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NEXT GENERATION

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> ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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> FOREWORDS

The British Council is about connections, trust, understanding and opportunity. In Ethiopia, as in the other countries where we operate on the African continent, we look to build connections between people in the UK and this beautiful country that hosts us.

Much of our programmatic work here is aimed at creating opportunities for young people, enabling them to fulfil their potential, improve their employability, develop their resilience and build their networks. To do that properly, and in a way that leads to long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between the UK and Ethiopia, we need to listen to young people. We need to understand their hopes and aspirations, their worries and concerns, and we need to tap into their ideas and their creativity.

To this end, the British Council developed the Next Generation series, commissioning research in countries that, like Ethiopia, are experiencing a period of significant change.

We have done this with the aim of ensuring that young people's voices are heard and their interests properly represented in decisions that may have lasting implications for their lives. Next Generation research has already been conducted in countries including the UK, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Ireland, Kenya, South Africa, Myanmar and Germany. Next Generation Zimbabwe will follow later this year.

Next Generation Ethiopia examines young people's sense of their lives at this critical point in the country's history. It looks at how they see their future in these times of change. It asks young people if they feel as if they have a stake in their society and in its politics. It interrogates their hopes, their aspirations, their dreams. Do they feel their voices are being heard by the elders, the leaders, the media and the opinion formers? Do they have agency? To what extent are the youth in Ethiopia engaged in the civic, economic, social and democratic life of their country?

Are they influencing their community, their country and wider world? Do they feel able to? Do they even want to?

These are some of the questions that young people across Ethiopia offered their views on as the research was conducted over the past few months. It is their views that this research reflects, and we hope policymakers and influencers will find it as illuminating as we have in the British Council, as we seek to understand better what matters to young people across Ethiopia, as we listen to their voices, and as we continue our efforts to support them in achieving their potential as creative, fulfilled and active citizens.

Peter Brown
Director British Council, Ethiopia

A room full of bright and intelligent young people invested in figuring out where the problem really lies, discussing and debating issues, reflecting and learning throughout the process: that's what being part of the youth task force feels like. It's one of the best experiences we've had so far.

We started this research with the purpose of considering the challenges and opportunities for young people, and to amplify their voice. But after taking part in this research, we realised that if it were properly used, this report could change Ethiopia for the better.

Throughout the course of the research, hope and optimism shone through, although accompanied by some frustration – what the authors describe as a 'cocktail of hope, uncertainty and fear'. It is important to take this seriously – after all, young people constitute more than half of the population of our country. And we do believe that our bright and optimistic leader has imbued the youth with hope.

We grew up loving this place deeply; we have listened to old stories about our country that instilled pride and love in our very core. This country is one of the oldest, most historical and most cultural hubs of Africa. Yet this proud country is now going through a crisis.

Unemployment, the quality of education and youth political participation are all issues that need to be addressed, but we fear they are overshadowed by the issue of ethnicity, which threatens the wellbeing of Ethiopia.

Ethnicity has become the most defining and dividing characteristic of our social structure, often taking precedence over our shared humanity. To sustain our harmonious coexistence, we will need to start a genuine dialogue to build greater national consensus and to open the way to meaningful reform. This Next Generation research report can be a great starting point.

This research sheds light on issues we have always known about and brings evidence to underpin them; it magnifies unaddressed issues and sheds light on the direction we need to travel. As well as creating awareness, it calls for further genuine dialogue to support policy enhancement. We hope it will serve as a reference for future change makers.

We would add that we, the youth task force, have benefited from being part of the process, and that being in a group of such dynamic current and future influencers has played a significant role in shaping our paths. Now that the research has highlighted the issues that need to be worked on, we will be devoting ourselves to the next chapter – driving the change, alongside our people, to take Ethiopia to a better place.

Now is the time to empower our youth to take ownership of their future and the country of their birth. The wellbeing of Ethiopia rests in the hands of those who can put humanity before ethnicity.

Ethiopia is an ancient and noble country, mentioned in both the Bible and Quran; such history should seek to remind us that the difficulties we face today are not new. What is renewed is our understanding and our resolve to tackle that which holds us back, and to keep moving forward together for the sake of this great country.

With all our hearts, we believe that Ethiopia will rise and shine.

Next Generation Ethiopia Youth Task Force

> EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background to the research

This report presents the findings from mixed-method research exploring the contexts, attitudes and aspirations of Ethiopian youth aged 15–29, as part of the British Council's Next Generation research programme. This research series explores young people's needs, daily lives and outlooks in countries undergoing significant change, with the aim of ensuring their voices in relation to these changes are heard and placed at the forefront of youth policy.

The findings outlined in this report are a synthesis of a literature review exploring the socio-political and youth context in Ethiopia, a nationally representative quantitative survey, and qualitative workshops and in-depth interviews with young people aged 15–29.

This research took place against a backdrop of significant change in Ethiopia: after taking office in April 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed wasted no time in instigating a series of reforms and promising to take Ethiopia on the road towards democracy. However, this change has also been accompanied by significant amounts of uncertainty and tension.

This research aims to bring to life the youth experience of this uncertain time in Ethiopia and outline what young people feel they want and need – not only to achieve their personal goals and ambitions but to see Ethiopia prosper and flourish.

Research was conducted by independent expert youth research agency 2CV with the help of our local partners[1] and with the input of the British Council team and the Youth Task Force, which comprised 15 members of the Youth Advisory Panel.[2]

Summary of findings

Young Ethiopians were optimistic about their own futures (77 per cent) and the future of Ethiopia (64 per cent think Ethiopia will improve in the next five years). Young people enthusiastically cited a series of positive changes and improvements they have witnessed in the past five years, including freedom of speech, press freedom, gender equality, access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and improved educational opportunities. More than half of young people also felt that their role in Ethiopian society has improved over the last five years (54 per cent), and a similar proportion (55 per cent) felt they have more of a role in the community compared to their parents' generation. Reflective of recent changes in Ethiopia, two-thirds of young people reported feeling more positive about their futures now, compared to 12 months ago (65 per cent). When we asked young people to choose three words to describe their country, the word most commonly chosen was 'love', a testament to the pride young people feel in their nation.

While youth reported feeling positive, this optimism was quite fragile, and the issues experienced by youth at the time of this research were having a detrimental impact on their daily realities and decision making. Ethnic conflict and rapid political changes are causing anxiety and uncertainty for young Ethiopians. The biggest challenges experienced by young people at the time of this research included lack of employment opportunities (38 per cent), lack of access to housing or poor-quality housing (38 per cent), ethnic conflict and discrimination (38 per cent), political corruption and violence (36 per cent) and a lack of financial security (31 per cent).

Overall, younger participants (15–18) and young women tended to be more positive about the issues discussed in this report, whereas older participants (25–29), youth in Tigray and young men reported feeling more negative. We also saw some important differences in the views of urban and rural youth across major themes, reflecting their highly varied daily realities.

Despite being an ethnically and religiously mixed, and politically divided, country, it is interesting to note that in terms of young people's values and pride points in their country, there is more that unites than divides young Ethiopians. Across the locations we visited in our qualitative research,[3] young people espoused the same values of faith, family, education, work and peace. There was also a high degree of consistency in the things that made young people proud to be Ethiopian – the food, coffee ceremonies, rich history and other cultural and religious traditions that make Ethiopia a unique place to live. Young people were also in agreement about the main issues that affect Ethiopia and impact youth. We summarise the findings for each of these below.

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1   > Havis Ltd. and the Sub Saharan Africa Research and Training Center (SART) helped us organise all elements of the qualitative research, while quantitative interviews were overseen by Sagaci.
2   > This panel was established by 1HMG and includes members drawn from the government, private and NGO sectors, the academic community and others deemed to have relevant expertise.
3   > Addis Ababa, Tigray (Mekelle and Hawana); Amhara (Debre Birhan and Chacha); SNNPR (Hawassa and Leku); and Oromia (Adama and Mermersa).

Voice

More than half (55 per cent) of young people feel they have more of a role in Ethiopian society compared to their parents. They told us they have more of a say in issues that matter to them compared to previous generations and that they feel more in control over decisions, like whether to stay in education and whom to marry.

While young people are feeling more empowered, they felt there is still opportunity for things to progress further. For example, they told us that speaking up at community meetings was frowned upon, with some even fearing retaliation from other community members for speaking up. They also told us that their role and status in the community was conditional on factors such as age, employment status, marriage status and behaviour. In other words, having a voice is earned by meeting certain standards and fitting into specific norms; it is not a guaranteed right.

When considering 'voice' at a national level, there is an appetite for greater youth engagement in politics, with young people expressing a desire to be more aware of what is happening in their country. Thirty-six per cent of young people stated that they have open discussions about politics with friends and family, and a similar proportion reported consuming political content via television or radio (32 per cent). Despite expressing interest, formal youth engagement with politics was low: 14 per cent claimed to be personally engaged with politics, while 53 per cent claimed to be unengaged. Issues like corruption, ethnic conflict and limited awareness of platforms or avenues through which to get involved were holding youth back from speaking up about political issues.

Politics – perceptions of the government, corruption and ethnic conflict

Young people's relationship with the government and politics is complex. Trust in the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the leading party, was relatively low (35 per cent stated they trust the government), and only 31 per cent of young people felt the government is effective, with youth in rural areas expressing higher levels of distrust and ineffectiveness. Young people told us that the activities and agenda of the EPRDF are relatively opaque to them and that corruption is rife. While the election of a reformist leader (Abiy Ahmed) was seen as a positive step by the party, some youth in our qualitative sessions felt cynical about the true motives behind this change – with some stating this was a half-hearted compromise from the party, a way to demonstrate a willingness to change without giving up power.

Views towards Abiy Ahmed were mixed. While many young people agreed that the new Prime Minister had instigated a series of positive reforms, they also worried about the rise in ethnic tensions and conflict that has accompanied these changes. Only 20 per cent of young people agreed that 'having a strong political leader' had been achieved in Ethiopia. In our qualitative sessions, many young people still supported the vision of the Prime Minister but were starting to lose faith in his ability to exert a positive influence within the constraints of the current political system.

Political corruption also emerged as a top issue experienced by young people in the past five years (36 per cent), something they were currently experiencing (36 per cent) and one

of the top three issues they wanted to overcome (30 per cent). Young people felt corruption impacted their lives on both a societal level (i.e. it has impacted Ethiopia's development opportunities and economy through misappropriation of funds) and a personal level (i.e. it has thwarted their opportunities to get government loans to start their own business and has impacted the funding that goes to local communities). While the new Prime Minister has been explicit about his intentions to crack down on corruption, many young people in our qualitative sessions told us they have not yet felt the impact of this.

In addition to corruption, increased ethnic conflict emerged as a political issue facing youth. In our quantitative survey, ethnic conflict/discrimination was one of the most pressing issues facing young people and has become more of a concern over time, with 38 per cent of young people stating they are currently experiencing this issue and 54 per cent stating it is a priority issue to overcome in the future. In our qualitative sessions, young people made a direct link between Abiy Ahmed's reforms and the increase in ethnic conflict. Views were divided as to whether the new Prime Minister is stoking the flame of ethnic conflict or trying to quell it with a message of peace and unity, but most young people agreed that the situation has declined as a result of the pace of change in the country. Young people in our qualitative sessions told us they fear that ethnic conflict will never be resolved unless the political structures fundamentally change and cease to be organised along ethnic lines. Young people were eager to see changes that will lead to a more united Ethiopia.

Education

Young people felt optimistic about educational opportunities in Ethiopia and reported noticing the increase in educational institutions over the last two decades. Access to education did not emerge as a major barrier, with only two in ten young people stating that they had experienced this challenge in the last five years. More than half believed that educational opportunities have improved in the last five years, putting education in the top five opportunity areas that young people think have improved.

Despite these improvements, key barriers to education remained, with low household income (38 per cent) and personal challenges (e.g. early marriage, pregnancy – 19 per cent) cited as top reasons for dropping out of education. Young people with disabilities and young women faced additional educational challenges as a result of negative social norms (for both) and issues with physical access (for youth with disabilities). In our qualitative sessions, young people told us that increased ethnic tension was also complicating decisions about *where* or even *whether* to go to university, as travelling to other regions feels increasingly risky.

While access to education has improved, quality remains an issue. Young people across locations (especially in rural areas) complained about a severe lack of resources (e.g. lack of books, computers, laboratories), lack of practical experience and poor-quality teaching. In fact, 30 per cent of young people stated they had been negatively impacted by poor-quality education. Young people told us their education did not adequately prepare them for work. Only a third (29 per cent) of youth felt their education prepared them well for work and just 23 per cent stated that it had improved their chances of getting a job. In line with this, fewer than half said they had received support and advice about employment while at

school (42 per cent). Those aged 15–18 and those in education were more likely to say they had received no support (81 per cent of 15- to 18-year-olds and 70 per cent of those currently in secondary school). Lack of support was also higher in rural versus urban areas (67 per cent versus 57 per cent). Young people also felt that the curriculum at the time of this research does not adequately prepare young people for entrepreneurship, something the current market increasingly demands, and that other practical skills such as CV writing and interview skills are lacking.

While the Ethiopian education system does offer students a more practical skills-based educational route through the Technical and Vocational Training Programme, this system does not necessarily offer an easier route into employment and suffers from a poor reputation.

Employment

A lack of employment opportunities was a big source of anxiety for young people across this research and was felt to have a range of detrimental consequences, including substance abuse issues and emigration to other countries. Half of our quantitative sample said that a lack of employment opportunities had impacted them negatively in the past five years (47 per cent), and 38 per cent stated they were currently experiencing this issue. Of the 24 issues presented to young people, a lack of employment opportunities was consistently chosen as one of the biggest issues across demographic sub-groups and in both urban and rural locations, and as one of the top issues youth felt must be overcome in the next five years.

According to youth, a lack of support for entrepreneurship, nepotism and ageism were big issues contributing to unemployment. Youth in our qualitative sessions asserted that it is difficult to get a job without the right connections

and that older people look down on young people who lack experience. Given these challenging circumstances, it is unsurprising that 75 per cent of our sample stated that they would like to set up their own business (this sentiment was stronger in urban (78 per cent) versus rural areas (49 per cent)). However, only 56 per cent of young people believed setting up a business was achievable, with no urban/rural differences. In our qualitative sessions, young people told us they lacked the practical skills and government support to set up businesses – with procedures for securing government loans being overly complicated and bureaucratic.

Lack of employment opportunities had a range of negative consequences for young people across this research, with loss of income (71 per cent), psychological challenges (including increased levels of stress and stress-related illness (37 per cent)) and low self-esteem (36 per cent) presenting major challenges. In our qualitative sessions, young people told us that issues such as substance abuse and sexual harassment were on the rise and that young people are increasingly looking outside of Ethiopia for employment opportunities, with a quarter of young people stating they would move outside of Ethiopia in the future (24 per cent) and a further 20 per cent stating they would like to but are unable to.

Despite high levels of unemployment, young people still considered having a secure job (80 per cent) and a job that they love (80 per cent) as the two biggest contributors to their future success and happiness, across both urban and rural locations. However, only 26 per cent claimed to have found a job they love (26 per cent), with even fewer stating they had a secure job (22 per cent). Despite placing high levels of personal happiness on employment, young people placed employment low on the list of opportunity areas that they think are likely to improve in the future.

Access to and trust in information

A key change under Abiy Ahmed's leadership has been increasing access to information and technology. As well as modernising a telecommunications network that had fallen behind other African nations, Abiy Ahmed has made big changes to the Ethiopian media, lifting censorship bans and freeing journalists and other political prisoners. These changes were experienced positively by youth: of all the areas we asked young people about, access to the media and technology was the area most youth felt had improved over the last five years. Two-thirds of young people thought that access had improved (66 per cent), and more than three-quarters expected it to continue to improve over the next five years (79 per cent).

Two-thirds reported having access to a mobile phone (67 per cent) and to the internet (65 per cent), and just under two-thirds had access to a smartphone (59 per cent). In our qualitative sessions, young people told us that mobile phones have become an integral part of daily life and are heavily relied upon for social networking and access to news. Despite increased access to internet-enabled mobile phones, the most commonly used source of information for news and current affairs was television (84 per cent), followed by radio (72 per cent) and social media (54 per cent). Family and friends also remain an important source for half of young people (51 per cent).

Overall, most young Ethiopians had some trust in the media, with 74 per cent having some trust and ten per cent stating they trust it a lot. Young people told us that since Abiy Ahmed came into power, levels of trust in the media have improved.

Despite relatively high levels of trust, fake news was seen to be a big issue with Ethiopia's media,[4] with almost three-quarters of young people thinking this was an issue (72 per cent). Qualitatively this was largely driven by a heightened media narrative around 'fake news' (particularly on social media channels such as Facebook) as an issue and thus a heightened national awareness of the problem.

Access to healthcare and housing

Healthcare was not seen to be an issue for young people and very few said it was an issue that needed to be overcome. Only three per cent said they were currently experiencing lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and four per cent other kinds of healthcare. Access to healthcare was one of the top five areas that have improved in the last five years, and there was an expectation among young people in this research that it would continue to improve over the next five years. In the qualitative sessions, a few participants mentioned the previous Minister for Health, Tedros Adhanom, and his role in improving healthcare in Ethiopia.

Lack of access to housing or poor-quality housing was a top challenge for young people, ranking in the top three challenge areas that young people are currently experiencing. Housing issues are especially prevalent in urban areas, most notably in Addis Ababa, where young people told us that space has run out and that tensions with surrounding regions are coming to the fore as the city expands into Oromia. Electricity and access to running water were also noted as an issue at the time of research due to a nationwide shortage and subsequent restrictions on usage.

Support and solutions

Emphasis placed on 'the self' and a low level of awareness regarding youth policies and initiatives meant that young people in Ethiopia found it difficult to articulate how support outside of their family or the community might look. That said, when prompted, participants had some specific ideas on the types of support that would help them achieve their goals. We explore this in the context of the different chapters covered in this report below.

Politics: the Ethiopian political landscape is complex, with support and solutions straddling the specific issues we outline

1. Engagement and voice

Youth called for political information to be more accessible and easier to understand to help drive engagement with politics. They asked for more formal and informal platforms (e.g. community centres to discuss politics and political clubs at schools) to aid political discussions about issues that matter to them. There was also a desire to tackle perceptions that the Ethiopian government is not transparent by creating more direct lines of communication between young people and politicians and encouraging increased representation of young people in government posts.

2. Corruption

Youth wanted government spending to be more transparent and reassurance that policies will be properly enforced and published online to increase accountability. In line with this, they wanted reassurance that those who engage in the misappropriation of government funds would be appropriately punished.

