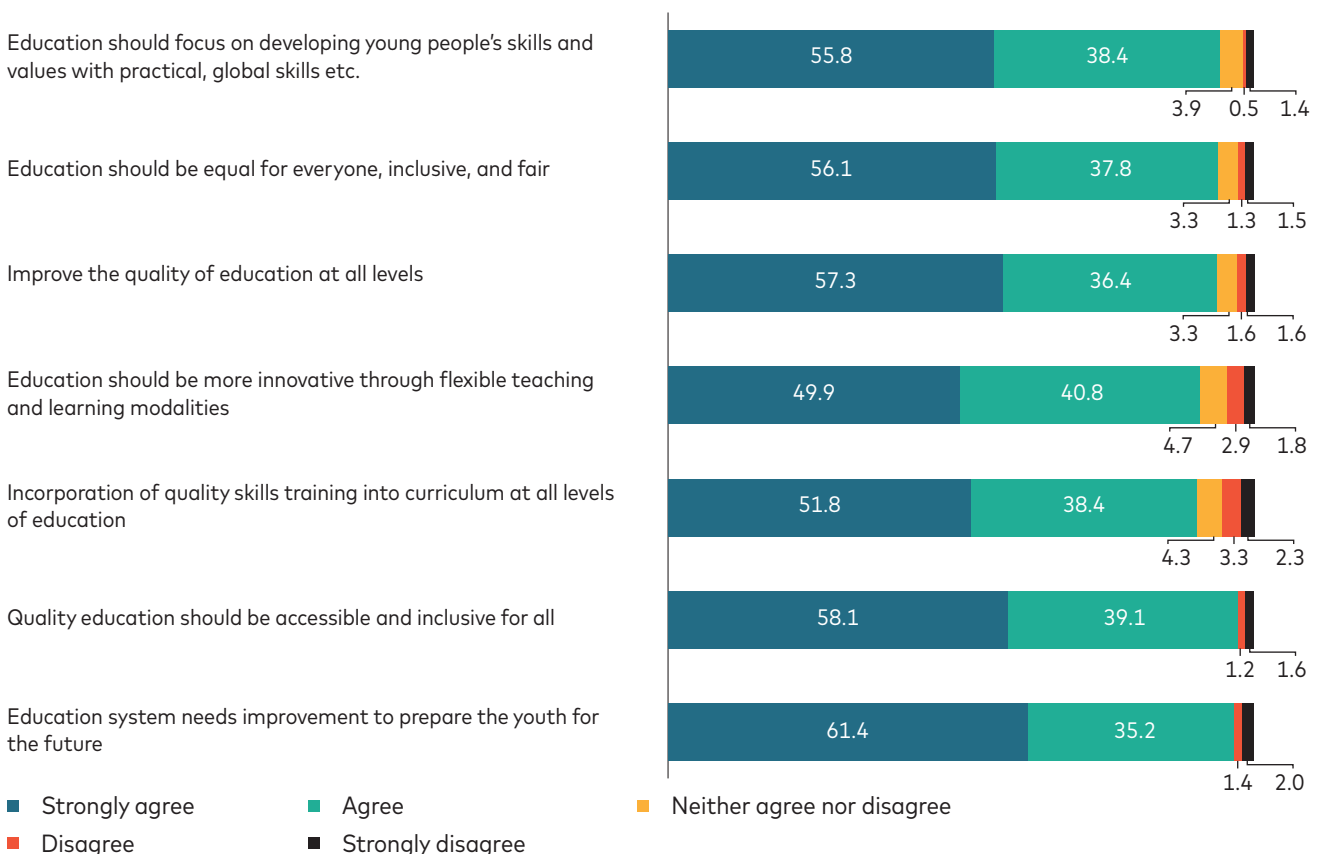


One young man argued "the current education system is not fit for purpose" (Participant, FGD, Male, Abuakwa North District, December 2023).

Similarly, the results show that the majority of youth strongly agreed with 1102 (57.3%) and agreed 700 agreed (36.1%) that education should be improved at all levels, although only a few 31 (1.6%) disagreed and strongly agreed 26 (1.3%). Moreover, many young men and women strongly agreed 1018 (58.1%) and 728 (39.1%) agreed with the statement that the statement that "good quality education should be accessible and inclusive for all young people in different parts of the country" (Figure 31).

The results also show that an overwhelming majority of young men and women strongly agreed 956 (49.9%) and agreed 781 (40.8%) that education should be innovative using flexible teaching and learning modalities to enhance creativity. However, a small proportion of young men and women were neutral in their response 90 (4.7%) while a few 34 (1.8%) strongly disagreed. About 1811 (94.2%) of young men and women strongly agreed and agreed with the statement that the education focus should develop the skills of young people by providing them with practical and global skills to make them internationally competitive (Figure 31).

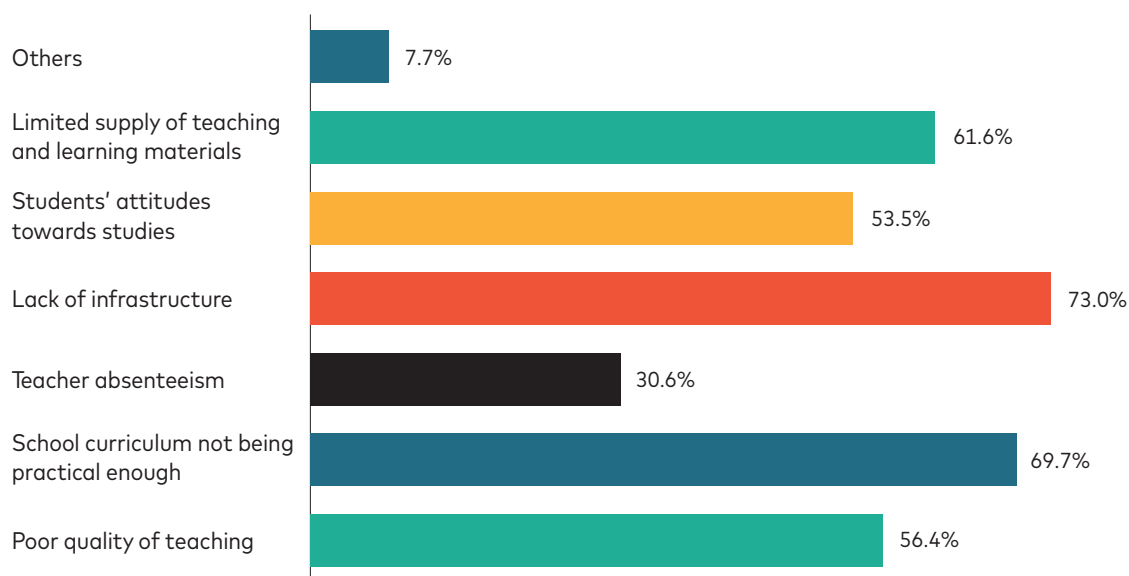
FIGURE 31: VIEWS OF RESPONDENTS ABOUT SUGGESTED CHANGES REQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA (n=1916).



MAIN CHALLENGES OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA AND IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE YOUTH

Figure 32 presents the results of the challenges in the education system reported by young men and women in Ghana. The majority of young people reported that the three topmost challenges facing the education system are: i) lack of infrastructure, 1412 (73.0%); ii) school curriculum not being practical enough, 1348 (69.7%); and iii) limited supply of teaching and learning materials, 1191 (61.6%). Aside from this, other challenges such as poor quality of teaching and students' attitudes towards learning were also reported as challenges. There were no marked differences in the responses between young men and women for all the reported challenges. However, there was a statistically significant association ($X^2(1) = 4.51, <p= 0.03$) between place of residence (i.e., urban and rural) and lack of infrastructure as a challenge (Appendix 17).

FIGURE 32 :
PERCEIVED CHALLENGES FACING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA (n=1992).



The findings from the qualitative data support that of the survey. Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that there is a wide infrastructural gap between schools in rural and urban areas. In sharing his experience of the infrastructural gap, a young man stated that:



One of the barriers in our education system is the lack of infrastructure in the rural areas. I completed a Senior High School (SHS) and I was a science student. It was only when we were about to write our WASSCE that we went to a nearby SHS to learn how to use some of the apparatus [...] Most of the science laboratory equipment, we don't even know because we don't have them in our school. So, there is an infrastructural gap for schools in the rural areas (Participant, FGD, Male, Sunyani Municipal, December 2023)

Another interviewee added:



Regarding the rural areas, I don't know whether it is political neglect or influence. Infrastructure in the rural areas is still inadequate despite the government's efforts. So, comparing those here [in the rural areas] and those there [urban areas], we those in the rural areas, the quality of education is low because the infrastructure is not the best (Interview, Male, Jirapa District, December 2023).

According to the survey, about a third of all young people 547 (29.6%) reported the school curriculum (i.e., making it more practical) as their topmost problem requiring government attention to enable the youth to meet their aspirations. This is followed by the provision of teaching and learning materials 496 (25.6%) and infrastructural facilities 480 (24.7%) (Table 8).

TABLE 8:
THREE TOPMOST PROBLEMS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM HINDERING THE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUTH (n=1940)

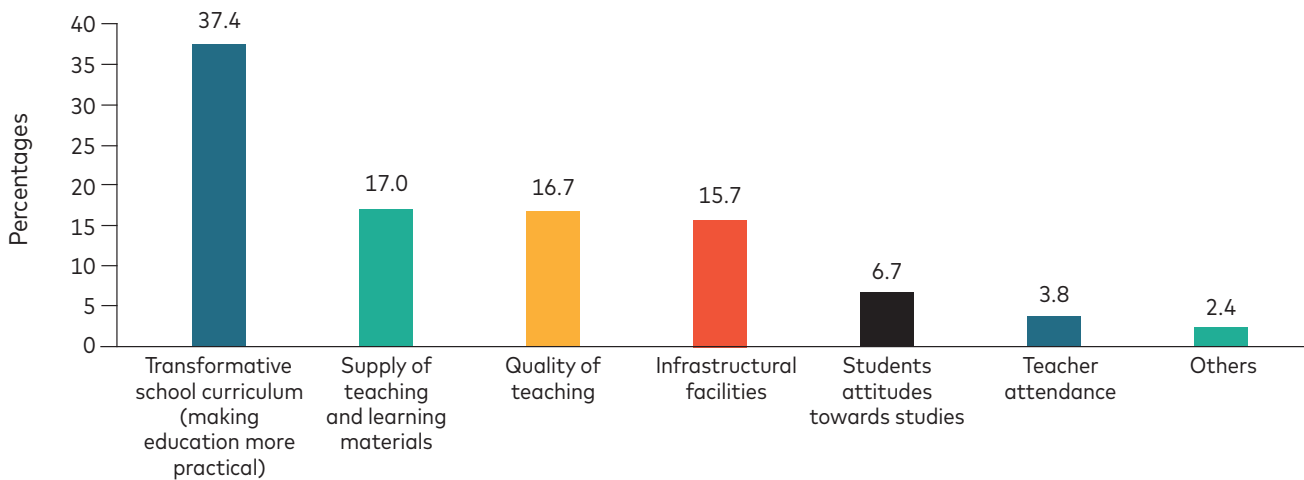
	Sex		Place of Residence		Pooled [n=1940]
	Male [n=970]	Female [n=970]	Urban [n=1122]	Rural [n=818]	
School curriculum (making it more practical)	31.3	27.8	28.9	30.6	29.6
Infrastructural facilities	25.7	23.8	23.6	26.3	24.7
Provision of teaching and learning materials	27.3	23.8	25.2	26	25.6

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

In terms of improvements required, for many young men and women, making the school curriculum 'transformative' by becoming more practical rather than being theoretical and rote learning, 725 (37.4%), is the most important improvement they require of government and stakeholders in the education sector. These are followed by the supply of teaching and learning materials 330 (17.0%), improvements in the quality of teaching

324 (16.7%) and the provision of infrastructural facilities 304 (15.7%) among others (Figure 33). There were also no marked differences in the perspectives of young men and women as well as rural and urban youth on what they considered to be the greatest improvements required in the education system to meet the needs of the youth. Thus, there was a consensus among young people that these improvements are critical if they are to achieve their future aspirations and needs.

FIGURE 33:
SUGGESTED AREAS TO BE IMPROVED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM (n=1932)



These shared perspectives were iterated in the qualitative data. According to many young men and women, the current education system requires significant improvements to be able to respond to the contemporary needs of the youth. In sharing their perspectives on the improvements required, this is what some young people had to say:

“Right now, our education curriculum is focusing more on the theory aspects. We are not focusing on ‘practicals’ and it is like technical education is going down gradually if not drastically. It is all theory and it does not help move the country forward” (Interview, Female, Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, December 2023).

“By making the education curriculum more practical, I think it will help to adequately prepare the youth for the future. Also improving and providing schools with adequate infrastructural facilities will help them to prepare for the future” (Interview, Male, Cape Coast Metropolis, December 2023)

Other young people expressed the need for the provision of adequate infrastructure to enhance teaching and learning as follows:

“I think the government needs to provide adequate infrastructures and equipment that will enhance effective teaching and learning processes. Also, the government should build more schools in both rural and urban areas to make education equally accessible to everyone” (Interview, Male, Gambaga District, December 2023).

CHANGES REQUIRED IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR THE YOUTH TO ACHIEVE THEIR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

The results related to youth perceptions of changes required in the education system to enable them to achieve their future aspirations is presented in Figure 34. Almost all the young men and women 1931 (99.8%) mentioned the provision of relevant skills and knowledge for the future as a major change they would want to see followed by an emphasis on practical work experience by students 1544 (79.8%) and preparing the youth for the job market 1468 (75.9%). There were no marked differences in the perspectives of rural and urban young men and women regarding the changes required in the education system for them to achieve their future aspirations. **In speaking about the changes required in the education system to help the youth achieve their aspirations, some young people mentioned that there should be a focus by policymakers and academic institutions to ensure that students are trained based on the requirements of the labour market.** This is what one young man suggested:



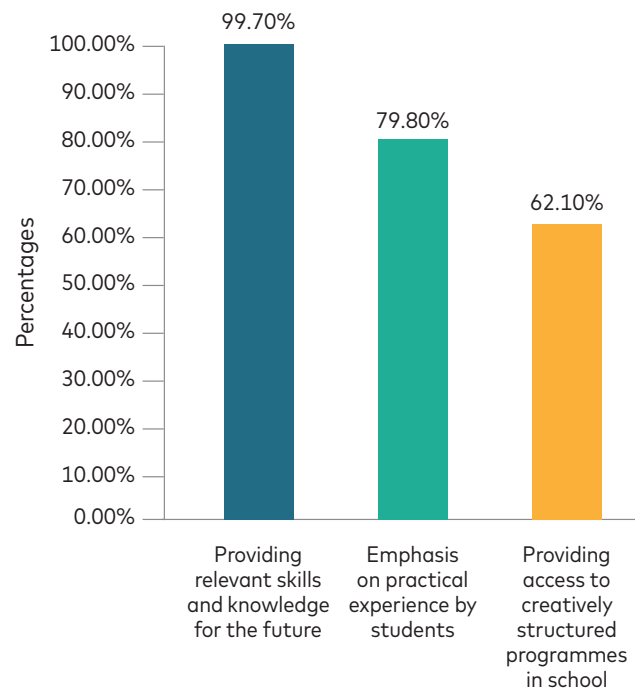
Policymakers should design our curriculum to be in sync with the labour market requirements to influence productivity and supply of goods and services (Interview, Male, Sunyani Municipal, December 2023).

A similar sentiment was shared by a female who argued that:



"I think the education system should be more practically oriented rather than being only theoretical. The Ghana Education Service should provide enough practical equipment that will help the students gain practical experience so that they can fit into the job market when they complete school" (Interview, Female, Cape Coast Metropolitan, December 2023).

FIGURE 34 : CHANGES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM ARE REQUIRED TO HELP THE YOUTH ACHIEVE THEIR FUTURE ASPIRATIONS(n=1934).



YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING IN GHANA

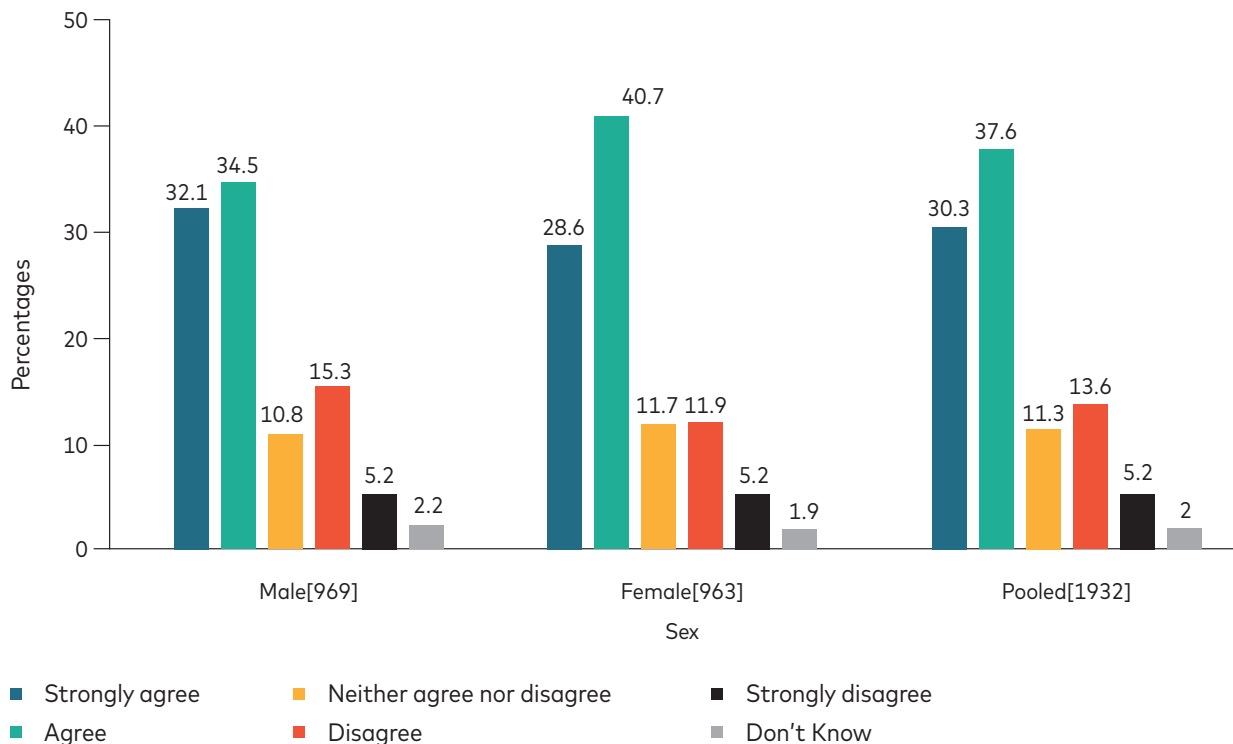


YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

This section presents the results of youth participation in decision-making regarding national development processes in Ghana. The youth were first asked about their perspectives on whether they have the right to participate in decision-making processes concerning their education and skills training. **Overall, of the 1932 youth who responded to this question, 726 (37.6%) and 585 (30.3%) either agreed or strongly**

agreed respectively that the youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education and skills training (Figure 30). It is also evident that a greater share of the young women including 392 (40.7%) and 275 (28.6%) either agreed or strongly agreed respectively to the view that the youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education and skills training. Likewise, many of the young men either agreed 311 (32.1%) or strongly agreed 334 (34.5%) that the youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education and skills training (Figure 35).

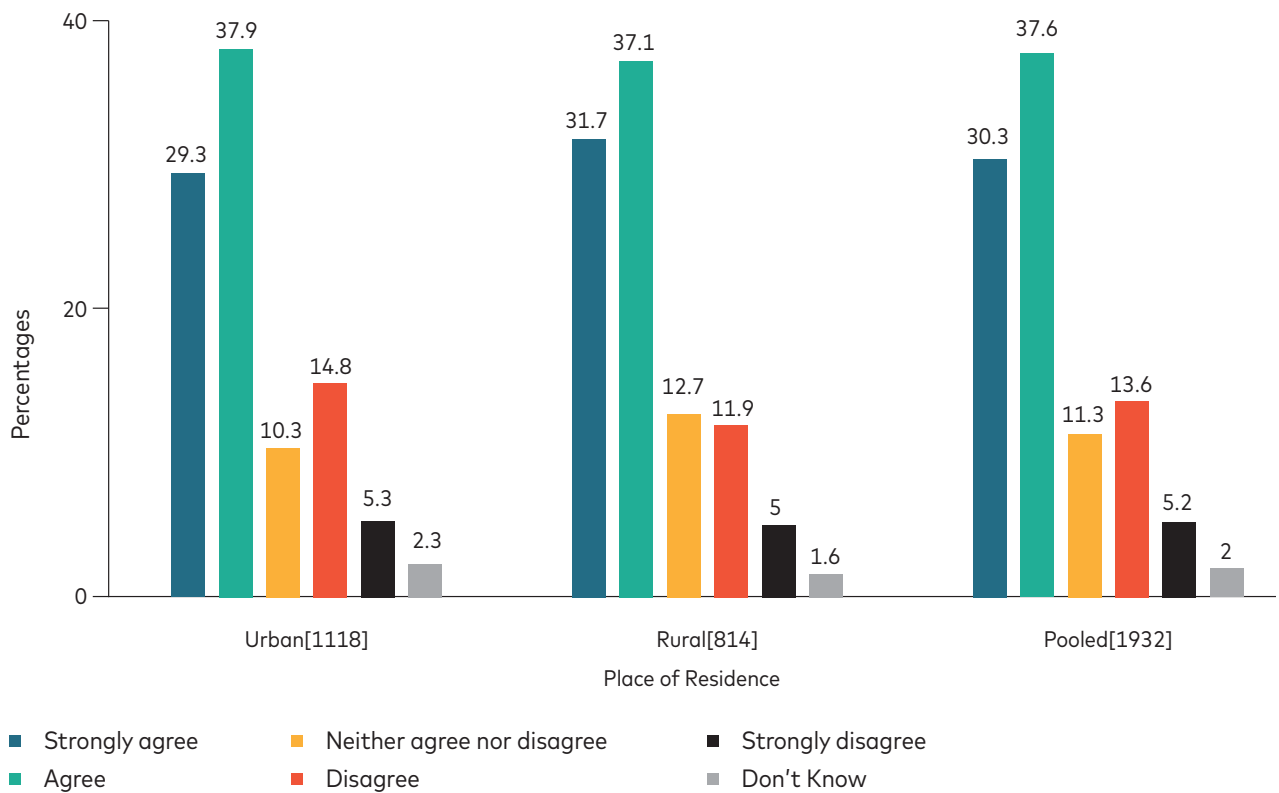
FIGURE 35: VIEWS ABOUT YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT CONCERN THEIR EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING, BY SEX (n=1934).



