



Mixed
Migration
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Thanks to the 4Mi team and the enumerators
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Educational realities and needs of migrant children and youth in West and North Africa

A quantitative analysis

Key findings

MMC conducted 2,649 interviews with youth migrants (n=1,446) and migrants traveling with children (caregivers, n=1,203) in Bamako, Conakry, Niamey and Tunis, highlighting the main characteristics of their educational realities and needs:

- **Access to education for migrant children in the four cities of interview is limited.** More than half of caregiver respondents (57%) reported that the children in their care were not accessing childcare or education services at the time of interview. Less than a fifth (17%) reported that the children in their care were attending primary or secondary school.
- **Access to formal or informal education is the most frequent need expressed by caregivers for the children in their care (29%),** compared to 20% who mention food assistance and 18% who indicate access to healthcare. The main obstacle to accessing childcare or education for their children is the lack of financial resources (41%).
- **Lower levels of education are associated with greater difficulties in finding a job.** Among youth respondents who were not earning money because they could not find a job (n=159), 39% had a secondary education and 24% had a primary education compared to 8% who had vocational training and 17% who attended university.
- **The probability of using regular migration pathways rises with higher education levels. More than half of the respondents (53%) were in an irregular situation at the time of the interview, thus potentially impeding access to public services, including education for them and/or the children in their care.** The proportion of respondents who were in an irregular situation was higher among those who had received primary education (66%, out of 492 respondents), secondary school (63%, out of 816 respondents), or did not complete any schooling (60%, out of 293 respondents), while only 20% of respondents who had a university education (n=366) reported being in an irregular situation.
- **Data shows higher levels of education among surveyed women migrants and among youth respondents.** In all locations except for Niamey, women respondents reported higher levels of education as compared to men; 23% of women youth respondents (n=500) had received a

university education, compared to 14% of men youth respondents (n=946). Of the caregiver respondents, 14% had not completed any schooling (compared to 8% among youth respondents).

- **Vocational training enhances access to job opportunities available to youth migrants.** Youth respondents who were earning money (n=1,164) more often reported having completed vocational training (18%) as compared to those who were not making money (9%, n=282).
- **Educational aspirations only play a minor role in migration decision-making among youth respondents compared to economic factors.** A third (33%) of youth respondents who had a university education (n=245) cited that access to better education opportunities played a role in their decision to migrate, compared to 9% of those who received vocational training (n=235). On the other hand, 91% of youth respondents who had vocational training cited economic reasons as among their reasons for migration (compared to 31% among those who received a university education).

In addition to these general patterns, each **city** displays specific educational realities and needs for migrants:

- **Reported needs for educational services¹ low in Bamako** – Almost two-thirds (63%) of youth respondents in Bamako (n=434) reported not needing any educational services, and 57% of caregiver respondents (n=461) indicated that the children in their care did not need any educational services. While 22% of all youth respondents in Bamako had achieved vocational training (the second highest rate across the four cities), access to foreign language training was the most common education-related service need reported in Bamako (by 19% of youth respondents).
- **Basic education most needed in Conakry** – The proportion of youth respondents (n=320) who had not completed any schooling is highest in Conakry (22%), while 22% reported they needed basic literacy skills. The highest proportion of caregivers who cited the need to access education (either formal or informal) for their children was also reported in Conakry (50%). Moreover, 31% of youth respondents in this city reported needing basic language skills, which could be linked to the fact that 35% of all respondents in Conakry were originally from Sierra Leone.

1 In the survey, education-related services included competence in literacy, basic language skills, digital literacy, computer and access to Internet, vocational training, foreign language training, and higher education.

- **Youth migrants in Niamey often expressed a demand for technical-oriented educational support, reflecting economic migration trends to the city** – Almost two-thirds of youth respondents in Niamey (n=388) had achieved either a secondary (40%) or vocational training (24%). The most needed educational services indicated by youth respondents were foreign language training (43%) and access to a computer or internet connection (40%).
- **Tunis is a hub for higher education, especially for women** - Of all youth respondents in Tunis (n=304), 35% had a university education. Women youth respondents more often reported they had attended university than men (50%/26%). Moreover, access to childcare/daycare was a need reported by caregivers most commonly in Tunis (32% of caregiver respondents in Tunis, n=191), which could be linked to their need, as a caregiver to work and/or undergo training.

Introduction

In contexts where the reasons motivating the migration of children and youth are complex and multifactorial, the right to education,² as a fundamental right, must remain a priority for children and youth on migration routes in West and North Africa. Consequently, the educational realities and opportunities for migrants need to be carefully documented and disseminated.

This briefing paper provides information on the educational realities and needs of children and youth migrants in four capital cities in West and North Africa (Bamako, Conakry, Niamey and Tunis). It is based on surveys conducted with youth migrants aged 18-24 and people travelling with children in their care (caregivers), carried out between June 2022 and September 2023. This is part of a series of briefing papers³ designed to inform programming to improve protection and access to work and education for youth and children in the region. These efforts constitute phase 1 of the “Children and Youth on Migration Routes in West and North Africa”

(Enfants et jeunes sur les routes migratoires en Afrique de l’Ouest et du Nord) project.

The project aims to improve support for children and youth people on the move (CYM) through a transformative effect on national and regional systems for protection, education, integration, and the creation of opportunities. Under this framework, MMC provides data and analysis to enable stakeholders to design and implement context-specific programs, and to advocate for the inclusion of key protection and access to education and professional integration risks in existing national and regional services and mechanisms.

This briefing paper is based on quantitative data collected through [4Mi](#), MMC’s flagship data collection methodology. It primarily aims to fill the quantitative evidence gap on educational realities and needs of youth migrants in the four cities of interview.⁴

² World Bank (2008) “[Migration and Education Decisions in a Dynamic General Equilibrium Framework](#)”.

³ MMC (2023), [Youth on mixed migration routes in West and North Africa: Profiles and journeys overview](#). MMC (2023), [Refugees and migrants traveling with children in urban centres in West and North Africa: Conditions and needs](#)

⁴ The module that was designed to complement the existing 4Mi core survey included education as one dimension alongside other thematic areas such as protection risks and economic inclusion. Additional analysis and research should be undertaken (i) with a more specific module that would delve into education-related questions and/or to (ii) compare these findings with qualitative data, existing assessment tools and publications on the same topic.

Methodology

Sample and respondent profiles

This paper is based on 2,649 quantitative interviews carried out between June 2022 and September 2023 in the four cities of Bamako (n=895), Conakry (n=479), Niamey (n=780) and Tunis (n=495). Sampling was purposive, targeting youth migrants aged between 18 and 24 (n=1,446), as well as caregivers who were travelling with children (n=1,203).⁵ Among all respondents, 44% were

women (n=1,165) and 56% were men (n=1,484).

The target group for the 4Mi survey is adults who have left their country of origin in the context of a mixed migration journey, regardless of their status. Respondents therefore crossed a border, and internally displaced persons in their country of origin are not covered by the 4Mi methodology.