3. Ethnic conflict/discrimination

The link between economic gain and ethnicity is firmly established among young Ethiopians, with young people telling us that ethnic conflict would not be overcome unless the ethnicity of the individual in power ceases to influence economic advantage and/or disadvantage.

Young people felt that schools and universities need to play a role in shifting the mindset of Ethiopia from one of ethnicity to one of unity. For example, they felt that universities need to take responsibility for the conflict that is currently being experienced on campus, and primary and secondary schools should teach students to celebrate diversity from an early age.

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4   > Note: Our questionnaire asked about 'media' in general, not social media specifically.

Education: support and solutions in relation to education centre around access, quality and preparation for work

1. Access

Lack of access to schools was a prominent issue for those with a physical disability and those with learning difficulties and for young women, with young people calling for better provisions for these groups. Young people with a disability told us they wanted better accessibility for disabled students (for example, ensuring all schools are fitted with ramps and lifts) and more 'normalisation' of disability in Ethiopian society. Young women called for a fairer distribution of household chores and for continued efforts to ensure parents see the value in girls' education. There was also a sense that there is a need for more tailored approaches for students who may experience learning difficulties and require extra attention.

2. Quality and preparation for work

Young people called for better training for teachers and an emphasis on more practical experience, particularly focusing on skills that would be beneficial outside the classroom environment (e.g. tips for CV writing and interviewing). Young people also wanted reassurance that there will be clearer links between education and job opportunities in the future to create smoother education–employment pathways for youth. While technical and vocational education and training (TVET) offers an alternative educational route, it is currently not attracting young Ethiopians and has developed a negative reputation, suggesting the need for a 're-brand' to increase appeal among youth.

Employment: ideas from the Ethiopian youth centre on ensuring there are enough employment opportunities available to young people

Youth called for increased financial and skill-based support to facilitate entrepreneurship and business skills. They told us they want hiring practices to be more transparent to encourage a shift away from nepotism, sexism, ageism and ableism, requiring companies to publish diversity data to increase accountability. Finally, there was a desire for increased investment in profit-yielding crops and more of an incentive offered for farmers to invest in land, alongside a continued investment in the private sector.

Basic provisions: young people called for the provision of adequate housing to become a top priority for the government

Young people called for reassurance that there will be adequate housing provision to keep up with the growing population, especially in urban areas where housing shortages present a huge problem. They called for policies that would allow the housing issue to be addressed long-term and in a sustainable manner, without pushing young people out of the cities. There was a sense from young people that investing in rural areas (and thereby slowing rural–urban migration) would help ease pressure on the housing issue.

> INTRODUCTION

The British Council, as part of its worldwide Next Generation research programme, gathers youth voices from disparate nations of different geographies, cultures, wealth and opportunities, but with one core similarity: they are all in transition. Ethiopia, like many other Next Generation nations, faces a 'youth bulge' demographic profile, as a rapidly expanding youth population reaches an economy that is not yet prepared for it. Of 104 million Ethiopians, an estimated 29 million are aged 15–29, and the number of young people in this age group could rise to 40 million by 2030 (Youth Power, 2018).[5] Addis Ababa and other urban centres have up to 40 per cent youth populations at any given time.

Coupled with Ethiopia's growing youth population is a limited labour market heavily rooted in agriculture. As one of the least urbanised countries in the world (World Bank, 2019a),[6] many employed people (83 per cent) make their living from subsistence agriculture (CSA, 2018),[7] providing few alternative career opportunities for the younger generation. This, paired with limited opportunities in the private sector, means young people are under pressure to navigate an increasingly competitive market, typically with limited skills and education (CIA, 2019).[8]

While education enrolment is increasing and more young people have access to schools, Ethiopia still has the world's third largest out-of-school population and the quality of education is often poor, with drop-out rates high (OECD, 2018).[9] There is a mismatch between the skills taught in schools and those demanded by the labour market, making job opportunities scarce even for those with university degrees (OECD, 2018).[10]

This difficult education and employment landscape is also paired with considerable amounts of political change and uncertainty. In April 2018, Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister and immediately instigated a series of radical political reforms, including freeing the press, unbanning political parties, freeing political prisoners, ending the border dispute with Eritrea and promising fair and democratic elections in 2020. This young, charismatic, ethnically and religiously mixed leader has laid out a new vision for Ethiopia, which has been met with excitement and hope, but also considerable amounts of fear and uncertainty about what the future holds.

Despite a greater emphasis on developing and implementing youth-focused policies and initiatives aimed at increasing youth employment and entrepreneurship in recent years,[11] little is known about what exactly young people want and need in order to succeed and become happy and fulfilled citizens. This report aims to give a voice to young Ethiopians by outlining how this unique mix of political upheaval and hope impacts the day-to-day lives of young people, the opportunities available to them, their hopes for the future and, importantly, their sense of agency and voice.

Specifically, this research explored:

- **lives in context:** What are young people's needs, hopes and challenges in daily life? Where do they go for information? What/who do they trust? What are their daily activities? What are their relationships like with friends, family, the community and the wider political environment?

- **agency, voice and values:** To what extent do young people feel able to make decisions about things that matter to them? Do they feel listened to by their communities and Ethiopian society? Do they feel they play an important role in Ethiopian society? Can they effect change?

- **main issues:** What are the biggest issues impacting young people today? What issues do they suspect will arise in the future? How do they experience these and what impact do they have on young people's lives?

- **support and solutions:** What do young people need and want from those around them and from wider Ethiopian society to achieve their goals and ambitions? How do they want the issues they face to be overcome?

5 > Youth Power (2018) https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/resources/Ethiopia%20CSYA%20Situational%20Analysis_1.5.2018v2.pdf
6 > World Bank (2019a) https://data.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia
7 > CSA (2018) www.csa.gov.et/component/phocadownload/category/1-national-labour-force-survey
8 > CIA (2019) https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/et.html
9 > OECD (2018) www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-issues-in-ethiopia.htm
10 > *Ibid.*
11 > See, for example: www.youthpolicy.org/national/Ethiopia_2004_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

Who are the young Ethiopians in this report?

For the purpose of this research, 'young people' and 'young Ethiopians' are defined as those who are 15–29 years old, currently living in Ethiopia.

The federal (and ethnically mixed) nature of Ethiopia meant that we had to look at a wide audience to get a clear sense of the lives of young people across the country (see Appendix for a full sample breakdown). Our quantitative research covered both city administrations and five regional states: Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Oromia, Harari, Tigray, SNNPR and Amhara.[12] We also gathered data on religion, ethnicity (where possible[13]) and urban/rural locations, allowing us to look at sub-group differences within the data.

Half of the young people we spoke to were male (52 per cent) and half female (48 per cent). A quarter of the young people we spoke to (23 per cent) were married and two in ten had children (18 per cent). Two-thirds said they were financially self-reliant (62 per cent did not rely on others financially) and a third (32 per cent) had others who rely on them financially.

A third of young people were currently enrolled in school (29 per cent, including primary and secondary school). A further 14 per cent were in higher education (including undergraduate and postgraduate courses). A small proportion were currently enrolled in TVET institutions and other forms of training (six per cent). Half of the young people we spoke to were employed (48 per cent), with 22 per cent employed full time, 20 per cent stating that they were self-employed, and six per cent employed part time. Just under one in ten of the young people we surveyed were currently unemployed (eight per cent).

While the quantitative data allowed us to get a clear picture of the state of play across the country, our qualitative sessions allowed us to fill in the gaps, gather more detail and bring the youth voice to life. We covered both urban and rural locations across Addis Ababa, Tigray (Mekelle and Hawana), Amhara (Debre Berhan and Chacha), SNNPR (Hawassa and Leku) and Oromia (Adama and Mermersa). These locations were selected with our local Ethiopian partners to allow us to get a good mix of ethnicity, rural/urban coverage and religion.

What methods were used in this research?

Our approach was iterative and multi-method, with research taking place over three main stages.

A literature review: A short burst of desk research informed the research parameters and assisted with contextualising the findings detailed in this report. The literature review involved a review of published sources (peer-reviewed and grey literature) that were included for their focus on the social, political and economic space of young people in Ethiopia. We drew on research from the World Bank, Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Young Lives, Ethiopia WIDE, GAGE and other youth-focused academic research. We used databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR and the Ethiopian Data Portal. Search terms included 'youth' or 'young people' and 'Ethiopia'.

We reviewed key findings thematically and produced a report that synthesised current knowledge on youth in Ethiopia along key themes. These themes helped to inform our line of questioning in both the quantitative and qualitative research.

A nationally representative quantitative survey: A nationally representative face-to-face 30-minute survey with 2,332 young Ethiopians across the country, carried out with the help of a trusted local Ethiopian research agency. Interviewers approached a random selection of participants within each region. Recruitment of our sample was done via a random selection of primary selection units within each region.

Participants were screened for eligibility using a standard quantitative screener, capturing key demographical data including gender, age, region and religion. Certain quota controls were implemented as per discussions with the British Council (see Appendix), and final data was weighted to ensure consistency across quotas.

The quantitative survey explored the following subject areas:

- **personal profile:** current and previous living situation
- **education and employment status:** previous and current education and employment status, attitudes towards education and employment, potential barriers to educational and employment opportunities, access to additional facilities
- **issues and challenges:** perceptions of Ethiopia today and in the future, in the context of personal, social and economic challenges; priority areas for future
- **opportunities and aspirations:** perceptions of personal future, perceived impact of recent changes in Ethiopia across multiple areas both now and in the future, achievements and barriers
- **personal identity:** identification at different levels

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12   > We were unable to go to the remaining four regions due to safety reasons at the time of fieldwork.
13   > Note: Not every participant wanted to disclose their ethnicity.

- **global outlook:** attitudes towards and perceived opportunities in other countries
- **lifestyles and pastimes:** access and use of media channels and technology, sources of news and information and trust in these sources, perceived issues with Ethiopian media
- **political outlook:** engagement with politics, awareness of political youth policies, perceptions of the Ethiopian government, attitudes towards recent governmental changes.

Before fieldwork commenced, we ran an initial piloting phase with a small group of participants alongside the fieldwork agency responsible for conducting interviews. We were then able to amend the questionnaire based on specific feedback from participants. Findings from this stage were used to inform the focus of the later qualitative stages.

Qualitative workshops: 48 young people were selected to represent a spread of youth demographics and contexts[14] using free-find recruitment methods and a screening questionnaire to ensure eligibility for participation. The workshops took place across five locations (a mix of urban/rural areas) and involved three to four hours of discussion and private responses around key topic areas such as education, employment, voice and agency (decision making), views on government, daily lives and hopes for the future. Examples of exercises include:

- **persona exercises:** Draw and tell us about a 'typical young person' in your community. What is a typical day like? Who influences them? What are their hopes and fears? Who do they turn to for advice? What is their dream job?
- **waking up in a few years:** Imagine you woke up one morning and it is five years later. What would have changed? How would you feel? Would life be better or worse? What would you be doing? Who would you live with? What would be your best hopes/worst fears?

- **future pathways:** Draw and imagine one 'good future' and one 'bad future' and explain to us in detail all the things that would/could happen along the way to make each future a reality
- **theme sorting:** We gave participants a range of cards depicting key issues identified in the quantitative phase of research (i.e. corruption, government, education, employment) and asked them to sort them into 'not an issue where I live', 'an issue where I live' or 'a very important issue where I live' and explain in detail why
- **secret question/concern boxes:** An opportunity for participants to write secret questions or issues on post-its and drop them into a 'secret box'.

Throughout, our exercises built up from general discussion and 'easier' topics to those that were more personal or sensitive. We also used a wide range of projective exercises (e.g. 'what would a typical person from Mekelle do?' rather than 'what are you going to do?') so that the young people we spoke to did not feel under pressure to disclose sometimes difficult personal circumstances, and to encourage the airing of more controversial views.

This phase was not intended to provide a representative qualitative evidence base or to act as a standalone evidence base on the issues. Rather, it served as explanatory evidence for some of the patterns identified in the quantitative research and served to explore issues that are harder to pinpoint quantitatively (e.g. issues such as voice and agency).

360 community immersions: One-on-one interviews with a fresh sample of 30 participants (ten young people and 20+ friends and family members) to deep-dive into some of the themes identified in the workshops and to get a more in-depth understanding of the daily lives of individual young people. These sessions included the following three elements:

- a one-on-one in-depth interview with a youth participant (between 45 and 90 minutes) in their home
- an interview with the youth's friends and/or family (30 minutes to an hour) to understand some of the key issues from multiple perspectives and to broaden our sample
- an immersive 'walk-around' session, where youths walked us around their local area and helped us understand how some of the issues we discussed in our interviews play out in practice in their local community.

Our analysis process: Our analysis approach across this piece of research was iterative, and the research team worked with the British Council to evolve our questioning and approach in light of learnings at each stage. Analysis for all phases of the research was thematic, combining elements of content analysis and creative group brainstorm research. Our quantitative analysis focused on identifying statistically significant patterns in the data and on understanding regional and audience differences. When carrying out our initial analysis, it was clear that, compared to other regions, data from Tigray consistently emerged as significantly different across some of the key themes explored in this report. We provide some historical context and our qualitative research findings to help explain some of these trends throughout the report.

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14 > The qualitative sample included an equal mix of genders and a mix of socio-economic status, education levels, employment situations, ages, urban/rural participants, ethnicities and religions.

A note on demographic differences

This research took place approximately one year into Abiy Ahmed's term and approximately one year ahead of the promised democratic elections in Ethiopia. The political backdrop (see Chapter 4 for more detail on this) against which this research took place was one of hope and excitement mixed with fear and uncertainty. The sudden change in political leadership and the reforms that have accompanied this have led to rapid change in the country and, as we'll see in this report, opinions among young people are divided as to what the outcome will be. Given that Ethiopia is made up of nine ethnically based federal states (and two city administrations) that all have varied interests and relative autonomy, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are quite a few regional differences in opinion regarding topics such as politics and the Prime Minister. However, despite these differences, we found considerable levels of consistency in the views espoused by young people across the country – particularly around hot-button issues such as education, employment and ethnic conflict.

We have structured this report according to the key issues that felt important to all Ethiopian youth and pull out important regional, urban/rural and any other demographic differences as and when they occur. However, there were some re-occurring patterns in the data that are worth calling out here, to bear in mind while reading this report.

- Young people in urban and rural areas had similar levels of optimism about their own futures and the future of Ethiopia. However, their experiences across the key issues discussed in this report differed somewhat, with urban youth experiencing higher levels of unemployment, corruption and ethnic conflict than their rural counterparts. On the other hand, rural youth had worse educational experiences (in terms of access and support) and self-reported having less trust in the government.

- Younger people (15- to 18-year-olds versus 25- to 29-year-olds) were generally more positive about the future in Ethiopia, perhaps reflective of their inexperience in the challenging Ethiopian job market. They were also more likely to feel negatively impacted by economic and employment concerns, such as lack of employment opportunities, lack of financial security and inadequate housing provision, as they increase in age and financial independence.

- Overall, women were more positive about their own futures and the future of Ethiopia compared to men. This was linked to the perception that the government is making positive moves towards gender equality. However, experiences of gender inequality remain a big issue for young women, with women less likely to have a secure job and more likely to be reliant on others financially. Women we spoke to also tended to have less of a voice and personal autonomy over their lives. Reflective of these gender differences, men were more likely to have others relying on them financially and consequently more likely to feel impacted by financial factors such as lack of employment opportunities, lack of financial security and inadequate housing provision.

- Overall, Tegaru youth were more negative than youth in other regions about recent political changes in Ethiopia, their personal futures and the future of the country. This was despite personally experiencing fewer challenges. Qualitatively, this lack of optimism was largely fuelled by the recent shift in political power and cynicism about the agenda of the current government and the new Prime Minister (we discuss the political context for this in Chapters 1 and 4).

- Young people with disabilities faced both practical barriers and discrimination and were more likely to experience a lack of employment opportunities and a poor-quality education.

A note on research timings

The qualitative fieldwork took place from 17 to 26 June 2019. On 22 June a coup attempt took place in Ethiopia's Amhara region, resulting in the death of five top government officials, including Ethiopia's army chief. Following these events, there was a five-day government-mandated internet shut-down. This incident meant that fieldwork in Debre Berhan (located in the Amhara region) was unable to go ahead as planned on 23 and 24 June. This fieldwork was instead completed the following week (30 June and 1 July). All other qualitative fieldwork was completed before this incident took place.

While young people in Debre Berhan were aware of the events that took place the preceding week, this did not dominate discussions, with issues such as unemployment and education taking precedence for young people. Young people did, however, refer to the incident as an example of why finding a solution to ethnic conflict is a pressing issue in Ethiopia. However, ethnic conflict was a key concern for young people across fieldwork locations before this incident took place, and we are confident that this incident did not bias our reporting of the issue of ethnic conflict in any way.

As mentioned above, the incident also led to an internet blackout. As most qualitative fieldwork and all quantitative fieldwork took place before this happened (with fieldwork in Debre Berhan taking place after internet access had been restored), the incident did not affect the way in which young people talked about access to information and the media.

Given the fast pace of change in the country, this report offers an important 'snapshot' of a particular time in Ethiopia, with the quantitative fieldwork taking place from 15 April to 11 June 2019 and qualitative fieldwork happening from 17 to 26 June 2019.

CHAPTER 1:
SETTING THE SCENE:
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A brief political history of Ethiopia

To understand the views of young people outlined in this report, it is important to be aware of Ethiopia's unique history on the African continent and its political story to date. Ethiopia is perhaps most renowned for never having been colonised – despite Italy's occupation from 1936 to 1941 – a point of pride for many Ethiopians. This unique position in Africa means Ethiopia has been able to hold on to many cultural practices and traditions – it has its own time system, operates according to a calendar similar to the Julian Calendar, and prides itself on a culture that values ceremony and ritual, and places coffee and food at its centre.

But Ethiopia has not been without its struggles. Ethiopia's history is marked by periods of political upheaval and violence, the effects of which are still felt today. For the purposes of this report, and to help the reader contextualise some of the youth views expressed in the chapters to follow, it is important to be aware of some of the key historical and political events that still colour the political landscape today.

The 17-year war against the military government

Between 1973 and 1974 an estimated 200,000 people in the Wallo province died of famine. Around this time, then-Emperor Haile Selassie was overthrown in a military coup by a socialist military regime that aligned itself with the Soviet Union, headed by Brigadier General Terefi Benti and, shortly thereafter, Colonel Mengistu Hailmariam. This kickstarted a period known as the 'Red Terror', in which thousands of government opponents were killed, agriculture was collectivised, and war with Somalia and severe drought brought famine to much of the country. This period of internal turmoil

led to independence movements in the region of Eritrea (which was then part of Ethiopia) and Tigray (BBC News, 2019).[15]

In 1991, after a 17-year war against Mengistu's government, the EPRDF established power, drafted a new constitution and recognised Eritrean independence. The EPRDF still holds power in Ethiopia today and is composed of a coalition of four ethnic parties: the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP – previously the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation), the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP – previously the Amhara National Democratic Movement), the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the latter of which led the revolution against Mengistu's government. Not long after this coalition was formed, then-Prime Minister Meles Zenawi (an ethnic Tegaru and leader of the TPLF) changed the country from a centrally unified republic to a federation of nine regional ethnic states and two federally administered city states (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa).