Both urban and rural young men and women also held a similar view that the youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes concerning their education and skills training. It is evident from Figure 31 that most of the rural youth either agreed 302 (37.1%) or strongly agreed 258 (31.7%) that the youth have the

right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education and skills training. Similarly, a greater share of the urban youth either agreed 424 (37.9%) or strongly agreed 328 (29.3%) to the assertion that the youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education and skills training.

FIGURE 36: VIEWS ABOUT THE RIGHTS OF THE YOUTH TO PARTICIPATE IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT CONCERN THEIR EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING, BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1934).



Despite their strong sense of optimism regarding having the right to participate in decision-making issues concerning their education and skills training, results from the quantitative survey highlight that the extent of involvement of the youth in decision-making on national issues is relatively low. Figure 37 presents the results of the views of the participants regarding the extent to which the youth are involved in decision-making on national issues. The results indicate that out of the total 1934 youth who responded to this question, the majority 439 representing (22.7%) indicated that the youth are to some extent involved in decision-making on national issues. A good proportion of the youth 408 (21.1%) reported that the youth are not at all involved in decision-making concerning national issues. While many young women 245 (25.3%) reported that the youth are to some extent involved in decision-making on national issues, many of the young men 216 (22.4%) held the view that the youth are not at all involved in the national decision-making process. A chi-square analysis of the survey data indicates that there are no statistically significant associations ($X^2(5) = 8.02, >p = 0.15$) with regard to the sex of respondents and the extent to which the youth think they are involved in decision-making on national issues (Appendix 18).

FIGURE 37:
VIEWS ABOUT THE LEVEL OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING, BY SEX (n=1934)

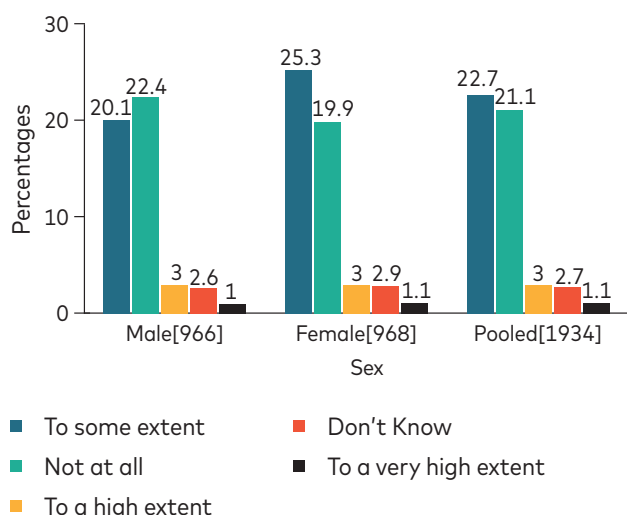
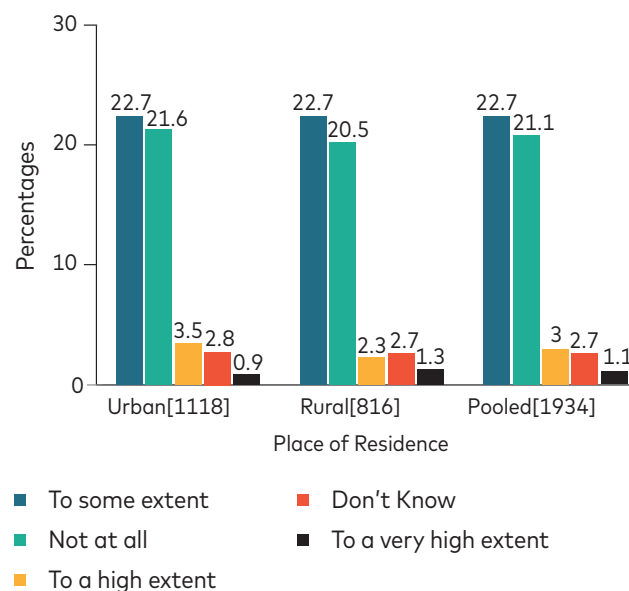


Figure 38 presents the results of rural and urban youth perspectives on the extent of youth involvement in decision-making processes on national issues. Overall, many rural youth, 185 (22.7%), and urban youth, 254 (22.7%), held the view that the youth are to some extent involved in decision-making processes on national issues. However, a very good proportion of the urban 241 (21.6%) and rural youth 167 (20.5%) also held the view that the youth are not at all involved in decision-making processes on national issues (Figure 33). A chi-square analysis of the survey data indicates a statistically significant association ($X^2(5) = 13.46, <p = 0.01$) between place of residence and the extent to which the youth think they are involved in decision-making on national issues (Appendix 19). Additionally, the results show a statistically significant association ($X^2(15) = 842.48, <p = 0.00$) between the level of education and the extent to which the youth think they are involved in decision-making on national issues (Appendix 20).

FIGURE 38:
VIEWS ABOUT THE LEVEL OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING, BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1934)



The qualitative component of the study gathered through interviews and focus group discussions aligns perfectly with the quantitative results on the extent to which the youth are involved in decisions on education policies and or national issues. Across all interviews in urban and rural Ghana, young men and women expressed the view that the extent of involvement of the youth in decisions regarding their education is quite low. Some youth participants narrated that the development of education policies takes no account of the views of the youth regarding the content of policies and or the direction that such policies should take even though Ghana is practising a democratic system of governance. A young woman interviewed in Ashanti Region for instance said:

“

The youth are not informed. Even though they say we have a democratic system, I think it's more paternalistic. Talking about the Free SHS policy for instance, it is designed for the youth, but I don't think there was any research undertaken to see what the policy should entail to suit the youth (Participant, Female, FGD, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023).

Another young man interviewed in a community in the Sekondi-Takoradi area also stressed that:

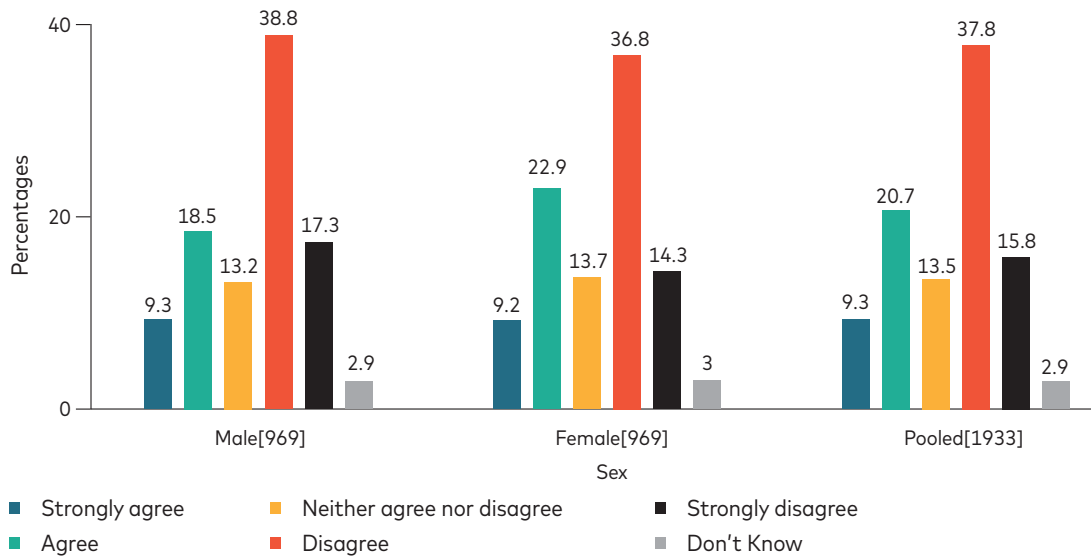
“

No, I do not think the voice of the youth is heard concerning our education policies. When these decisions are being taken, it is mostly done in parliament. They make the decisions, and they are mostly adults. So, most of the time, we miss the voices of the youth, their ideas, or opinions on our education policies. (Interview, Male, Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, December 2023).



Results from the survey on the level of agreement among youth regarding their involvement in decision-making processes in the governance of the country are displayed in Figure 39. Overall, 730 (37.8%) of the youth, which represents the majority, disagreed with the assertion that they are involved in decision-making processes in governing the country. The proportion of young men 376 (38.8%) who disagreed with the assertion is slightly higher than their young women 357 (36.8%) counterparts. Again, both young men (17.3%) and young women (14.3%) strongly disagreed with the assertion that the youth are involved in decision-making processes in governing the country. However, a good number of young women 221 (22.8%) and to some extent young men 179 (18.5%) agreed with the assertion that the youth are involved in decision-making processes in governing the country.

FIGURE 39:
VIEWS ABOUT YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN GOVERNING THE COUNTRY, BY SEX.



Similarly, a greater share of the urban youth 426 (38.1%) and rural youth 304 (37.4%) disagreed that the youth are involved in decision-making processes in governing the country, although some of the urban 212 (19%) and rural youth 188 (23.1%) agreed that the youth are involved in decision-making concerning national issues (See Figure 40).

FIGURE 40:
VIEWS ABOUT YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES IN GOVERNING THE COUNTRY, BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1933).

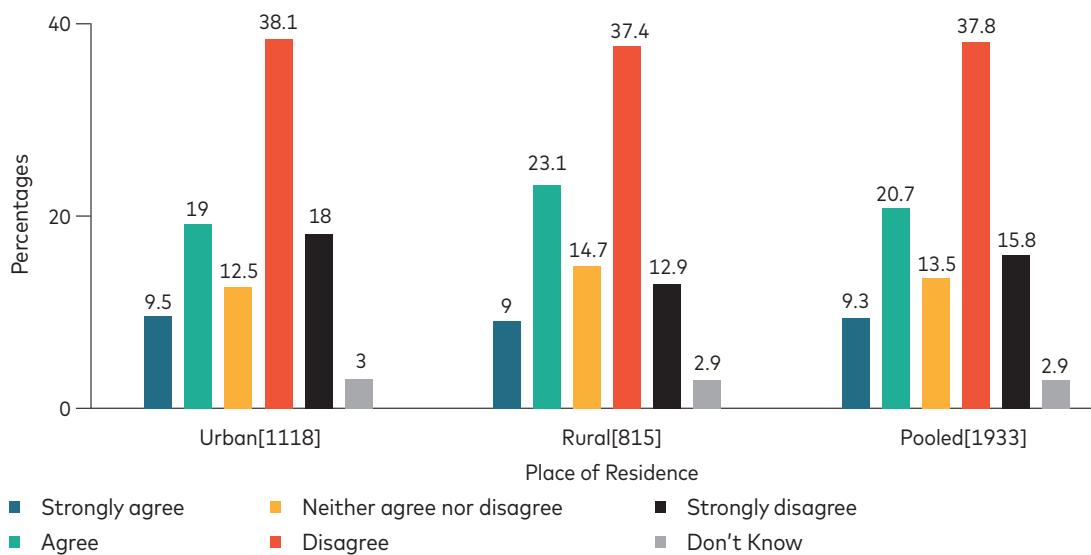
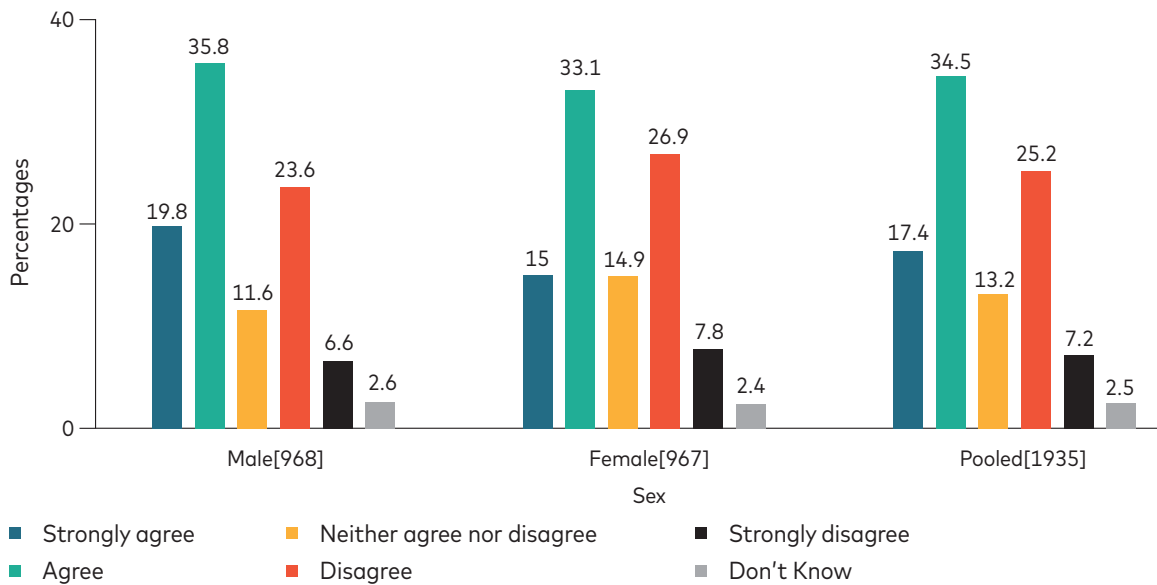


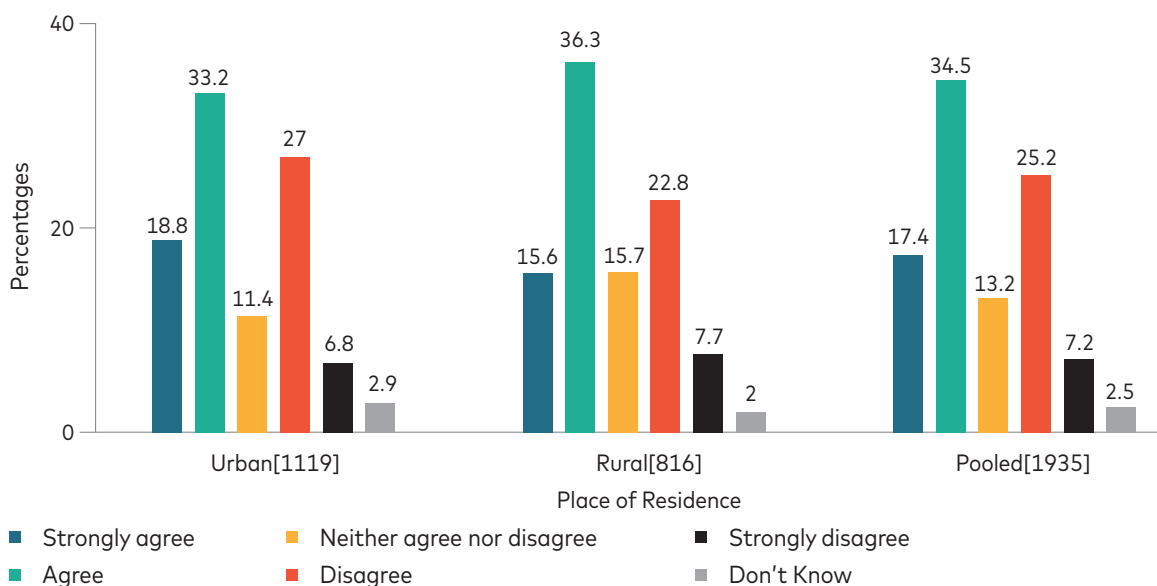
Figure 41 presents the perceptions of the youth regarding whether they have a say in what the government does in Ghana. Overall, many respondents, 668 (34.5%), agreed that they do not have a say about what the government does in the country. However, a good proportion of the youth 488 (25.2%) disagreed with the assertion that youth like themselves do not have a say in what the government does in Ghana. Slightly more young men are likely to agree 347 (35.8%) or strongly agree 192 (19.8%) that they do not have a say about what the government does in the country compared to proportion of the young women who agreed 320 (33.1%) or strongly agreed 145 (15%) that they do not have a say about what the government does in the country compared to proportion of the young women who agreed 320 (33.1%) or strongly agreed 145 (15%).

FIGURE 41:
VIEWS ABOUT YOUTH HAVING A SAY IN WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES IN GHANA, BY SEX (n=1935).



It is also evident that a good share of the rural youth either agree, 296 (36.3%), or strongly agree, 127 (15.6%), that youth like themselves do not have a say in what the government does in Ghana. Again, many of the urban youth, 372 (33.2%), agreed or strongly agreed, 210 (18.8%), that youth like themselves do not have a say in what the government does in Ghana (see Figure 42).

FIGURE 42:
VIEWS ABOUT YOUTH HAVING A SAY IN WHAT THE GOVERNMENT DOES IN GHANA BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE OR GEOGRAPHY (n=1935).



Similarly, a key theme which emerged from the qualitative findings is that there is little if any involvement or participation of the youth in decision-making concerning national development issues in Ghana. Some youth expressed frustrations regarding how the government has sidelined their voices in decisions regarding national issues. A young woman interviewed in Mampong in the Ashanti region for instance indicated that the government continue to make decisions for the youth without considering the views of young people. Some of the respondents asserted:



Do they even involve us? They [referring to the government] do not involve us; they make decisions for us, and they do not even listen to us even if we voice out our concerns (Interview, Female, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023)

One young man in the Greater Accra region also shared his views as follows:




When we rank it from 0 to 10, I take zero. Our political institutions do not recognize us. Our voices only make noise and are not heard. So, we need to be allowed to participate in making crucial decisions that will help the nation at large. They do not place so much priority on it. (Interview, Male, La-Nkwantanang Municipal, December 2023).

Another young woman interviewed also narrated that:



The views of youth are not taken into consideration unless we take an action such as demonstration or destroying things, and that is when the government will try to listen to us. The government should not base its cabinets or ministers on what they say because they are up there and they do not know what is going on here[(at the grassroots). So, for him to get the youth to participate in national issues, he should come down to the level of the youth and know what should be done (Interview, Female, Sefwi Wiawso Municipal, December 2023)



A section of the youth who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions reported they are rarely engaged in decision-making processes.

Notwithstanding, in some cases when they do, the youth are only mere participants during discussions about pertinent national issues. According to the youth, policymakers and decision-makers may sometimes involve the youth during round table discussions yet the concerns, viewpoints and opinions of the youth do not feed into government decisions on programmes and policies. Box 1 presents an illustrative case study of a young man interviewed in the Upper West region who narrated how young people's views are mostly not considered during decision-making in Ghana even though they might have the opportunity to sit down with policymakers at the decision-making table.

It is important to mention that some of the youth who participated in the qualitative aspect of the research indicated that their involvement in decision-making concerning national development issues is gradually gaining momentum through the work of the youth parliament that has been established throughout various MMDAs in Ghana. The participants further explained that many youths have taken up positions in government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and are championing the course of young people bringing the attention of policymakers to the unemployment and other social challenges faced by the youth in Ghana. A young man interviewed in the Upper East region for instance narrated:



I can say that the inclusion of the youth in the decision-making process is gradually gaining some grounds [...] I can say that now we have some youth in government and other agencies who are contributing their quota, and their development in the country (Interview, Male, Bongo District, December 2023).

