

# SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EGYPT

*Egypt is at a stage in its demographic transition with a marked “youth bulge,” that is, the proportion of young people in the population is significantly larger compared to other age groups. About 62 percent of the total population is age 29 or under, and nearly 40 percent is between the ages of 10 and 29.*

*With the right investments in their health, education, and general well-being these young people can positively shape Egypt’s future. Yet, despite their strategic social and economic importance, little is known about the lives of young Egyptians and the issues confronting them.*

*Consequently, the Population Council and the Information and Decision Support Center of the Egyptian Cabinet of Ministers conducted a comprehensive situation analysis of 15,029 young people from 11,372 families. The Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) asked 10–29-year-olds throughout the country questions related to health, education, employment, marriage, and social engagement.<sup>1</sup>*

*Except where otherwise noted the information in each of these facts refers to the age group 10–29 years old.*

## Health and Safety

- Most SYPE respondents said that they are in good health (87 percent) and are at an appropriate body weight (75 percent).
- When they are sick, most young people go to a private clinic or hospital (45 percent) or to a government health facility (39 percent).
- About 6 percent of young people reported having a chronic disease or disability, and one-fifth of those with a chronic disease or disability had never attended school.
- About 29 percent of young people aged 15–29) report that the environment is polluted in some way (38 percent of males and 20 percent of females). But most of these respondents said that they did not feel that this pollution affects their health.
- About 26 percent of all males aged 15–29 and 41 percent of males aged 25–29 reported that they currently smoke tobacco. Many young people are exposed to secondhand smoke: More than 40 percent said their father smokes.
- Almost 44 percent of all females have experienced sexual harassment, which was more common in urban areas.
- Three-quarters of female respondents are circumcised. Most respondents (64 percent) think the practice is necessary.
- About 60 percent of females get information about puberty from their families, and 57 percent of males get information from friends, neighbors, and relatives.
- More than 71 percent of all respondents had heard of HIV/AIDS and knew some routes of transmission. Yet very few (3 percent) of youth aged 15–29 had complete knowledge of the ways that HIV may be transmitted.
- Among married female respondents, 88 percent had given birth. About 77 percent of the respondents’ recent births were assisted by a doctor, and 18 percent were assisted by a *daya*.
- On average, males spend 46 minutes per day walking or biking to get around, while females spend only 26 minutes in these activities.
- About 30 percent of respondents are concerned about fast or reckless driving in the street, and 27 percent fear overcrowding on streets.
- Most of those who drive wear a seatbelt, but when riding with someone in a car 53 percent of all respondents never wear a seatbelt. Fewer females than males wear seatbelts.
- Fifteen percent of youth had an injury in the past year, most of which were accidents from a fall.
- Many young people consume carbonated drinks and fast food, and 42 percent of the wealthiest consume these products three or more times per week.

<sup>1</sup>The SYPE would not have been possible without the support of The Ford Foundation; Canadian International Development Agency; The World Bank; UNDP; UNFPA; UNICEF; UNIFEM; the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands; and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

## Education

- More than two million young people are out of school; 80 percent of them are girls from rural areas and in Upper Egypt.
- The main obstacles to education are high out-of-pocket education-related expenses and cultural norms that keep girls out of school.
- Only one-quarter of young people who never attended school attend literacy classes. Among those who do, only one-quarter are able to read or write.
- Grade repetition and dropout rates are high: One in four students in vocational secondary school repeated a grade, and 16 percent of university students repeated a grade; 4 percent of primary school students and 9 percent at the preparatory level drop out before completing.
- Higher education is also a privilege of richer and urban young people. Forty-six percent of university students come from the richest households and only 4 percent come from the poorest.
- Only about 50 percent of higher education students believe their education prepares them for the labor market.
- Two-thirds of young people have reported that they have cheated, and nearly 80 percent have seen others cheat. Half of young people receive out-of-school tutoring, and almost 40 percent take group support classes.
- Early childhood education, which usually helps children to learn better at higher levels of education, is spreading in Egypt (36 percent), but mainly among young people from richer households (77 percent among the richest compared to 14 percent among the poorest households) and those living in urban areas (56 percent in urban compared to 25 percent in rural areas).
- Under the standard market definition, the total youth (aged 15–29) unemployment rate is 15.8 percent. The unemployment rate among females (31.7 percent) is more than double that among males (12.5 percent).
- Labor force participation of young people aged 15–29 is 13.4 percent among females compared to 61.4 percent among males.
- A number of interrelated factors could contribute to females' disadvantaged position in the Egyptian labor market, including discouraging work conditions, fewer "networking" opportunities, lower mobility, and difficulty engaging in entrepreneurship.
- Young women continue to prefer working in the public sector because it is more flexible and more likely to provide benefits. Female job seekers are twice as likely to register at a government labor office (21 percent) as male job seekers (10 percent).
- Young women aged 15–29 continue to work in traditionally "female" occupations such as teaching and clerical and domestic work. Young women with permanent jobs are also more likely to work part-time (42 percent) than their male counterparts (17 percent).
- Many young people have restricted access to credit and little knowledge of marketing and finance. These problems are particularly acute for young females.
- Despite improvements in school enrollment and child labor laws in recent years, about 3 percent of children aged 10–14 are currently working (5 percent of males and 1 percent of females).