This system based key rights – to land, government jobs, representation in local and federal bodies – on ethnicity rather than Ethiopian citizenship (Engedayehu, 1993).[16]

Large-scale anti-government protests, tensions over governance and the fast expansion of Addis Ababa (which is surrounded by Oromo settlements, leading to tension over land ownership) put pressure on Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn to resign, paving the way for Abiy Ahmed's premiership in April 2018. Young people played an important role in this transition. In the Oromia region, the 'Qeerro' (an Oromo term meaning 'bachelor'), a group of politically active young men, played a large part in putting pressure on the EPRDF to make a change. Grassroots

youth movements in Amhara, Tigray and other regions also played a role in fuelling this change.

Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister

Shortly after being elected, Abiy Ahmed instigated a series of reforms to open up Ethiopia's political space. He freed the press, unbanned political parties, freed several high-profile political prisoners, made peace with Eritrea, proposed ending government monopolies in key economic sectors (including telecommunications, energy and air transport) and promised fair and democratic elections in 2020. His youth, charisma and rhetoric of change and unity ignited hope and excitement across the country and abroad. Coming from a mixed ethnic and religious background, Abiy Ahmed has been praised internationally for being, in many ways, the poster-child for Ethiopian unity.

However, his series of reforms has also come at a cost. With more than 80 nationalities and ethnic groups, Ethiopia's political landscape is dominated by tribal allegiances. Abiy Ahmed is the first Prime Minister to come from the ethnic Oromo group, and, despite promoting unity, some of his opponents have accused him of acting in the interests of the Oromo people.

This political backdrop in many ways shapes the youth views discussed in this report. While unemployment remains a key concern for young people, ethnic conflict is increasingly playing a role in how young people view their own future and that of Ethiopia. That said, issues like gender equality, access to information and young people's role in society are all seen to be improving – giving young people plenty to be hopeful about.

This report aims to bring to life young people's lived experience of this exciting but tense time in Ethiopia: a time where certain areas of life seem to be getting worse while others are drastically improving. In the chapters to follow, we outline how young people are experiencing this tension in the following areas: identity, values and voice; challenges, changes and expectations for the future; their views on the government and politics; education; employment; basic necessities and access to and trust in information; and, finally, what this all means in terms of the support young people want and expect to help them fulfil their ambitions and dreams.

CHAPTER 2:
A PORTRAIT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ETHIOPIA: IDENTITY, VALUES AND VOICE

In this chapter, we outline how young people in Ethiopia experience their identity both as an individual and as an 'Ethiopian' in the context of rapid political change in the country. We discuss the role of Abiy Ahmed's unity rhetoric in shaping national identity and the pride young people feel in their country. We then go on to discuss young people's values and the role of religion in shaping these. We note that the consistency across regions (and ethnicities) in how young people experience identity and the values they espouse suggests that there is already more that unites than divides young people in Ethiopia, despite heightening ethnic tensions. Finally, we discuss how young people experience 'voice' (i.e. decision-making power and ability to effect change) in their day-to-day life and the factors that contribute to being able to exercise this.

Identity and pride: despite high levels of conflict, there is more that unites than divides young people across regions

The question of 'identity' in Ethiopia is a complex one. With more than 80 ethnic groups and a mix of religious faiths, young people have multiple ways in which they can choose to relate to their country and to themselves. Against the backdrop of increased ethnic tension in the country, it is interesting to note that most young people in both our quantitative and qualitative research reported identifying most strongly with their country (38 per cent ranked this first) over ethnicity (one per cent), suggesting a strong national identity. This was the case across genders and age groups. In fact, ten per cent of young people surveyed refused to state their ethnicity at all, with the qualitative fieldwork indicating that

instead of identifying with a specific ethnicity, young people increasingly prefer to identify as Ethiopian. In our qualitative workshops, many young people in both urban and rural locations told us they feared ethnic allegiances are inhibiting economic growth and stability in the country, which in turn is affecting their personal opportunities to find gainful employment and become financially independent. For many (especially youth in urban locations) the new Prime Minister's agenda of Ethiopian unity resonates: many from this young generation are eager to cultivate a national identity in the pursuit of peace, stability and economic growth.

In Addis we are all Ethiopian. In this community there are Oromo, Tegaru, Amhara and we all help each other and live together peacefully.

Female, 25, Addis Ababa

Figure 1: Levels of identification with Ethiopia

Question: Which of the below do you identify with most strongly? (Ranked first.)

Base: All participants (2,332) – Addis Ababa (1,023), Amhara (543), Oromia (435), Harari (50), Tigray (155), SNNPR (94) and Dire Dawa (32).

Figure 2: Open verbatim responses – words used to describe Ethiopia

Question: How would you describe Ethiopia, in five words?

Base: All participants (2,332).

One noteworthy exception to this trend was found in Tigray, where young people were less likely to identify with their country than young people in all other regions (see Figure 1). This finding can perhaps be explained by the recent changes in the political power balance and Tigray's history of pushing for greater autonomy and independence, something we will discuss further in 'Politics and the government' (Chapter 4). We also found some noteworthy urban/rural divides in identity, with those in urban areas being significantly more likely to strongly identify with their country compared to those in rural areas (40 per cent versus 16 per cent), who are more likely to identify with their religions and family than with their country or ethnicity.

This was mirrored in our qualitative sessions, which found that the worlds of rural young people were much 'smaller' and more community-orientated than those of urban youth, a trend we have seen in other Next Generation markets such as Colombia and Kenya.

The desire among young people for a stronger national identity has (to some extent) already been realised, as evidenced by consistency among young people in terms of what makes them proud to be Ethiopian. Across regions and ethnicities, we saw young Ethiopians reference similar aspects of their country (for example, its rich history and culture) when asked about Ethiopia. When we asked young people in our nationally representative survey to

describe Ethiopia in five words, the word most frequently used was 'love' (see Figure 2). Across fieldwork locations, young people were knowledgeable about their country's rich history and expressed pride in never having been colonised by a European power – something they felt has allowed Ethiopia to uphold many of its traditions, languages, rituals and cultural practices.

This pride in their country and culture is evidenced further by young Ethiopians' relative disinterest in experiencing other cultures and countries. Experiencing other countries was felt to be the smallest contributor to success and happiness among Ethiopian youths, across both urban and rural areas.[17]

17 > Note: There were some small regional differences in this trend. Young people in Dire Dawa (low base size) were less likely to cite 'giving back to the local community' (21 per cent) and having a close circle of friends (17 per cent) as important contributors to success and happiness than experiencing different cultures (33 per cent), while for young people in Tigray, having a strong political leader was the smallest contributor (66 per cent).

This finding stands in contrast to many other Next Generation markets, such as Turkey and Germany, whose young people expressed strong desires to travel.

While other countries are seen to offer better economic opportunities, few young people wished to go elsewhere unless it was out of economic necessity. In fact, they feared that moving away would mean compromising their culture and faith. A few participants in our qualitative sample talked about relatives who had moved abroad – to the USA, China or Saudi Arabia – and expressed sadness that these relatives were caught up in a cycle of working too hard and losing contact with their cultural values and traditions.

My uncle lives in America. He has to work very hard. America is not like Ethiopia, they do not have the same traditions and rich culture that bind people together.

Female, 27, Addis Ababa

Young people's love for Ethiopia is strongly bound up in religion. Approximately 63 per cent of Ethiopians are Christian, with approximately 44 per cent belonging to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (Index Mundi, 2018),[18] one of the oldest Christian denominations, founded in Ethiopia. Until 1974, there was no separation of church and state, and the church still plays a central role in people's lives and identity today. In fact, 'having a strong religion/faith' was ranked as one of the top factors contributing to personal success and happiness (79 per cent), and one most young people felt they had already achieved (60 per cent), a finding that was consistent across the majority of regions. Reflective of the above, many young people told us that living in a 'God-loving' country was important to them, with the church playing a central part in bringing communities together and bringing a sense of purpose and hope to daily life for many young people.

Religion is very important to me. I go to church every day and I put my faith in God that he will look after me and my family.

Female, 19, Mekelle

Our lives revolve around God. He has a plan for all of us.

Male, 15, Hawassa

As we will see when we come to talk about the support and solutions young people want to achieve their dreams, the centrality of many young people's faith to their identity and daily life strongly influences the way they approach the challenges they face and their likelihood to expect (or ask for) support from others or institutions. It forms an important lens through which young people view the world, the opportunities available to them and their likelihood of achieving their dreams.

Values
Youth values are largely consistent with those of previous generations

In our qualitative sessions, young people's top-rated values were largely consistent across the country. Youth value systems were strongly influenced by their religion, family and community, as evidenced by the central role youth place on these in helping them navigate their daily lives and the wider world. Reflective of this, young people's top values in the qualitative fieldwork were consistently faith, family, education, work and peace.

It is worth noting that not a single young person in the qualitative sessions mentioned more individualistic values (e.g. independence, personal growth, wealth). It was clear from our discussions that the communal nature of these values was important to young people – a value system based on the premise that upholding these ideals would ultimately make life better for all Ethiopians. In line with this, young

people felt that their own values and those of their parents, community and the rest of Ethiopia were largely consistent. In other words, they did not expect young people in other parts of the country to espouse different beliefs and felt that their values were largely in line with those of the previous generation.

Interestingly, the only exception to this were attitudes towards 'education', which was felt to be more highly valued by young people and their parents than it had been for previous generations, especially in rural locations. While school drop-out is still an issue, especially among young women in rural locations (Woldehanna and Hagos, 2012),[19] young people consistently said that they felt this was slowly improving, with more parents realising the value of keeping their children in school.

Education is of the upmost importance. Without it you won't be able to achieve your dreams and my parents will do anything to make sure I graduate as it is their dream too.

Female, 21, Addis Ababa

Young people felt this was likely a result of the government push to encourage more young people to go to school and attend universities. As we'll see in Chapter 5, while young people place great value on education, they also feel let down by the quality of education they are currently getting.

Young Ethiopians' shared values and identity are noteworthy in the context of ethnic tension. As mentioned above and as highlighted by the emergence of 'peace' as a core value, young people are eager to work towards a more unified Ethiopian identity, with the aim of achieving a more stable country and economy. However, the similarities between young people across regions highlight that there is *already* a high degree of uniformity in cultural values, belief systems and identity, regardless of ethnicity.

18   > Index Mundi (2018) https://www.indexmundi.com/ethiopia/religions.html
19   > Woldehanna and Hagos (2012) https://www.younglives.org.uk/sites/www.younglives.org.uk/files/YL-WP88_Woldhehanna-and-Hagos.pdf

Youth feel their own values and those of the government do not align

When asked to compare their own values to those of the Ethiopian government, an interesting picture emerged. Many young people in our qualitative sample felt that the government mostly values power, status and money, or stated they were unsure *what* the government values. This highlights the distance young people feel between them and the government and, as we'll see when we talk about 'Voice' in the section below, points to the powerlessness young people feel to make their voices heard and effect change. Only a minority of young people in our qualitative sample felt the government values peace, suggesting that Abiy Ahmed's rhetoric of peace and unity is seen to be coming solely from him, not the wider government. Some young people in our qualitative sample argued that promoting unity and togetherness is meaningless unless the political structures fundamentally change to pave way for a fairer system of governance that does not favour any one ethnic group over another. We discuss this further in Chapter 4.

Voice (at a local level)

Youth feel their role in society has improved, but more can be done to amplify the youth voice

An integral part of daily life and growing up for the young Ethiopians we met was the ability to exercise a certain level of decision-making power and control within their family homes and communities. For them, having a voice meant being able to effect change and be listened to by others:

A person is said to have a voice if their thoughts and ideas are accepted and listened to by their parents and within the community.

Female, 23, Mekelle

Among our survey participants, just over half (54 per cent) thought that their role in Ethiopian society had improved over the last five years, with only ten per cent saying it had declined. This was especially pronounced in rural areas (64 per cent versus 53 per cent). In our qualitative sessions, young Ethiopians told us they have more agency when it comes to their education, compared to their parents, and young women specifically (across urban and rural locations) told us they had more decision-making power over marriage compared to their parents.

Young people in this research reported feeling progress and expressed a strong desire for this to continue. They told us that they still frequently felt dismissed by their elders, both at home and in the community, and wished they had greater confidence to stand up for their opinions. Young people said they tend to defer to older people to validate their decisions or guide them in the right direction. This is despite the National Youth Policy (2004),[20] which aims to actively encourage 'the active participation of youth' in matters concerning them.

Voice within the family and community: a right that is earned, not granted

For young people, exercising voice within the home and the community felt most important. They told us that the family environment is where most decisions are made on matters regarding their day-to-day lives, including school, employment, chores and relationships.

Young people's opinions were divided over their role and voice within their communities. When asked whether their role in the community was better compared to their parents' generation, 55 per cent said that their generation had more of a role, while 28 per cent felt they had less of a role. Our qualitative sessions revealed that despite improvements compared to

previous generations, many still felt that they had little to no agency or voice in matters concerning the community. This is supported by research conducted by USAID (2017),[21] which found that young people can struggle to feel as though their voices are heard in a community setting, stating that they are never involved in community decision making, which made them feel frustrated and like they lacked agency. Generally, youth in USAID's research felt that at the community level, decisions rest in the hands of officials and they are not interested in the needs of youth. Some men even reported that they are fearful that asking questions to community elders could result in jail (USAID, 2017).[22]

You don't speak to elders unless you are spoken to.

Male, 21, Dire Dawa

While young people expressed a strong wish to be listened to by those around them, they told us that there is little opportunity for this and that formal channels for youth involvement are lacking. Furthermore, they told us that having the right to 'voice' through more informal channels is contingent upon several factors, including age, reputation, employment and marriage status. In other words, having a 'voice' is not a right that is assumed, it has to be earned.

Overall, earning a 'voice' in the community was also more difficult for young women and youth with disabilities. For young women, lack of family support can negatively impact their ability to get ahead. For example, they told us they have less opportunity for meaningful participation in household decision making as a result of their gender.[23] Similarly, young people with disabilities told us that the stigma and prejudice that often accompanies their disability can stand in the way of them feeling as though they have a voice across multiple areas of their life, including their day-to-day activities and education.

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20 > Youth Policy (2004) www.youthpolicy.org/national/Ethiopia_2004_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

21 > Youth Power (2017) https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/resources/Brief_Ethiopia_v2_FINAL%207-24-18.pdf

22 > *Ibid.*

23 > This finding is supported by USAID's CYSA (2017) research. *Ibid.*

Voice and age: a complex relationship

Young people across our qualitative fieldwork locations told us that 'voice' increases with age. Within the home environment, age was a determining factor as to whether parents (or elders) felt as though young people should have more of a role in matters concerning them or the household. Young people told us that age demands respect, making it hard for young people to have a say compared to their elders both at home and within the community.

When you get older, parents start to think you are getting wiser and matured. Specially, if you share with them anything they are unfamiliar with, they would listen to you.

Female, 23, Mekelle

Turning 18 was considered a big milestone for young people, as this marks 'adulthood' and the ability to make more independent choices. In line with this, young people in our quantitative survey who were over the age of 18 were more likely to state that their role in Ethiopian society had improved in the past five years (57 per cent of 19- to 24-year-olds thought their role had improved compared to 46 per cent of 15- to 18-year-olds). However, most 18+ young people in our research still felt unable to exercise this control, as many were unemployed and still living with parents/family. In fact, older participants (25–29) were more likely to say that they had less of a role in the community than their parents at the same age (31 per cent) compared to their younger counterparts.

Herein lies an interesting tension. On the one hand the younger people we spoke to assumed they would have more of a voice and more control over their lives as they get older. However, for the older participants we met (who were now at the age they would expect to have more voice), economic pressures and a lack of job opportunities (which we discuss at length in Chapter 6) meant that these young people were unable to leave home and gain the voice and independence they desired.

I am an adult now and have a job, but because I can't afford a home of my own, I still live with my parents. As long as I am living under their roof, they will treat me like a child.

Female, 24, Addis Ababa

Voice and reputation: good behaviour is rewarded

Across our qualitative fieldwork locations, young people stressed the importance of reputation in being able to exercise decision-making power and control in their lives. Earning the trust and respect of the community was key to being privy to important conversations in the community and being able to share opinions. They told us that if someone was deemed to be hard-working, trustworthy and educated, they would in turn have more of a voice in the important decisions in their lives:

I believe it is your personal quality and reputation. You should be open to others if you want to be heard. You should avoid telling lies and you should be trustworthy. For me these things matter the most. If I have these characters, I am more likely to have a voice. For me these are the basic things.

Male, 22, Adama

We have a voice as long as we don't disturb the social norm.

Male, 20, Addis Ababa

Young people told us they earned a positive reputation through hard work, attending church and helping out in the community. On the other hand, when a young person exhibited behaviour that had a negative impact on their perceived reputation within the community, their ability to have a voice was severely diminished:

I used to have a voice in the home, but then I started getting in trouble and hanging out with the wrong people and now I am not considered when it comes to family matters.

Male, 17, Hawassa, out of school

Voice and employment/ marriage

Tied into reputation is whether young people are in full-time work or married. In our qualitative sessions, employed or married young people felt they had more 'voice' in all matters concerning them. These milestones were markers of success for young people and their parents, and something most young people we met were aspiring to. For many, these two things were key signifiers of adulthood.

If a young person is employed and earning money, our participants told us that means they are successful and 'on the right path'. Being self-sufficient is key to exercising control over decisions, and having a level of knowledge of expertise in a certain field or domain means people not only within your own family but also within the community will trust your opinion more.

I have a voice when it comes to the work I do. For instance, when I communicate with my customers, they would accept me the price I offered them. Even though prices vary at different times, but still they would accept my price. I have a voice in my family as well because mostly I ask for what I need. If you perform quality work, others would accept you.

Male, 25, Adama

Furthermore, young people told us that once they are married and no longer living in the family home, they are presumed to have full voice and agency over their lives. This is especially the case for men who, once they are married, are expected to have full voice and agency over their own family. Young people told us that marriage is often seen as the ultimate step in having more control over their lives, and a moment when parents see their children as adults.

Once I am married, my parents will trust me to take matters into my own hands and I will then become responsible for raising a family of my own.