BOX 1

EXCERPTS OF YOUTH VOICES NOT CONSIDERED DURING DECISION-MAKING

EXCERPTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

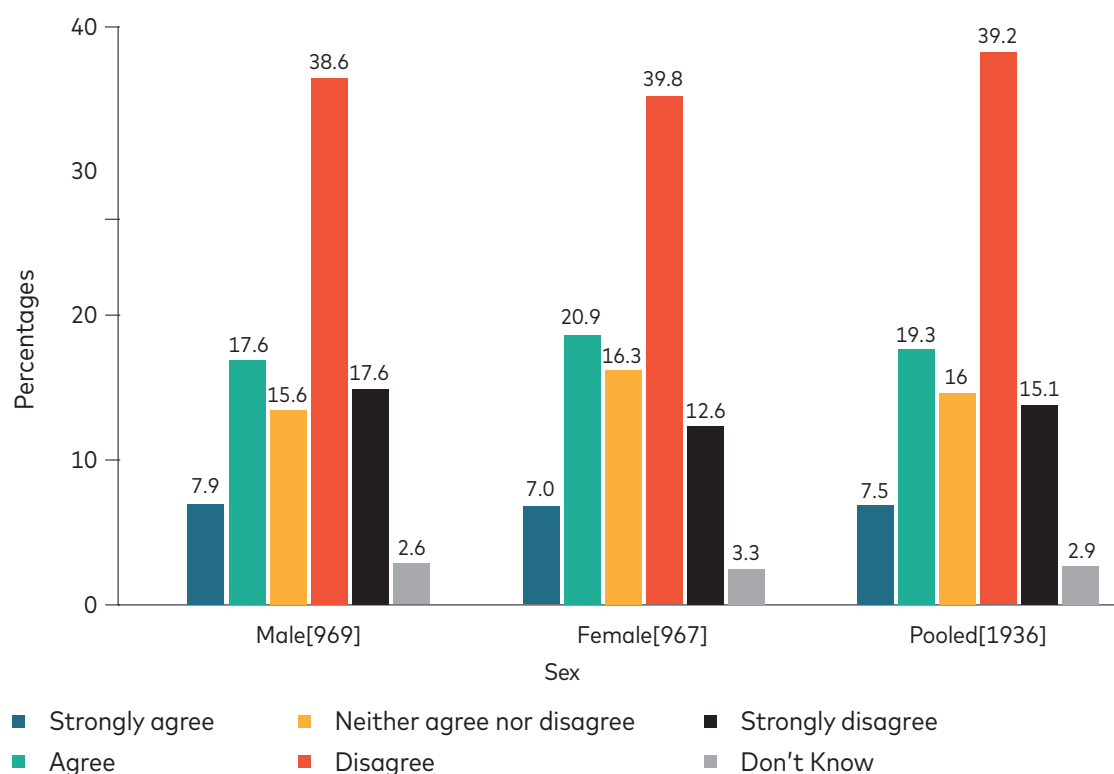
There is very little evidence of youth participation in decision making. **Even for the very few who get the opportunity to engage in policy processes in some shape or form**, you would realise that their concerns or their grievances are not taken into consideration. Sometimes, when they just call you to be part of the decision-making process, they call you not to really contribute but just to come and listen; just to come and watch or observe what they are doing, not to come and contribute. Even when you bring in your contributions, they only set you back, like oh, we will look at it when we go back to the drawing table. So, now, where is the drawing table? Why are you not part of the drawing table? They're just trying to, I mean, make the world see that, oh, they are bringing youth on board, but then, you don't bring them on board. So, when you look at the country as a whole, youth perceptions and youth grievances are not considered at all. Even when you see youth coming out to demonstrate about a particular thing that is affecting them, you will see police come in to brutalize them. So, you see, where is the opportunity that the Constitution, the 1992 national constitution, has given to us to voice out our grievances into demonstration and other actions that the government would consider. So, yeah, youth participation in decision-making is very poor. Talking about the extent, I think it's just extremely low. Yeah. Just like I said in the previous question, um, we virtually have little to no say in the decision. Even with the little that I'm talking about, we are only brought on board to observe, they will come and tell you that youth are our tomorrow's leaders or today's leaders, but when they are taking the decision, you are not there, they only call you to come and give the grievances with which they had already taken the decision. Like, they just call you to come over. It's just like a more formal process or a normal process. A lot of the youth have spoken a lot of youth have come on air to speak about pertinent issues that are affecting us. But to what extent have those issues been addressed for even just once? Nothing has happened! So yeah, youth participation in decision-making is extremely poor or low! **(Interview, Male, Wa West Municipal, December 2023)**

YOUTH INVOLVEMENT IN HOLDING DUTY BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE

This section presents the findings on the extent of involvement of youth in holding duty bearers to account. It further presents the findings on youth perspectives on opportunities to voice their concerns and whether duty bearers have created an enabling environment for the youth to engage in decision-making processes concerning national development issues.

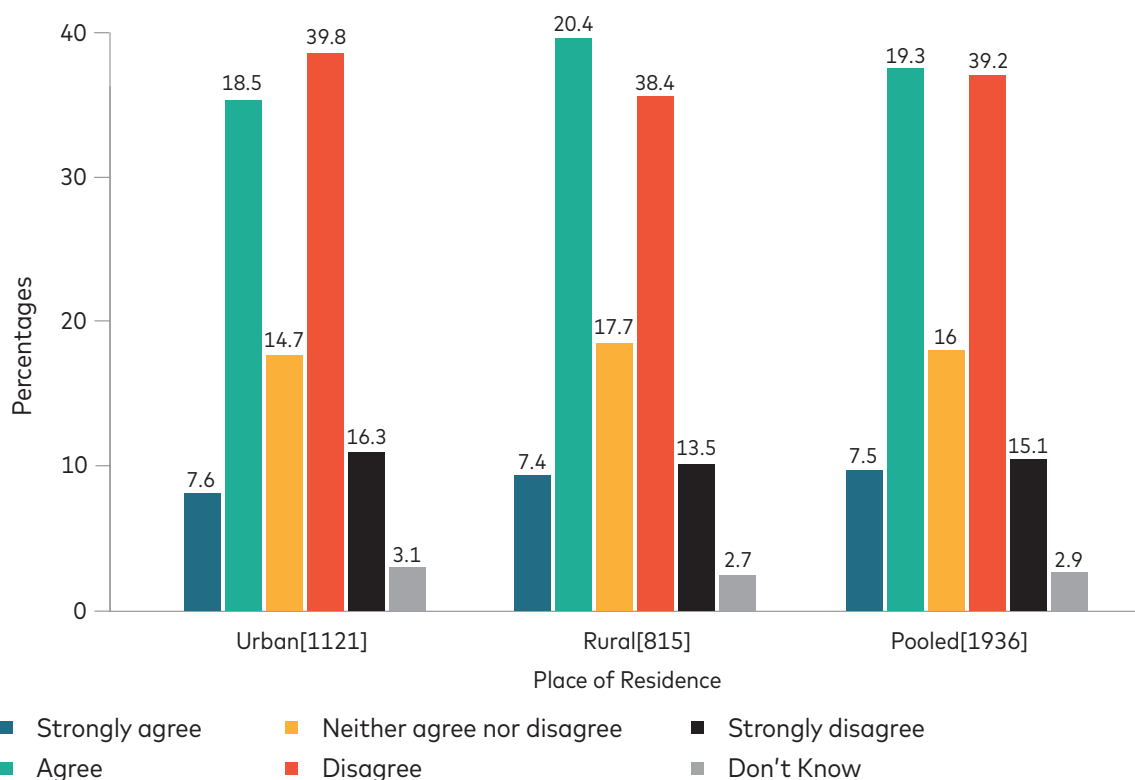
Figure 43 presents the views of the respondents regarding the extent to which the youth are able to hold duty bearers into account. Overall, of the 1936 youths who responded to this question, the relative majority 759 (39.2%) disagreed that the youth are able to hold the government and duty bearers into account. Slightly, more young women 385 (39.8%) than young men 374 (38.6%) disagreed that they can hold the government and duty bearers accountable. While some of the youth, 374 (19.3%), agreed that the youth are able to hold the government and duty bearers accountable, the proportion of those who agreed to this assertion is slightly higher for the young women 202 (20.9%) than the young men 171 (17.6%)

FIGURE 43:
VIEWS ABOUT WHETHER THE YOUTH IN GHANA ARE ABLE TO HOLD GOVERNMENT AND DUTY BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE, BY SEX (n=1936).



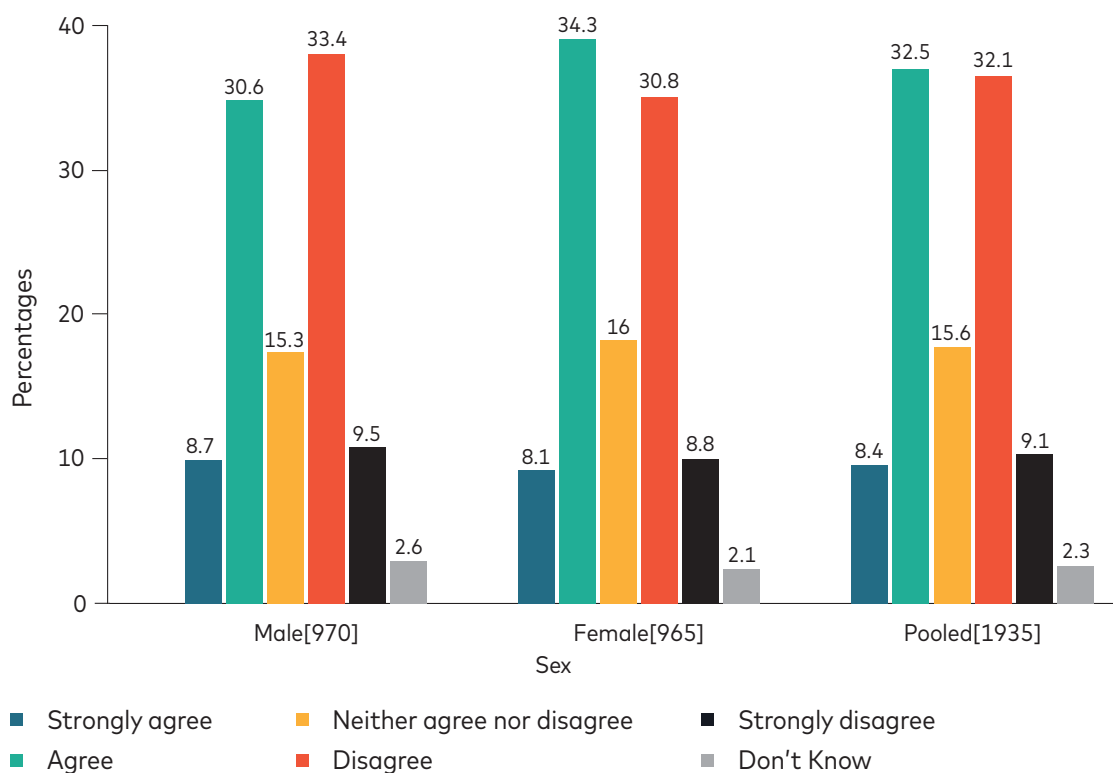
Taken together, the survey results further indicate that many rural and urban youth either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the youth in Ghana are able to hold the government and duty bearers accountable. For example, the results show that many of the urban youth either disagreed 446 (39.8%) or strongly disagreed 85 (7.6%) with the assertion that the youth are able to hold the government and duty bearers into account. Similarly, many of the rural youth either agreed 313 (38.4%) or strongly agreed 60 (7.4%) that the youth are able to hold the government and duty bearers into account (Figure 44).

FIGURE 44:
VIEWS ABOUT WHETHER THE YOUTH IN GHANA ARE ABLE TO HOLD GOVERNMENT AND DUTY BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE, BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE OR GEOGRAPHY (n=1936).



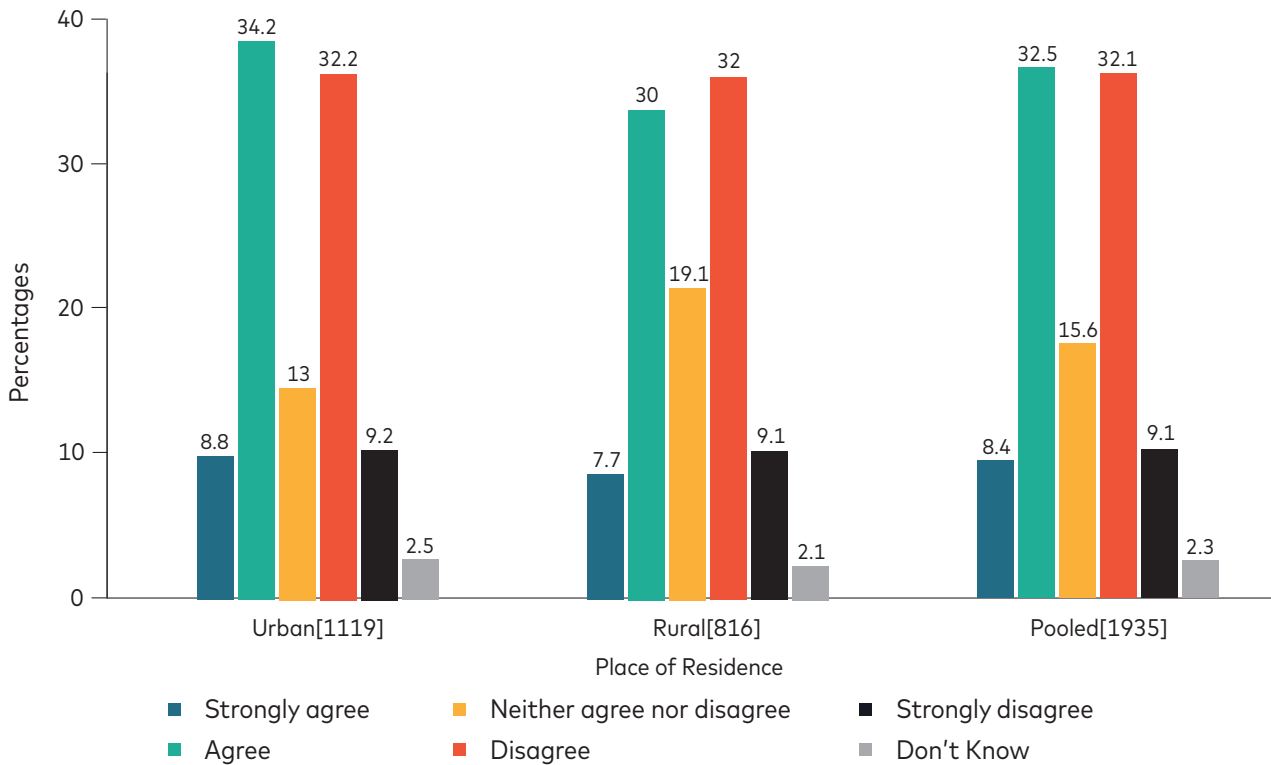
There appear to be mixed opinions or perspectives among the youth respondents regarding whether they have the opportunity to voice their concerns about national development issues. On the one hand, while 629 (32.5%) of the youth participants agreed they have the opportunity to could voice out their concerns about national development issues in Ghana, nearly the same proportion 621 (32.1%) disagreed with this statement. There are gender differences regarding whether the youth participants perceived the youth have the opportunity to voice their concerns about national development. While the majority 331 (34.3%) of the young women agreed that they have the opportunity to voice their concerns, more than a third of the young men 324 (33.4%) which represent the majority disagreed with having the opportunity to voice out their concerns about national development issues (Figure 45).

FIGURE 45:
OPPORTUNITY BY RESPONDENTS TO VOICE OUT THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN GHANA, BY GENDER (n=1935).



The results further indicate that slightly more urban youth than rural youth agreed with having the opportunity to voice their concerns on national development issues although a good proportion of both urban, 360 (32.2%), and rural, 260 (32%), youth also disagreed with the assertion of having the opportunity to voice their concerns out regarding national development issues (Figure 46).

FIGURE 46:
OPPORTUNITY BY RESPONDENTS TO VOICE OUT THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN GHANA, BY GENDER (n=1935).



Findings from the qualitative data further provide mixed views regarding whether the youth have the opportunity to voice their concerns about national development issues. On the one hand, some of the youth interviewed stressed that there are opportunities for the youth to voice their concerns on national development issues mainly through student associations, digital and social media, and to some extent the youth Parliament. According to a section of youth interviewed, these platforms have often provided avenues for young people to express their opinions, views and perspectives on critical developmental issues including but not limited to education, unemployment, and democratic governance. Some youth interviewees narrated:



Because of freedom of speech most of the time we hear young people speaking on radio stations and gatherings but for it to be taken into consideration is the problem (Interview, Female, Sagnarigu District, December 2023)



Yes, we do have the opportunity to voice concerns through social media channels, media interviews, and youth group discussions. You put out your messages or your information, what you think needs to be changed, and at the end of the day, the government would not see that. We have a high chance of voicing out your challenge, but then there is a low chance of the government to act or take it (Interview, Male, East Mamprusi, December 2023).

The latter part of the narration by the young man interviewed in the North East Region suggests that although the youth may have avenues for voicing their concerns, it is more likely that their views or concerns may not be considered by the government. This view was also shared by another young female interviewed in the Eastern region when she narrated that “We do voice out our concerns, but the government doesn’t listen to us” (Interview, Male, Yilo Krobo Municipality, December 2023). On the other hand, many of the youth interviewed reported that they are not aware of any available platforms or avenues for the youth to voice out their concerns on critical national issues as follows:



I will largely say that the youth are not able to voice their concerns because there is no avenue created by the government on which the youth can give their opinion, and even if there is some, I do not know (Interview, Male, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023).

According to some of the youth, the reason for the inability of the youth to voice out their concerns is that in addition to having no platforms or avenues, the youth themselves are not well organised which incapacitates them from having a common voice for channelling their concerns as stated by some of the participants as follows:



To me, I don't think the youth have the opportunity to voice their concerns. Even if we can voice our concerns. I don't think it will go anywhere. We are not given the opportunity. I don't think we have youth in the Parliament House (Interview, Female, Wa Municipal, December 2023).



I do not see any youth platforms around or youth leaders. They are not there. I do not think the youth are well organised. They are not well organised to make their voice heard. (Interview, Female, Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, December 2023)

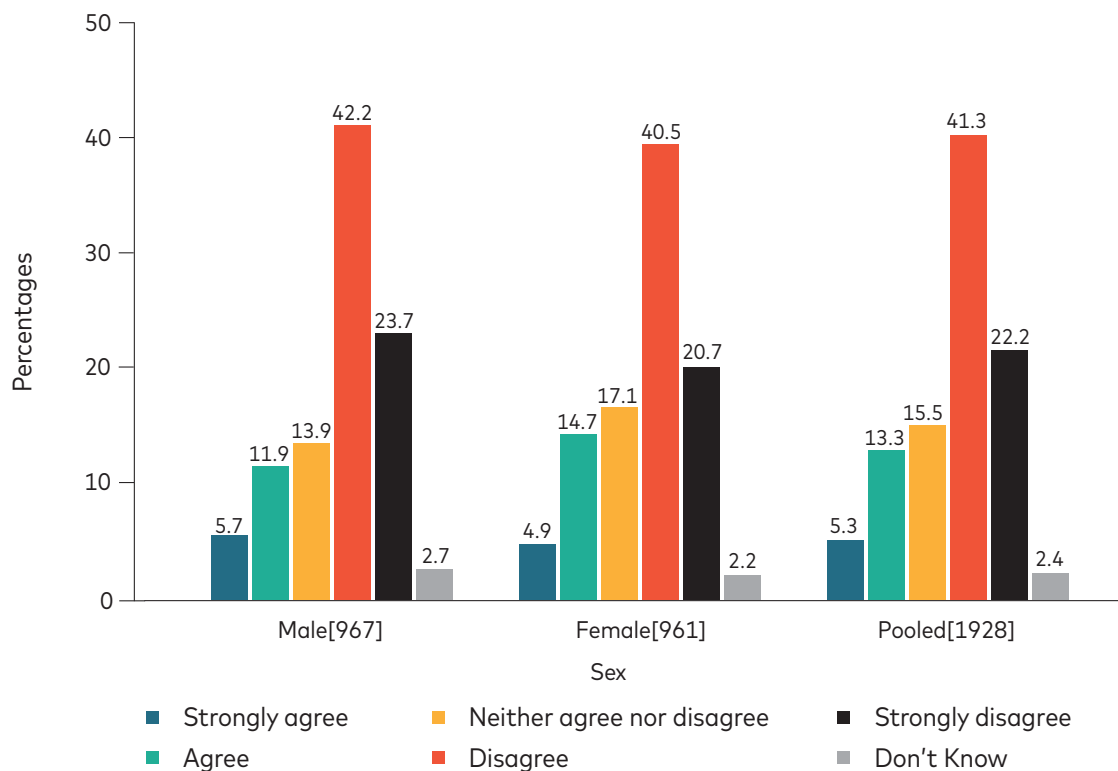


We virtually have little to no say in the decision-making, even with the little that I'm talking about, we are only brought on board to observe. They [the leaders] will come and tell you that the youth are our tomorrow's leaders or today's leaders, but when they are making the decision, you are not there. They only call you to come and give the grievances with which they had already taken the decision. A lot of the youth have come on air to speak about pertinent issues that are affecting us. But to what extent have those issues been addressed by our leaders for even just once? Nothing has happened (Interview, Male, Wa Municipal, December 2023).

The latter part of the quote from the interviewee from the Wa Municipal in the Upper West region highlights that the voices or concerns of the youth are not taken seriously by the government or policymakers.

This view buttresses the quantitative results regarding whether the views of the youth are taken seriously by policymakers concerning improving the education system. Indeed, out of the sample of 1928 youth who responded to this question, the majority 796 (41.3%) disagreed that the views of the youth are taken seriously by policymakers concerning improving the education system. It is also evident that many young men 408 (42.2%) and young women 476 (49.5%) disagreed with the assertion that the views of the youth are taken seriously by policymakers concerning improving the education system. It should also be noted that a good proportion of the young men 229 (23.7%) and young women 199 (20.7%) strongly disagreed with the statement in question (see Figure 47).

FIGURE 47:
PERCEPTION THAT THE VIEWS OF THE YOUTH ARE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY POLICYMAKERS CONCERNING IMPROVING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM, BY SEX (n=1928)



The qualitative findings largely revealed that policymakers do not seriously take the views of the youth. Interviewees expressed the view that there have been several education policies and programmes that have been developed and implemented with little or no involvement of the youth. According to the interviews, this relates more to the nature of public policy-making in Ghana where the technocrats and political actors at the national level assume that they know it all including the issues affecting the youth. Therefore, youth participation in public policy-making is often limited; and in situations where the youth are invited, many interviewees expressed the view that they are just to consent or validate the document prepared for them. They mentioned that generally, in Ghana, the policy-making processes are not adhered to, which contributes to the little participation of the youth and marginalized section of the society. Key mention was made of the recent Free Senior High School policy, which according to some youth, was rolled out with little consultation with the youth in the decision-making process. A female participant for instance narrated:



The government does not take us seriously as youth. If the government listens to us, when it initiated this Free SHS policy, you realize that most people, especially the youth, were against it because they envisaged that it would compromise quality education. If the government had listened to the opinions of the youth, I think things would have been better” (Interview, Female, Kwabre-East Municipal, December 2023).