## International Migration

## Employment

- Comparing the SYPE data to previous surveys (Egypt Labor Market Surveys of 1998 and 2006) suggests that there was a significant decline in the youth (aged 15–29) unemployment rate from 1998 to 2006, followed by relative stability from 2006 to 2009.
- About 18 percent of young people aged 15–29 expressed interest in international migration. Of those respondents, 68 percent said they intend to migrate to Arab countries and 21 percent to a Western country. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates are the top destination preferences.
- Males aged 15–29 are more likely to say they want to migrate (30 percent) than females (7 percent). Migration aspirations, particularly to the West, rise with educational attainment.

- Unemployment and low income are cited as important factors motivating youth aged 18–29 to leave Egypt.
- Social networks play an important role in facilitating migration. Over 80 percent of the young people aged 18–29 planning to migrate indicated that friends and relatives are their source of information about migration destinations. In addition, many aspiring migrant youth expect to receive help in migration from their social network.

### **Marriage and Family Formation**

- Young women tend to marry at younger ages than men. The median age at marriage among males aged 18 and above is 25, compared to 19 among their female counterparts.
- Twenty-five percent of currently married female youth aged 25–29 are married before the age of 18, compared to only 2 percent of male youth. Early marriage is particularly prevalent among rural girls and girls with low educational attainment.
- Over 70 percent of youth aged 15–29 mentioned religiosity and politeness as characteristics to look for in a spouse. The vast majority of married youth met their spouse through social networks; 47 percent met their spouse through personal networks, and an additional 34 percent through relatives.
- For young people aged 15–29, on average, unmarried female youth said that the ideal number of children is 2.6, whereas married female youth said 2.9. Unmarried and married male youth said that the ideal number of children is 2.7 and 2.8, respectively. Female youth's ideal number of children declines with education level among both the married and the unmarried.

### **Civic Engagement**

- Young people aged 15–29 rated poverty reduction, economic growth, health, and educational reform as the most pressing national priorities.
- The civic engagement of young people in Egypt is very weak. Only 2.3 percent of all

young people aged 10–29 have volunteered during the past year, mainly providing assistance—cash or in-kind—to the poor. Only 5 percent are members of a group or organization; young men's civic participation is twice as much as young women's.

- Sixteen percent of young people aged 18–29 have ever voted. Few discuss politics with friends or are even aware of their representatives in parliament.
- One-quarter of young people aged 18–29 reported having witnessed bribery, and 28 percent have witnessed nepotism “Wasta/Mahsobia.”
- At a time when young people usually invest much time in networking, social networks among young people in Egypt are limited to a few friends and family.
- Religion appears to play the most important role in young people's lives and identity. The vast majority (88 percent) of all young people identify themselves as religious.

### **Time Use**

- Males aged 10–29 generally spend significantly more time than females in paid and unpaid work (2.8 hours a day for males compared to 0.4 hours for females). On the other hand, housework and family care responsibilities are primarily undertaken by females (0.2 hours a day for males compared to 3.3 hours for females).
- Among students, time spent in schooling activities shows little variation across gender and across other background characteristics.
- Males spend more time socializing with friends (1 hour a day) compared to their female counterparts (0.10 hours a day).
- Both males and females experience increasing leisure time through ages 18–24. This free time later decreases, when at ages 25–29 they take on adult responsibilities, including work and marriage.
- Young people of all age groups spend an average of 2 hours a day watching television and 0.38 hours listening to music. Youth also spend a considerable amount of their time in religious activities (0.38 hours a day for males and 0.49 for females). Internet use is not an everyday activity. Males use the Internet

about three times longer per day (0.14 hours) than do females.

- Place of residence and wealth also influence leisure activities. Urban youth have more free time than their rural counterparts. Young people from wealthier families have more time for and engage in a wider variety of leisure activities.

### **Young People's Attitudes Toward Gender Roles**

- Young people aged 15–29 in Egypt, both men and women, tend to have conservative attitudes toward gender roles. Young men tend to be more conservative in their attitudes than young women.
- While the majority (76 percent) of young men and women do not agree that boys should have higher priority in education than girls, over 80 percent believe that men should have priority over women in the labor market when jobs are scarce.
- Seventy-three percent of young men and 59 percent of young women believe that boys should not have to do as much domestic work as girls.
- Seventy-one percent of young men and 49 percent of young women believe a girl must obey her brother even if he is younger than she.
- More than three-quarters of young men and women believe that a woman must obey her husband's orders in all cases.
- Sixty-two percent of young men and 37 percent of young women believe that a husband should make decisions about household expenses.
- Urban dwellers and those living in the Lower Egypt governorates tend to be less conservative than those living in rural communities.
- Education has a significant and positive effect on young people attitudes toward gender equality.
- About 75 percent of young men and women believe that a woman who dresses provocatively deserves to be harassed, and two-thirds agreed that wife battery is justified in some situations.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURVEY OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN EGYPT,  
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