Male, 18, Adama

In Chapter 4, we discuss what it means for young people to have a 'voice' at a national level by exploring the extent to which young people feel represented by the government and their levels of engagement with politics.

CHAPTER 3:
CHALLENGES, CHANGES AND EXPECTATIONS: GENERAL OPTIMISM MARRED BY UNCERTAINTY

This chapter sets out the context of young people's lives in Ethiopia: their daily lives, current challenges and hopes and expectations for the future. It highlights the key issues that feel important to young people – each of which will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters of this report.

Overall, young people felt their daily lives are better than those of their parents' generation and, in the context of rapid change in Ethiopia, young people were mostly optimistic about their personal future and the future of Ethiopia. However, while young people felt that some areas of life have greatly improved in recent

years (e.g. access to media and gender equality), other important areas are felt to be deteriorating (e.g. financial security, ethnic conflict, employment and politics). This flux is leaving young people uncertain and anxious about the future.

As mentioned in the introduction, there was a pattern of regional difference in perceptions of and attitudes towards recent changes and the future.

- Younger people (15- to 18-year-olds versus 25–29) were more positive about the future, perhaps reflective of their inexperience in the challenging Ethiopian job market.

- Women were generally more positive about their own futures and the future of Ethiopia compared to men. In our qualitative sessions, this was linked to the perception that the government is making positive moves towards gender equality. That said, as we'll see throughout the remainder of this report, experiences of gender inequality remain a big issue for young women.

- Tegaru youth reported feeling more negative than youth in other regions about all the challenges facing youth, despite personally experiencing fewer challenges.

Figure 3: Open verbatim responses – notable changes in Ethiopia in the last five years

Question: What do you think have been the most notable changes in Ethiopia, over the last five years?

Base: All participants (2,332).

Perceptions of recent changes

We asked young people in our survey (without prompting) what the most notable changes in Ethiopia have been over the last five years. The most common words mentioned are shown in Figure 3.

Positively, young people mentioned freedom of speech, press freedom, better job opportunities, gender equality, construction of roads and better educational opportunities. The overall sentiment is one of momentum and opportunity, reflecting young people's optimism about the future.

We then prompted young people with a list of 13 issues. Figure 4 shows whether young people think these issues have improved, worsened or remained the same over the last five years, as a result of recent changes in Ethiopia.

Improvements were reported by more than half of young people across access to the media and technology, gender equality, access to healthcare, access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, education opportunities and young people's role in Ethiopian society.

However, there were a few areas where perceptions of decline were significantly higher when compared to other areas. Around a third of young people reported that employment opportunities, access to basic necessities (e.g. food, water, housing), politics, safety and financial security were worsening. Qualitatively, we saw that these issues in particular are major contributors to current uncertainty, and we explore each area at length in the following chapters of this report.

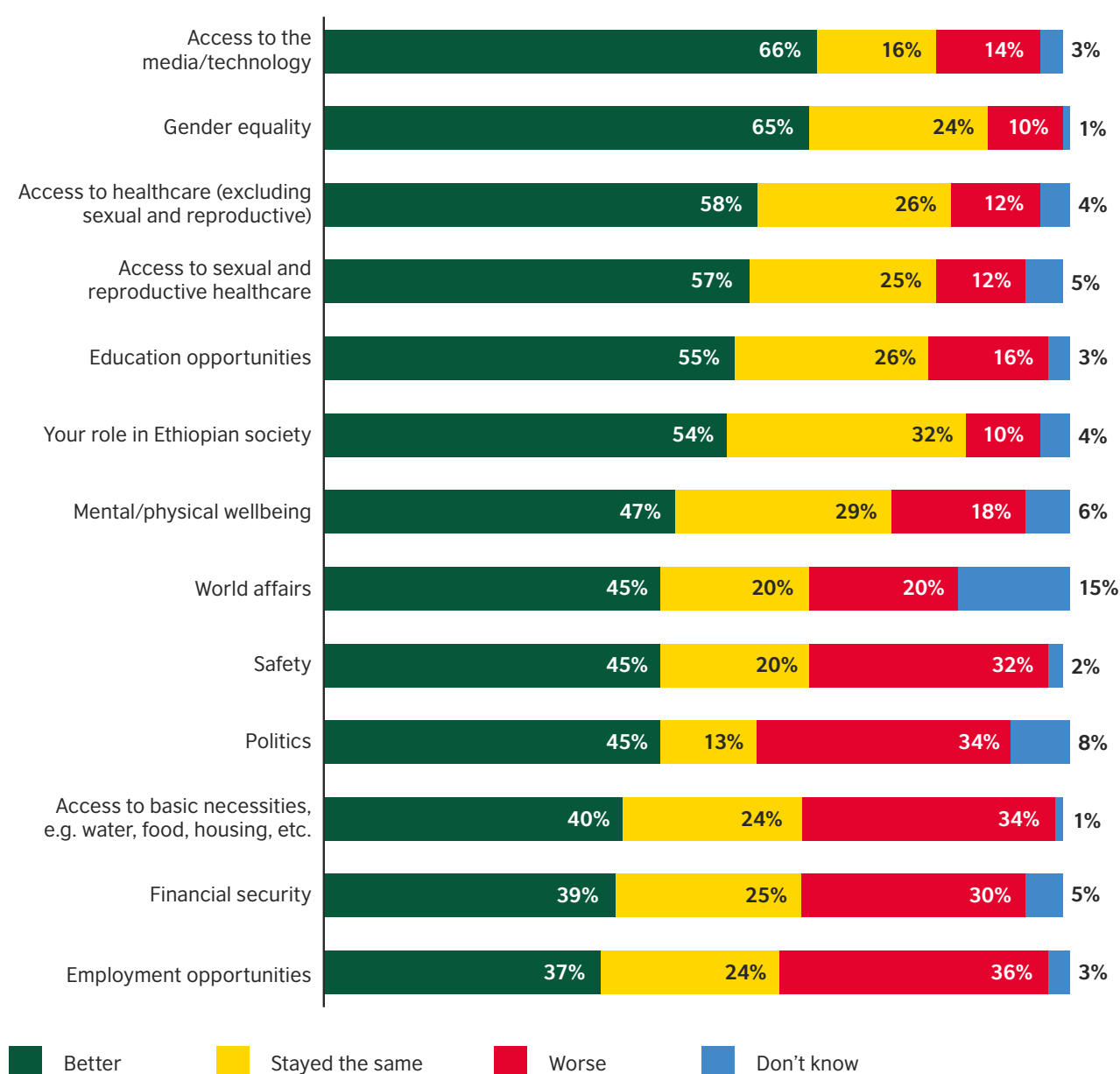## Perceptions of daily life and key challenges facing youth

Most young people felt that their day-to-day lives are better now than they were for their parents' generation (59 per cent said life was better now than it was for their parents when they were the same age). Women, younger participants (aged 15–18) and those in rural areas were more likely to say that life in Ethiopia had improved compared to their parents' generation (62 per cent women versus 56 per cent men; 68 per cent 15- to 18-year-olds versus 53 per cent 25- to 29-year-olds; and 66 per cent rural versus 58 per cent urban), suggesting that there is a sense of momentum for women, younger people and those in rural areas that things are getting better overall.

However, despite this optimism, youth in Ethiopia face key challenges. Figure 5 shows the 12 most commonly experienced challenges that young people have faced in the last five years and are facing in Ethiopia today.

Figure 4: Perceived change over the last five years

	Better	Stayed the same	Worse	Don't know
Access to the media/technology	66%	16%	14%	3%
Gender equality	65%	24%	10%	1%
Access to healthcare (excluding sexual and reproductive)	58%	26%	12%	4%
Access to sexual and reproductive healthcare	57%	25%	12%	5%
Education opportunities	55%	26%	16%	3%
Your role in Ethiopian society	54%	32%	10%	4%
Mental/physical wellbeing	47%	29%	18%	6%
World affairs	45%	20%	20%	15%
Safety	45%	20%	32%	2%
Politics	45%	13%	34%	8%
Access to basic necessities, e.g. water, food, housing, etc.	40%	24%	34%	1%
Financial security	39%	25%	30%	5%
Employment opportunities	37%	24%	36%	3%

Question: Based on these recent changes in Ethiopia, do you think the following have got better, worse or stayed the same over the past five years?

Base: All participants (2,332).

The most common challenges that young people told us they are currently facing are lack of employment opportunities (38 per cent), lack of access to housing or poor-quality housing (38 per cent), ethnic conflict and discrimination (38 per cent), political corruption and violence (36 per cent) and a lack of financial security (31 per cent). However, it should be noted that most of these issues are perceived to have decreased in prevalence over the past five years, reflective of youth's sense of overall improvement. The only exception to this was ethnic conflict,

which more young people are experiencing now (38 per cent) compared to the past five years (35 per cent).

In the chapters to follow, we outline how these challenges are being experienced by youth and pull apart key demographic and regional differences. A summary of the key themes in the data is outlined below.

- Young people in SNNPR are currently experiencing a greater number of challenges (7.5 challenges on average, from a list of 24), with the

lowest in Amhara (2.8), Oromia (3.0) and Tigray (3.2). Those in urban areas are also experiencing more challenges on average (4.0 versus 2.9 in rural areas).

- Young men were more likely than young women to state that they are currently experiencing 11 out of the top 12 issues, notably a lack of employment opportunities, ethnic conflict and discrimination, political corruption and violence, a lack of or poor housing and a lack of financial security.

Figure 5: Top 12 challenges experienced by young people in Ethiopia

Challenge	Currently experiencing	Last five years
Lack of employment opportunities	38%	47%
Lack of access to housing/poor-quality housing	38%	39%
Ethnic conflict/discrimination	38%	35%
Political corruption and/or violence	36%	36%
Lack of financial security	31%	33%
Poor-quality education	20%	30%
The current political economic system	18%	20%
Lack of access to food and/or water	13%	16%
Lack of access to the media/information resources	13%	22%
Lack of access to education	12%	21%
Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol)	12%	16%
Lack of youth centres/lack of resources to enhance skills	11%	17%

■ Currently experiencing ■ Last five years

Question: Looking back from now and over the past five years, which, if any, of the below challenges would you say have had a negative effect on you personally? / Which of the below issues, if any, are you currently experiencing?
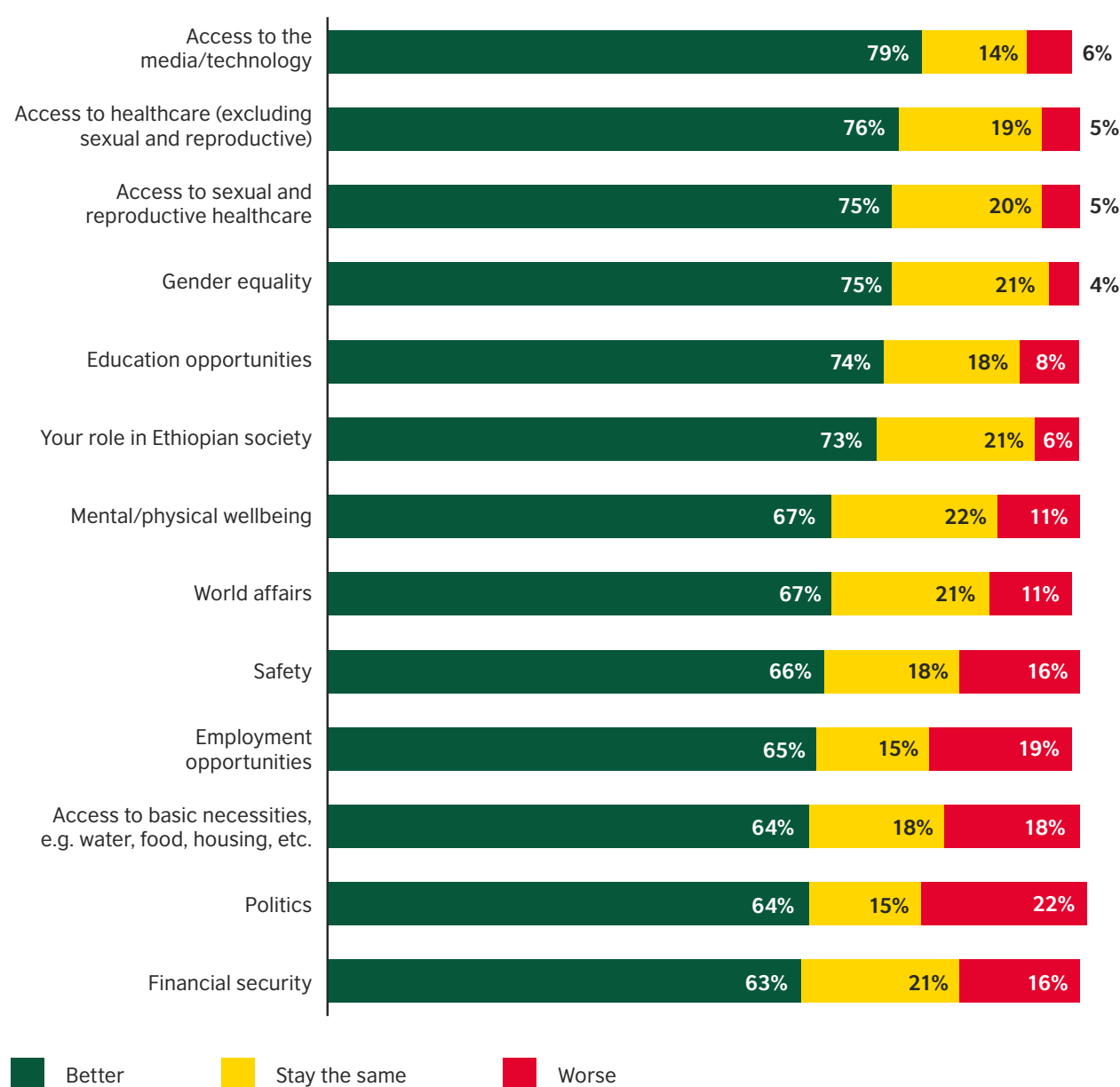
Base: All participants (2,332).

- Young people aged 25–29 and those who were financially independent were more likely to feel negatively impacted by economic and employment concerns such as lack of employment opportunities, lack of financial security and lack of or poor-quality housing.

- Those with disabilities were more likely to experience a lack of employment opportunities (47 per cent) than those with no disabilities (38 per cent), political corruption (44 per cent versus 35 per cent), poor-quality education (28 per cent versus 19 per cent) and lack of access to media and information (20 per cent versus 13 per cent).

The future: optimism on both a personal and societal level

Overall, when we asked young people how they felt about their personal futures, three-quarters said they were positive (77 per cent). This high level of positivity was consistent among young men and women and across all age groups between 15 and 29 years old.

Figure 6: Predicted change over the next five years

	Better	Stay the same	Worse
Access to the media/technology	79%	14%	6%
Access to healthcare (excluding sexual and reproductive)	76%	19%	5%
Access to sexual and reproductive healthcare	75%	20%	5%
Gender equality	75%	21%	4%
Education opportunities	74%	18%	8%
Your role in Ethiopian society	73%	21%	6%
Mental/physical wellbeing	67%	22%	11%
World affairs	67%	21%	11%
Safety	66%	18%	16%
Employment opportunities	65%	15%	19%
Access to basic necessities, e.g. water, food, housing, etc.	64%	18%	18%
Politics	64%	15%	22%
Financial security	63%	21%	16%

■ Better ■ Stay the same ■ Worse

Question: Do you think opportunities in Ethiopia in the below areas will get better, worse or stay the same in the next five years?

Base: All participants (2,332).

However, there were some regional differences, with young people in Harari, Tigray and Dire Dawa less likely to say they feel positive about their personal future than young people in other regions (55 per cent in Tigray, 52 per cent in Dire Dawa[24] and 50 per cent in Harari).[25] Those in SNNPR and Addis Ababa were the most positive (91 per cent and 81 per cent positive respectively). Levels of personal optimism were equal across urban and rural areas.

Reflective of recent changes in Ethiopia, two-thirds of young people also told us that they are more positive about their future now, compared to how they felt 12 months ago (65 per cent).[26] This positivity about personal futures is a trend we have seen across many Next Generation reports, including Myanmar, Turkey, Kenya, Columbia and South Africa, and from the qualitative research we saw that, in Ethiopia, this personal optimism was strongly tied into faith. As mentioned in Chapter 2, young people's faith gives many a sense of hope and meaning, even in challenging economic times.

There is also a high degree of optimism that the issues affecting Ethiopia will improve in the next five years, with two-thirds feeling that life in Ethiopia will get better in the next five years (64 per cent). Similar to feelings of optimism towards their personal lives, young women (68 per cent versus 61 per cent of young men) and those under the age of 25 tended to be more positive (70 per cent versus 59 per cent of 25- to 29-year-olds) about the future of Ethiopia as a country. Those in urban and rural areas were equally positive about life improving, but in Tigray there were concerns that things will get worse (47 per cent versus 22 per cent among the total sample).

Figure 6 shows whether young people predicted that change would be positive or negative across a number of key areas in Ethiopia over the next five years.

Young people expect that the areas that have already seen improvement will continue to improve further, including access to media and technology, access to healthcare (including sexual and reproductive healthcare), gender equality and educational opportunities. Reflecting their lower positivity about recent changes in general, young people in Tigray were less likely than those in other regions to believe there will be future improvements in any of the areas listed.

However, in our qualitative data it was clear that optimism expressed by many young Ethiopians is hanging by a thread. Issues like ethnic conflict and general political upheaval dominate discussions and, as we'll see in the chapters to come, penetrate every area of young people's lives, from education to employment. Within the quantitative survey we found that, relative to other areas, young people were more likely to predict that politics (22 per cent), employment opportunities (19 per cent), access to basic necessities (18 per cent), financial security (16 per cent) and safety (16 per cent) would get worse.

Important challenges to overcome in the future

We asked young people to select the top five most important challenges to overcome in the future (out of a list of 24). Figure 7 shows the percentage of young people who ranked each challenge in their top five.

The areas that young people think are most important to overcome in the future closely mirror the challenges that young people themselves are currently experiencing: ethnic conflict and discrimination (54 per cent ranked this as one of their top five concerns), lack of employment opportunities (53 per cent), political corruption and violence (44 per cent), and lack of access to or poor-quality housing (40 per cent).

The fifth challenge that young Ethiopians thought was most important to overcome was substance abuse (30 per cent). While substance abuse was not an issue many young people reported experiencing currently or in the past, young people recognise that this is a growing issue in Ethiopia, something they attribute largely to lack of employment opportunities. We discuss this further in Chapter 6.