Another participant also emphasised:

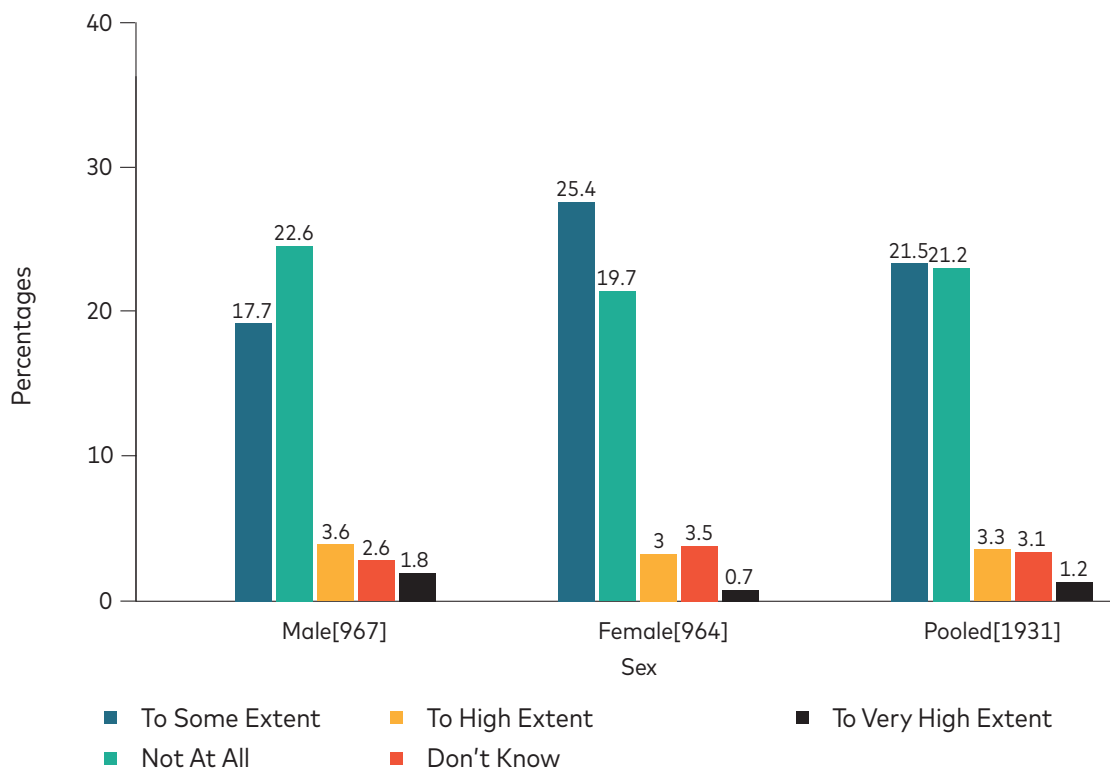


“I don’t think the government takes the views of the youth seriously because if you go online, a lot of people are crying. So, I don’t think the government hears the cry of the youth and it’s not going to happen” (Interview, Female, Wa Municipal, December 2023).

CREATION OF AVENUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT

Figure 48 presents the views of the youth regarding the extent to which the government has created avenues for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development issues. Figure 48 presents the views of the youth regarding the extent to which the government has created avenues for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development issues. Overall, out of 1931 youth who responded to this question, many shared the view that either the government has to some extent 406 (21.5%) or not at all 409 (21.2%) created opportunities for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development. More young men, 219 of them representing 22.6% reported that the government has not at all created any avenues in contrast to the young women, many of whom (245 or 25.4%) reported that the government has to an extent created opportunities for youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development. A chi-square test analysis indicates a statistically significant association ($X^2(5) = 23.0, <p= 0.00$) between the sex and perceptions of the youth about the extent to which the government has created avenues for youth engagement (Appendix 21).

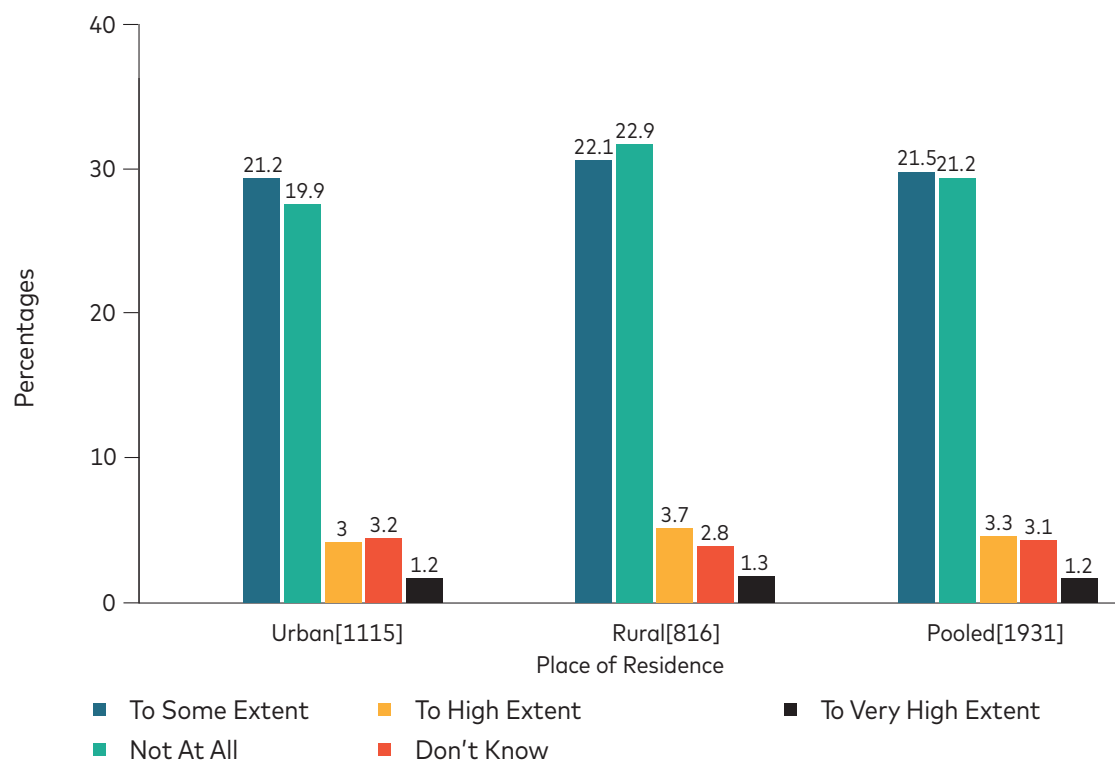
FIGURE 48:
PERCEPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED AVENUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, BY SEX.



The results shown in Figure 49 demonstrate that more rural youth are likely to report that either the government has not at all 187 (22.9%) or to some small extent 180 (22.1%) created avenues for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development. A similar trend can be observed for the urban youth, with many of them reporting that either the government has not all 222 (19.9%) or to some extent 237 (21.2%) created avenues for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development. Further analysis of the survey data indicates no statistically significant association ($X^2(5) = 4.88, >p = 0.43$) between the rural and urban youth about the perception of the extent to which the government has created avenues for youth engagement (Appendix 22).

However, the results indicate a statistically significant association ($X^2(15) = 45.34, <p = 0.00$) between the level of education and the perception of the extent to which the government has created avenues for youth engagement (Appendix 23). Indeed, out of the total sample of 517 youth with tertiary education, a greater proportion indicated that the government has either to some (136) or little extent (256) created avenues for youth engagement. Again, a greater share of the youth with secondary school education indicated that the government has to some extent (563 out of 1062) created avenues for youth engagement.

FIGURE 49:
PERCEPTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED AVENUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT, BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1931).



Many of the youth who participated in the qualitative interviews and focus group discussions narrated that they are not aware of any structures at both the national and local levels that have been created to facilitate youth engagement in decision-making processes on national issues that affect them. The youth participants argued that it is only during voting and elections they get the opportunity to select their representatives who represent them in Parliament which is the highest decision-making body on national development issues. Nevertheless, some of the youth interviewed indicated that at the national level, there is the national youth authority which represents the youth while at the community they are aware of the voices of the youth coalition, and the youth parliament that have been formed and are used in championing the course of the youth as seen below:



There are a few structures like the youth authority, to ensure youth involvement in decision-making" (Interview, Female, Tamale Metropolis, December 2023).



For the community level, I can strongly say yes, there are voices for the Youth. But at the national level, that's where the problem is. I think from the grassroots, we gather their voices, and it doesn't get anywhere at the national level" (Interview, Female, Wa Municipal, December 2023)



Yes, there are structures and then even there are legal entities, when you look at the 1992 constitution, it has given youth a very great right to be able to bring their grievances to the government to address or for leaders to address. But like I'm saying those structures are just there, there are bureaucratic processes that are more or less like myth in disguise or reality in disguise. So, they're just like a myth, they don't work. They don't work, even some of them that will give you the listening ear, are just like, oh, just take it. But some even go to the extreme of not giving you a listening ear, left alone, you are voicing your grievances to them. So, it's just like a myth, is just like reality in disguise, their structures, the constitution is there, but nothing is working" (Interview, Male, Wa Municipal, December 2023)

A young male interviewed in the Volta region also indicated some youth leaders that tend to mobilise the youth to discuss issues that affect the youth, especially in the community although there is a tendency for the views of the youth to make no meaningful or material change in policy decision making as follows:



At the community level, we have youth leaders who gather the youth to discuss issues about them, and at the national level, we have the youth parliament, but the views are not practicalised" (Interview, Female, Ho Municipal, December 2023, Volta Region).

EFFECTIVE ACTIONS TO MAKE THE VOICES OF THE YOUTH HEARD BY DECISION-MAKERS

The research elicited the perspectives of the youth regarding the most effective actions to make their voices heard by decision-makers. To do this, the respondents were asked to select the four most effective solutions from a wide range of suggested solutions on how to achieve this. The results in Table 9 show that the top four most effective actions suggested by the youth include: i) organising youth dialogue with policymakers or politicians, 1397 (72.0%); ii) engaging in social media by expressing opinions, 1178 (60.7%); iii) voting in local and national elections, 1108 (57.0%); and iv) taking part in a public consultation on proposed political initiatives (online or offline), 910(46.9%).

TABLE 9:
EFFECTIVE ACTIONS FOR MAKING THE VOICES OF THE YOUTH HEARD BY POLICYMAKERS (n=1940).

	Sex of respondent		Place of residence		Pooled
	Male [n=970]	Female [n=970]	Urban [n=1,122]	Rural [n=818]	n=1940
Participating in student or youth organisations	31.8	28.8	31.8	28.1	30.3
Voting in local and national elections	56.5	57.4	55.7	58.7	57.0
Contacting a politician about an issue	34.4	34.6	32.4	37.5	34.5
Engaging in social media by expressing my opinion, using hashtags, and changing my profile pictures.	58.0	63.3	62.1	58.7	60.7
Taking part in a public consultation on proposed political initiatives (online/ offline)	46.9	46.9	48.8	44.4	46.9
Volunteering for a charity/campaign organization	27.9	26.6	27.4	27.1	27.3
Organising youth dialogue with policymakers or politicians	72.5	71.5	72.6	71.1	72.0
Participating in political movements, parties or unions	43.8	42.9	43.2	43.5	43.4
Not applicable	11.9	12.1	11.3	12.8	12.0
Don't Know	16.3	15.7	14.6	17.8	16.0

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

There are gender and rural-urban commonalities and differences in some of the actions suggested by the youth. The overwhelming majority of the young men 703 (72.5%) and young women 694 (71.5%) opted for organizing youth dialogue with policymakers or politicians. However, slightly more of the young women 614 (63.3%) than young men 562 (58%) reported engaging in social media by expressing opinions and taking part in a public consultation on proposed political initiatives (online or online). Moreover, more than half of both young men 548 (56.5%) and young women 558 (57.4%) surveyed reported voting in local and national elections. A good proportion of the young men 455(46.9%) and young women 455 (46.9%) also highlighted taking part in a public consultation on proposed political initiatives both on- and online (see Table 9).

Findings from the qualitative study also highlight key actions such as organising dialogues between policymakers and young people, having youth representatives on decision-making structures at the local level, revamping and resourcing the youth parliaments to make them more effective, and organising forums to elicit views of the youth on key national and topical issues that affect them



There can be a forum where maybe the youth can be called so that they share their views on issues, like these education issues, they share their views and that would also be taken and considered when they are making decisions (Participant, Male, FGD, Sunyani Municipal December 2023)



If the government can set up a Youth Parliament that will be effective. A youth parliament that has the resources to function. If all the resources are there that can help them, I think it will improve" (Interview, Male, Techiman, December 2023).



We should have youth representatives during every decision-making, just as we have the council of elders, so they can bring on board generational issues and challenges to help develop the country" (Interview, Male, Tamale Metropolis, December 2023).

YOUTH ASPIRATIONS AROUND EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT



EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASPIRATIONS OF THE YOUTH

This section presents the findings on the education and training aspirations of the youth in Ghana. Table 10 presents the results on the views of the youth regarding the meanings they ascribe to pursuing education. Overall, out of the total of 1933 youth who responded to this question, the majority 1,204 (63.2%) mentioned that being able to pursue education means obtaining and enriching one's knowledge. A significant proportion of the youth also indicated that being able to pursue education means building and becoming equipped with skills 1092 (56.5%), opportunity to enter the labour market 1069 (55.3%), and opportunity to acquire a complex understanding of one or more fields 860 (44.5%) and occasion for personal growth and development 847 (43.8%).

Many young men 616 (63.7%) and young women 605 (62.6%) reported that being able to pursue education means obtaining and enriching their knowledge. Again, more than half of both the young men 537 (55.5%) and young women 531 (55.0%) reported that educational pursuit offers opportunities for young people to enter the labour market. Others reported educational pursuit provides opportunity to build and become equipped with skills (males = 548, 56.7%; females = 544, 56.3%), opportunity to acquire a complex understanding of one or more fields (males = 428, 44.3%; females = 432, 44.7%), and occasion for personal growth and development (males = 427, 44.2%; females = 420, 43.5%). A similar trend was observed for the rural and urban youth (See Table 10).

TABLE 10:
MEANING OF EDUCATION AMONG THE YOUTH (n=1933)

Meaning of education among the youth	Sex of respondents		Place of residence Pooled		Pooled [n=1933]
	Males (n=967)	Females (n=966)	Urban (n=1121)	Rural (n=812)	
Next or future step in a person's education experiences	42.4	42.0	43.0	41.0	42.2
A way of obtaining and enriching one's knowledge	63.7	62.6	63.0	63.0	63.2
An opportunity to enter the labour market	55.5	55.0	54.0	57.0	55.3
A means of building and becoming equipped with skills	56.8	56.3	57.0	56.0	56.5
Participating in student or youth organisations	20.9	21.5	18.0	25.0	21.2
An opportunity to acquire a complex understanding of one or more fields	44.3	44.7	45.0	44.0	44.5
An occasion for personal growth and development	44.2	43.5	43.0	44.0	43.8
Don't know	3.2	2.3	3.0	3.0	2.7
Others	2.0	1.3	1.0	3.0	1.7

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Table 11 presents the results of the specific areas of education and skills training that the youth would be interested in the future. The results indicate many of the young men 554 (57.8%) and young women 522 (54.4%) would be interested in technical and vocational education. Moreover, slightly more of the young women 503 (52.5%) than the young men 428 (44.7%) indicated that they would be interested in formal education. Furthermore, the results further indicate that many of the urban youth and rural youth would be interested in technical and vocational training as part of their education and skills training in the future. Again, 578 (52.2%) of the urban youth and 353(43.6%) of the rural youth reported that they would be interested in formal education.

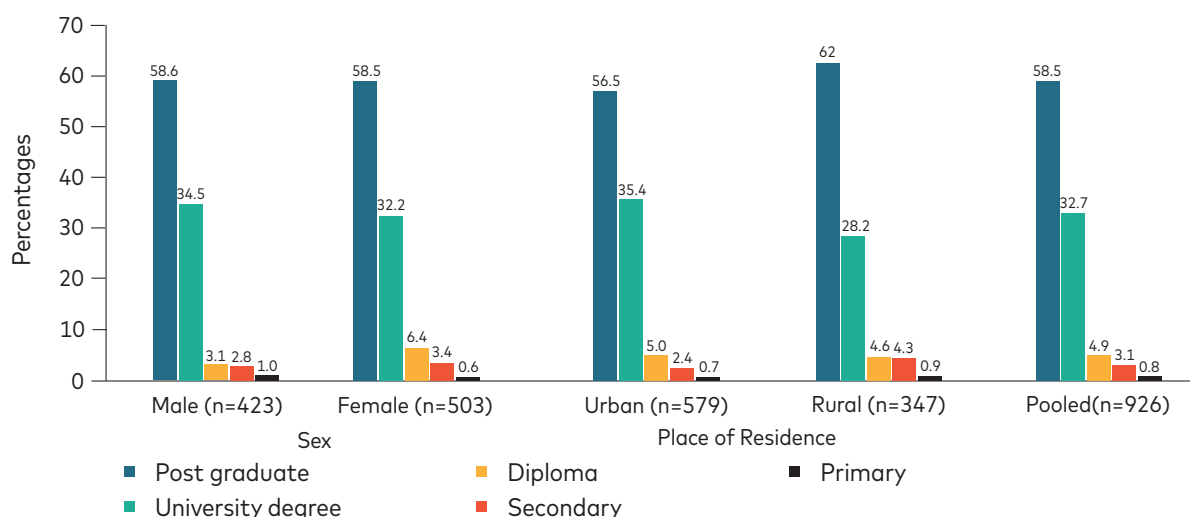
TABLE 11:
INTEREST IN FUTURE EDUCATION AND SKILLS (n=1917)

Interest in future education and skills	Sex of respondents		Place of residence		Pooled (n=1917)
	Males (n=958)	Females (n=959)	Urban (n=1108)	Rural (n=809)	
Formal education	44.7	52.5	52.2	43.6	48.6
Technical and vocational	57.8	54.4	55.4	57.1	56.1
Technology and information	37.2	27.6	31.9	33.1	32.4
Traditional apprenticeship	17.7	19.4	15.0	23.5	18.6
Agro-based training	13.9	9.1	12.0	10.8	11.5
Others	1.7	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.4

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Among the youth who reported interest in formal education, the majority including both young men (58.6%) and young women (58.5%) mentioned that they would want to pursue post-graduate degrees (Masters and PhD levels) (males = 248, 58.6%, females = 294, 58.5%) followed by undergraduate (university) degree (males = 146, 34.5%, females = 162, 32.2%). Moreover, a greater share of rural, 215 (62.0%) and urban, 327 (56.5%), youth would want to pursue a postgraduate degree (e.g., Masters and PhD level), followed by undergraduate degree (rural youth = 99, 28.2%, urban youth = 205, 35.4%) (see Figure 50).

FIGURE 50:
DESIRED LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF RESPONDENTS, BY SEX AND PLACE OF RESIDENCE



The findings from the qualitative interviews align perfectly with the quantitative results on the educational aspirations of the youth. Across all interviews and focus group discussions, many of the youth indicated that they have ambitions of pursuing higher degrees at the postgraduate level (i.e., Masters and PhD). The youth including both males and females' sense of wanting to pursue higher education is linked with their career ambitions of obtaining a well-paid professional salaried employment and making a positive difference in their communities, society, and nation. Interestingly some of the youth suggested that they would wish to travel to advanced countries such as the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, and other countries to pursue their higher education dreams. Some of the youth professed:



I am considering pursuing my master's degree or PhD or diverting to ICT and pursuing Cybersecurity (Interview, Male, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023)



I want to continue my education and have my PhD. in the UK and come and teach in Africa because I don't like brain drain. I want to contribute to the development of Ghana and Africa (Interview, Female, Abuakwa North District, December 2023).