Table 1. Youth respondents by city of interview and gender

City	Women	Men	Total
Bamako	236	198	434
Conakry	82	238	320
Niamey	75	313	388
Tunis	107	197	304
Total	500	946	1,446

Table 2. Caregivers by city of interview and gender

City	Women	Men	Total
Bamako	300	161	461
Conakry	98	61	159
Niamey	163	229	392
Tunis	104	87	191
Total	665	538	1,203

Country of origin

Almost all respondents (97%) were from West and Central Africa.⁶ Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Sierra Leone were the most common nationalities reported among all respondents (11%, 10% and 9% respectively), followed by Mali (8%) and Benin (8%). Women more often reported originating from Côte d'Ivoire (16%) and Togo (13%) than men (7% and 8% respectively). This reflects the gendered division of labor among migrants in Western Africa, whereby Togolese and Ivorian women migrants commonly work in sectors that are easily accessed by enumerators, such as the service and catering sectors, or as small-scale entrepreneurs.⁷

The country of origin of respondents varied across the cities of interview. This was reflective of shorter-distance migration trends with a higher proportion of respondents from neighboring countries, except for in Tunis. In Conakry, 35% of respondents were originally from Sierra Leone, and 16% from Mali. The three most frequently cited nationalities in Bamako were Côte d'Ivoire (18%), Togo (18%) and Guinea (12%), whereas in Niamey they were Benin (14%), Togo (12%) and Burkina Faso (11%). In Tunis, 12% of respondents were originally from Côte d'Ivoire, 11% from Guinea and 11% from Mali.

⁵ Respondents aged 18 to 24 and traveling with dependent children were counted as caregivers and did not respond to the youth module.

⁶ Other African countries of nationality were Angola (3), Burundi (2), Comoros (7), DRC (30), Eritrea (20), Ethiopia (10), Libya (1), Morocco (1), Somalia (2), South Sudan (3), Sudan (6) and Zambia (2). Only two respondents in Tunis came from Yemen.

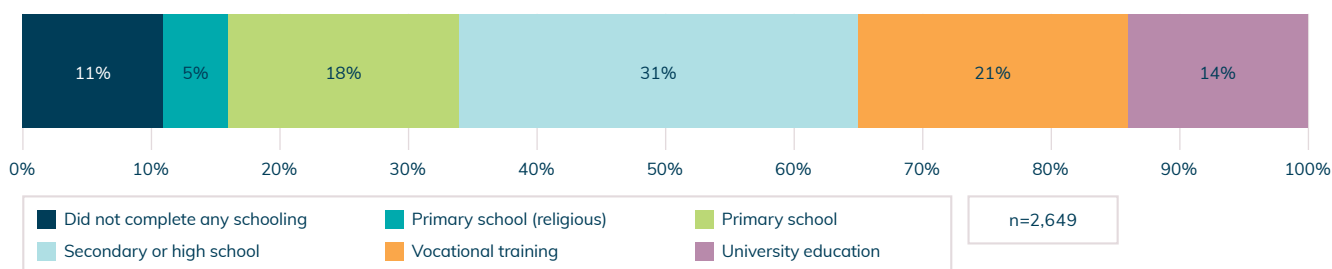
⁷ Papa Demba Fall, Pierre Kamdem, Emmanuela Gamberoni (2022), [Regard actuel sur les mobilités féminines transfrontalières ouest-africaines](#)

Education level

Overall, 11% of respondents (youth and caregivers) had not completed any education at the time of the interview, and 34% had a level of education below secondary school (primary school/religious or no education completed). With 89% of respondents reporting they had accessed education, respondents' education levels were higher than those of the general population in West and Central Africa, where the average primary school completion rate in both regions was 61% in 2022.⁸ In

terms of secondary education, 66% of respondents had at least some secondary education.⁹ This figure is higher than the average rate of completion of lower secondary schooling among the general population in both regions, which was 43% in 2022.¹⁰ The level of education of respondents is analyzed in depth throughout this study, including concerning the profiles of respondents (youth), cities of interview, and gender.

Figure 1. Education level of respondents (general)



Length of stay in interview city

Across the whole sample, respondents spent on average 263 days in the city of interview, with considerable differences between the four cities. Respondents spent on average only 121 days in Niamey, which is the lowest average across all four cities, primarily due to Niger's pivotal role as a country of transit for West and Central Africans heading towards Libya and Algeria. In Tunis, respondents spent on average 358 days and in Conakry, 340 days. In Bamako, respondents stayed on average 294 days. These longer periods of stay underscore the dual role of Tunisia, Guinea and Mali as countries serving both as transit points and as destinations. The average duration of stay provides insight into the suitability of educational services for each interview location. Surveyed migrants in Tunis, Conakry, and Bamako may be more available to participate in long-term educational programs, while those in Niger may benefit more from targeted short-term education-related services.

Legal status of respondents

A little more than half of the respondents (53%) reported that they had no legal documents to stay in the country of interview, whereas 26% reported being in a regular situation with no need for a permit and 8% reported being in the country holding a temporary permit. Youth respondents more often reported that they had no legal documents to stay in the country of interview (57%) than caregivers (49%). Legal status can be essential

for accessing education and employment. Without it, migrants may need to find work in the informal sector, increasing their precarity.

There were also differences between cities in terms of legal status,¹¹ with respondents in Bamako and Conakry more often reporting that they had no legal documents (respectively 70% and 69%), compared to respondents in Niamey who more frequently indicated that they were in a regular situation with no need for a permit (43%). This could be linked to the fact that respondents spent on average, a shorter period in Niamey compared to respondents in other cities and that nationals of ECOWAS member states have the right to reside up to 90 days in another member state without obtaining a visa.

Migrants with a university education appear to have greater access to regular migration pathways. Rates of irregularity were reported higher among respondents who did not receive any education (n=293), as well as those who only received primary (n=492) or secondary education (n=816), with 63%, 66% and 63%, respectively, reporting they did not have documents to stay in the country of interview. This is considerably higher than respondents who had a university education (n=366), where only 20% reported they did not have legal documents to stay in the country of interview.

⁸ World Bank Group (2022), [Education Strategy for West and Central Africa](#)

⁹ Their highest level of education was secondary school, vocational training and/or university.

¹⁰ UNICEF, [Secondary education data](#) (accessed April 18, 2024).

¹¹ How a certain legal status is determined and assigned can vary from country to country, therefore numbers should be interpreted with caution.

Limitations

The 4Mi sampling approach involves a number of measures to mitigate bias but remains purposive. This means that the findings derived from the surveyed sample provide rich insights, but the figures cannot be used to make inferences about the total population. For this study, sampling targeted youth migrants (aged 18-24)

as well as caregivers and used a snowball approach to recruit participants. MMC is committed to increase the representation of women in its data collection. Although MMC ensures to interview women in all locations, in some cities this can present more challenges in terms of access than in others.

Caregivers – Educational needs of children in their care

This section explores the perceptions of 1,203 migrant caregivers regarding the educational needs and challenges faced by the children under their care.

Respondents were living in Bamako (n=461), Conakry (n=159), Niamey (n=392) and Tunis (n=191) at the time of interviews. Overall, among caregiver respondents, 55% were women (n=655) and 45% were men (n=538).