Overall, young women were more likely to cite a number of issues as more important to overcome in the future than men: gender inequality (12 per cent versus six per cent of men), sexual and reproductive disease (13 per cent versus ten per cent), marriage at a young age (12 per cent versus eight per cent), sexual abuse and violence (11 per cent versus seven per cent), female genital mutilation (nine per cent versus six per cent), and domestic abuse and violence (seven per cent versus four per cent). This highlights that despite advances in gender equality, women are still experiencing the impact of negative gender norms and inequality.
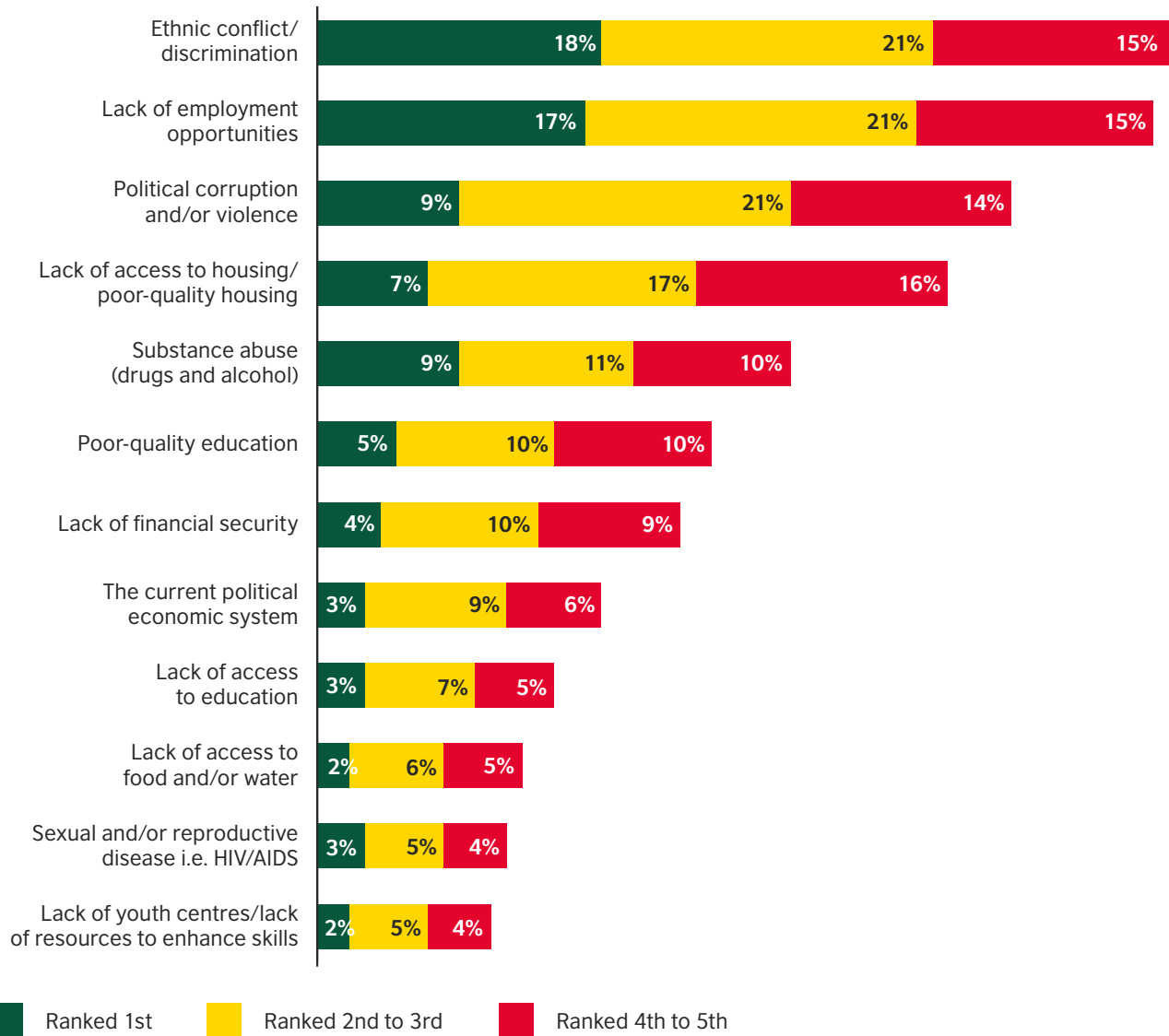
The experience of gender inequality takes many forms, and we highlight how it is experienced across key issue areas such as education and employment in the chapters to follow.

The remaining chapters of this report shine a light on some of the key issues highlighted in this section. Specifically, we delve into young people's perceptions and experiences of politics and the government (including issues of ethnic conflict and corruption), education and employment, access to housing (and other basic necessities such as water and power) and access to and trust in information. While access to information is not an 'issue' as such, we dedicate a chapter to it in this report as it is an area that has significantly changed for young Ethiopians in the past year and a half.

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24   > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.
25   > Note: Low base in Harari of n=50.
26   > One notable exception to this was Tigray, where young people were more likely to say they felt more negative now than 12 months ago (44 per cent said they felt more negative). Unsurprising given the general pessimism we see from Tigrayans about the recent political changes across this report.

Figure 7: The top 12 challenges to be overcome in the future

Challenge	Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd to 3rd	Ranked 4th to 5th
Ethnic conflict/discrimination	18%	21%	15%
Lack of employment opportunities	17%	21%	15%
Political corruption and/or violence	9%	21%	14%
Lack of access to housing/poor-quality housing	7%	17%	16%
Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol)	9%	11%	10%
Poor-quality education	5%	10%	10%
Lack of financial security	4%	10%	9%
The current political economic system	3%	9%	6%
Lack of access to education	3%	7%	5%
Lack of access to food and/or water	2%	6%	5%
Sexual and/or reproductive disease i.e. HIV/AIDS	3%	5%	4%
Lack of youth centres/lack of resources to enhance skills	2%	5%	4%

Question: And which do you think are the most important challenges that need to be overcome in the future for young people in Ethiopia?

Base: All participants (2,332).

CHAPTER 4: POLITICS AND THE GOVERNMENT

As recently as a year and a half ago, people in Ethiopia felt unable to freely express their views about the political system or their leaders. One mother interviewed in the research told us: 'I wouldn't even talk about it with friends or family. I kept it all inside for a very long time.' The Ethiopia we encountered at the time of this research is wildly different from that picture: cars proudly display Abiy Ahmed's photograph on their windscreen, taxi drivers are eager to debate politics, and young people across this research were unafraid to loudly declare their opinions – positive or negative.

We begin this section by providing an overview of the current political situation before outlining youths' views towards the EPRDF and the Prime Minister in broad terms. We then delve into what this means for their political engagement and their views on core issues such as corruption, ethnic conflict and the question of Ethiopian unity.

Current political context

Ethiopia has seemingly entered a new era of politics, but its road towards democracy is still uncertain. An uncertain economy, ethnic conflict and high numbers of displaced people (MacDiarmid, 2018)[27] make Ethiopia an uncertain place to live for its young citizens. While the new Prime Minister has promised a different future for this young generation and democratic elections in 2020, the EPRDF's stronghold remains largely unchallenged. The EPRDF has been the ruling party in Ethiopia since 1991. It controls all 547 seats of the parliament and, for more than two decades, it has adhered to a system of democratic

centralism,[28] meaning that decision making is centralised within the party and policies are formulated through a top-down process. This system has arguably helped the Ethiopian state avoid factionalism but has also curbed disagreement within the coalition. This system was brought into question when anti-government protests between 2015 and 2017 revealed divisions, with two constituent parties – the Amhara Democratic Party (ADP) and the Oromo Democratic Party (ODP) – publicly siding with the protestors and later voting against a second state of emergency (Van der Beken, 2018)[29]. Divisions were further exacerbated in April 2018, when Abiy Ahmed – an ethnic Oromo – was internally elected to be the new Prime Minister (Van der Beken, 2018).[30]

Youth views on the EPRDF and the Prime Minister: a cocktail of hope, uncertainty and fear

Perceptions of the government

Given the EPRDF's unchallenged, autocratic rule for the past 28 years, it is perhaps unsurprising that perceptions of the government are complex. In our qualitative sample, young people accused the government of being 'all talk and no action' and for serving the interests of the few, rather than the masses. Employment opportunities are felt to be a pressing issue, and young people place a large proportion of blame on the government. Of those who did not think getting a secure job was achievable, nearly half our quantitative sample (45 per cent) cited that this was a result of a lack of governmental support.

Young people told us that the government and its priorities are opaque to them and that, despite being in power for more than 20 years, the coalition is perceived as secretive and inaccessible. While the election of a reformist leader who preaches unity and 'Ethiopiawinet' (the Amharic word for 'Ethiopianness') was largely perceived as a positive and progressive step by the EPRDF, some young people in our qualitative sample were also cynical that this appointment was nothing more than a half-hearted compromise – a way to demonstrate a willingness to reform without giving up power.

I don't know how much will actually change … I am a bit cynical about politics and the motivations of our government for the recent changes.
Male, 25, Debre Berhan

I don't really know who the government is or what they stand for. They are just the people who have all the power, that is all I know.
Male, 16, Addis Ababa

When we asked participants about their attitudes towards the Ethiopian government, it became clear that there are some key issues. While there is agreement that the current government is more effective than previous governments (61 per cent), less than a third (31 per cent) agreed that the Ethiopian government is effective and only 35 per cent of participants claimed to trust the current government. This was more prominent in specific regions, with young people in Amhara, Tigray and SNNPR significantly less likely than other regions to agree that the government is

27 > MacDiarmid (2018) https://www.thenational.ae/world/africa/ethiopia-has-highest-number-of-internally-displaced-people-in-2018-1.769626
28 > A Leninist democratic practice in which political decisions and policy are reached by voting processes and are binding upon all members of the party. It is used to prevent factionalism and disagreement within the party.
29 > Van der Beken (2018) https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328964803_The_Challenge_of_Reform_within_Ethiopia's_Constitutional_Order
30 > Ibid.

effective, and those in Tigray and SNNPR less likely to trust the current government versus other regions (see Figure 8). Overall, young people in rural locations were also more negative about the government and the Prime Minister than their urban counterparts. They were less likely to think that the government is effective (24 per cent versus 32 per cent) and less likely to trust the government (23 per cent versus 36 per cent). This highlights how much attitudes towards the government are determined by location, with young people in rural locations telling us that the government does not care about the opinions of young people and cares even less about the opinions of rural young people. This highlights the greater disconnect rural youth feel from the government, citing politics as an 'urban preoccupation'.

Why would the government care what I think? I am a young girl in Hawana and I do not have a job.

Female, 19, Hawana – rural location outside Mekelle

Figure 8: Trust and effectiveness of the government by region
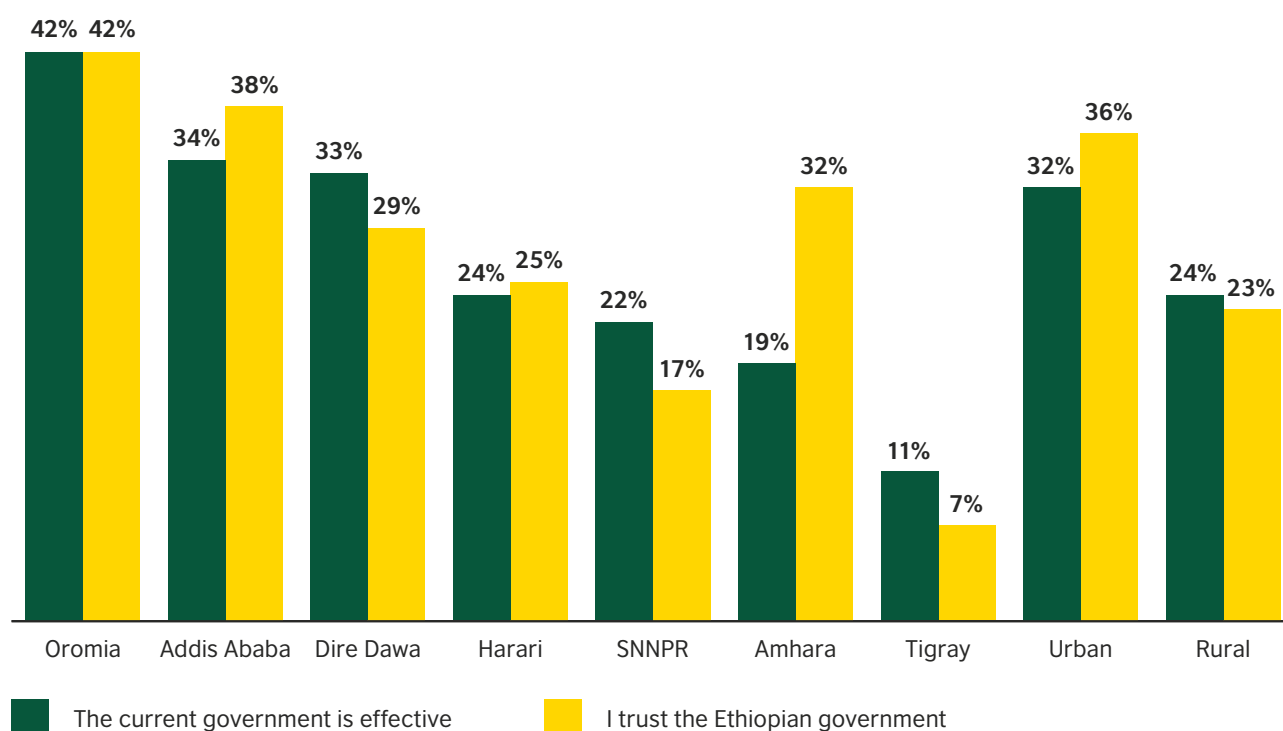
Question: Which of the below statements do you agree with?

Base: All participants (2,332) – Addis Ababa (1,023), Amhara (543), Oromia (435), Harari (50), Tigray (155), SNNPR (94), Dire Dawa (32); urban (2,099), rural (233).

Views on Abiy Ahmed

Opinions towards Abiy Ahmed and his actions are complex. Most young people agreed that the new Prime Minister had instigated a series of positive reforms, with less than a quarter of people rating any of these recent changes as negative (see Figure 9).

However, young people felt these reforms had often had little impact on their personal spheres, while having a potentially detrimental effect – i.e. sparking ethnic conflict – across the country. This has left many young people questioning whether all the political change is 'really worth it' when it may come at a price as significant as peace. While most young people support the new Prime Minister in theory, they are starting to lose faith in his ability to exert power within the constraints of the current political system. In fact, within our quantitative sample, only 20 per cent claimed to have achieved having 'a strong political leader'. This sense of a lack of achievability was especially strong in rural areas and in Harari,[31] Dire Dawa[32] and Tigray.

In light of the above, it is not unreasonable to assume that Abiy Ahmed's honeymoon period is over and, while there is still a lot of hope, this hope is increasingly tinged with fear and uncertainty. Views on the Prime Minister in our qualitative sessions broadly fell into two camps, strongly influenced by region.

1. The Prime Minister is doing all he can to make positive progress within an inherently broken system: These young people argued that the Prime Minister's reform agenda is being thwarted by the EPRDF and people within the party whom he cannot control. Young people who held this view were hopeful that in a year's time – when the elections are scheduled – Ahmed will gain an electoral victory which would give him a broader constitutional mandate, facilitating his reform efforts. These young people also tended to view the increased ethnic tension as an unfortunate inevitability on the road to democracy and felt hopeful that elections would help ease tensions. In our qualitative fieldwork locations, these views were most common in Addis Ababa, SNNPR and Amhara. This is supported by our quantitative data, which found that young people in SNNPR (37 per cent) and Addis Ababa (29 per cent) were more likely to think that having a strong political leader had already been achieved compared to other regions.

2. The Prime Minister is overly concerned with his reputation abroad and not doing enough to fix the issues – especially ethnic conflict – within Ethiopia: These young people felt that the Prime Minister is focusing too much on shaping a positive reputation abroad instead of focusing on pressing internal issues such as unemployment and ethnic conflict. Some of these young people argued that the Prime Minister is not doing enough to quell ethnic conflict within the country, and participants in our qualitative sessions asserted that Ahmed is simply using unity rhetoric as a cover, while advancing the interests of the Oromo ethnic group. This view was most common among Tegaru youth, many of whom told us

in our qualitative sessions that they worried the recent political changes would impact them negatively. In fact, in our quantitative survey, youth in Tigray were significantly less likely to believe that having a strong political leader has been achieved, compared to other regions.

In line with these contrasting opinions, youth views were divided as to whether Ethiopia will be able to overcome its challenges to become a democracy. Of our quantitative sample, only 26 per cent believed that 'having a strong political leader' was unachievable in the future, with young people in Addis Ababa (13 per cent) and SNNPR (eight per cent) being more positive about Ethiopia's political future. Conversely, perceptions that having a strong political leader is unachievable in the future were higher in Harari[33] (81 per cent), Dire Dawa[34] (78 per cent) and Tigray (58 per cent). When we explored potential reasons for this sentiment in the qualitative sessions, it became clear that this was strongly linked to whether young people believed there would be a democratic election next year.