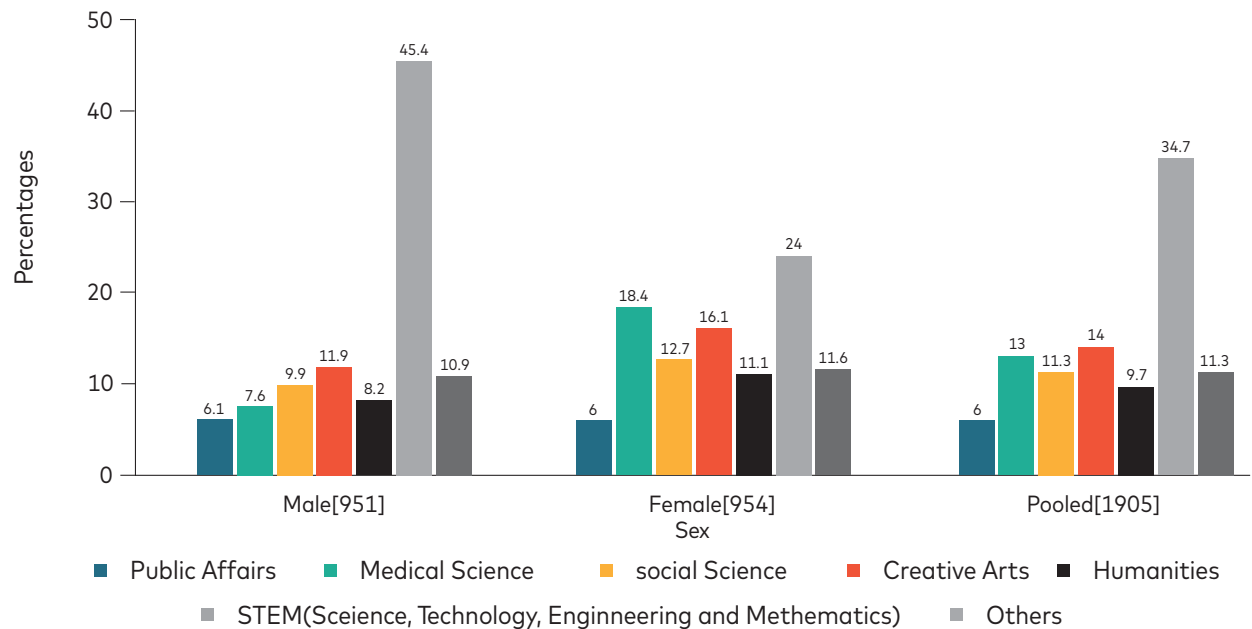
My future educational aspiration is to undertake my master's and PhD degrees abroad. I want to do that so that I can secure a good job and contribute to my community and nation" (Interview, Female, Ledzokuku Municipal, December 2023).



My educational aspirations in the next five to ten years, I hope and I pray to Allah to be in either a PhD school, that is my second master's, or I'm done with my second master's and then working, but then aside, doing all the education, I am always looking at how to improve things, especially the education in our rural areas, and also working on other things like climate change, by then I should have had a different project and also a well-established social entrepreneur. Entrepreneur organization or something like that, so that I'll be able to use it on a larger scale to benefit more people" (Interview, Female, Ledzokuku Municipal, December 2023).

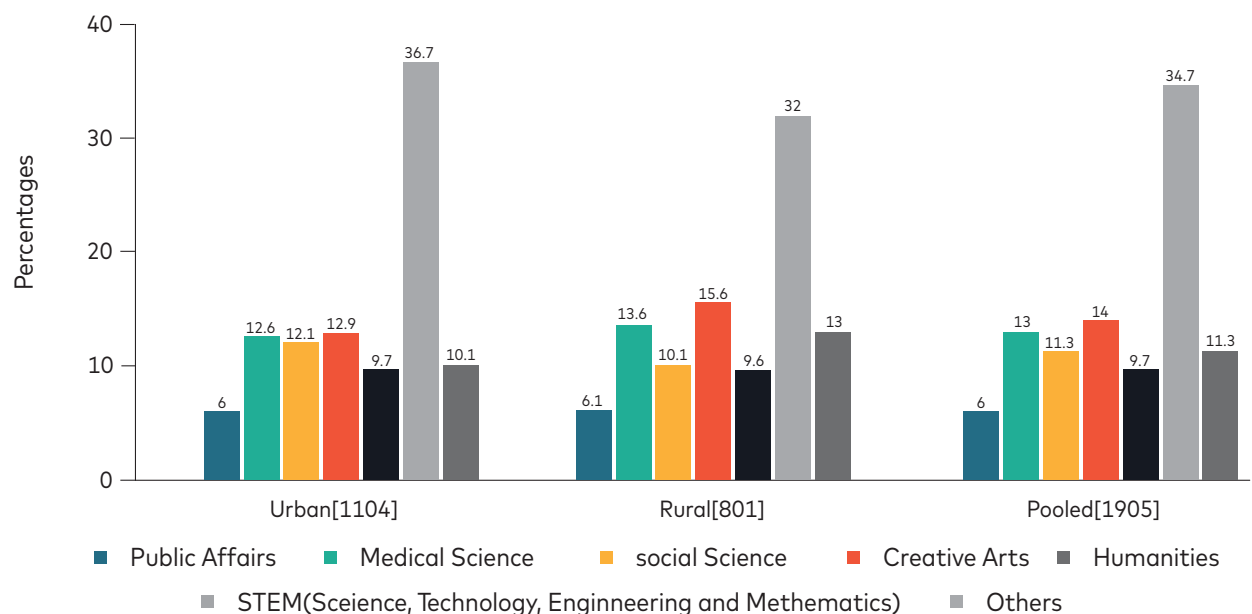
Among the youth with an interest in pursuing higher education (1905), more than a third 661(34.7%), which represents the relative majority, reported that they would want to offer **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related courses**. However, the proportion of young men 432(45.4%) who favour STEM is nearly twice the proportion of young women (n=229, 24%) who also prefer this area of study (See Figure 51).

FIGURE 51:
DESIRED SUBJECT OF STUDY AT THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL BY SEX



More rural 256 (32%) and urban 405 (36.7%) youth also opted for **STEM-related courses as part of their educational aspiration (see Figure 52)**. It is worth mentioning that the proportion of urban and rural young men and women who opted for social sciences and humanity-related courses is comparatively low.

FIGURE 52:
DESIRED SUBJECT OF STUDY AT THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1905)



SOFT SKILLS TRAINING THE YOUTH WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING IN THE FUTURE

The research also elicited the perspective of the youth regarding soft skills training that they would be interested in learning in the future. out of the 1932 youth who responded to this question, an overwhelming majority 1378 (71.3%) indicated that they would be interested in learning good communication skills. A significant proportion also suggested that they would be interested in learning about problem-solving skills 1097 (56.8%), teamwork 1061 (54.9%), leadership skills 1036 (53.6%), and time management 1,010 (52.3%) (Table 12).

Findings from the interviews revealed that the youth regard these soft skills as critical to enhancing their chances of finding good employment in the future. This is significant because there is growing orientation in the job market where employers are keen to recruit and retain employees who can apply theoretical knowledge but also can effectively work in a team, take initiatives, contribute effectively to solving problems with little or no supervision, and also articulate their views more clearly in the world of work. A female interviewed in the Ashanti region for instance explained her desire to learn various soft skills as follows:

“

For soft skills training, personally, I would like to learn more about leadership, communication and how to take initiative at the workplace. I will also want to improve my communication and public speaking skills. As you know, these are needed in the workplace, and even for personal development of the individual. So, I will want to learn more about these skills” (Interview, Female, Tamale Metropolitan, December 2023).



However, more young women 720, (74.5%) than young men 657 (68.0%) prefer to learn good communication skills. Again, slightly more young women 405 (41.9%) than young men 347 (35.9%) would be interested in presentation skills. Equally, a good proportion of young men and women reported their interest in problem-solving (m=554, 57.3%, f=544, 56.3%), teamwork (m=543, 56.2%, f=517, 53.5%), leadership (m=531, 55.0%, f=504, 52.2%) and time management (m=498, 51.6%, f=512, 53.0%) (Table 12).

Compared to the urban youth 773 (69.1%), a slightly larger proportion of the rural youth, 604 (74.3%) reported that they would be interested in good communication skills. Again, some rural and urban youth would be interested in learning more about problem-solving (rural=480, 59.0%, urban=618, 55.2%) and teamwork (rural=464, 57.1%, urban=596, 53.3%). Furthermore, more rural, and urban youth show strong interest in learning more about time management (rural=455, 56.0%, urban=555, 49.6%) and negotiation skills (rural=344, 42.4%, urban=383, 34.2%).

TABLE 12:
SOFT SKILLS TRAINING THE YOUTH WOULD BE INTERESTED IN LEARNING IN THE FUTURE

	Sex of respondent		Place of residence		Pooled (n=1932)
	Males (n=966)	Females (n=966)	Urban (n=1119)	Rural (n=813)	
Good communication	68.0	74.5	69.1	74.3	71.3
Teamwork	56.2	53.5	53.3	57.1	54.9
Leadership	55.0	52.2	52.5	55.1	53.6
Time management	51.6	53.0	49.6	56.0	52.3
Negotiations	36.9	38.5	34.2	42.4	37.7
Presentation skills	37.5	41.9	38.4	41.5	39.7
Emotional intelligence	35.9	39.6	37.5	38.1	37.8
Analytical and Critical Thinking Skills	51.3	48.8	49.9	50.3	50.1
Problem-solving	57.3	56.3	55.2	59.0	56.8
None of the above	2.3	1.9	1.6	2.7	2.1
Others	0.6	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.5

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

BARRIERS TO REALISING EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING ASPIRATIONS

This section presents the views of the youth regarding potential barriers that might hamper their education and skills training aspirations.

Figure 53 presents the views of the young men and women regarding whether they foresee any potential

constraint to realising their education and skills training aspirations in the future. The results show that out of the 1,921 young people who responded to this question, a greater share 1,256 (65.4%) reported that they foresee potential constraints to realising their education and training aspirations. While the frequency is high for both sexes, slightly more young men 651 (67.7%) than young women 606 (63.2%) mentioned that they foresee potential constraints to their education and skills training aspirations.

FIGURE 53: POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS TO REALISING EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING ASPIRATIONS BY GENDER (n=1921)

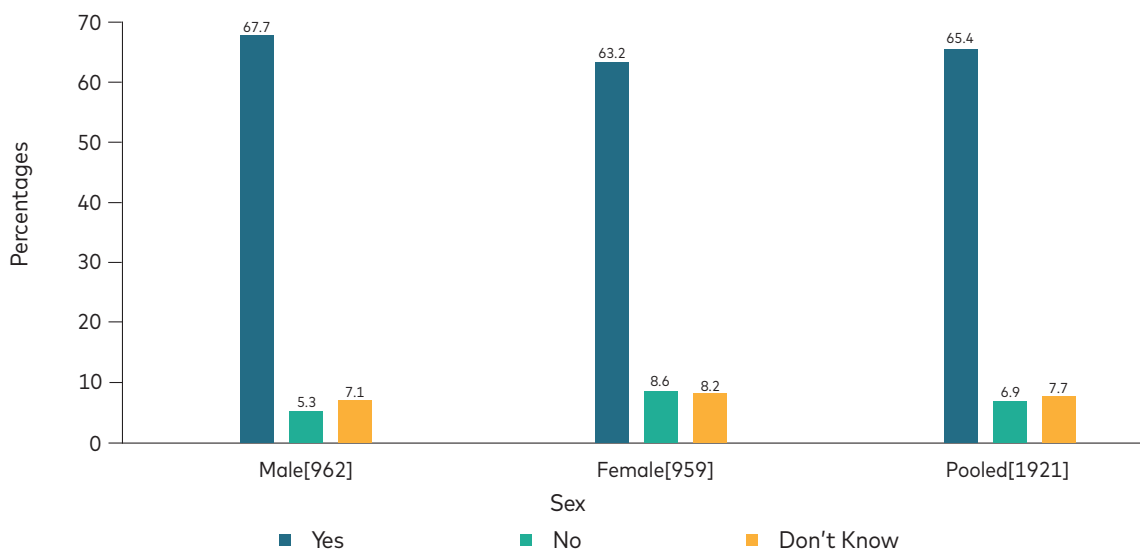
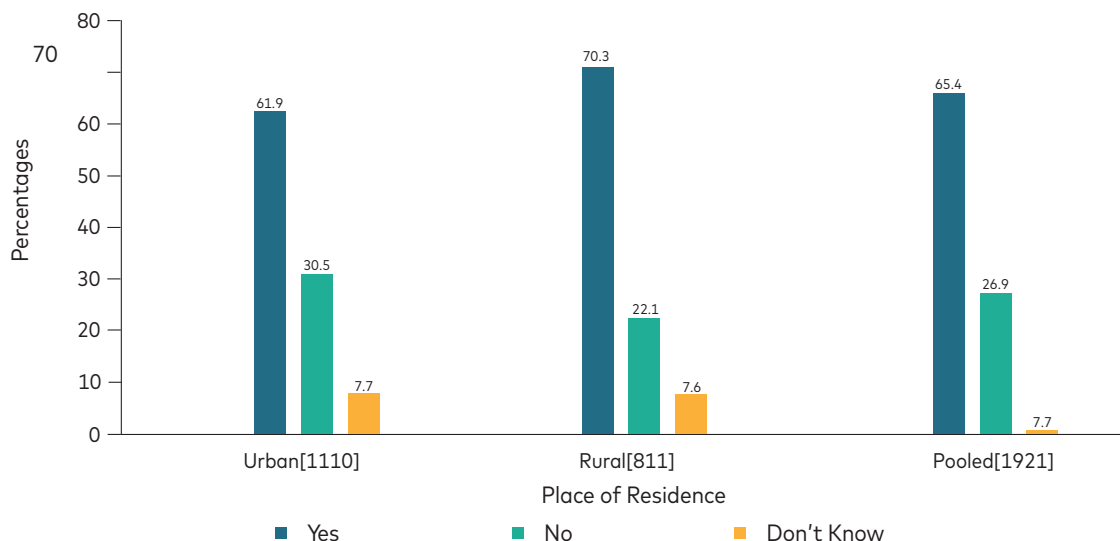


Figure 54 further shows that a greater proportion of both rural 570 (70.3%) and urban youth 687 (61.9%) also reported that they foresee

potential constraints to their education and skills training aspirations.

FIGURE 54: POTENTIAL CONSTRAINTS TO REALISING EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING ASPIRATIONS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (N=1921)



From the survey, the three (3) topmost constraints to realising future education and skills training aspirations include a lack of financial resources to fund higher education, 1023 (81.4%), frequent illness, 418 (33.3%), and a lack of connections or acquaintances 405 (32.2%). An overwhelming majority of the young men 530 (81.4%) and young women 493 (81.4%) reported a lack of financial resources to fund higher education as the topmost constraint to realising their education and skills training aspirations. More than a third of the youth including

(m=236, 36.3%, f=182, 30%) mentioned frequent illness. Lack of connections and acquaintances accounted for 208 (32%) and 197 (32.5%) of the responses for the young men and young women respectively (Table 13).

In terms of place of residence, a greater share of the urban and rural youth also mentioned a lack of financial resources (urban=560, 81.5%, rural =463, 81.2%), followed by frequent illness (urban=235, 34.2%, rural=183, 32.1%) and lack of connections or acquaintances (urban= 211, 30.7% rural=194, 34.0%).

TABLE 13:
CONSTRAINTS TO REALISING EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING ASPIRATIONS (n=1257)

Constraints	Sex of respondents		Place of residence		
	Males (n=651)	Females (n=606)	Urban (n=687)	Rural (n=570)	Pooled (n=1257)
* Lack of money to fund higher education.	81.4	81.4	81.5	81.2	81.4
* Frequent illness (Health issues)	36.3	30.0	34.2	32.1	33.3
* Lack of connections or acquaintances [Whom you know]	32.0	32.5	30.7	34.0	32.2
Death of parents	26.4	28.1	23.6	31.6	27.2
Lack of perseverance, motivation or self-confidence	19.7	17.8	22.4	14.4	18.8
Parents do not think education is important	7.5	6.6	7.9	6.1	7.1
Not knowing where to go to achieve this	9.4	10.6	10.5	9.3	9.9
Pregnancy	2.3	21.6	12.4	10.7	11.6
Domestic obligation	16.0	13.2	16.7	12.1	14.6
Frequent illness of a family member	5.8	5.9	4.8	7.2	5.9
Separation of parents [Divorce]	9.7	7.4	9.3	7.7	8.6
Conflict (militancy/insurgency)	13.7	5.1	9.2	10.0	9.5
Not smart enough	5.2	4.1	4.5	4.9	4.7
Not applicable	14.9	17.0	14.7	17.4	15.9
Others	4.6	4.6	5.7	3.3	4.6

* Denote the top three constraints to realising education and skills training aspirations
SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

The qualitative findings align perfectly with the quantitative results on the barriers to realising educational aspirations. A consistent theme from the interviews and focus group discussions is that the lack of money to fund higher education in the future represents a major hurdle for the youth. Youth participants narrated that the cost of education in Ghana or elsewhere abroad, especially in terms of tuition fees, accommodation and subsistence has become expensive in recent times. Lack of financial resources therefore stands as a major challenge to realising the dream of pursuing a master's or PhD degree as narrated by some participants as follows:



The major challenge I see with pursuing my dream of having a master's and PhD degree is the financial cost involving attending this. If it's not a scholarship, you have to pay for your tuition, hostel, and all that. Then the other aspect of the list is the employment aspect. No, I think it's not well laid out yet (Interview, Female, Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, December 2023).



I will say 100 % it is the financial issue I mentioned. That is why I am still holding on to these dreams of furthering my education. I would have started by now, even wanted to start last year. But looking at the amount involved, I was also thinking that if I invest that same amount in a business, I will make gains from it and then use it for school. And you see, so comparing those two, then again, at my age I would like to also start a family anytime soon. So, I am just contemplating that if I start now and anything of that nature comes in, how am I able to combine all this and also start a family as a woman? Because you cannot also develop one aspect of your life leave the rest at the end of the day. If you attain all the degrees in your home, you cannot watch them and sleep. (Interview, Female, Sunyani Metropolis, December 2023).

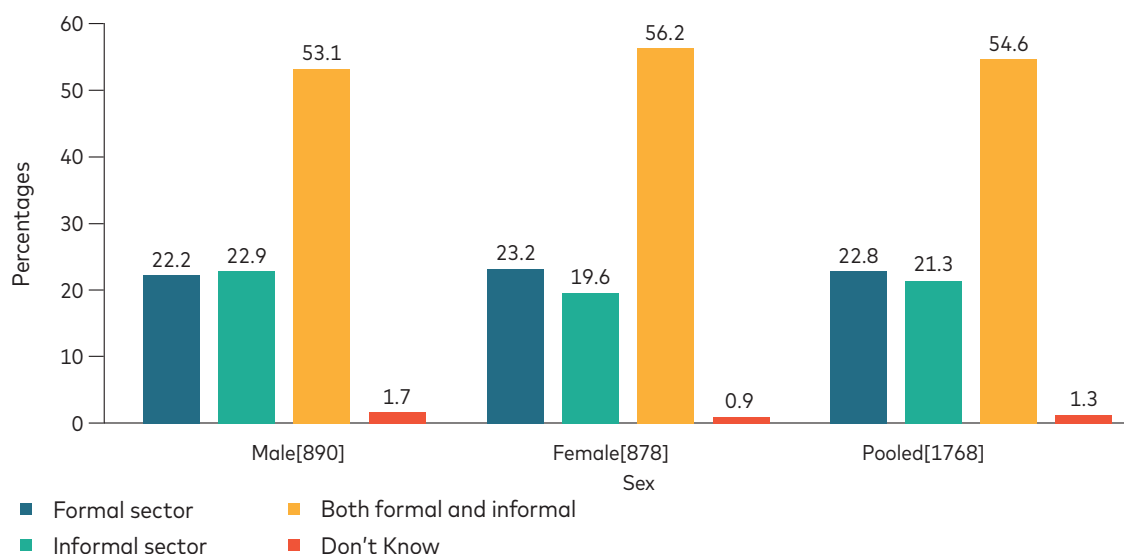
YOUTH ASPIRATIONS AROUND EMPLOYMENT IN THE FUTURE



THE EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS OF THE YOUTH

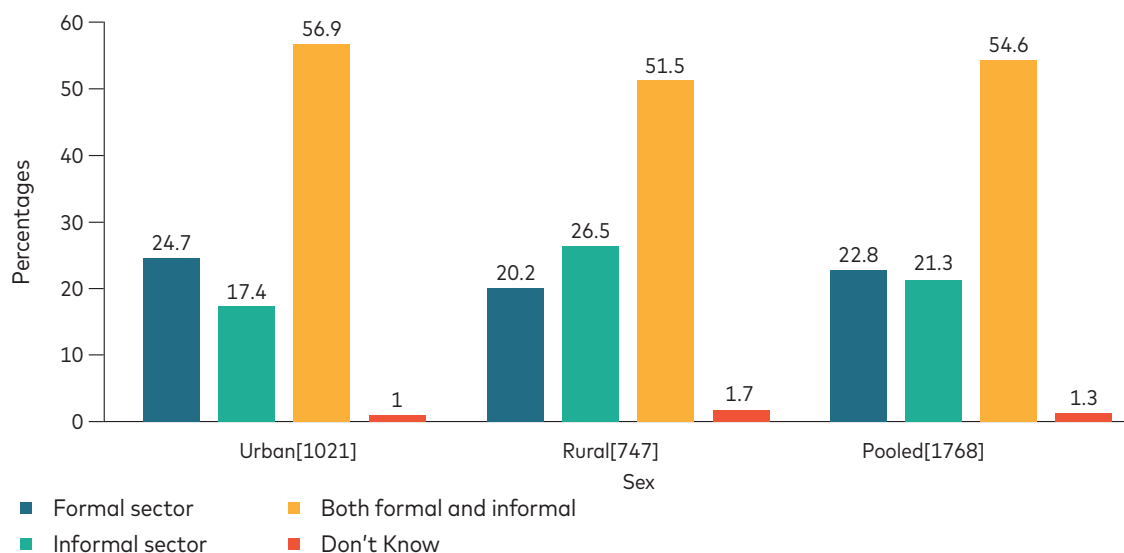
Young people’s employment aspirations should serve as a guidepost for the design and implementation of youth employment programmes and interventions. Figure 55 presents the perspectives of the youth regarding their future employment aspirations. In all, out of 1,768 youth who responded to this question, more than half 965 (54.6%) reported that they would like to venture into both formal and informal sector employment. However, slightly more young women, 493 (56.2%), than young men, 473 (53.1%), favour both formal and informal sector employment. A proportion of the young women, 203 (23.2%), and young men, 198 (22.2%), reported that they would want to venture into formal sector employment. Others, including 204 (22.9%) and 172 (19.6%) of the young men and young women respectively, indicated their preference for informal sector employment.