The distribution of gender differed among the cities of interview, with highest proportions of women caregivers interviewed in Bamako (65%) and Conakry (62%), and the highest proportion of men caregivers reported in Niamey (58%). This reflects the general population of migrants in Niger, where men are generally over-represented.¹²

Access to education in the city of interview

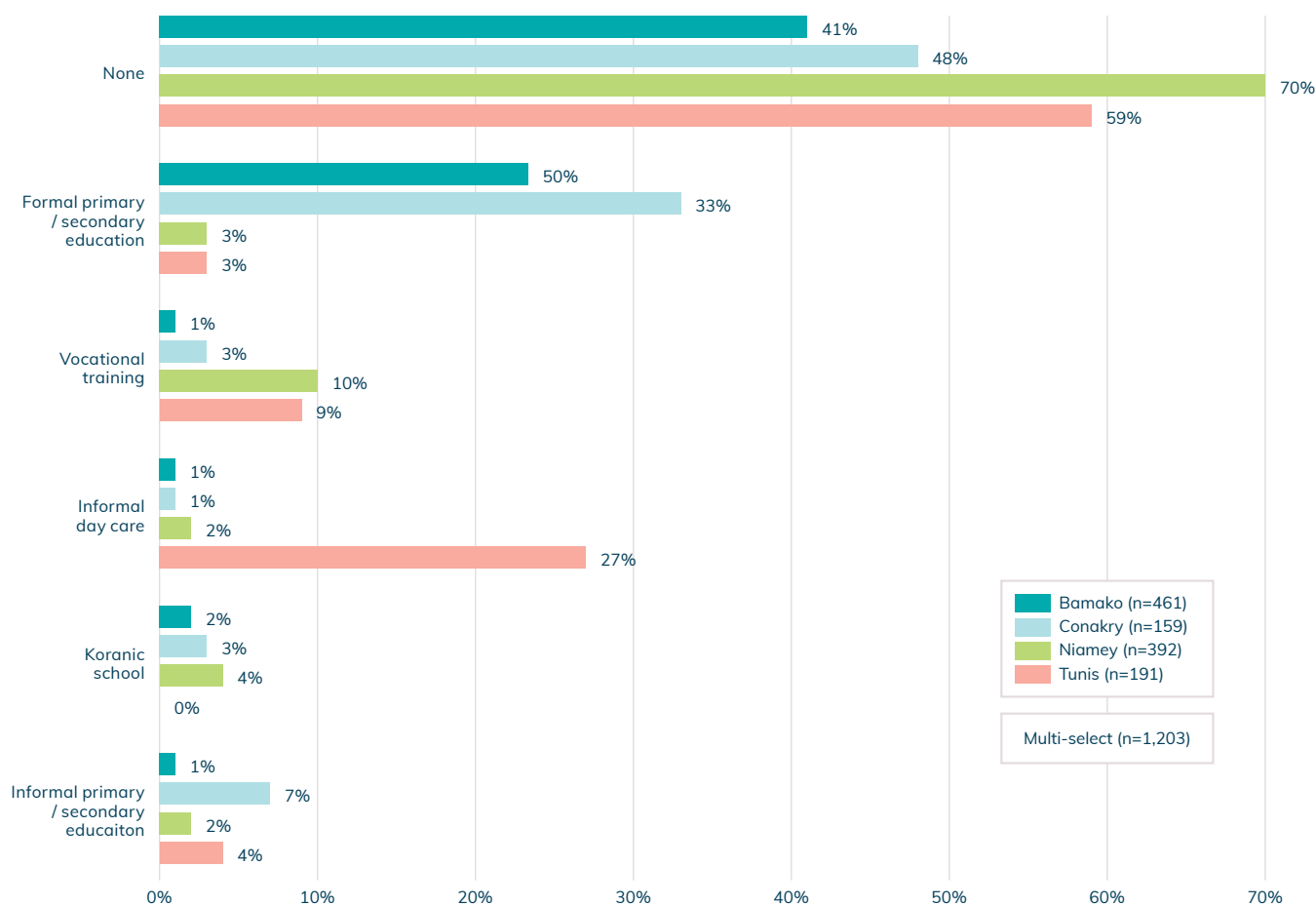
Access to education for migrant children in the four cities of interview is limited. Indeed, among caregivers, more than half of the respondents (57%) reported that the children in their care were not accessing childcare or education services at the time of interview. Almost one-quarter (17%) did report that the children in their care were attending primary or secondary school.

There were some differences by city regarding the attendance to childcare and educational services

among caregivers' children. In Niamey, respondents reported "none" much more often (79%) than in Bamako (41%) when asked if children in their care were attending childcare or educational services. Respondents in Bamako (50%) and Conakry (33%) reported more often that their children were in formal schooling than in Niamey (3%) and Tunis (3%). This is likely related to an overall shorter average duration of stay among respondents in Niamey, while access to informal daycare in Tunis appeared to be much more common (27%) than in the other cities.

12 IOM (2024), [Displacement Tracking Matrix - Republic of Niger, January 2024](#)

Figure 2. Children’s access to educational services according to their caregivers (by city)



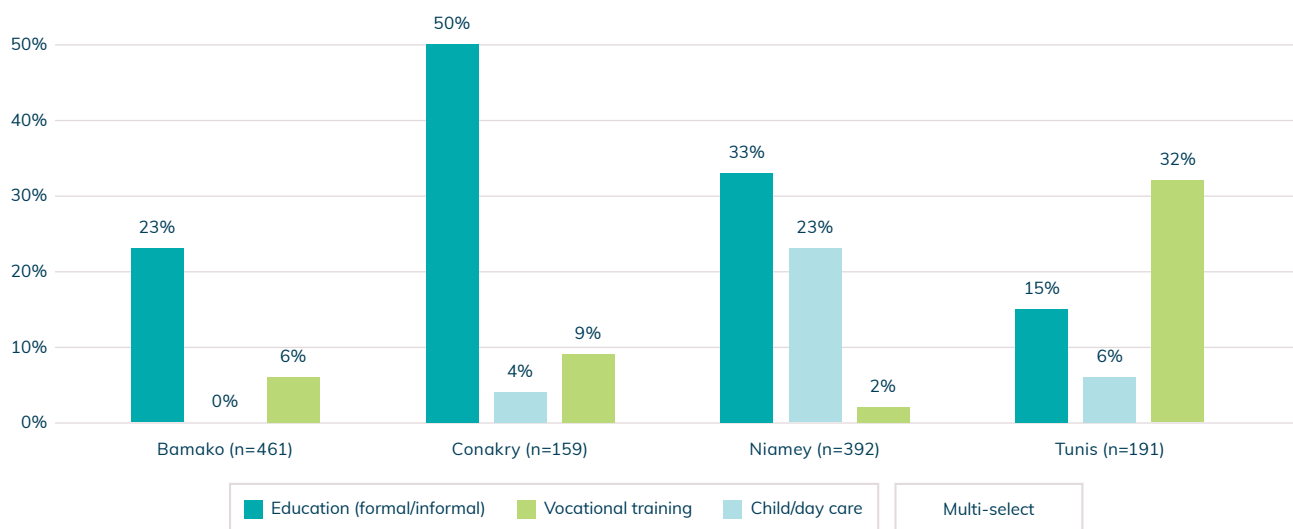
Educational needs

Compared with other types of services, access to formal or informal education ranks first among the needs identified by caregivers for their children. Overall, 29% of those surveyed listed education (formal or informal) among the types of services needed by the children in their care. This score is higher than, for example, needs in terms of food assistance (20%) and access to healthcare (18%). Less than one caregiver respondent in ten considered childcare (10%) and/or vocational training (9%) among the needs for their children.

There were notable differences between cities. In Conakry, half of caregiver respondents reported education (either formal or informal) among the services

needed by their children, which underlines a pressing need. Similarly, one third of caregiver respondents in Niamey listed education (either formal or informal) among the needs of the children under their care. Moreover, Niamey recorded the highest proportion of caregiver respondents who cited vocational training among the needs of their children (23%). In Tunis, 32% of caregiver respondents indicated childcare as a need for their children, which also reflects the above-mentioned prominent access to informal daycare in Tunis (reported by 27% of caregiver respondents). In general, caregiver respondents in Bamako less often reported education-related services needs for their children as compared to in other cities.