Engagement with politics

As mentioned in Chapter 2, young people feel they have little power to make decisions about important things that matter to them or to effect change at a family/community level. At a national level, young people told us they feel even more unable to make their voices heard. Despite recent political changes, young people in our qualitative sessions repeatedly told us: 'The Ethiopian government does not care about the opinions of young people.' In fact, only 14 per cent claimed to be personally engaged with politics, while more than half our sample (53 per cent) claimed to be unengaged (see Figure 10).[35]
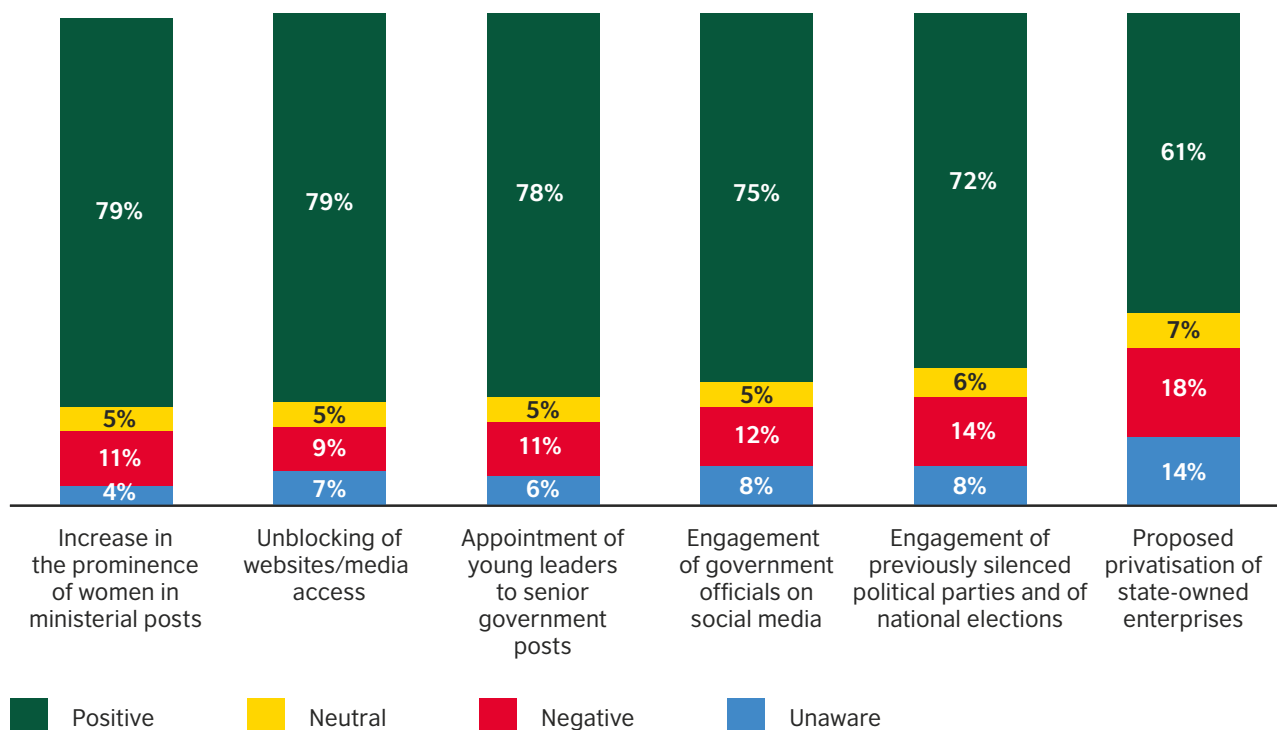
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31 > Note: Low base in Harari of n=50.
32 > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.
33 > Note: Low base in Harari of n=50.
34 > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.
35 > Engagement was higher among males (18 per cent) than females (ten per cent) and older participants aged 25–29 (16 per cent) compared to those aged 15–24 (12 per cent), while engagement was equally low in urban and rural areas.

Figure 9: Feelings towards recent governmental changes

	Increase in the prominence of women in ministerial posts	Unblocking of websites/media access	Appointment of young leaders to senior government posts	Engagement of government officials on social media	Engagement of previously silenced political parties and of national elections	Proposed privatisation of state-owned enterprises
Positive	79%	79%	78%	75%	72%	61%
Neutral	5%	5%	5%	5%	6%	7%
Negative	11%	9%	11%	12%	14%	18%
Unaware	4%	7%	6%	8%	8%	14%

■ Positive　■ Neutral　■ Negative　■ Unaware

Question: How do you feel about the most recent governmental changes, listed below?

Base: All participants (2,332).

Figure 10: Engagement with politics

Engaged	Neutral	Unengaged
14%	33%	53%

■ Engaged　■ Neutral　■ Unengaged
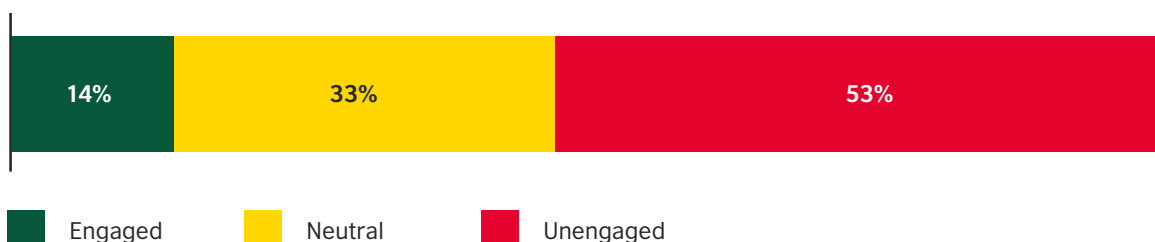
Question: How engaged would you say you are personally with politics in general?

Base: All participants (2,332).

Qualitatively, when we asked young people why they were unengaged with politics, a few key reasons emerged.

• Corruption is perceived to a big barrier to youth engagement, with young people feeling there is 'no point' in trying, as the people who hold power are unlikely to listen.

• Ethnic conflict is making young people hesitant to 'speak up' for fear of retaliation.

• Both formal and informal opportunities to become involved are perceived to be limited, and awareness of any initiatives and youth policies is very low. Half (53 per cent) of our quantitative sample were aware of any youth-focused policies, and when asked about the details of these policies, who they were targeting and how to access them, very few young people had any knowledge.

Nothing in this country has changed in years and it isn't going to.

Male, 15, Hawassa

The powerful people in Ethiopia make all the decisions for the rest of us and no one cares what we think.

Male, 17, Addis Ababa

Politics in this country is very corrupt. There are no avenues for getting involved and no point because no one will listen to you.

Male, 25, Debre Berhan

In spite of this, quite a high proportion of young people reported having open discussions about politics with friends and family (36 per cent), with a similar proportion consuming political content via the television or radio (32 per cent). Both activities were also significantly more likely to be carried out by young people in urban areas. This indicates that despite low engagement in explicitly political activities, interest in politics is high and young people want to stay informed about what is happening in their country.

In fact, two-thirds (66 per cent) of young people in our quantitative sample stated that they want to increase their engagement with politics in some way. When asked how to engage them, young people told us that political information needed to be more accessible (44 per cent) and easier to understand (37 per cent). Both methods of increasing engagement were preferred among older participants compared to younger, likely reflective of their amplified desire to increase their engagement with politics. These methods of engagement were the most positive across all regions, apart from in Harari and Tigray, where a desire for politics to be more reflective of their personal views and opinions was preferred (43 per cent and 22 per cent, respectively).

Corruption: an issue affecting youth's goal achievement and Ethiopia's development

While anti-corruption laws are strong in Ethiopia, in theory, they are not adequately implemented (Rahman, 2018).[36] In fact, Ethiopia ranks 107 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2018).[37] Political corruption was a major concern among young people across regions and demographics. It emerged as a top issue experienced by young people in the last five years (36 per cent) and something they are currently experiencing (36 per cent). It was also one of the top five issues young people want to overcome in the next five years (44 per cent). Young people in urban areas were more likely to state that they were impacted by corruption currently than rural youth (37 per cent versus 19 per cent) and were more likely to feel it is a priority issue (top five) to overcome in the future (45 per cent versus 30 per cent).

Corruption impacted young people's lives on multiple levels and in multiple ways. First, young people felt corruption was holding Ethiopia back from developing as a country. For example, issues such as lack of housing, power and water continue to plague Ethiopia and could, according to young people, be easily fixed if government money and local grants were used appropriately. Young people also told us that local governments often misappropriate funds without any consequences or accountability. In almost every community we visited during the qualitative sessions, young people had stories about community projects that were promised but never got off the ground. Young people told us that the important job of maintaining the community – building schools, improving sanitation, maintaining the church – was often left to the people of the community, not initiated by local government.

Multiple participants told us about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to illustrate the extent of corruption they experienced. The project was initially promised as a huge step forwards to Ethiopia's economic development strategy, providing much-needed electricity for industrial development (Piesse, 2019).[38] However, young people told us that the dam has encountered delay after delay, and has been in construction since 2011 (GCR, 2018).[39] Young people told us that what was positioned as a symbol of Ethiopian power and prestige has now turned into an example of mismanagement and corruption.

36 > Rahman (2018) https://www.u4.no/publications/overview-of-corruption-and-anti-corruption-in-ethiopia
37 > Transparency International (2018) Corruption Perceptions Index 2017.
38 > Piesse (2019) www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/the-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam-power-for-ethiopia-disaster-for-egypt/
39 > Global Construction Review (2018) www.globalconstructionreview.com/news/ethiopias-huge-nile-dam-delayed-2022/

Second, young people felt that corruption was impacting their personal ability to realise their goals and ambitions. For example, young people told us that it was near-impossible to secure a government loan to start a business, and many had personal experience (or knew someone with experience) of simply being told that 'budget had run out', without further explanation. As young people see entrepreneurship as one of the only routes to employment (something we'll discuss further in Chapter 6), lack of access to start-up capital is a key barrier, perceived to lead to other social problems such as drug use and pregnancy at a young age.

While Abiy Ahmed has adopted a more aggressive stance on corruption by arresting corrupt government officials and being explicit about the corrupt practices that plague the government (Fecadu, 2019),[40] young people are not yet experiencing the impact of these actions at a local level and some are questioning how serious the Prime Minister's crackdown on corruption really is.

Ethnic conflict and the question of Ethiopian unity

Ethiopia's coalition of four major ethnic parties and its regional, ethnically based states make it impossible to separate politics and economic interests from ethnicity. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Abiy Ahmed's rise to power revealed tensions within the ruling coalition and shifted the balance of power within the party. The ODP and ADP put their differences aside to provide full support for Abiy Ahmed. Understanding the precarious political situation he was stepping into, Ahmed immediately took on a reconciliatory tone and promoted Ethiopian 'togetherness', reinvigorating nationalism in the country.

However, despite encouraging unity, his premiership has been fraught with rising ethnic tensions and violence. The sudden switch from decades of censorship to free speech has been a difficult one. Frequent hate speech and encouragement of discrimination around ethnic lines has caused violent clashes in Addis Ababa and the Oromia, Amhara and southern regions over the past year (Fecadu, 2019).[41] Ethnic conflict in the past year alone has resulted in the displacement of more than 1.5 million Ethiopians (DTM, 2019).[42] The worst conflicts have occurred in the country's southern region, where thousands of people were displaced as a result of conflict between the Oromo and Gedeo ethnic groups. In SNNPR there have also been requests by the Sidama ethnic group to have a government referendum to vote on whether they should have their own regional state. As a result, tensions have been growing and other ethnic groups in the area have been making similar requests. At the time of our qualitative fieldwork, ethnic tensions rose again when the Ethiopian army chief was shot dead in a failed coup attempt (The *Guardian*, 2019),[43] resulting in a five-day government-imposed internet blackout which the government argued was necessary to stop the spread of fake news and further conflict. The government (and Abiy Ahmed in particular) has been criticised for not doing enough to stop the conflicts and, importantly, for not coming to the aid of the millions of people affected by this crisis quickly enough (Human Rights Watch, 2019).[44]

While personal experience of conflict was relatively low in our qualitative sample, the threat of it felt very real to all young people across this research. In fact, in our quantitative survey, ethnic conflict/discrimination emerged as one of the most pressing issues facing young people in Ethiopia and has become more of a concern over time. Around

one in three of the young people we spoke to in our quantitative survey had personally experienced ethnic conflict/discrimination over the last five years (35 per cent), placing it in the top four issues experienced. However, when asked about issues being currently experienced, ethnic conflict rises to 38 per cent. This was the only issue that had increasing levels of concern when comparing current experiences with those over the last five years. This places it in equal first place with lack of employment opportunities and lack of access to housing/poor-quality housing.

Ethnic conflict/discrimination is a universal challenge, experienced widely across all demographics and regions, but some groups are more affected than others. Those living in urban areas were more likely to currently experience ethnic conflict/discrimination (40 per cent versus 19 per cent in rural areas), as well as those living in SNNPR and Dire Dawa,[45] followed by Addis Ababa. The area where ethnic conflict and discrimination is lowest is Tigray. It is unsurprising that concerns about ethnic conflict and discrimination are higher in these ethnically diverse southern regions given the violent incidents that occurred around the time of this fieldwork and the Sidama campaign for independence that has been causing tensions in SNNPR specifically. In Dire Dawa one of the rallying points of recent protests in the city was the 40:40:20 arrangement of the local administration (Addis Standard, 2019),[46] which critics say gives 'unfair' advantage to Oromo and Somali residents while the remaining residents are represented in just 20 per cent of the arrangement. This has created further tensions, with some ethnic groups feeling like they are not getting fair representation. Tigray, on the other hand, is relatively ethnically homogenous. It thus follows that ethnic conflict is less of a pressing concern for young people in this region.

40 > Fecadu (2019) https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2019/04/make-justice-a-priority-in-ethiopias-transition/
41 > *Ibid.*
42 > DTM (2019) https://displacement.iom.int/ethiopia
43 > The *Guardian* (2019) https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/23/ethiopia-coup-attempt-leaves-army-chief-shot-says-pm
44 > Human Rights Watch (2019) https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/ethiopia
45 > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.
46 > Addis Standard (2019) http://addisstandard.com/exclusive-the-404020-administrative-arrangement-in-dire-dawa-was-corrected-from-the-gate-go-as-4060-former-mayor/

Leading on from this, when asked about the most important challenges to overcome for young Ethiopians in the future, ethnic conflict/discrimination was rated at the top (see Figure 11).
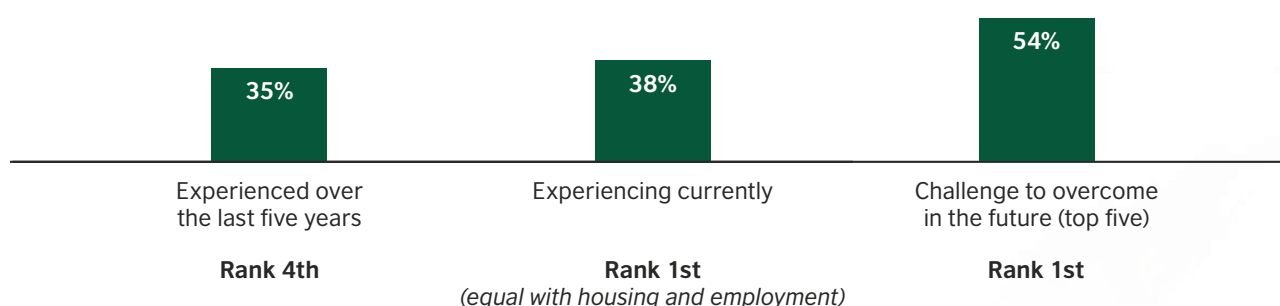
Young people are making a direct link between Abiy Ahmed's reforms and the increase in ethnic conflict and tensions. As mentioned above, youth views are divided about whether Abiy Ahmed is stoking the flame of ethnic conflict or trying to quell it with a message of peace and unity, but most young people agree that the situation has worsened as a result of the pace of change in the country and has laid bare long-standing issues with the political system in Ethiopia. Young people in our qualitative sessions told us they fear that ethnic conflict and tension would never be resolved unless the political structures fundamentally change and stop organising along ethnic lines.

I don't know how we do this, but something needs to change in Ethiopia because this ethnic problem is a real problem. We will never be a peaceful country unless we address the ethnic problem first.

Male, 25, Debre Berhan

Figure 11: Experience of ethnic conflict

35%	38%	54%
Experienced over the last five years	Experiencing currently	Challenge to overcome in the future (top five)
Rank 4th	**Rank 1st** *(equal with housing and employment)*	**Rank 1st**

Question: Which of the below issues have had a negative effect on you personally (last five years)? / Which of the below issues are you currently experiencing? / Which are the most important challenges to overcome for young people in Ethiopia?

Base: All participants (2,332).

Figure 12: Experience of ethnic conflict by region and area
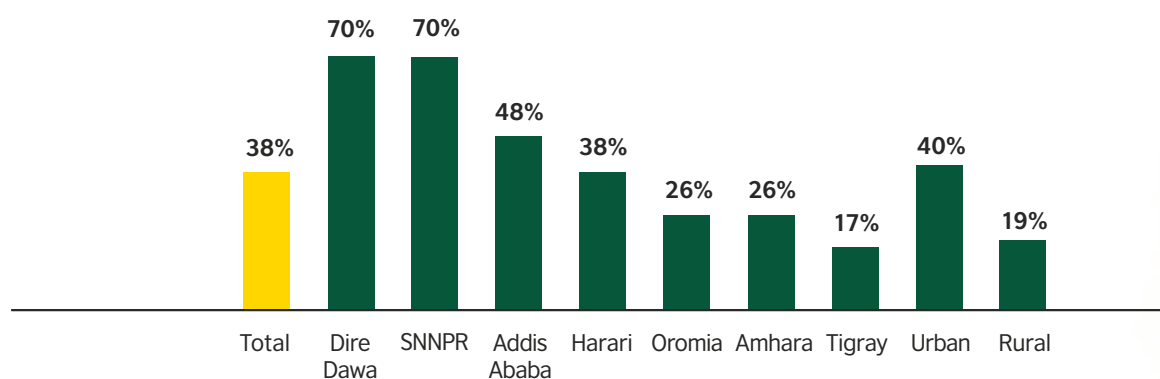
Question: Which of the below issues are you currently experiencing?

Base: All participants (2,332) – Addis Ababa (1,023), Amhara (543), Oromia (435), Harari (50), Tigray (155), SNNPR (94), Dire Dawa (32); rural (233), urban (2,099).

CHAPTER 5:
THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ETHIOPIA: A PERIOD OF UNPRECEDENTED CHANGE

Unlike other African nations that had various Western-style education systems imposed upon them by their colonial rulers, the Ethiopian system was tied into religion and church schools providing education, mainly to elite males, up until the early 20th century.[47] Throughout the 20th century, increasing external influences (mainly Western) impacted the Ethiopian education system, and by the mid-20th century, the predominant language of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels was English. Around this time (1961), however, only 3.3 per cent of the elementary school-aged population attended school, which, at the time, was one of the lowest enrolment rates in Africa (WENR, 2018).[48]

These very low levels of enrolment throughout the 20th century meant that improving education levels and access to educational institutions has been a huge government priority over the last few decades. This is evidenced by the increasing levels of young people attending school, which continues to be a key government priority. According to the World Bank (2017),[49] Ethiopia spent 26.3 per cent of its government expenditure and 4.5 per cent of its GDP on education provision in 2013. Remarkable progress has been made in Ethiopia in terms of both school enrolment and literacy rates. From 1996 to 2014 the net enrolment rate in primary schools rose from 26 per cent to 86 per cent (World Bank, 2019b).[50] The literacy rate of people aged 15–24 is estimated to have reached its highest level of 69 per cent in 2015. In terms of the number of students enrolled in these schools, this rose from three million to 18 million.[51]

However, while education enrolment is increasing, and more young people have access to schools, Ethiopia still has the world's third largest out-of-school population and the quality of education is often poor and drop-out rates high.[52] With an industry dominated by agriculture, the demand for TVET programmes is high, and the skills developed in Ethiopian schools do not match the needs of the national labour market. High drop-out rates, gender and rural–urban disparities also remain major challenges for Ethiopia in achieving a basic education provision nationwide.