FIGURE 55:
DESIRED JOB SECTORS FOR THE FUTURE, BY SEX.



The results of the employment aspirations of the rural and urban youth are displayed in Figure 56. It is evident that more than half of both rural 388 (51.5%) and urban 581 (56.9%) youth would want to venture into both formal and informal sector employment.

FIGURE 56:
DESIRED JOB SECTORS FOR THE FUTURE, BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1768)



The perspectives of the youth regarding the employer group they would like to work for is displayed in Table 14. In all, out of the 1770 who responded to this question, the vast majority 1,194 (67.5%) said that they would like to venture into self-employment, followed by public sector employment 580 (48.6%) and private sector employment (e.g., corporate organisations, and family-owned companies) 413 (35.3%). This is consistent with the earlier results on the aspirations of youth to combine both formal and informal employment. Nevertheless, there are gender and rural-urban differences. While nearly the same proportion of young men, 600 (67.3%), and young women, 594 (67.6%), indicated their preference for self-employment, slightly

more young women, 455 (51.8%), than young men, 406 (45.6%), would like to work for the government (public sector employment). However more young men, 338 (37.9%), than young women, 282 (32.7%), prefer private sector employment (Table 14).

A greater proportion of the rural youth, 535 (71.7%), and urban youth, 659 (64.4%), indicated their preference for self-employment. Again, more than a third of rural youth, 289 (38.7%), and urban youth, 336 (32.8%), indicated their preference for private sector employment (e.g., corporate organisations, family-owned companies).

TABLE 14:
DESIRED EMPLOYER CATEGORIES FOR THE FUTURE

Employer group	Sex of respondents		Place of residence		
	Male (n=891)	Female (n=879)	Urban (n=1024)	Rural (n=746)	Pooled (n=1770)
Self-employment (Entrepreneur)	67.3	67.6	64.4	71.7	67.5
Public sector employment (Government)	45.6	51.8	47.7	50.0	48.6
Private Sector employment (e.g., Corporate organisations, family-owned)	37.9	32.7	32.8	38.7	35.3
NGOs (Local and International)	23.2	22.2	23.8	21.2	22.7
International Institutions (UN Agencies, World Bank, Bilateral agencies etc.)	19.8	17.4	20.7	15.7	18.6
Others	0.7	0.3	0.3	0.8	0.5

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Findings from the qualitative interviews revealed two broad employment aspirations of the youth. On the one hand, many of the youth interviewed suggested that they would want to secure well-paid professional salaried employment in the future. The occupational niches mentioned by the youth include being a lecturer, ICT technician, nurse, banker, lawyer, consultant, pharmacist, engineer, politician, and policy analyst among others. Many of the youth indicated their preference for working with both international and national organisations in the public and private sectors and linked their interest in these jobs to job security, appropriate payment, respect and contributing to solving pressing development problems:

“

I am looking to be employed in a government institution where a monthly salary is assured. Also, in an automobile company or chemistry field since I studied chemistry (Interview, Male, Asokore Mampong Municipal, December 2023).

“

I'm a trained teacher but in the next 5 to 10 years, I see myself maybe being a lecturer at the university (Interview, Male, Wa Municipal, December 2023)

“

I want to become an ICT expert because I see ICT to be one of the avenues that I can use to solve problems. And it also requires me to be someone who thinks logically and critically. So that's why I went into it. And that is also where I see that I have a lot of strength as far as the other disciplines are concerned (Interview, Female, Nadowli-Kaleo District, December 2023)



In addition to securing professional or salaried employment, many of the youth also indicated their preference of becoming entrepreneurs who would establish their businesses. They spoke of establishing agribusinesses, trade, and printing press, among others. They would want to become employers who would also employ other youth in their communities. Some of the youth interviewed for instance narrated:

“

As much as I'd like to get my PhD certificate in the next 5 to 10 years, within these years too, I'd like to also establish a big printing press in my community called Nalerigu. Yes, establishing a big printing press will also create more employment opportunities for the youth (Interview, Male, Nalerigu District December 2023).

“

I would like to create businesses and employ most of my people in the community and engage the youth in opening or setting up their businesses (Interview, Female, Sefwi Wiawso, December 2023).

“

After SHS, I tried doing some business by myself; so, I think if I acquire more knowledge in accounting, it will help me in my business to be able to even reach others. I may be able to employ others whilst I'm also working elsewhere. (Interview, Male, Techiman, December 2023).



REASONS FOR THE CHOICE OF A PARTICULAR EMPLOYER

Table 15 provides the results on reasons for preference for a particular employer. In all the top five reasons provided by the youth for choosing to work with a particular sector or employer include good salary, 1351 (75.8%), good benefits, 811 (45.5%), more secured employment, 738 (41.1%), work flexibility and time flexibility of working place, 732 (41.1%) and opportunity to learn, 700 (39.3%).

TABLE 15:
REASONS FOR WANTING TO WORK FOR A PARTICULAR EMPLOYER (n=1782)

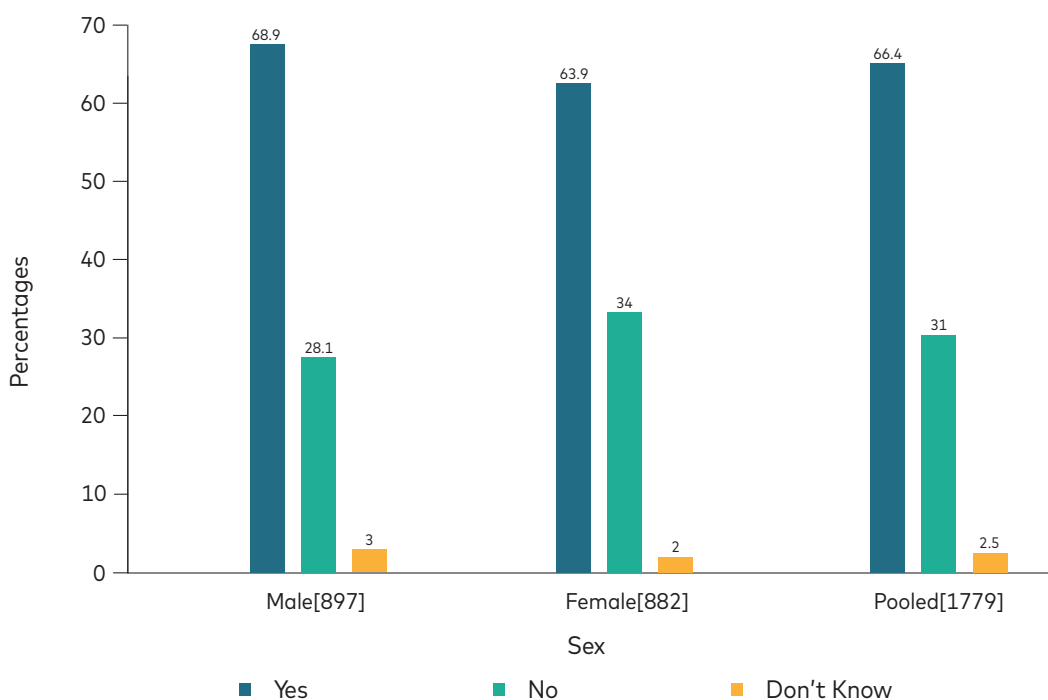
Reasons for choosing an employer	Sex of respondent		Place of residence		Pooled n=1782
	Males (n=897)	Females (n=885)	Urban (n=1034)	Rural (n=784)	
Good salary	74.6	77.1	75.7	75.9	75.8
Respect Employees	26.5	29.4	29.3	26.1	27.9
Helping others outside my family	39.7	36.8	37.5	39.3	38.3
Opportunity to learn	41.2	37.4	38.4	40.6	39.3
Opportunity to grow	39.2	35.1	36.8	37.8	37.2
More secured employment	40.6	41.7	39.5	43.4	41.1
Good benefits	45.9	45.0	42.7	49.2	45.5
Opportunity to travel the world	30.0	31.3	32.4	28.2	30.6
Good social image	29.7	32.5	31.2	30.9	31.1
Work flexibility and time flexibility of working place	39.6	42.6	43.4	37.8	41.1
Life/work balance	20.8	21.8	20.6	22.3	21.3
Others	3.0	3.4	3.6	2.7	3.2

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

BARRIERS TO REALISING EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS.

The research elicited the perspectives of the youth regarding potential barriers to realising their employment aspirations. The results demonstrate that majority of the youth (66.4%) responded in the affirmative when asked whether they foresee any potential constraint to realising their employment aspirations. More than half of both the young men 618 (68.9%) and young women 564 (63.9%) surveyed affirmed potential constraints to realising their employment aspirations (Figure 57). In terms of rural-urban dynamics, while many rural and urban youth reported potential constraints to realise their employment aspirations, the proportion of rural youth 538 (71.9%) who affirmed this is slightly higher than the urban youth 644 (62.5%).

FIGURE 57:
POTENTIAL BARRIERS TO REALISING EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS BY GENDER



According to the survey, the top three barriers to realizing employment aspirations of the youth include lack of adequate skills and education (62.5%), lack of connections or acquaintances (41.2%), and frequent illness (35.2%). Many young men (63.3%) than young women (61.7%) reported a lack of adequate skills and education as the topmost constraints. A very good proportion of the young men, 265 (42.9%), and young women, 222 (39.4%), also mentioned a lack of connections or acquaintances. More than half of both young men, 237 (38.3%), and young women, 179 (31.7%), also mentioned frequent illness. In terms of rural-urban dynamics, a significant proportion of rural youth, 366 (68.0%), and urban youth, 373 (57.9%), indicated a lack of adequate skills and education as the topmost constraint to realising employment aspirations. A good number of the rural and urban youth also reported a lack of social connections as well as frequent illness (see Table 16).

TABLE 16:
BARRIERS TO REALISING EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS BY THE YOUTH (n=1182)

Barriers to realising employment aspirations	Sex of respondent		Place of residence		Pooled [n=1182]
	Males (n=618)	Females (n=564)	Urban (n=644)	Rural (n=538)	
Lack of adequate skills and education	63.3	61.7	57.9	68.0	62.5
Lack of connections or acquaintances [who you know]	42.9	39.4	40.2	42.4	41.2
Frequent illness (myself)	38.3	31.7	36.8	33.3	35.2
Lack of perseverance, motivation or self-confidence	22.5	18.3	24.5	15.6	20.5
Death of parents	19.1	22.5	18.6	23.2	20.7
Domestic obligation	17.3	16.5	18.0	15.6	16.9
Conflict in my community	16.8	10.1	12.4	15.1	13.6
Separation of parents	8.4	8.5	9.6	7.1	8.5
Parents did not think it was important	6.6	6.0	6.8	5.8	6.3
Frequent illness of a family member	8.6	7.3	8.4	7.4	8.0
Obligatory military service	1.0	1.1	1.6	0.4	1.0
Pregnancy	2.6	26.2	15.2	12.3	13.9
Not smart enough	3.6	3.7	2.8	4.6	3.6
Not knowing where to go to achieve this	14.7	11.2	13.8	12.1	13.0
Lack of capital to start business	0.5	0.5	0.8	0.2	0.5
Others	4.7	3.7	3.7	4.8	4.2

A key theme that emerged from the qualitative findings regarding the barriers to realising employment aspirations is a lack of social connections. Across all interviews and regions, young men and women expressed the view a lack of social capital or not knowing anyone who can connect them to their dream job stands as a major challenge. Participants indicated that in Ghana today, having limited social capital in society has become a major challenge for many young people seeking to enter the labour market for the first time as seen in the quotes below:



I will say lack of social connections is a major barrier. Right now, the system in Ghana is whom you know, so if I don't know anybody, how can my business reach out there for me to get the benefit. It is very difficult. The support from the family, every family will be happy to see their family member successful, but sometimes financial difficulties cause them to withdraw the support they have (Interview, Female, Sekondi- Takoradi Metropolis, December 2023)



The barriers would be the external factors such as who-knows-you systems that only give opportunity to people who are related to people in higher offices to get employed and the other would be my certificate and CV that may not qualify me for certain jobs (Interview, Male, Asokore Mampong, December 2023).



In Ghana, it's hard to get employment, if you don't have significant connections to people in authority. So even regardless of your qualifications, they might be irrelevant if you don't have the necessary connections. So, a lack of opportunity in the employment sector as well. (Interview, Male, Tamale Metropolis, December 2023).

Findings from the qualitative interviews also revealed financial barriers as a major hurdle for the youth to realise their employment aspirations. Across all interviews, participants expressed the view that a lack of financial resources can hinder them from continuing their education to secure professional employment or establishing their businesses in the future as envisaged.



The main barrier will be money to establish the business because you cannot get access to loans and funds from anywhere. Even the financial institutions will not mind you because they will say you don't have collateral. How can you start a business without the funds (Interview, Female, Sekondi- Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly, December 2023)



The main barriers are money and social connections and also the society especially when you are a person living with disability, they doubt your capabilities. So the societal mentality is a challenge (Interview, Male, La-Nkwantanang Municipal, December 2023).

Other reported barriers mentioned by the youth include social stigma, death, illness, and limited family support. However, the youth mentioned that with hard work, determination, and God on their side they will be able to achieve their employment aspirations.



THE NEEDS OF THE YOUTH TO HELP THEM REALISE EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS IN THE FUTURE.

In line with popular calls to ensure that the perspectives of young people inform youth employment interventions, the research explored the views of the youth regarding what they currently need to help them realise their

employment aspirations (see Table 17). From the survey results, majority of the youth, 1553 (87.2%), mentioned that they need financial support to help them realise their employment aspirations. Others reported that they need education and skills training, 1183 (66.4%), and networking and social connections, 983 (55.2%). The result indicates that a greater proportion of young men, 782 (87.0%), and young women, 771 (87.4%), as well as rural, 673 (89.9%), and urban, youth 880 (85.3%), prefer financial support.

TABLE 17:
CURRENT NEEDS OF THE YOUTH TO HELP THEM REALISE THEIR EMPLOYMENT ASPIRATIONS (n=1781)

	Sex of respondents		Place of residence		Pooled (n=1781)
	Males (n=899)	Females (n=882)	Urban (n=1032)	Rural (n=749)	
Financial support	87.0	87.4	85.3	89.9	87.2
Education and skills training	65.3	67.5	65.7	67.3	66.4
Networking and Social connections	55.3	55.2	55.0	55.5	55.2
Internship opportunities	29.6	28.9	28.2	30.7	29.3
Others	0.6	0.5	0.7	0.3	0.5

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Analysis of the interview data also points to financial support, social networking opportunities, assistance to secure employment, support in advertising their businesses, education, internship opportunities, skills training, encouragement and improving the education system (infrastructure provision) as indicated below:



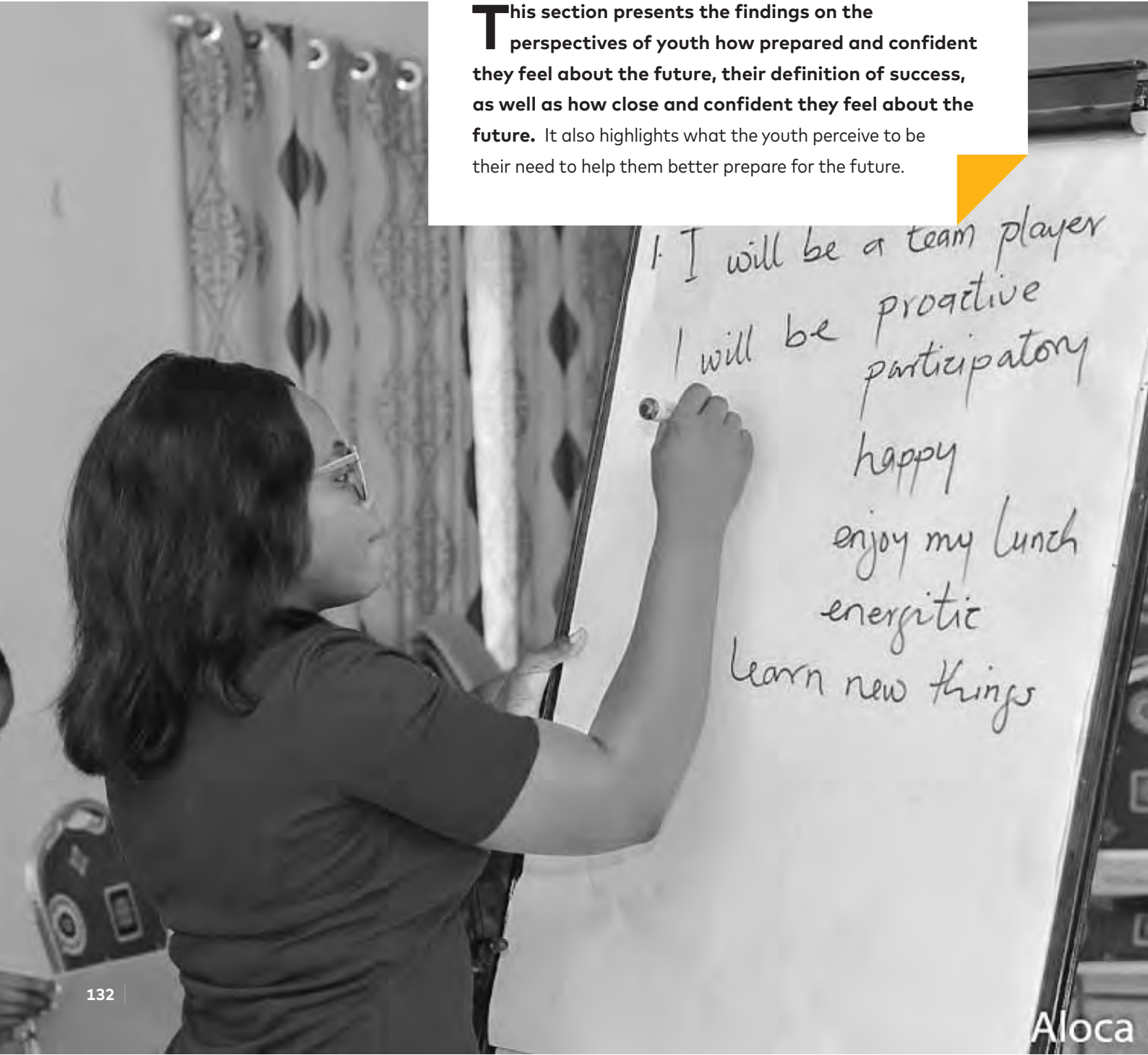
For the support I need, I would need finance, just allowing me to be able to learn what I want to learn and also allowing me to learn through internship programs or remote work. For volunteerism for now I think I would say I haven't put a halt on them, but it was very hard for me to do it like I'll just do maybe one or two, not like how I used to commit almost all my time. So now I'm just looking for internship opportunities, so that I should be able to get some kind of income for my upkeep and also help my family, you know, I have parents and siblings. So yeah, so I think these are some of the benefits that I think if provided to me, will help or go a long way to provide, even when I have access to an internship program that is good paying, I should be able to take care of my education rather than depending on the scholarship. (Interview, Male, Tamale Metropolis, December 2023).



Financial support for education and government should put structures in order. It's an error that I am looking for a job and you tell me to pay before I get into the system. The system must work so that access to jobs and employment is made easier not through corruption (Interview, Female, Techiman, December 2023).

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON HOW PREPARED AND CONFIDENT THEY FEEL ABOUT THE FUTURE

This section presents the findings on the perspectives of youth how prepared and confident they feel about the future, their definition of success, as well as how close and confident they feel about the future. It also highlights what the youth perceive to be their need to help them better prepare for the future.

A young woman with dark hair and glasses is seen from the side, writing on a whiteboard. She is wearing a dark t-shirt. The whiteboard has handwritten text in black marker. The text is organized into two columns. The first column starts with '1. I will be a team player' and continues with 'I will be proactive', 'participatory', 'happy', 'enjoy my lunch', 'energetic', and 'learn new things'. The second column contains the words 'proactive', 'participatory', 'happy', 'enjoy my lunch', 'energetic', and 'learn new things' stacked vertically. The background shows a window with patterned curtains.

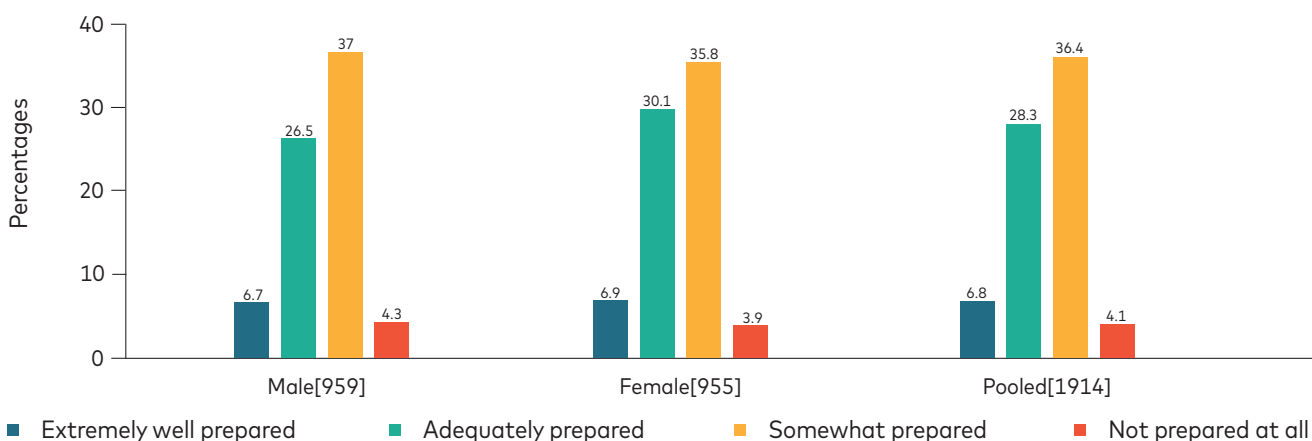
1. I will be a team player
I will be proactive
participatory
happy
enjoy my lunch
energetic
learn new things

YOUTH PREPAREDNESS FOR THE FUTURE

Figure 58 presents the views of the youth concerning how prepared they are for the future. In all, out of the total 1914 young people who responded to this question, more than a third, 697 (36.4%), which represent the relative majority, indicated to be somewhat prepared for the future. Also close to a third, 542 (28.3%), indicated that they are adequately prepared

for the future. In terms of gender, more than a third of the young men, 355 (37%), and young women, 342 (35.8%), reported that they are somewhat prepared for the future. Moreover, a third of the young women, 287 (30.1%), and a good proportion of the young men, 959 (26.5%), indicated to be adequately prepared for the future (See Figure 58).