Figure 3. Education-related services needs of caregivers' children (by city)¹³



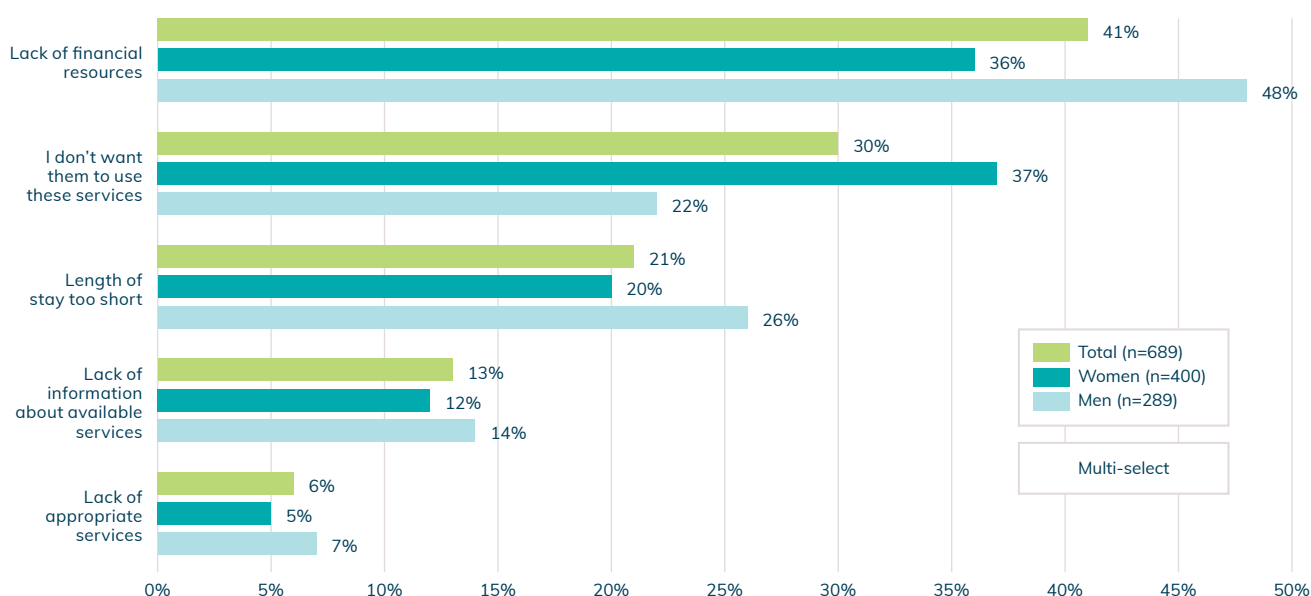
Barriers to accessing education-related services

For caregivers whose children were not accessing childcare or education services (n=689), reasons varied.

The most cited reason was a lack of financial resources (41%). This was more commonly cited by men caregiver respondents (48%, n=538) compared to women (36%, n=655). Length of stay was also a relevant factor for 22% of caregiver respondents. Over one-third of women caregiver respondents (37%) also reported that they did not want the children in their care to access these services compared to 22% of men (30% overall). This was especially the case in Bamako, where 54% of all caregiver respondents reported this answer, and potentially also

linked to financial vulnerability. The highest proportion of caregiver respondents who reported requiring cash support was recorded in Bamako (95%), as compared to only 58% of caregivers in Conakry. However, also 93% of caregivers in Bamako reported to earn money at the time of interview. This suggests that caregiver respondents in Bamako were particularly financially vulnerable which could constitute a reason why they do not want their children to access educational services, as they potentially need their children's support to secure the family income.

Figure 4. Reasons for their children not to attend educational/care services among caregiver respondents (by gender)



¹³ Other response options included dimensions that were cross-cutting and relevant to other themes of interest in the same series of information documents. Overall, respondents also indicated that their children needed health care (18%), housing (13%), food (20%), psychological support (2%), social activities (16%), no activities (33%), other activities (less than 1%) and "don't know" responses (less than 1%).

Lack of financial resources is the main obstacle encountered by caregivers who reported an educational need for the children in their care. Among the caregivers who reported a need for their children to access formal or informal education (n=347), half (51%) indicated that the children in their care do not attend any educational and/or childcare services. Among those (n=178), a large majority (79%) cited the lack of financial means as one of the reasons for not being able to access educational services. Short duration of stay and lack of information about available educational services were reported as secondary reasons cited respectively by 29% and 24% of caregivers whose children did not attend any educational services despite a stated need. 10% of caregivers reported a lack of appropriate services, which should be interpreted with caution given the relatively

good availability of educational services in the capital cities where the survey was deployed.

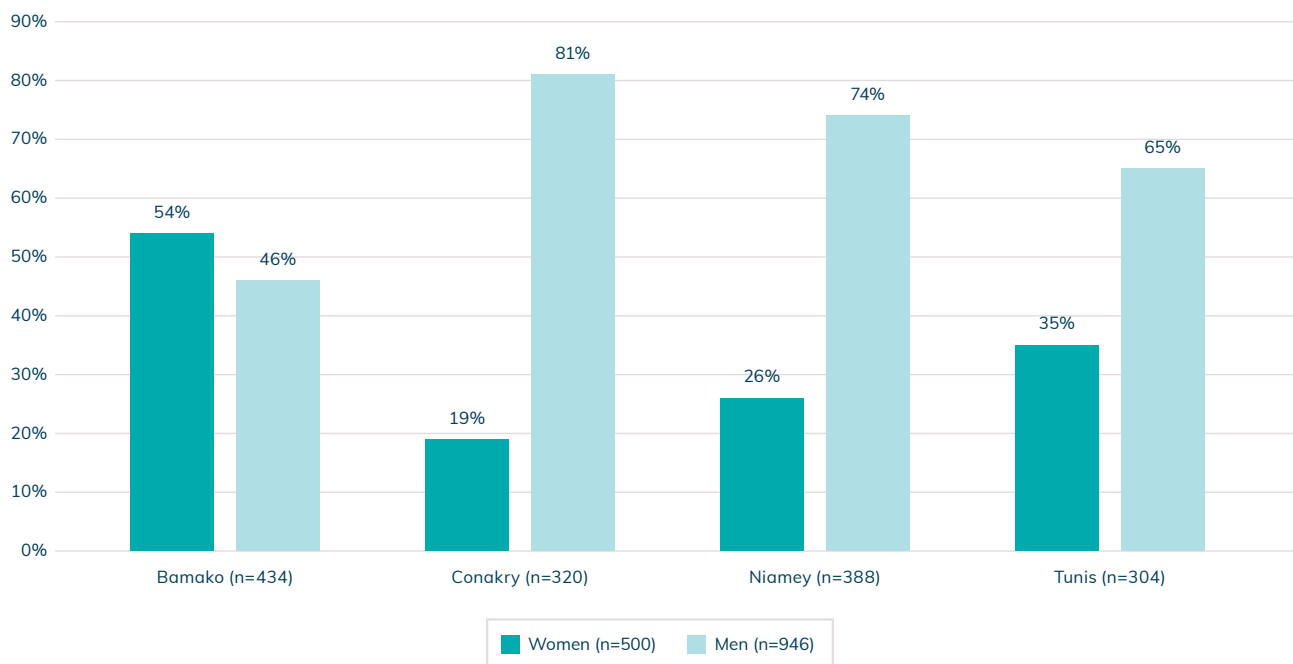
The perception among the caregivers that the children in their care would not need access to educational services is one of the reasons why the right to education is not realized for many children and youth on migration routes. One third (33%) of caregivers whose children do not attend any educational services (n=689) expressed no educational needs. Among them (n=225), almost two-thirds (64%) do not want the children in their care to attend educational services. This underlines the need for action to increase awareness for educational demand and the involvement of caregivers who oppose the education of the children in their care.