With the rapid increase in educational provision and enrolment rates, more young people than ever are graduating from university and entering the job market with qualifications (WENR, 2018).[53] On top of this, the government – through its 70:30 policy – has tried to heavily steer the 'types' of degrees young people are graduating with towards science and engineering, despite the lack of jobs in this field.[54]

In this chapter, we discuss the current education system and the barriers that young people face in getting through it. We go on to discuss the tension between access and quality of education, before discussing the extent to which young people feel education prepares them for working life.

The educational context in Ethiopia: enrolment is increasing but drop-outs continue

Enrolment rates in education have increased (especially at an elementary level), but high levels of drop-outs still persist. More than a third of young people aged 15–29 that we surveyed only had a primary certificate (13 per cent) or had not completed primary school (24 per cent, including those currently still enrolled in primary school) – see Figure 13.

Of the young people we surveyed, more than half (54 per cent) had completed their Ethiopian General Secondary School Education Examination or higher. Ten per cent had a TEVT institution education.

There were some regional differences in level of education achieved, with young people more likely to have completed an undergraduate degree in SNNPR (34 per cent), Tigray (34 per cent) and Addis Ababa (22 per cent). Young people who were less likely to have finished primary school or not to have attended formal school included those in rural areas (17 per cent compared to 11 per cent in urban areas), those in Dire Dawa (47 per cent)[55] and Harari (46 per cent)[56] and those of Islamic faith (19 per cent) compared with Ethiopian Orthodox (eight per cent) and Protestant (nine per cent).

47 > WENR (2018) https://wenr.wes.org/2018/11/education-in-ethiopia
48 > Ibid.
49 > World Bank (2019) Data on Ethiopia https://data.worldbank.org/country/ethiopia
50 > World Bank (2019b) https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.TENR?locations=ET
51 > WENR (2018) https://wenr.wes.org/2018/11/education-in-ethiopia
52 > OECD (2018) https://www.oecd.org/countries/ethiopia/youth-issues-in-ethiopia.htm
53 > WENR (2018) https://wenr.wes.org/2018/11/education-in-ethiopia
54 > Ibid.
55 > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.
56 > Note: Low base in Harari of n=50.
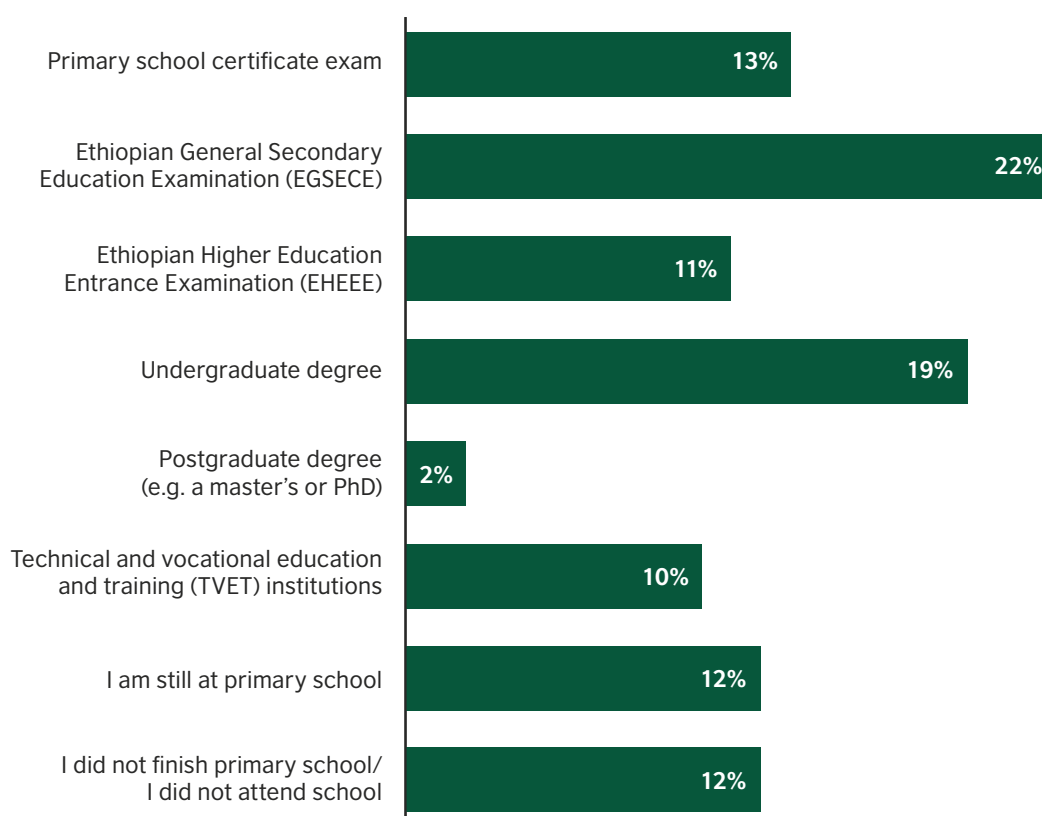
Barriers to education

High levels of school drop-out are indicative of the many barriers that young people in Ethiopia can face when it comes to maintaining their participation in formal education. These barriers can range from lack of family support to lack of financial ability to experiences of discrimination due to gender or disability. Figure 14 shows the most common reasons cited for dropping out of school.

While the barriers that young people across Ethiopia face are complex, the most common reasons cited by young people for dropping out of education were down to lack of family support (both emotional and financial) and personal challenges (gender disparities and experiences of discrimination due to disability and ethnicity). This section will examine each of these barriers in turn, exploring the nuances across regions and ages of our youth participants.

Figure 13: Highest level of education achieved

Question: And what is the highest level of education you have completed?

Base: All participants (2,332).

Low household income and family support present key barriers

For those who had remained in full-time education from a primary to tertiary level, the support and encouragement, as well as financial backing, of their family had been critical. For young people who had dropped out of education at either the primary or secondary level, low household income was the most common factor (38 per cent), suggesting that lack of money presents a huge barrier to staying in education.

The transition into secondary school presents a crossroads for many young people, and a combination of school fees and the prospect of work can make dropping out seem like an attractive option for young people in financially tough situations. Young people who dropped out of school most commonly dropped out in Grade 8, the last year of primary school.

Figure 14: Reasons for dropping out of education

Low household income — 38%
Personal challenges (e.g. early marriage, pregnancy) — 19%
I just chose to leave — 14%
I did not have enough time for school — 13%
My family no longer wanted me to go — 10%
My family moved out of the area and I could no longer get there — 5%
I could not get the grades I needed — 5%
I did not see the value in it — 3%
I did not enjoy going every day — 3%
It was too far for me to get to — 2%
The subjects did not interest me — 2%
I was asked to leave by the school — 2%
I didn't like the other students/teachers — 1%
I didn't think I was good enough — 1%
Menstruation — 0%

Question: Why did you leave primary/secondary school? / Why did you not attend any grade of school?

Base: All who did not finish primary/secondary school (294).

The young people we spoke to who had dropped out of education at the age of 17–18 told us that being able to provide for and support their families took precedence over continuing their studies.

I dropped out of school because my dad got sick and was unable to keep working. My mum looks after my sisters, so when I turned 17 I decided to get a job shoe shining to raise some money. As my dad didn't get better I have continued as my family are relying on me.

Male, 17, Hawassa, out of school

Most young people who had dropped out of education said they chose to leave themselves (82 per cent); however, the reasons for this decision were often rooted in financial issues and young people we spoke to in our qualitative sessions stated that financial constraints meant that dropping out was often the only viable choice. This was especially the case for young men, who felt as though there were certain expectations placed upon them to be the breadwinner. Young men who dropped out of education were more likely to do so for economic reasons, with 54 per cent citing low household income as the reason for dropping out compared with 24 per cent of young women. No one we spoke to in our qualitative fieldwork mentioned being able to rely on external help in these tough circumstances, suggesting that sole responsibility for income can often fall to young people.

Family support is crucial for young people's ability to stay in education. For the young people we spoke to, staying in education is seen as key to 'bettering yourself'. In fact, two-thirds of our sample thought that it is important for a young person in Ethiopia to complete school (68 per cent). Parents also place immense importance on the value of staying in school, often to ensure their children ultimately live better or more comfortable lives. Half of the young people we spoke to said that their family encouraged them to get a good education (54 per cent), and this level of agreement increased the higher the level of education achieved (71 per cent of those with an undergraduate degree agreed that their family encouraged them).

We will do whatever it takes to make sure our children complete their education. It's the only way they will be able to have a better life than us and, God willing, they will succeed. If you do not have an education there is no hope, so we are working hard to make sure he goes back to school [after an accident that left him disabled].

Mother of male, 15, Hawassa, out of school

My parents gave up so much to make sure me and my sisters stayed in school, and now we have jobs I think they are very pleased.

Female, 22, Addis Ababa, employed

Gender disparity: females (especially in more rural areas) face higher levels of discrimination

Across Ethiopia, there remain notable educational gender inequalities. The young women we spoke to were much more likely than young men to have dropped out of school due to family demands. Of those who dropped out, young women were more likely to have left school because their family no longer wanted them to attend, compared to males (15 per cent versus four per cent). Additionally, personal challenges such as early marriage or pregnancy were the most common reason for young women dropping out of secondary education (27 per cent). Girls' added home pressure and slower progress through school results in gender disparities being much more apparent for the higher grades; for example, national enrolment rates for Grades 9 and 10 are only 41 per cent for girls versus 56 per cent for boys (EMIS, 2014).[57] Research conducted by GAGE (2017)[58] confirmed that while there have been significant improvements to young women's physical and social access to education over the last 15 years, girls are still much more likely to drop out of primary school or have to repeat grades than boys. The report attributes this to girls' greater responsibility for household chores, which limits their regular attendance of school and prevents them from completing homework.

Parental support for girls' education is still limited due to conservative social norms around marriageability and limited exposure to female role models. This is especially the case in more rural locations where girls are also more likely to drop out of education compared to those in more urban locations (WENR, 2018).[59] In this current research, girls who had dropped out of education were more likely to say it was their parents' decision (25 per cent compared with 13 per cent of boys) or their spouse's choice (five per cent versus zero per cent of boys). Where girls dropped out at the primary level, this was even more likely to be driven by parents (34 per cent).

There are certain expectations my family have of me as a woman. I need to find a husband and start a family before I get much older and that is more important than me finishing my education.

Female, 18, Adama – rural

57   > EMIS (2014) Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2006 E.C (2013/14 G.C). Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education.
58   > GAGE (2017) Exploring Ethiopian adolescents' gendered experiences and perspectives.
59   > WENR (2018) https://wenr.wes.org/2018/11/education-in-ethiopia

Challenging behaviour: a lack of tolerance for more challenging behaviour can quickly lead to young people dropping out of school

In addition to a lack of family financial support, personal challenges emerged as a key reason for school drop-out in our qualitative sessions. Young people told us that dropping out of education as a result of 'falling in with the wrong crowd' is a huge issue.

The young people we spoke to who have dropped out of school told us how there was very little support at school to help them with their behavioural difficulties, and as a result it was easy to fall into the 'wrong crowd'. Young people told us that out-of-school children face stigma and discrimination from the community and that second chances are rare.

A group of young boys who had all dropped out of school in Hawassa told us that they didn't feel welcome or indeed able to go back to school, so hanging out on the streets was the only option for some.

I was badly behaved in school and my teacher basically told me not to come back. She chased me out of the classroom once. I stared hanging out with a bad crowd.

Male, 17, Hawassa, out of school

For young people who do not fit the standard educational mould or may require extra support (e.g. learning difficulties), getting through education can be particularly challenging.

Ethnic conflict: a growing issue at universities

Ethnic conflict is not a barrier that tends to present itself in primary and secondary education levels, as many young people attend school in their local area, with those of a similar ethnicity or background. However, over the past few years, instances of ethnic conflict have become an issue when looking at higher education and are now a real barrier to young people wanting to attend university. In line with the above, those currently in higher education were more likely to say they were currently experiencing ethnic conflict or discrimination (48 per cent) than primary or secondary school students (35 per cent).

Rather than being places where Ethiopians from all walks of life can socialise and coexist, young people told us that university campuses are increasingly starting to reflect the political upheaval and ethnic tensions that Ethiopia is currently experiencing at a national level (the context of which is discussed at length in Chapter 4).

Young people told us that instances of ethnically fuelled violence on university campuses are having a knock-on effect on university applications. They told us that youths from different regions do not feel safe attending a university outside of their region and ethnic group and, as a result of increasing safety concerns, students are selecting universities in their region and refusing to attend if they are allocated outside their region. In many ways, this practice is exacerbating the issue by creating more ethnically homogenous universities and increasing the gap between different ethnicities.

Access versus quality: while access is vastly improving, quality is lacking

As discussed, access to education in Ethiopia has vastly improved and is continuing to do so across all levels of education from primary up to tertiary/ university level. As such, having access to some form of educational institution is not necessarily a major issue for young people. However, access cannot be conflated with quality. The following sections discuss how, despite an increased provision, quality of education can be severely lacking.

Vast improvement in access to education

Ethiopian government statistics report that the number of elementary schools tripled from 11,000 in 1996 to 32,048 in 2014, while higher education provision has expanded from just three public universities in 1986 to 34 in 2019 (WENR, 2018;[60] UniRank, 2019[61]), with an estimated 150,000 students graduating in 2018 alone (Fick, 2018).[62] This number is closer to 60 if including colleges (Webometrics, 2019).[63] This is reflected among the young people we surveyed. While young people in urban areas were more likely to say that school is close and easy to get to (43 per cent compared with 20 per cent of young people in rural areas), only two in ten young people in Ethiopia stated they had experienced a lack of access to education in the last five years (21 per cent, consistent across urban and rural areas).

60   > WENR (2018) https://wenr.wes.org/2018/11/education-in-ethiopia
61   > UniRank (2019) https://www.4icu.org/et/
62   > Fick (2018) https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ethiopia-youth/far-from-ethiopias-capital-change-remains-a-distant-dream-idUKKBN1KD1M1
63   > Webometrics (2019) http://webometrics.info/en/Africa/Ethiopia

From the young people we spoke to, there was a general sense of optimism when it comes to their education. It seems that young people have actively noticed the increase in educational institutions over the last two decades, with many feeling as though educational opportunities have improved due to increased provision and access. In fact, more than half believed that educational opportunities have improved in the last five years (55 per cent), putting education in the top five opportunity areas that young people think have improved. Young people in rural areas and those aged 19–24 were particularly likely to think educational opportunities had improved.

Three-quarters of young people expected educational opportunities to further improve in the next five years (74 per cent), with young people in SNNPR (89 per cent), Oromia (80 per cent) and Addis Ababa (77 per cent) particularly positive about this.

There is lots of opportunity to be educated in Ethiopia. If you want to go to school, you can.

Female, 21, Addis Ababa

Concerns remain over quality of education

While Ethiopia's ever-expanding provision of education is impressive, this period of extreme growth has led to concerns about the quality of the education system (WENR, 2018). This is reflected in the most recent World Bank figures, which state that Ethiopia's adult literacy rate in 2007 was 39 per cent – one of the lowest in the world and far below the average of 83 per cent in the same year (World Bank, 2019b).[64]

We heard from young people that many institutions, all the way from primary up to university levels, are severely lacking in terms of the quality of teaching, resources available and facilities. While a third of young people rated their education as good (30 per cent) and half as fair (54 per cent), 30 per cent stated that they had been negatively impacted by poor-quality education in the last five years. Those in SNNPR were particularly likely to say that they had experienced poor-quality education in the last five years (49 per cent). While experience of a lack of access to education was at a similar level across rural and urban areas, those in urban areas were more likely to say they had experienced poor-quality education in the last five years (32 per cent compared with 15 per cent in rural areas). A quarter of survey participants placed poor-quality education as one of the top five issues that need to be overcome for young Ethiopians (25 per cent). This was also higher among those in urban areas (26 per cent) compared to rural (17 per cent), likely reflective over their previous experiences.

In our qualitative sessions, young people cited unqualified or poor teaching, lack of books and up-to-date materials, lack of facilities such as libraries, science equipment or sporting facilities, and a limited curriculum as key issues with the educational system. These complaints from young people about the quality of the educational system are reflected in the National Youth Policy (2004),[65] which states that the quality of education in secondary schools and universities has deteriorated.

Some schools, even universities, don't have a single computer or library. How are people expected to get a quality education if there are no resources?

Female, 13, Addis Ababa

Access to extracurricular activities was also inconsistent across fieldwork locations. Some young people stated they had access to facilities such as sports clubs, art and music, Kebele facilities, youth centres and libraries, while others did not, showing that provision is not consistent across the country.

Education pathways: the role of TVET

As an alternative to the formal education system, the TVET system offers a parallel track for Ethiopian youth. After the national exam at the end of Grade 10, young people can enter into the TVET system and pursue one, two or three years of additional training. Ten per cent of the young people we surveyed had been educated via this route (Youth Power, 2018).[66]

Youth entering TVET institutions are placed at the regional level into specific sectors based on government predictions of demand. Based on a German apprenticeship model, the government mandates that 70 percent of a TVET student's time in the programme is devoted to participating in apprenticeships.[67]

Even though the TVET route offers students a skills-based learning programme and should, in theory, give students the practical knowledge they need for many practical jobs, young people told us that TVET is considered to be a less desirable route compared to the more academic route. For many it is seen as a 'sub-par' education, with a more positive reputation associated with graduating from university with an academic degree.

TVET does not have the prestige of a university degree, it is not desirable.

Male, 24, Addis Ababa

64 > World Bank (2019b) https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/se.adt.litr.zs
65 > Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2004) www.youthpolicy.org/national/Ethiopia_2004_National_Youth_Policy.pdf
66 > Youth Power (2018) https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/resources/Brief_Ethiopia_v2_FINAL%207-24-18.pdf
67 > *Ibid.*

Despite these negative perceptions, there is some evidence to suggest TVET may be better at guaranteeing employment than just a secondary school education. From our survey, those who had a TVET education were more likely to be currently employed (39 per cent) than those with an Ethiopian General Secondary School Education Examination (21 per cent), but not more likely than those with an undergraduate degree. They were also more likely to agree that their education had prepared them well for work (39 per cent) than those with a Secondary Education (26 per cent) or Higher Education Entrance Examination (28 per cent) and improved their chances of getting a job (19 per cent versus 29 per cent), but less likely to agree than those with an undergraduate degree.

Despite this, the current job market is not prepared to receive TVET graduates. Research conducted by USAID CSYA, cited in Youth Power (2018),[68] showed that despite efforts to increase students doing TVET, the model is now producing more graduates than there are jobs available. In our research, eight per cent of those who used the TVET system were currently unemployed, in line with the rest of the young people we surveyed. This is predicted to continue to be a challenge, as youth enrolment and the number of TVET institutions in Ethiopia increases. This is not solely an issue with the TVET education route, but also the standard curriculum route, which also struggles to place graduates in employment.