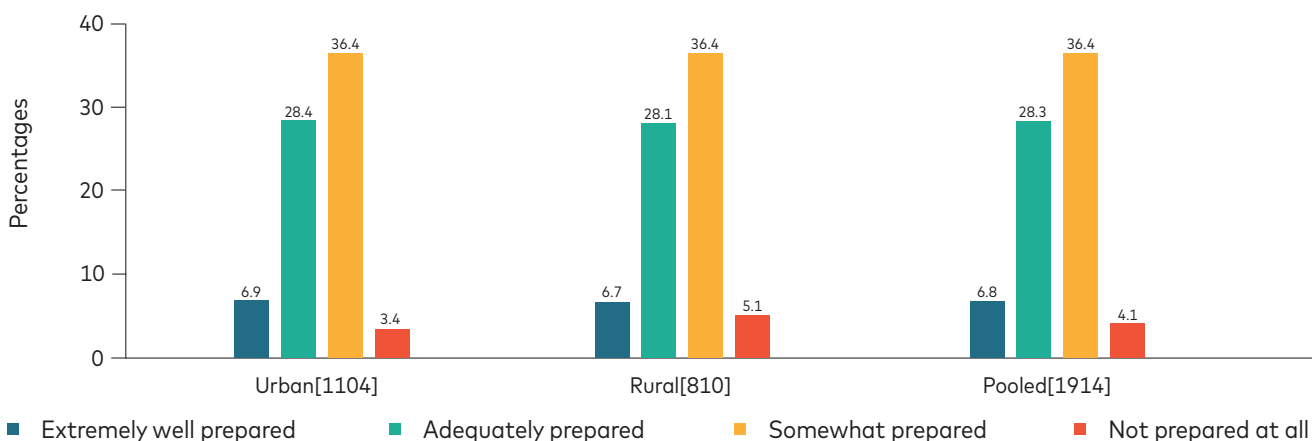
FIGURE 58:
PREPAREDNESS OF THE YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE BY GENDER (n=1914)



The results further indicate that most rural youth are somewhat prepaid, 295 (36.4%), or adequately prepared, 228 (28.1%), for the future. Likewise, most of the urban youth also reported that they are somewhat prepared, 402 (36.4%), or adequately prepared, 314 (28.4%), for the future (see Figure 59). A chi-square analysis of the survey data revealed that there is no statistically significant association ($X^2(4) = 3.71, >p = 0.44$) between rural and urban youth concerning their perceptions of the extent

to which they are prepared for the future (Appendix 24). However, the results show a statistically significant association $X^2(12) = 88.4, <p = 0.00$ between the level of education of the youth and their perceptions of the extent to which they are prepared for the future (Appendix 25). Indeed, majority of youth with tertiary education indicated to be adequately (189 out of 532) or very well (142 out of 532) prepared, in contrast to those with primary education who indicated to be adequately (58 out of 232) or very well prepared (73 out of 232).

FIGURE 59:
PREPAREDNESS OF THE YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE.



Data collected through the qualitative interviews revealed mixed perspectives regarding how the youth are prepared for the future. On the one hand, some youth interviewees expressed the view that they are prepared or making every effort to ensure that they get prepared and succeed in the future. Some participants for instance narrated:



I am gradually getting prepared with some small education, skills, and everything I will get there. I am not there yet (Interview, Female, Sefwi Wiawso Municipal, December 2023)



I'm very prepared because I just completed JHS, and I passed. I'm preparing to go to school; I hope I'll pass to the next level. So, I'm just looking for the best (Interview, Female, Cape Coast Municipal, December 2023).

On the other hand, others mentioned that they are not adequately or somehow prepared for the future. They expressed the view that they lack the needed resources that can help or enable them to move a step further in life particularly in relation to their education, learning a trade, establishing businesses, securing employment and other aspect of their futures. A young woman interviewed in Cape Cost for instance reported:



I'm very prepared because I just completed JHS, and I passed. I'm preparing to go to school; I hope I'll pass to the next level. So, I'm just looking for the best (Interview, Female, Cape Coast Municipal, December 2023).

Another young woman interviewed in the Western Region also had this to say:



"I am gradually getting prepared with some small education, skills, and everything I will get there. I am not there yet (Interview, Female, Shama District, December 2023).

WHAT THE YOUTH NEED TO HELP THEM BETTER PREPARE FOR THE FUTURE

The perspective of the youth was sought on what they need to help them better prepare for the future. In all, out of the 1928 youth who responded to this question, an overwhelming majority of the youth, 1,661 (86.2%), affirmed that there is something they need to help them better prepare for the future. An overwhelming proportion of the young men, 830 (86%), and women, 831 (86.3%), indicated that there is something they need to help them better prepare for the future. The results further show that more rural youth, 715 (88.2%), and urban youth, 1031 (84.7%), affirmed that they currently need support to help them better prepare for the future.

Table 18 illustrates the specific needs of the youth to help them prepare for the future.

The results show that financial support is part of the key support required by both young men and women to help them prepare for the future. Out of the total of 1,657 youth who responded to this question, an overwhelming majority, 1,523 (91.9%), indicated that they would require financial support to help them better prepare for the future. A significant proportion of the youth also mentioned skills training (n=1012, 61.1%), network and interactions (n=863, 52.1%) and education (either restart or further education) (n=778, 47%). The results also show that more young men (n=759, 91.7%) and young women (n=764, 92.2%) would need financial support. Slightly more young women (64.1%) than young men (n= 481, 58.1%) (Table 18).

TABLE 18:
SPECIFIC NEEDS OF THE YOUTH TO PREPARE THEM FOR THE FUTURE (n=1657)

Specific needs of the youth	Sex of respondents		Place of residence		Pooled (n=1657)
	Males (n=828)	Females (n=829)	Urban (n=945)	Rural (n=712)	
Financial support	91.7	92.2	89.9	94.5	91.9
Skills training (e.g., apprenticeship)	58.1	64.1	60.6	61.7	61.1
Networking and interaction with employers	54.0	50.2	51.6	52.7	52.1
Education (attending school)	46.6	47.4	46.5	47.8	47.0
Internship opportunities	26.7	26.9	27.6	25.7	26.8
Others	0.8	0.8	1.2	0.4	0.8

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

Similar to the quantitative results, many of the youth who participated in the qualitative interviews also emphasized education and adequate skills training, financial support, as well as a networking opportunity to expand their social networks as key support they need to help them better prepare for the future.

“

I would say getting much training and improving myself in the field that I want to develop to specialize in that area would give me that confidence (Interview, Female, Sefwi Wiawso Municipal, December 2023)

The youth who participated in the interviews and focus group discussions stressed the importance of financial support as one key thing they needed to enable them to establish their dream businesses and also further their education at the tertiary level.

This view was common among the youth who wanted to start a business as well as those who had completed senior high school and wanted to further their education. Some of the participants narrated:

“

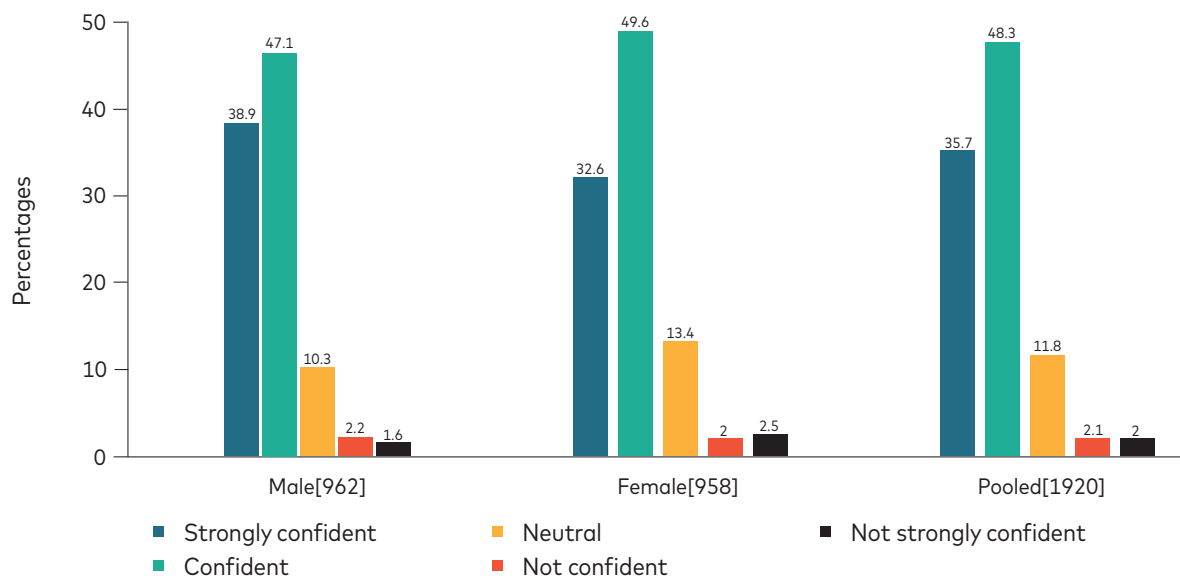
I would say financial support. You know if you want to establish a business, you need capital. Now I plan to go into selling agricultural produce and what I require is the money to start (Interview, Male, Asokore Mampong, December 2023)



CONFIDENCE OF THE YOUTH TO SUCCEED IN THE FUTURE

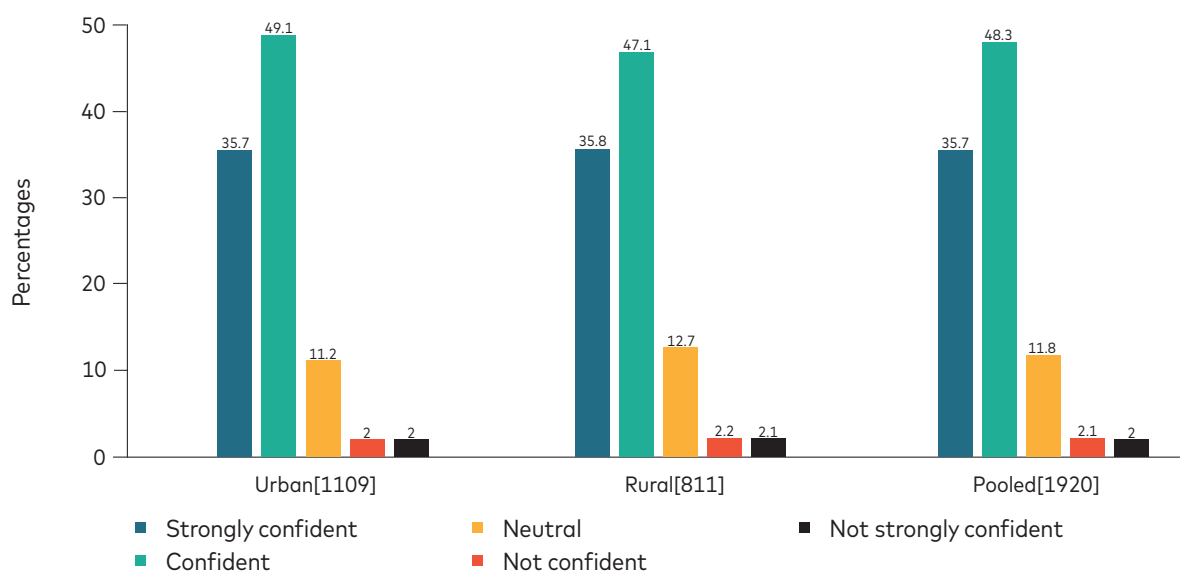
The research also elicited the perspective of the youth regarding how confident they feel about succeeding in the future. Figure 60 shows that nearly half of the youth surveyed 927 (48.3%) and more than a third of the youth 685 (35.7%) reported that they are confident or strongly confident about succeeding in the future respectively. Gender-wise, more young women, 475 (49.6%), than young men, 453 (47.1%), are confident about succeeding in the future. However, the number of young men who reported being strongly confident about succeeding in the future, 374 (38.9%), is higher than the number of young women 312 (32.6%) who reported same.

FIGURE 60:
CONFIDENCE ABOUT SUCCEEDING IN FUTURE BY GENDER (n=1920)



In terms of rural-urban dynamics, a significant proportion of the rural youth reported that they are either confident 382 (47.1%) or strongly confident 290 (35.8%) about succeeding in the future. Similarly, a greater proportion of the urban youth also affirmed that they are either confident 545 (49.1%) or strongly confident 396(35.7%) about succeeding in the future (Figure 61).

FIGURE 61:
CONFIDENCE ABOUT SUCCEEDING IN FUTURE BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE (n=1920)



Findings from the qualitative interviews corroborate the quantitative results.

Across all interviews, the youth participants expressed the view that despite all the economic, social and cultural challenges in which they find themselves, they are confident about succeeding in the future. They averred that as long as there is no conflict, and they stay fit, healthy and strong, coupled with God's protection and guidance, family support, encouragement as well as determination and hard work, they are confident about achieving their dreams and future ambitions.



Everyone is confident about succeeding in the future, even if you ask... sorry to say but if you ask a madman about succeeding in the future the madman will say yes because everybody wants to succeed in life. So, for me I will say with God on my side I will achieve my aspirations as long as there is no conflict or war in my community (Interview, Male, Nalerigu District, December, 2023)



I am very confident of succeeding in the future because I work hard and I am working hard for everything good in my life (Interview, Female, Shama Municipal, December 2023)



I am confident that I will succeed but every youth would always need financial support and prayers from the family to be able to realize their aspirations (Interview, Male, Ho Municipal, December 2023)



I would not always want to be overly ambitious, but I am confident. That is why I say I have always believed in Allah, and I have always believed in what he has always been doing and what he can do. What he cannot do does not exist. But I am so confident but not extremely (Interview, Female, Ketu North District, December 2023)

THE CONCERNS OF THE YOUTH ABOUT THE FUTURE

The research also elicited the perspective of the youth regarding what they are most concerned about in their futures (see Table 19). Overall, out of the 1182 youth who responded to this question, the majority, 764 (64.6%), indicated that they are more concerned about unemployment in the future. A very significant proportion also indicated that they are more concerned about health crisis, 522 (44.2%), political instability (42.5%), and limited opportunities for advancing their life aspirations, 478 (40.4%). In terms of gender, many young women, 384 (68%), and young men, 379(61.3%), suggested that they are more concerned about unemployment. The results further indicate that a greater proportion of both rural youth, 358 (66.6%), and urban youth, 407 (63.2%), are most concerned about unemployment in the future.

FIGURE 19:
CONCERNS OF THE YOUTH ABOUT THE FUTURE (n=1182)

	Sex of respondents		Place of residence		Pooled (n=1182)
	Males (n=618)	Females (n=564)	Urban (n=644)	Rural (n=538)	
Unemployment	61.3	68.0	63.2	66.6	64.6
Health crisis	43.7	44.6	44.3	44.0	44.2
Political instability	43.9	41.1	44.8	39.4	42.5
Limited opportunities for advancing life aspirations	39.0	41.8	37.7	44.2	40.4
Corruption	38.4	35.5	36.6	37.4	36.9
Social vices	25.6	30.7	26.8	29.9	28.1
Access to education	27.3	25.8	26.5	26.6	26.5
Climate change	22.9	24.1	25.3	21.1	23.5
Peer influence	21.5	22.4	20.9	23.4	22.0
Others	3.0	2.9	3.5	2.2	3.0

SOURCE: (YOTA FIELDWORK, 2023)

5.0

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents a summary of the key findings and conclusions emerging from the study. It further provides some recommendations and suggestions for policy and practice aimed at improving access to and quality of education as well as enabling young people to realise their aspirations around education and employment in the future.



SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS



YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

An important finding of the study is that the youth perceived the current education system in Ghana to be retrogressing. The key reasons accounting for this situation as reported by the youth include the overly excessive focus on teaching theories rather than practical and experiential learning. In a sense, while most of the youth surveyed have an interest in learning practical skills and the fact that the current labour market requires graduates with critical thinking and other practical and soft skills, the youth perceived that the current education system is far from accomplishing this.

It was therefore not surprising to discover that the majority of the youth responding to the survey described the education system in Ghana as fairly bad. The youth who shared this view explained that this is due to several factors prominent among them which include disparities in educational infrastructure between urban and rural areas, a gradual fall in standards of quality education compared to what is happening elsewhere in the developed world, limited disciplinary mechanisms and the fact the introduction of a double track system associated with the Free Senior High School Policy has hampered quality education delivery in secondary schools. Nevertheless, some of the youth recognised that there has been some progress made over the years. For example, the efforts made by the government in enhancing youth access to education through, FCUBE and the Free SHS as well as improvements in educational infrastructure.

PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH ABOUT ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Another key finding of the study is that many young people either agreed or strongly agreed that the education system in Ghana gives preferential treatment to certain people in society. This finding demonstrates that there is perceived inequality in the education system in favour of certain classes of people in society.

However, there were mixed views regarding the youth perceptions of access to education. On the one hand, many of the youth disagreed that access to education was dependent on the background of the individual. On the other hand, a section of youth agreed that access to education had no bearing on an individual's background. Many of the youth held the view that



The education system provides equal opportunities for young people irrespective of their background

However, the qualitative interviews revealed the existence of rural-urban disparities in terms of equal opportunities for education. The youth perceived that young people in urban communities have more opportunities in relation to quality teaching and learning in contrast to rural youth. Thus, despite the strong commitment and efforts of the government to improve the education system in the country, rural areas continue to suffer from deplorable educational infrastructure and limited access to learning and instructional materials, which hamper quality education delivery. However, there is a strong sense of optimism on the part of the youth, many of whom reported that they expect their access to education would increase in the future.

The research establishes that the top three constraints to young people's access to education in Ghana include limited financial resources, higher cost of education, and lack of family support. The youth interviewed expressed the view that limited financial resources act as a disincentive for attending school. While public education in Ghana (i.e., from KG to SHS) in terms of school fees is free, the youth who participated in the study indicated that limited financial resources incapacitate their parents from meeting their other school-related expenses such as transport and purchasing of school uniforms, books, and bags. For some others, private school education, especially school fees, remained a challenge. Other barriers mentioned by the youth include the lack of social connections or 'whom you know' that can support them in gaining admission to schools, long distances to school, frequent sicknesses, peer influence, teenage pregnancy, and lack of interest in education.

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE

An important finding from this study is that most of the youth in Ghana agree that



The education system in Ghana prepares the youth for the future

This view was rooted in the perception that although the education system focuses on the learning of theories, the youth suggested that the knowledge young people have acquired so far in life was because of their educational pursuits. However, the study findings highlight a gendered perspective regarding youth perceptions about whether the education system prepares the youth for the future. More young women in contrast to young men indicated that the education system prepares the youth for the future. A very significant proportion of the youth agreed that the education system has adequately prepared them for their working life in the future. The qualitative findings highlight that education has equipped the youth with knowledge and skills which they perceived as critical in terms of their preparation for the future. Nevertheless, some of the youth raised concerns regarding the current education system highlighting that formal education in Ghana today places more emphasis on teaching theories rather than providing them with the skills and knowledge needed to prepare them for the future. The youth expressed the view that there is little if any focus on critical thinking, creativity, and entrepreneurial skills that they perceive as critical to preparing them for the future. However, the findings highlight mixed views regarding whether the current education system aligns with the needs of the labour market.

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ABOUT EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE

The results revealed that a large proportion of young people expect to be working in the next five years to gain financial independence. It is also evident that others will be studying because the occupation they want requires them to acquire certificates or degrees. There is a strong sense of optimism on the part of the youth regarding their future, with many of them indicating that they are very optimistic about the future. This is despite the challenges and struggles they faced with their education and socio-economic life. However, some of the youth expressed great worry about how the future looked uncertain indicating that opportunities and prospects for them to succeed appear to be quite limited.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE CHANGES REQUIRED IN THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

The research highlights mixed views regarding the level of satisfaction of the youth with the current education system. On the one hand, many of the youth highlighted that they were somewhat satisfied or satisfied with the current education system. On the other hand, some of them expressed their dissatisfaction with the current education system. There are gender and rural-urban differences in the level of satisfaction of the youth regarding the current education system. Slightly more young women than young men highlighted their satisfaction with the current education system. Also, more urban youth reported being satisfied with the current education system than their counterparts in rural areas.