Youth migrants - Educational realities and needs

This section delves into the educational background and aspirations of 1,446 youth migrants (aged 18-24) interviewed in Bamako (n=434), Conakry (n=320), Niamey (n=388) and Tunis (n=304). 35% were women (n=500) and 65% were men (n=946). However, the gender distribution differed among the cities where the interviews took place (see Figure 5), largely reflective of

the gender proportions of migrant populations in each city,¹⁴ as well as factors relating to access to migrants by enumerators. Accessing women migrants can be influenced by cultural and religious factors and may differ depending on the place of data collection. Measures, such as recruiting women enumerators, were taken to mitigate this access challenge.

Figure 5. Gender of youth respondents, by city of interview



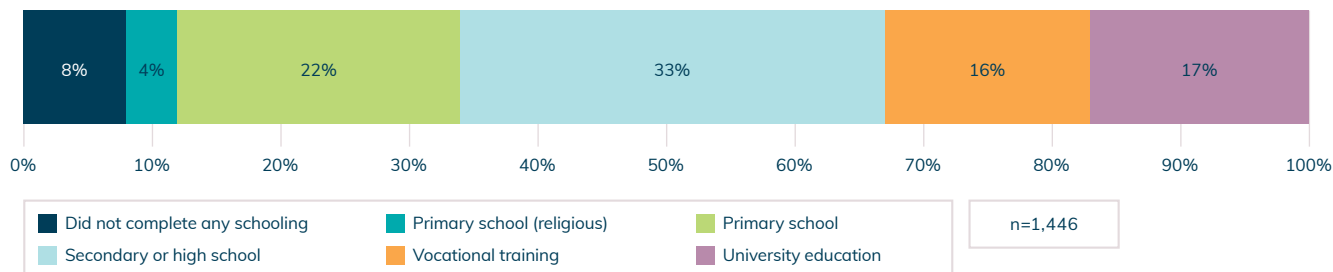
¹⁴ According to the most recent numbers from the UN's international migrants stock from 2020, there are only slight differences in gender representation of migrants in the West Africa region. An exception is Guinea, where more men (59%) than women (41%) were registered in the international migrants stock. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 needs to be taken into account when considering these figures. UN Population Division (2020), [International Migrant Stock](#)

Educational level of youth respondents

The general education level of youth respondents did not differ substantially from that of the overall sample. However, there were considerable differences reported

by youth respondents between city of interview, and according to gender.

Figure 6. Education level of respondents (youth)



Differences between cities of interview

Youth respondents in Tunis more often reported having a university education (35%) than in Bamako (16%), Conakry (12%), and Niamey (9%).¹⁵ This can be explained by the fact that Tunis is a city of destination for migrants seeking higher education opportunities. It is known for its high-quality education and visas are available for students from many African countries.¹⁶

Youth respondents in Conakry (n=320) had the lowest average level of education. Only 3% of respondents in Conakry reported having obtained vocational training, and 22% of respondents reported that they did not complete any schooling. Given that more than half of

youth respondents in Conakry were originally from Sierra Leone (40%) or Mali (14%), low literacy rates in these two countries of origin (49% and 31% respectively)¹⁷ could explain why youth respondents in Conakry had an overall lower level of education compared to respondents interviewed in other cities. In addition, the jobs available to migrants in Conakry¹⁸ are primarily in lower-skilled sectors, often attracting migrants who have not had access to higher levels of education. At the same time, in Conakry and Niamey, 41% and 40% of respondents reported that the highest level of education obtained was secondary or high school, which is higher than in the other cities.

Table 3. Educational level of youth by city of interview

	Bamako (n=434)	Conakry (n=320)	Niamey (n=388)	Tunis (n=304)
Did not complete any schooling	7%	22%	1%	6%
Primary school (religious)	5%	3%	5%	3%
Primary school	24%	20%	21%	21%
Secondary or high school	26%	41%	40%	23%
Vocational training	22%	3%	24%	13%
University education	16%	12%	9%	35%

¹⁵ Results should be interpreted carefully as enumerators mentioned varying understanding of university education among respondents, from having formally obtained a university degree to being enrolled in a higher education institution.

¹⁶ Tufts University (2021), [Cross-Saharan Migration to Tunisia: A case study of West African workers and students](#)

¹⁷ World Bank Group, [Taux d'alphabétisation, total des adultes \(% des personnes âgées de 15 ans et plus\) | Data \(banquemonde.org\)](#) (accessed 28 February 2024)

¹⁸ The main sectors of employment for youth respondents earning money in Conakry (n=242) were small businesses (35%), agriculture (18%), driver/transportation (13%) and domestic work (10%).

Gender differences

Within the overall sample concerning university education, differences between youth women and men were noticeable, with women (23%) more often than men (14%) reporting to have received a university education. This trend does not reflect the gendered structure of school enrolments in West Africa, where the proportion of girls declines as the level of education increases.¹⁹ Vocational training and secondary school, on the other hand, were completed more often by men (18% and 35% respectively) than women (14% and 29% respectively). The educational factor therefore seems to play a different role according to gender in the profiles of migrants in the region, with better-educated young women more likely to embark on a migratory journey, contrary to men.

However, gender differences were more frequent when analyzed by city of interview.

- In **Bamako** (youth women: n=236; youth men: n=198), slightly more youth women reported having a university education (18%, compared to 14% of youth men). This is also the case for secondary/high school (29% of youth women, compared to 23% of youth men) and primary school (28% of youth women, compared to 20% of youth men). At the same time, more youth men reported attending vocational training (32%, compared to 13% of women).
- In **Conakry** (youth women: n=82; youth men: n=238), 17/82 (21%) of youth women reported having a university education compared to only 8% of youth men who more often reported secondary/high school

to be their highest level of education (42%, compared to 35%, 29/82, of youth women). 24% of youth men respondents did not complete any schooling, which is almost one third higher than the number for youth women respondents (15%, 12/82).

- In **Niamey** (youth women: n=75; youth men: n=313), youth men reported having attended university more often than youth women (10%, compared to 4%, 3/75). This is also the case for secondary/high school (42%, compared to 33%, 24/75). Youth women respondents reported almost twice as often having attended primary school as their highest level of education (33%, 24/75, compared to 16%). Among all the cities, Niamey is the city where youth women more often reported having attended vocational training (25%, 19/75). This reflects the link between having attended vocational training and the economic aspirations of surveyed youth migrants, as underscored in sub-section on drivers of migration. Indeed, economic drivers of migration were the most often cited in Niamey²⁰ among youth respondents more generally, and also among those who reported primary school or vocational training as their highest level of education.²¹
- In **Tunis** (youth women: n=107; youth men: n=197), 50% of youth women respondents had a university education, which is almost twice as much as men respondents (26%). Four times as many youth men than youth women reported primary school to be their highest level of education (28%/7%).

Education and livelihoods among youth respondents

Educational profile of youth working migrants

The majority of youth respondents reported to be currently making money. Indeed, most youth respondents (80%) had a source of income at the time of interview. The level of education of these respondents reflects the overall level of education among youth respondents.

Vocational training may be advantageous for youth migrant jobseekers. Compared to youth respondents who were not earning money (n=281), youth respondents who had an income at the time of interview (n=1,164) more often reported having completed vocational training

(18% vs 9%), and less often reported having attended university (14% vs 31%). This may reflect that vocational skills are more transferable across countries than tertiary education, particularly in certain sectors. Among youth respondents who had completed vocational training and were earning money at the time of the interview (n=197), a slightly higher proportion worked in construction (25%) and industry sectors (16%) compared to the overall youth respondents who were earning money (18% and 6% respectively, out of a total of 989 respondents).²²

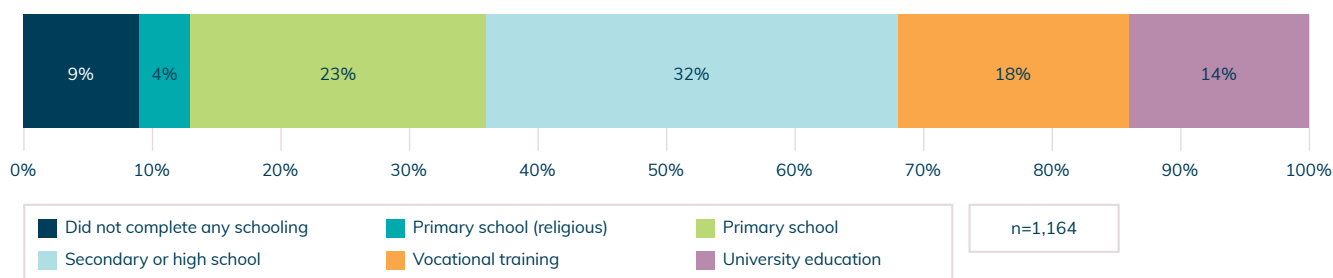
19 World Bank Group, [Empowering adolescent girls in Africa through education \(worldbank.org\)](https://www.worldbank.org/) (accessed 6 May 2024)

20 96% of youth respondents in Niger indicated economic reasons as among the reasons why they had left their country of origin.

21 92% of youth respondents who had completed primary school and 91% of those who attended vocational training indicated economic reasons as among the top reasons for leaving their country of origin.

22 Only youth respondents who were earning money and answered "regular paid employment" or "occasional/temporary work" or "business owner/independent worker" to the question on the type of their source of money were asked the question on sector of employment.

Figure 7. Respondent's education level (youth who were making money at the time of interview)

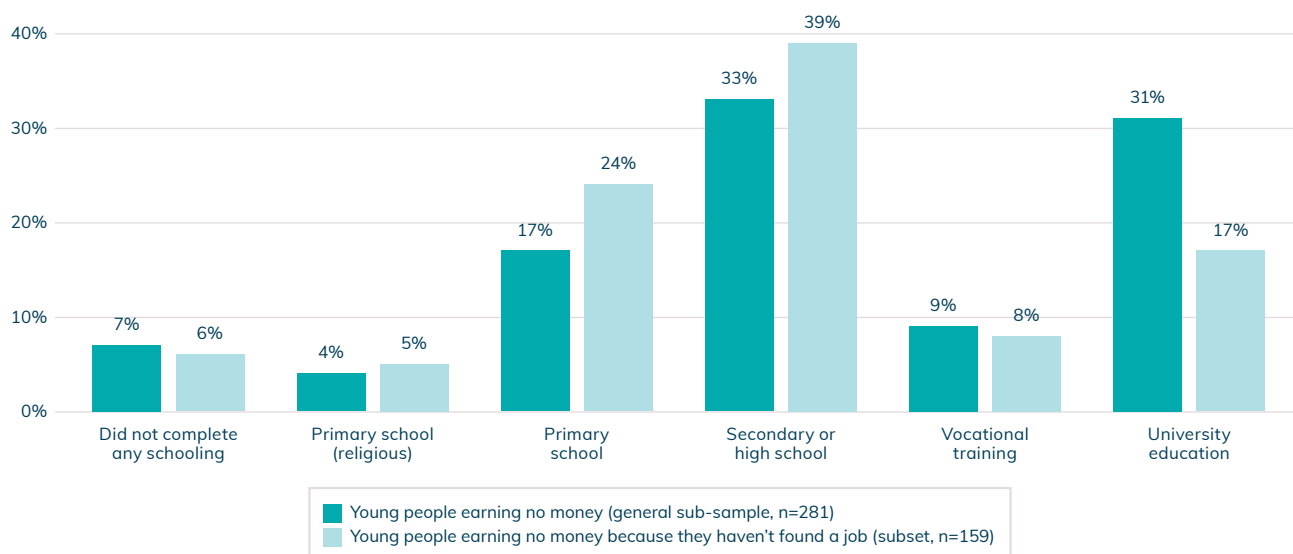


Barriers to livelihoods

Among youth respondents, the level of education did not considerably influence the ability to earn an income, except for respondents who had vocational skills. The level of education among youth respondents who were not making money at the time of interview is similar to the overall level of education among youth respondents. However, youth who received vocational training (n=235) less often reported that they were not making money (11%).

The primary factor hindering income generation among youth respondents was the challenge of finding employment opportunities. Asking respondents who were not making money at the time of interview (n=282) why that was the case, 56% reported that they could not find a job and 24% reported that they were students (see Figure 5). Even though 31% of respondents who reported not earning money at the time of interview had a university education (n=86), they actually reported more often than other educational categories that it was because they were still students (54/86).

Figure 8. Respondents' education level (youth who were not earning money at the time of interview)



Youth respondents with a lower level of education stated more often that they could not find a job as the main reason for not making money. Figure 8 underscores the differences²³ between youth respondents who had attained primary and secondary education as their highest level of education and youth respondents who were not earning money because they could not find a job. Moreover, even though the subset sizes are small, 39/47 of youth respondents not earning money who

finished primary school and 62/93 who completed their secondary education were not able to make money because they could not find a job.

The level of education of youth respondents did not appear to be a barrier to accessing job opportunities as compared to other factors. Asking youth respondents unable to find a job so far (n=159) why this was the case, only 5% indicated that it was because they did not have

²³ Compared to the general educational level of youths in the sub-sample of respondents who were not making money and from which this subset is derived.

the required qualification or diploma for the jobs available to them. This suggests that the skills demanded by the jobs accessible to migrants matched or fell below their educational qualifications. On the other hand, 35% gave as a reason that there were no jobs available and 34%

reported that they did not know where to look for a job. Across all educational levels, these two reasons are cited most frequently, together with the reason that some respondents are not staying long enough in the city of interview to start working (12%).

Educational aspirations and needs among youth respondents

Educational needs are generally lower in the sample age group (18 to 24) than in younger generations. The need for education is lower for this age group, as young adults more often need to focus on finding employment and income-generating activities than teenagers and children.

Drivers of migration

The primary reasons given by youth respondents for leaving their country of origin were economic factors (79%), followed by a culture of migration (27%), access to services and corruption (15%), and personal or family reasons (14%). Youth men respondents more often cited economic factors (84%, compared to 68% for women) among the reasons for leaving. The multiplicity of reasons cited for undertaking a migratory journey underlines the multi-factorial nature of migration decisions, where aspirations to access a better quality of life dominate but cannot in themselves explain the factors driving migration.