Another key finding is that nearly all the youth surveyed were of the view that the education system required some changes or improvements for it to respond to their needs and priorities and thereby enable them to realise their future aspirations. In terms of the specific changes required, the majority reported that education should be innovative using flexible teaching and learning modalities to enhance creativity and the focus of education should be on developing the skills of young people by providing them with practical and global skills to make them internationally competitive. In terms of the specific changes required in the education system to enable the youth to realise their future aspirations, the study found that the provision of relevant skills and knowledge is something that is extremely paramount for the youth followed by the acquisition of practical work experience while in school and adequate preparation of the youth for the job market.

CHALLENGES WITH THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND THE MOST SIGNIFICANT REFORMS REQUIRED

The most reported challenges with the current education system in Ghana by the youth surveyed include: i) lack of infrastructure particularly on infrastructure deficit in rural areas; ii) school curriculum not being practical enough and iii) limited supply of teaching and learning materials. In line with this, it was not surprising that the youth highlighted that the most significant reform needed in the education system is changing the school curriculum and making education more practical from the existing theoretical and rote learning. Others noted the need for enhancing the supply of teaching and learning materials improvements in the quality of teaching and the provision of infrastructural facilities.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN NATIONAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

The research findings established a high degree of awareness regarding the youth knowledge about their rights to participate in national decision-making issues including education and skills training. The findings indicate that agreement that youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their education and skills training. This high degree of awareness of the right to participation in decision-making cut across both gender and place of residence with more young men and women in the rural areas highlighting that the youth have the right to participate in decision-making processes regarding national issues. Despite this sense of awareness, overall, the study found that many of the youth are, to some extent not all involved in decision-making regarding national issues. .

An interesting gender perspective emerged where slightly more young women reported that the youth are to some extent involved in decision-making on national issues compared to young men who held the view that the youth are not at all involved in decision-making on national issues. Despite the turn to democratic governance in Ghana since 1992, young men and women interviewed expressed the view that the development of education policies takes no account of the views of the youth regarding the formulation of policies and or the direction that such policies should take. The youth expressed concerns that their voices are sidelined in decision-making and policy-making and in instances where the youth are invited by policymakers, they only become mere participants during discussions as their views or suggestions may find no place in the government's decisions regarding programmes and policies that matter for the youth. Thus, the involvement of the youth in policy agenda-setting is relatively limited.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN HOLDING DUTY BEARERS ACCOUNTABLE

The research established that the youth in Ghana are far from holding duty bearers to account. More young women and young men as well as more urban and rural youth, disagreed that they are able to hold the government and duty bearers accountable. The results further show mixed perceptions regarding whether the youth have the opportunity to voice their concerns about national development issues. It emerged that platforms such as student associations, digital and social media and to some extent the youth parliament provide important avenues for young people to voice their concerns on national development issues. Despite this, many of the youth who participated in the study raised concerns that they were not aware of any available platforms or avenues for the youth to voice out their concerns on critical national issues. Moreover, the inability to better organise has also stymied the efforts of young people to voice their concerns over national development issues.

EFFECTIVE ACTIONS TO MAKE THE VOICES OF THE YOUTH HEARD BY POLICYMAKERS.

An important finding from the study is that rural and urban young men and women hold the view that either the government has to some extent or not at all created opportunities for the youth to be engaged in decision-making processes concerning national development. In line with this, the youth suggested that the top four most effective actions to make their voices heard by decision-makers are: i) organising youth dialogue with policymakers or politicians; ii) engaging in social media by expressing their opinions online; iii) voting in local and national elections; and iv) taking part in a public consultation on proposed political initiatives (online or online). In addition, the qualitative findings highlight the need to have youth representatives on decision-making structures at the local and national levels, revamping and resourcing the youth parliaments to make them more effective and organising forums to elicit views of the youth on key national issues.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING ASPIRATIONS OF THE YOUTH

The youth who participated in the survey suggested that being able to pursue education means obtaining and enriching one's knowledge. Furthermore, the study's findings suggest that education is key to building the capacity of the youth and providing them with the skills and opportunities to enter the labour market. It is also an opportunity to acquire a complex understanding of one or more fields as well as an occasion for personal growth and development. Therefore, young men and young women in both rural and urban areas would be interested in technical and vocational education. Others highlighted their interest in pursuing formal education. To a large degree, many of the youth who studied in both rural and urban areas highlighted their interest in pursuing postgraduate degrees at the PhD and master's level but suggested that they would like to pursue this abroad. What is evidently clear is that many of the youth with an interest in pursuing formal education highlighted their preference to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM-related courses). However, the proportion of young men who favour STEM is nearly twice the proportion of young women who favour this. The youth linked their interest in pursuing higher education to their own career ambitions of obtaining well-paid professional employment and making a positive contribution to their families, society, and nation. The study further found that the top three (3) constraints to realising future education and skills training aspirations of young people are: i) a lack of financial resources to fund higher education; ii) frequent illness; and a lack of connections or acquaintances ('whom you know') that can support with gaining admissions.

SOFT SKILLS TRAINING NEEDS OF THE YOUTH

The research findings also demonstrate that the Ghanaian youth have an interest in learning more about soft skills. The most commonly reported soft skills that the youth would be interested in learning include good communication skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork, leadership skills and time management.

YOUTH ASPIRATIONS AROUND EMPLOYMENT AND PERCEIVED BARRIERS

The findings of this study highlight that many Ghanaian youth would want to engage in multiple jobs by combining formal and informal sector employment.

However, there is a strong preference for self-employment followed by public sector employment and private sector employment (e.g., corporate organisations, family-owned companies). The preference for self-employment is also evident in the qualitative findings. The fact that more than half of Ghanaian youth expressed desires to establish their own businesses, perhaps is an indication that they are realistic about the challenges associated with securing employment in the public and private sectors in the country. But in addition to self-employment, the qualitative findings revealed that the youth would want to secure professional salaried employment such as being a lecturer, banker, lawyer, or engineer among others. Lack of social or personal connections ('whom you know') together with limited financial resources were reported as key barriers or hindrances to realising the employment aspirations of young people in Ghana.



PREPAREDNESS AND CONFIDENCE OF YOUTH ABOUT THEIR FUTURE

The findings highlight positive views regarding the preparedness of youth for the future. A section of the youth suggested that they are somewhat or adequately prepared for the future. Thus, despite the challenges and difficulties faced, this finding underscores the positive outlook with which the youth view their future. It is evident from the study that the youth are making every effort, for example through being focused on life and pursuing their education to ensure that they succeed in the future. Nevertheless, the youth indicated limited financial resources as a key challenge that inhibits them from pursuing their dreams of establishing businesses, learning a trade, or pursuing higher education.

In terms of the extent to which education has prepared the youth for the future, the study found that a greater share of the youth surveyed indicated that their education has to some extent prepared them for the future. A good proportion also suggested that their education has prepared them a little for the future. Overall, while the youth indicated several challenges of the current education system, they also suggested that through their education they had gathered important knowledge, skills, and analytical capabilities in preparation for their future ahead. Nevertheless, many young people suggested that they would require financial support, skills training, network and interactions and education (either restart or further education) to help them prepare for their future. The findings further suggest that Ghanaian youth maintain a positive outlook about the future and many suggested that they are confident or strongly confident about succeeding in the future respectively.

CONCLUSION

The youth in Ghana appear to have their voices missing in education policy decisions which require significant modifications to meet their future career aspirations around education and employment. The current state of affairs does not seem to favour their preparations for the future in the way knowledge and skills are imparted to them. Their optimism for better prospects ahead presents an opportunity for policy makers to engage them in crafting strategies to meet their needs in education and career development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the study offers the following suggestions for policies aimed at improving access and quality of education, as well as enabling the youth to realise their education and employment aspirations in the future.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF GHANA

1. Make the education curriculum more practical or practically oriented

A key and important finding from this study suggests that many young people in Ghana perceive the current education system to be retrogressing and attributed this to the focus on rote teaching and learning and theoretical principles. This makes it irrelevant to the needs of the youth because of its little or no emphasis on practical skills, knowledge and experience which are crucial for entering the labour market and the future career ambitions of the young people. Therefore, it is recommended to the Ministry of Education and the Ghana Education Service to incorporate practical field-based learning via the curriculum, for example, collaborating with industry for students to undertake internships, visit, learn and appreciate the practical demonstration of theories taught as part of relevant courses across all levels of education. Efforts must also be made by universities to incorporate practical field-based training in all programmes.

2. Address the high cost of education at all levels that puts education out of the reach of young people, especially in rural areas both now and in the future

The research established that the high cost of education coupled with limited financial resources act as a disincentive to pursuing higher education among the youth. While the government has made significant strides to make basic and secondary school education free in terms of government covering tuition fees, other essential costs inhibit the education pursuit for young people, especially in rural areas. It is therefore recommended for the various District Assemblies to initiate support mechanisms to provide financial assistance for needy but brilliant youth in rural communities. This can be done by setting up youth education endowment funds where relevant government, private sector institutions, development partners and individuals may be approached to contribute to such funds to support young people's educational pursuits. Also, the government should review tertiary education financing in Ghana and develop a modality that reduces the high cost of accessing tertiary education. Moreover, the Students Loan must be adequately financed to enable more tertiary students to have access to it to finance their education. Other public students' financial assistance schemes like the GETFund Scholarship, Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) Scholarship and Scholarship Secretariat should be adequately resourced to provide scholarships to more needy students. While the Free SHS Policy has lessened the cost of secondary education for parents, some parents are still unable to enrol their JHS graduates due to prospectus cost. Therefore NGOs, Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), and the District Assemblies should create financial assistance schemes to support such students.

3. Increased public investment in the basic education sector to promote equity and lay a strong foundation for many young people across the various geographies in Ghana

Despite significant efforts made by the government, NGOs and international development organisations to provide and improve upon existing educational infrastructure, the research findings indicate that many rural areas still lack well-functioning school buildings, laboratories and essential learning materials. This is a major disincentive to young people's interest in pursuing education. Therefore, the Ministry of Education should build more basic schools, especially in the deprived districts of Ghana, where access to schools is largely limited. The Ministry of Education and the District Assemblies must support providing desks to public basic schools with desk deficits across the country. The GETFund must allocate more of its resources to infrastructure projects (e.g., school buildings, computer laboratories, furniture, portable water, as well as learning and instructional materials) most especially in rural areas as against non-infrastructure since that is the main objective of the Fund. This will help in bridging the huge educational infrastructural gaps between urban and rural areas.

4. Incorporate soft skills training as a compulsory module in schools right from senior secondary school and beyond

The youth who participated in this research indicated that they would like to gain practical soft skills training which is less emphasised in the current education curriculum. Since employers emphasize soft skills in the professional world, higher education institutions must think of ways to integrate these skills into their curricula, so students are prepared to be successful in their professional careers.

Therefore, it is recommended for the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service and higher institutions of learning to consider incorporating the teaching and learning of communication skills, effective communication, problem analysis and problem-solving skills, teamwork, leadership skills and time management among others to enable the youth to be prepared to be successful in their professional careers. While the new basic school curriculum emphasises the acquisition of soft skills by the students, teachers' capacity needs to be built to integrate that into the teaching and learning process. Ghana Education Service (GES) and the National Teaching Council (NTC) must provide continuous capacity development for teachers to attain that objective. Tertiary institutions, in addition to aiding students to gain content mastery, should create opportunities for the students to gain soft skills. Thus, in addition to designing education curriculum to specifically focus on teaching these soft skills in senior high schools and universities, institutions of higher education (universities) as well as secondary schools could design "alumni in the industry meet students initiative" in various schools to provide a platform for alumni to share their practical experience on various soft skills including teamwork, communication skills and interpersonal relationships and how they play out at the workplace.

Moreover, universities and institutions of higher learning may need to intensify their collaboration with industry by formalising partnership arrangements that allow every student the opportunity to undertake a job placement or internship as an integral part of their education. Such internship or job placement schemes could be made mandatory, and it is recommended for students to submit a report of their internship experience and lessons learnt. Special certificates could be awarded to students as part of their final degree.

Provide an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurial drive or self-employment to thrive

According to this study, the youth in Ghana aspire to establish their own businesses and enterprises in the future. Nonetheless, this entrepreneurial drive cannot be sustained on individual responsibility alone, and requires a supportive climate furnished by the state to sustain them. There are already several government agencies and institutions with programmes and policies (e.g., National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme), private sector and NGOs working in this space to provide young people in Ghana with access to financial capital, entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, and business management training for the youth to establish their own businesses.

However, the key challenge has always been the inability of young people especially those with limited social connections to access such opportunities. It is therefore recommended that initiatives that focus on providing entrepreneurial skills training and self-employment be widely publicised and transparent, and the selection process is made fair to all young people irrespective of their background and social connections. Moreover, there is the need for the central government to also address the structural barriers such as macro-economic instability (e.g., inflation) and power crisis which affect small-scale businesses, many of which are run by young people.

Create awareness, revamp and resource existing national youth parliaments

While the youth parliaments provide a formalised structure and opportunity for young people at the district, regional and national levels to share their concerns and frustrations, deliberate on matters of importance to youth development, and hold duty bearers accountable, the research findings indicate that there is little awareness on the part of many of the youth surveyed concerning the existence of the youth parliaments in their respective locations. Others who had knowledge of the youth parliaments bemoaned that they were largely not effective in executing their mandates. It is therefore recommended that the National Youth Authority create awareness among the youth both in and out of school regarding the existence of youth parliaments. Again, the youth parliaments would need to be resourced to enhance their activities of facilitating youth engagement on critical national issues.

It is also recommended that the Ministry of Education should strengthen TVET Education

This can be achieved by way of investing in the skills development of young people through TVET in the formal sector and apprenticeship training in the informal sector. The Ministry of Education could also re-introduce skills learning at the JHS level to prepare them for a better choice of career path at the SH level.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO DONORS AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. Youth voices must be represented in policy decision-making and must be a key requirement for funding to government and civil society initiatives

The research findings indicate that many young people in Ghana perceived that while they have the right to participate in decision-making concerning national issues of interest to them, their level of involvement has been sluggish. It is therefore recommended for donors and development partners to make youth engagement, and meaningful participation a key requirement for funding support to government institutions and CSOs working on youth and development in Ghana. This would ensure that the meaningful participation of young people is given the needed attention. This would also require donors to put in place mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the participation of the youth as part of project outcomes.

2. Provide funding support for capacity strengthening of youth parliaments

We also recommend that donors provide funding support to enhance capacity strengthening for youth parliaments in terms of technical expertise, advocacy skills and competencies in using effective communication tools to formulate their messages and engage with policy actors.



RECOMMENDATIONS TO YOUTH-LED CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOS)

1. Organise youth forums and create avenues for youth to network and interact with potential employers and relevant stakeholders

The youth who participated in this research underscored the importance of social and professional networks in supporting their transition to the labour market and enhancing career prospects. We therefore recommend that youth-led civil society organisations strengthen their engagement and advocacy efforts. This can be achieved through the creation of platforms (online and offline) for youth in and out of school to interact with employers as well as other relevant actors whose knowledge, expertise and resources can become instrumental for career development. Such a platform may provide space for the youth to learn practical lessons on the most critical skills and knowledge they would need to develop in line with their career ambitions.

2. Support strengthening the capacity of the youth parliaments

We also recommend that youth-led CSOs support the revitalisation of the existing youth parliaments. This can be done by strengthening their technical capacities, including mobilisation skills for collective action and organising, and connecting them to influence education policies and other policies that matter for youth development.

3. Intensify advocacy to promote equitable access to education

It is also recommended that CSOs intensify their advocacy efforts aimed at promoting equitable access to education for all segments of society irrespective of background and location. This would also require them to be strategic in their advocacy efforts by developing strategies that focus on specific state agencies and private sector organisations. For instance, CSOs should focus on developing strategies for influencing the design and formulation of education policies by the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations to ensure that they capture the perspectives of young people and address their needs and priorities accordingly.

4. Build a national coalition of CSOs in youth development to maximize

their individual strength to collective power and voice that partners with young people on youth policy space.

5. Support in mobilising young people to form the National Youth Federation

which gives young people the space and voice for policy inputs and expands the space for their participation in the decision-making process.

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APPENDICES

CHI-SQUARE TESTS OF ASSOCIATIONS

APPENDIX 1:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION SEX AND DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.989 ^a	3	.575
Likelihood Ratio	1.989	3	.575
Linear-by-Linear Association	.027	1	.870
N of Valid Cases	1940		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 46.00.

APPENDIX 2:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION SEX AND DESCRIPTION OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN GHANA

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	314.314 ^a	16	.000
Likelihood Ratio	168.433	16	.000
N of Valid Cases	1940		

a. 8 cells (32.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .02.

APPENDIX 3:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION SEX AND PERCEPTIONS THAT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM PROVIDES EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IRRESPECTIVE OF ONE'S BACKGROUND

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.473 ^a	5	.002
Likelihood Ratio	19.547	5	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.981	1	.084
N of Valid Cases	1930		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 22.45.

APPENDIX 4:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION SEX DISPARITIES AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION AMONG YOUNG MEN AND FEMALES

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.610a	1	.010
Likelihood Ratio	6.631	1	.010
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.607	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	1932		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 133.50.

APPENDIX 5:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION SEX AND HOW THE EDUCATION SYSTEM MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET IN GHANA

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.982a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	27.183	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.541	1	.060
N of Valid Cases	1929		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 53.97.

APPENDIX 6:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND HOW THE EDUCATION SYSTEM MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET IN GHANA

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.368a	5	.030
Likelihood Ratio	12.500	5	.029
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.695	1	.010
N of Valid Cases	1929		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 45.52.

APPENDIX 7:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION OF AGE AND FUTURE PLANS OF THE YOUTH

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	290.100a	100	.000
Likelihood Ratio	304.449	100	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.776	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1921		

a. 46 cells (36.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.02.

APPENDIX 8:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION OF SEX AND FUTURE PLANS OF THE YOUTH

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.856a	5	.232
Likelihood Ratio	6.876	5	.230
Linear-by-Linear Association	.028	1	.868
N of Valid Cases	1921		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 30.45.

APPENDIX 9:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION OF PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND FUTURE PLANS OF THE YOUTH

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.555a	5	.768
Likelihood Ratio	2.548	5	.769
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.069	1	.150
N of Valid Cases	1921		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 25.82.

APPENDIX 10:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION OF LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND FUTURE PLANS OF THE YOUTH

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	104.508 ^a	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	104.899	15	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	16.103	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1826		

a. 5 cells (20.8%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .66.

APPENDIX 11:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEX AND OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	2.672 ^a	4	.614
Likelihood Ratio	2.682	4	.612
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.586	1	.108
N of Valid Cases	1932		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.96.

APPENDIX 12:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	6.374 ^a	4	.173
Likelihood Ratio	6.519	4	.164
Linear-by-Linear Association	.717	1	.397
N of Valid Cases	1932		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 20.96.

APPENDIX 13:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.195a	4	.879
Likelihood Ratio	1.201	4	.878
Linear-by-Linear Association	.778	1	.378
N of Valid Cases	1932		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.20.

APPENDIX 14:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL STATUS AND OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	52.776a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.922	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.832	1	.016
N of Valid Cases	1838		

a. 5 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .27.

APPENDIX 15:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE SEX OF THE YOUTH AND PARENTS' INFLUENCE ON THEIR FUTURE OCCUPATION.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.501a	4	.006
Likelihood Ratio	14.527	4	.006
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067
N of Valid Cases	1917		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 61.97.

APPENDIX 16:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE AGE OF THE YOUTH AND PARENTS' INFLUENCE ON THEIR FUTURE OCCUPATION.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	213.122 ^a	80	.000
Likelihood Ratio	206.487	80	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	97.021	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	1917		

a. 10 cells (9.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.07.

APPENDIX 17:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.527 ^a	1	.033
Likelihood Ratio	4.532	1	.033
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.524	1	.033
N of Valid Cases	1933		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 379.04.

APPENDIX 18:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE SEX OF THE YOUTH AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.026 ^a	5	.155
Likelihood Ratio	8.039	5	.154
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.093	1	.043
N of Valid Cases	1933		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 28.43.

APPENDIX 19:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE OF THE YOUTH AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.465a	5	.019
Likelihood Ratio	13.588	5	.018
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.388	1	.020
N of Valid Cases	1933		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 24.03.

APPENDIX 20:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE YOUTH AND THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	42.485a	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	33.034	15	.005
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.144	1	.076
N of Valid Cases	1838		

a. 6 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .40.

APPENDIX 21:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SEX OF THE YOUTH AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED AVENUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.070a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	23.279	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.069	1	.792
N of Valid Cases	1931		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.98.

APPENDIX 22:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED AVENUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.882 ^a	5	.430
Likelihood Ratio	4.874	5	.431
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.336	1	.126
N of Valid Cases	1931		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 10.14.

APPENDIX 23:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS CREATED AVENUES FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	45.349 ^a	15	.000
Likelihood Ratio	37.521	15	.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.390	1	.001
N of Valid Cases	1837		

a. 6 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24.

APPENDIX 24:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND PREPAREDNESS OF YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.714 ^a	4	.446
Likelihood Ratio	3.668	4	.453
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.164	1	.281
N of Valid Cases	1914		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 33.01.

APPENDIX 25:

CHI-SQUARE TEST FOR ASSOCIATION BETWEEN LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND PREPAREDNESS OF YOUTH FOR THE FUTURE

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	88.496a	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	86.439	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.103	1	.043
N of Valid Cases	1820		

a. 2 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .68.

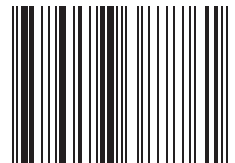


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