Youth respondents who had completed primary education (n=312) or vocational training (n=235) more often cited economic factors as among the primary reasons for migration (91% and 92% respectively). On the other hand, youth respondents who had a university education (n=245) less often cited economic factors among their reasons for leaving (31%). Compared to other groups, youth respondents who had a university education more often cited access to services/corruption (53%) and personal or family reasons (25%) to explain why they had left their country of origin. Other factors can explain the mobility of youth with university education within the region, including the mismatch

between their skill set and jobs available to them in their country of origin.²⁴

Migration decision-making and educational aspirations

Educational aspirations only played a minor role in youth respondents' decision to leave their country of origin.

Only 12% indicated a lack of educational opportunities when asked about the reasons for leaving their country of origin. Proportionally to their overall representation in the youth sub-sample, women more often cited the lack of educational opportunities as a reason that explained why they had left their country of origin.²⁵

Of the respondents who indicated that educational aspirations factored in their decision to migrate, access to higher education seems to have played a prominent role. Indeed, of the respondents who reported having left their country of origin due to a lack of educational opportunities (n=172), 70% had a university education at the time of interview. Besides, 72% of these respondents were interviewed in Tunis, which supports the assumption that Tunis is an attractive hub as the city offers higher educational opportunities, including for migrants.

For 13% of youth respondents, access to better education was a motivation factor that led them to select one specific desired destination. Youth respondents who had a university education (n=245) more often cited access to better education as a reason for choosing their preferred destination (33%) compared to respondents who had access to lower levels of education.²⁶

24 ILO (2008), [Good practice from West Africa. Building the case for business collaboration on youth employment](#)

25 Of the youth respondents who indicated the lack of educational facilities as a reason that explained why they had left their country of origin (n=172), 47% were women, whereas women represented 35% of the overall youth sub-sample.

26 Such as 9% of those who received a vocational training (n=235).

Education needs: differences by gender, education level and city

Overall, the most needed education services of youth respondents are foreign language training (33%) and vocational training (28%). This typology of educational needs reflects skills required for access to an income-generating activity, which corresponds to an aspiration characteristic of the age group studied (18 to 24). It should be noted, however, that 32% of those surveyed replied that they did not require any educational services. This figure is even higher for women (40%) than for men (28%), reflecting their overall higher level of education. Two sub-categories of youth female respondents stand out: those for whom the lack of educational opportunities in their country of origin influenced their decision to migrate on the one hand (see previous section), and those who declared they had no educational needs on the other hand.

The type of education-related services youth respondents need varies according to their level of education. 40% of youth respondents who completed vocational training (n=235) indicated the need for foreign language courses, which is 13 percentage points higher than among respondents who did not complete any educational cycle (17%, n=122). The latter express above all the need to access literacy skills (24%) and/or vocational training (20%). However, access to vocational training is more often cited as a need among respondents who reported primary school (33%, n=312) and secondary education (34%, n=471), as their highest education levels achieved. Access to tertiary education opportunities is cited as a need primarily among youth respondents with a university education (51%, n=245), whereas this need is cited by only a minority of the other categories of respondents (for only 9% of youth migrants with a secondary education, for example).

Figure 9. Education-related services needed by youth respondents (by city)

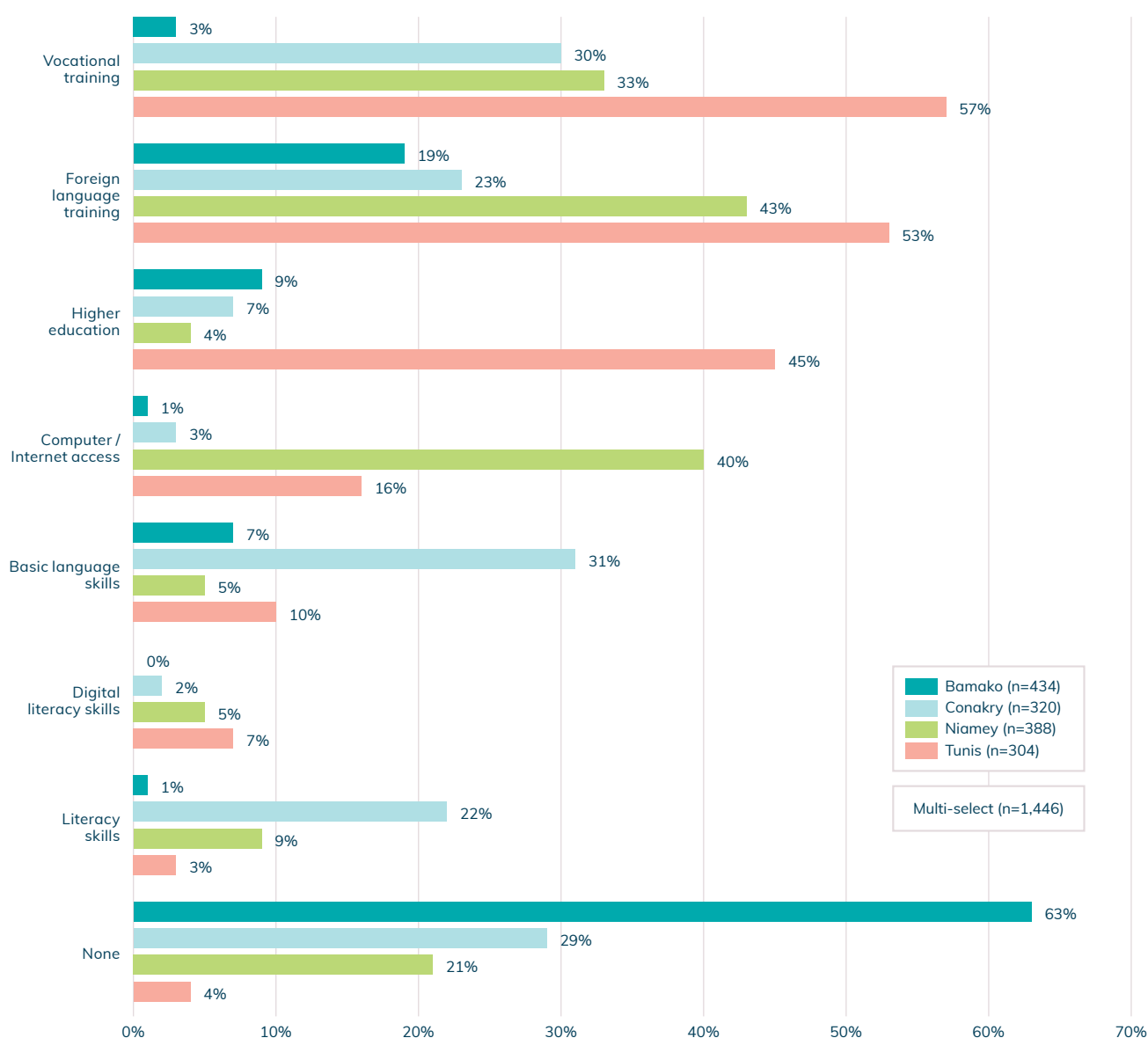


Figure 9 underscores major differences between the four cities, which are likely connected to the fact that respondents' educational profiles and labor market needs vary by city.

- In **Bamako** (n=434), 63% of youth respondents reported no need for education-related services, and only 3% cited vocational training. The two most reported sectors of activity among youth respondents who earned money in Bamako (n=361) were small-scale business (51%), including street vendors, and sex work (23%). Given that the activities in question do not demand high levels of education and most respondents did not require education-related services, this suggests that easy access to an income-generating activity in Bamako relegates educational aspirations and needs to second place among the priorities of youth respondents.
- In **Conakry** (n=320), 22% reported they needed basic literacy skills, which is much higher than in other cities (1% in Bamako, 9% in Niamey and 3% in Tunis). This is also similar for basic language skills, where 31% of youth respondents in Conakry reported to be in need (compared to 7% in Bamako, 5% in Niamey and 10% in Tunis). The overall lower level of education among youth respondents and the over-representation of respondents originally from an English-speaking country (Sierra Leone) in Conakry are key factors in explaining the nature of these education needs.
- Youth respondents in **Niamey** (n=388) proportionally more often indicated needing access to a computer and/or Internet connection (40%) compared to respondents in other cities. This suggests that youth respondents in Niamey were more likely to face practical barriers when trying to access online educational opportunities that were made available to them. Moreover, 43% of the youth respondents reported that they needed foreign language training. This can be related to the overrepresentation of Nigerians among respondents in Niger (9%), who are more likely to need French language education compared to migrants from French-speaking countries in the region. Furthermore, it can be related to an anticipated need in the next stretch of their journey where other language skills will be helpful (i.e. the average period of stay in Niamey was the lowest among the four cities).
- In **Tunis** (n=304), more than half of the youth respondents needed vocational training (57%) and foreign language training (53%). Only 4% reported no educational needs. The need for vocational training may illustrate a mismatch between youth respondents' educational level and the skills required for the jobs available to them in the local labor market. While the highest proportion of youth

university students and graduates were recorded in Tunis, most youth respondents in Tunis were earning money (n=109) as domestic workers (43%), small-business owners (29%) or in the construction sector (19%). Besides tending to be overqualified for these activities, the prevalent need to learn a foreign language (presumably Arabic) underscores its importance in accessing job opportunities in Tunis.

Disaggregated by gender and city, differences are minor, except for a few occurrences.

In Conakry, youth men respondents more often reported needing vocational training than women (33% compared to 21%). Slightly more youth women respondents reported needing foreign language training (26% compared to 21%) likely due to the overrepresentation of women Sierra Leonians (46%, compared to 38% of men) among youth respondents interviewed in Conakry. In Niamey, more youth men respondents reported needing vocational training than youth women (45% compared to 35%). In Tunis, more youth women respondents reported needing higher education services (58% compared to 39%).

Professional skills needed

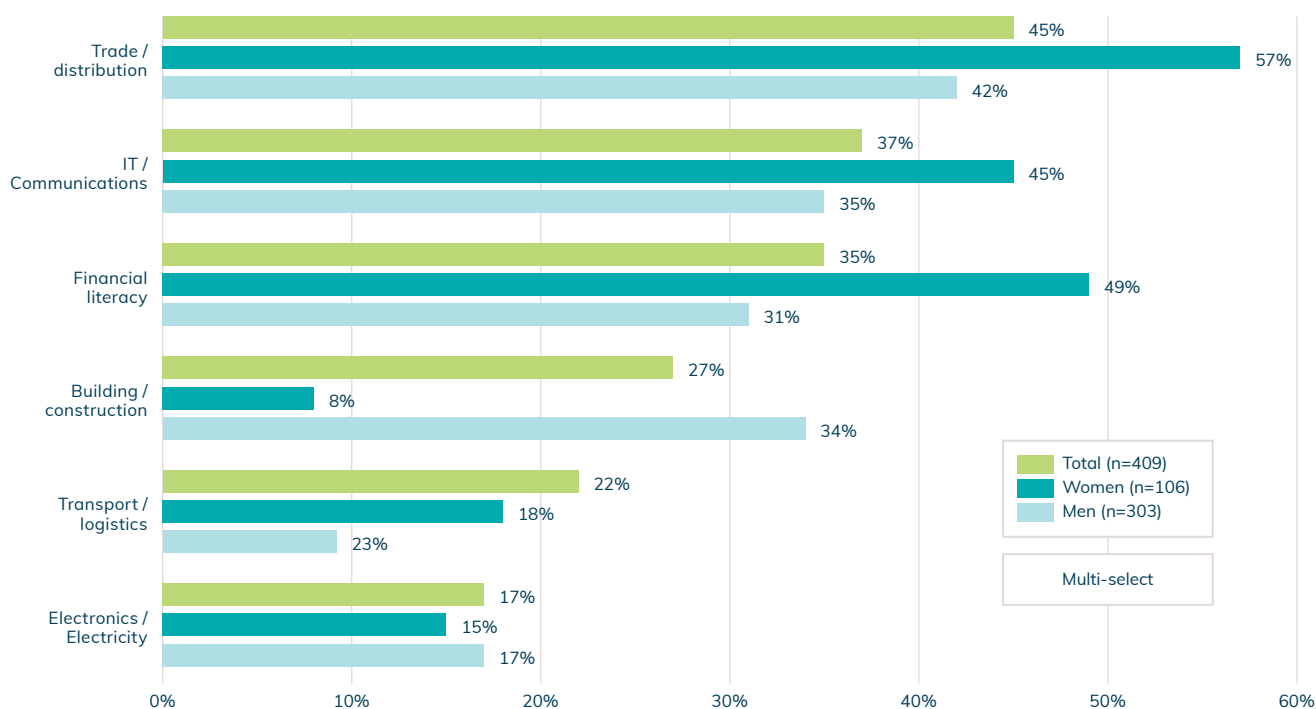
Of the 409 youth respondents who indicated that they needed vocational training, 45% reported they needed this in the area of trade, 37% in IT/communications and 35% in financial literacy.

The vocational training needs of respondents varied by gender, reflecting a gender division of technical and manual labor among migrants.

Youth women more often reported they needed vocational training in the area of trade (57%), in IT / communications (45%) and financial literacy (49%) than men (42%, 35% and 31% respectively). Youth men respondents more often reported needing vocational training in the area of building/construction (34%) than women (8%). This matches the gendered nature of the labor market in West Africa as most employment opportunities for women remain in the areas of domestic work and trade.²⁷

27 ILO (2020), [Women migrant workers' labour market situation in West Africa](#)

Figure 10. Types of vocational training needed among youth respondents (by gender)



Conclusion

This report delves into the differing educational situations and needs of youth migrants and their caregivers in Bamako, Conakry, Niamey, and Tunis, revealing distinct patterns. Overall, the average level of education of all respondents was relatively low, with one third (34%) reporting they had a level of education below secondary school. Having completed vocational training appeared to influence access to income, with 18% of all youth respondents who were earning money at the time of interview having undergone vocational training, compared to 9% of youth respondents who were not generating income. Youth respondents' decisions to leave their country of origin were minimally influenced by their educational aspirations. However, for respondents seeking educational opportunities, access to higher

education appeared to be a more determining factor, especially in Tunis. Among all youth respondents, the most needed education services were foreign language training (33%) and vocational training (28%). Regarding professional skills learning aspirations, 45% reported they needed this in trade, 37% in IT/communications and 35% in financial literacy. On the other hand, only 9% of all caregiver respondents indicated vocational training as a need for their children, whereas they cited access to primary or secondary education (either formal or informal) more often. Across all cities, the main barrier that caregiver respondents reported regarding educational services for their children was a lack of financial resources.



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