Figure 15: Employment support and advice in schools
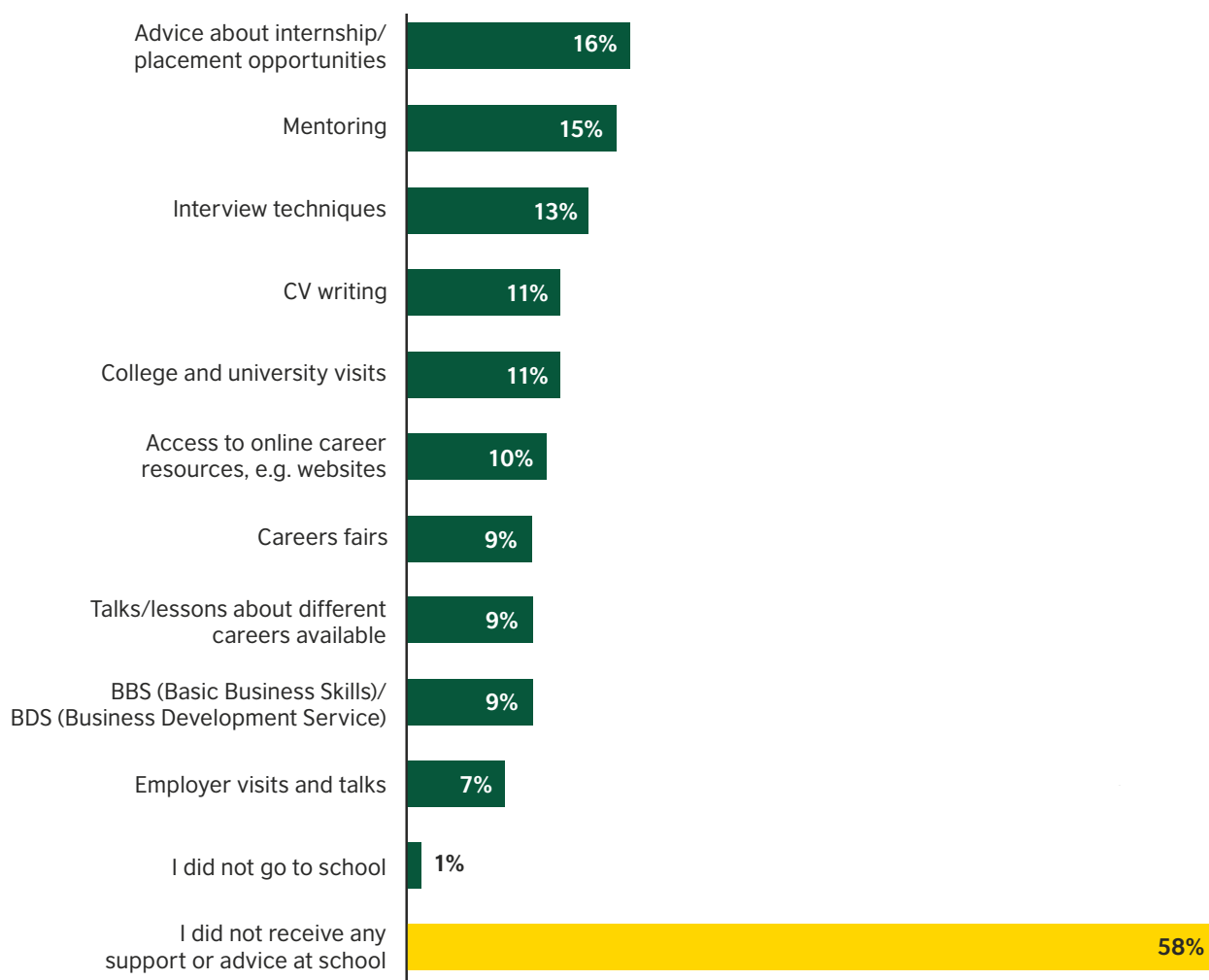
Question: What, if any, support and/or advice did you get in school about employment?

Base: All participants (2,332).

68 > Youth Power (2018) https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/resources/Brief_Ethiopia_v2_FINAL%207-24-18.pdf

Education is failing to prepare young people for work

When asking Ethiopian youth about how their education system prepared them for work and life, we see some interesting tensions emerge. While young people value education as an important part of life, they do not necessarily see it as a valuable or successful facilitator of employment. While four in ten young people reported feeling that their education had prepared them well for their general life (39 per cent), only a third felt that it prepared them well for work (29 per cent), and just 23 per cent that it improved their chances of getting a job. This sentiment was reflected in our qualitative sessions, where young people consistently highlighted the value of education in becoming an enlightened and fulfilled person, but not as a stepping stone to employment. This is also supported by Ethiopia WIDE research (2018),[69] which found that the growing number of jobless graduates is leading to disillusionment with education as a pathway to employment.

Despite this, two-thirds of young people think that education is valuable for preparing 'a young person in Ethiopia for working life' (65 per cent). This suggests that they either see the value in their education once in the workplace (if not in initially securing a job), or see *an education* as valuable, but not necessarily the *education they received*.

When we asked young people why they felt education was not preparing them adequately for working life, many young people blamed the overly technical nature of education and the attendant lack of practical experience in any fields. Some young people told us they had been studying biology for years without ever touching a microscope or setting foot in a laboratory.

I have a friend who did a degree to become a teacher but never trained in a school before her first day as an actual teacher.
Female, 22, Addis Ababa

There are universities that are teaching science degrees that don't even have laboratories.
Male, 18, Hawassa

Fewer than half of young people said that they had received support and advice about employment while at school (42 per cent). As shown in Figure 15, when they did receive advice, this most commonly took the form of advice about internships or placements, mentoring and CV writing.

For those getting this support, this was received positively, with 68 per cent of those who received this advice or support in schools saying they were satisfied with it. However, more than half of the young people we surveyed said they did not receive any support or advice about employment while at school (58 per cent). Worryingly 15- to 18-year-olds and those currently in education were more likely to say they

had received no support (81 per cent of 15- to 18-year-olds and 70 per cent of those in secondary school). Lack of support was also higher among those in urban areas than rural (67 per cent versus 57 per cent) and those who are currently unemployed (69 per cent versus 46 per cent in full-time employment). Half of those who did not receive any support or advice on employment while at school said they thought it had a negative impact on them finding employment (48 per cent). This was higher among men (53 per cent versus 43 per cent of women), young people aged 25–29 (61 per cent versus 45 per cent of 19- to 24-year-olds) and those in urban areas (50 per cent versus 32 per cent of those in rural areas).

Young people also told us they felt that the skills they learned in school had not been adapted to fit the changing employment landscape, which increasingly demands that young people become entrepreneurs. Young people complained that their education had not taught them the valuable business skills they would need to set up a business successfully. Young people also felt there is a distinct lack of basic skills provision, such as CV writing, preparing application letters and interview skills. This is supported by the National Youth Policy (2004),[70] which states that young graduates lack basic skills they need for employment, finding it hard to express themselves both verbally and in writing. All of the above results in a lack of preparation for leaving school and a tough transition into work.

69   > Ethiopia WIDE (2018) http://ethiopiawide.net/wp-content/uploads/WIDEBridge_DB4_Young-peoples-economic-experiences_2018.pdf
70   > Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2004) www.youthpolicy.org/national/Ethiopia_2004_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

> CHAPTER 6: EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment and, more specifically, youth unemployment remain a huge issue in Ethiopia. Recent estimates from the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (2018) put youth unemployment at 25.3 per cent, a figure that is higher for females (30.9 per cent) compared to males (19 per cent).[71] However, these figures do not tell the whole story. While many young people in rural areas are employed, they are often engaged in subsistence farming and struggle to generate an income from their work. Young people in rural locations are also more likely to drop out of school at an early age, limiting their opportunities in the formal sector. Thus, while these young people are technically 'employed', they are not making a profit from their work.

Young people in urban locations face different but equally tough challenges. High levels of competition and few job opportunities in the formal sector make it very difficult for young people to find employment. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ethiopia is producing more university graduates than its economy can accommodate. This leaves many young people idle, which, according to youth, leads to other social problems such as drug use and early pregnancy. Some also told us that idleness fuels ethnic resentment among young people, who often blame their situation on ethnic power imbalances.

The government has recognised the importance of this issue by putting together various policies[72] (e.g. the

Micro and Small Enterprises Development Policy and the Youth Revolving Fund) aimed at fuelling entrepreneurship among young people. The new Prime Minister has also set an ambitious target of creating three million new jobs in 2019–20 by opening Ethiopia up to more foreign investment and by privatising some of its key industries (Gebre, 2018).[73]

This chapter outlines young people's perspectives on the scale of the unemployment issue, the impact of unemployment on their daily lives and ambitions, and why, despite job creation initiatives by the government, young people are still feeling unsupported in the job market as entrepreneurs.

Figure 16: The top five challenges to be overcome in the future (ranked first to fifth)

Challenge	%
Ethnic conflict/discrimination	54%
Lack of employment opportunities	53%
Political corruption/violence	44%
Lack of access to housing/poor-quality housing	40%
Substance abuse	30%

Question: And which do you think are the most important challenges that need to be overcome in the future for young people in Ethiopia?

Base: All participants (2,332).

71 > Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (2018) Adolescent and youth status report.
72 > See, for example: https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/natlex4.detail?p_lang=en&p_isn=89584&p_country=ETH&p_classification=08
73 > Gebre (2019) https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-07-02/ethiopian-pm-says-reforms-will-deliver-3-million-jobs-in-2019-20

Youth unemployment: the scale of the issue

A lack of employment opportunities continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing young Ethiopians today. Half of our quantitative sample said that a lack of employment opportunities had negatively impacted them over the past five years (47 per cent), and 38 per cent claimed to be currently experiencing this issue. Of the 24 issues we presented young people with, employment opportunities were consistently selected as the biggest issue across demographic sub-groups and in both urban and rural areas. Lack of employment was selected as an issue young people are currently experiencing across all regions and locations. In our qualitative sessions, young people gave emotional accounts of the dire employment situation in their country and told us that despite their best efforts, getting a good job and attaining a comfortable level of financial security increasingly felt impossible.

It's about jobs jobs jobs! We want to work, we have the skills, but there is nothing available! Many young people are getting very frustrated with this situation. It is terrible.

Male, 27, Debre Berhan

While youth unemployment has been an issue in Ethiopia for a long time, young people told us they have seen no improvements in recent years, despite political changes and government efforts to improve youth employability (Sisay, 2013).[74] In our quantitative survey, the same proportion of young people believed that employment opportunities have improved in the last five years (37 per cent) as those who believed they have diminished (36 per cent).

Given the gloomy picture presented above, it follows that unemployment emerged as one of the top challenges young people felt must be overcome in the next five years (see Figure 16). This sentiment was expressed in both urban (54 per cent) and rural locations (42 per cent), across all demographic groups and regions. In fact, just under one-fifth of our quantitative sample (17 per cent) cited that a lack of employment opportunities was the single most important challenge to be tackled in the future.

Youth unemployment: a bigger challenge for urban youth, women and disabled individuals

Urban youth are more likely to be unemployed

While youth unemployment is a key issue across Ethiopia, the issue is exacerbated in urban areas. In our quantitative survey, lack of employment opportunities was more likely to be a current issue for urban youth compared to rural (38 per cent for urban versus 28 per cent for rural). This was also considered to be a more pressing issue to be overcome in the future among urban youths (54 per cent urban versus 42 per cent rural).

There are several reasons for this. First, Ethiopia is one of the least urbanised countries in the world and relies heavily on agriculture, with some 80 per cent of its population deriving their livelihood directly from agriculture. The government has historically invested a lot of money into this sector, which has played a key role in its economic growth (Schmidt and Bekele, 2016).[75] However, the challenges of this sector (e.g. low crop yields and land scarcity) mean that farming is undesirable to many young people and migration to urban centres is common

(Tadele and Ayalew Gella, 2014).[76] In our quantitative survey, rural youth were significantly more likely than urban youth to state they want to move elsewhere within Ethiopia (36 per cent rural versus 21 per cent urban). In our qualitative sessions, many rural youths expressed a desire to move to urban areas to find employment, even on a temporary basis. For example, some young boys in Hawassa told us they planned to go to Addis Ababa for the summer to work as shoe shiners to bring back money to the local community.

Lots of boys go to Addis in the summer to work on the streets, shoe shine and that sort of thing. You can make more money doing that in a day than you can in a week in Hawassa.

Male, 17, Hawassa

Urban areas, while comprising a smaller percentage of the total population, tend to be very densely populated and tend to be home to the highest numbers of young people, compared to rural areas. Rural to urban migration contributes to this growth. In fact, one study found that in 2001, some 40 per cent of the population in urban centres was aged 15–29 (Bizuneh et al., 2001).[77] Growth in urban areas remains slow. Some scholars attribute this to the fact that the private sector (and self-employment) is still grappling with the effect of the repression it experienced in the pre-1991 period.[78] Simply put, there are not enough formal jobs in the private sectors to accommodate the numbers of young people.

I try to do any job … washing cars, shining shoes … anything that will get me a little bit of money. I have stopped caring about the 'job I want'. I just need to make money now.

Male, 20, Addis Ababa

74 > Sisay (2013) https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/may-2013/youth-unemployment-lessons-ethiopia
75 > Schmidt and Bekele (2016) www.ifpri.org/publication/rural-youth-and-employment-ethiopia
76 > Tadele and Ayalew Gella (2014) https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a089d9e5274a27b20002c7/FAC_Working_Paper_083.pdf
77 > Bizuneh, et al. (2001) Work status and unemployment in urban Ethiopia
78 > *Ibid.*

Social norms and discrimination present additional employment barriers for women

Unemployment is worse for women. While our research found that young men and women place a similar level of importance on having a secure job and having a job you love, men are more likely to have achieved both (see Figure 17).

In our qualitative workshops, young women across locations consistently complained about the struggles of finding employment in what is often a male-dominated environment. They told us that despite policies to close the gender-gap, finding employment is still harder for women as a result of ingrained gender biases and a nepotistic culture that favours male employees. According to the Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE) report (2017),[79] young women have an unemployment rate more than three times that of young men (50 per cent versus 14 per cent for 15- to 19-year-olds), and wages one-third to one-half lower due to a gender pay gap that has been growing in recent years. The GAGE report also found that young women are more likely to contribute their wages to the entire household and family than boys, meaning they are taking home even less.[80]

A woman has to go to an interview, then to another interview and then to another interview. A man interviews for the same job and gets it straight away.

Female, 24, Addis Ababa

As a woman, you have to be five times better than a man to get a job.

Female, 24, Mekelle

Having a secure job is seen as a big contributor to happiness and personal success for both men and women, but women are significantly less likely than men to feel they have a secure job (20 per cent versus 25 per cent). In our qualitative fieldwork sessions, young women told us that gender roles remain traditional and that after marriage many young women are expected to stay home, do housework and take care of the children. This could explain why more young men in our quantitative survey claimed to be currently experiencing a lack of employment opportunities (43 per cent) versus women (33 per cent). The woman's role is still very much in the house, and it is likely that fewer women in our quantitative sample were looking for employment opportunities altogether. In our qualitative sessions, women who had children complained that returning to work or finding work after having children was almost impossible, due in part to social norms that frown upon women who want to work after starting a family.

I have two children and I want to go back to work. But there are no jobs and my husband wants me to stay home and take care of the children.

Female, 26, Mekelle

Figure 17: Employment-based achievements by gender

25%   20%

Having a secure job
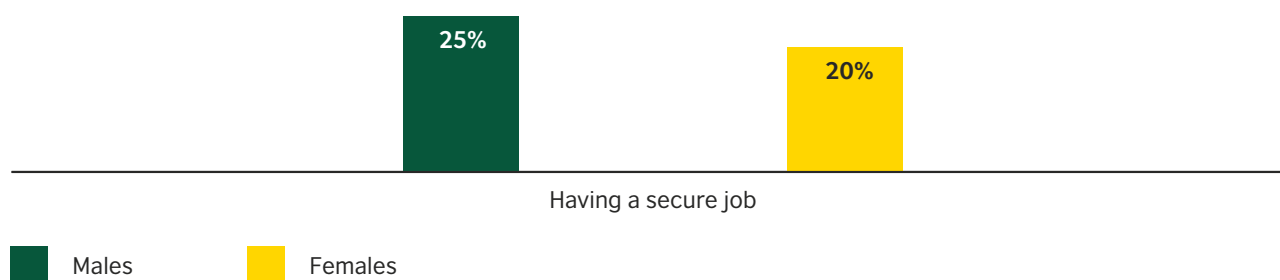
Males   Females

Question: Which of the below have you already achieved?

Base: All participants (2,332) – males (1,451), females (881).

79 > GAGE ODI (2019) https://www.odi.org/projects/2841-gender-and-adolescence-global-evidence-gage
80 > *Ibid.*

Disabled young people face additional employment challenges

As mentioned in the previous chapter, disabled individuals face unique educational barriers and are often stigmatised in Ethiopian society. Given these challenges, it is unsurprising that disabled individuals face additional challenges when it comes to employment. In our quantitative survey, disabled individuals were significantly less likely to have a secure job compared to those without disabilities (13 per cent versus 23 per cent) and were significantly more likely to cite lack of employment opportunities as an issue currently being experienced (47 per cent versus 38 per cent).

These challenges are also having a powerful impact in shaping disabled Ethiopians' views on their future and the relative importance they place on employment as a route to happiness. Young people with a disability were significantly less likely to feel that having a secure job (72 per cent versus 81 per cent) and a job they love (73 per cent versus 81 per cent) were important contributors to success and happiness. Furthermore, those with a disability were significantly less likely to think employment opportunities in Ethiopia will improve in the future (54 per cent versus 66 per cent).

The young Ethiopians we spoke to who have a disability told us they struggled with discrimination in the workplace. Getting any form of employment, let alone a career of their choosing, was a real challenge:

I have applied for jobs before, and I have the right high school certificate, but when they see I am disabled and am missing one leg they just assume I won't be able to do it. I have the knowledge but they assume I don't.

Male with a disability, 18, Hawassa

One young woman we met had to overcome many obstacles to get a job. Due to medical complications she struggled to walk and took it upon herself to sue the local hospital when they tried to fire her because of her disability:

They said I couldn't work in the pharmacy because of my disability. They didn't give me a reason why so I took the case and tried to sue them. When I did that they backed down and left me alone.

Female, 25, Hawassa – rural

Youth views on the causes of unemployment

According to young people, there are multiple interlinking factors that contribute to the unemployment issue. While many young people felt there are core issues that will require time to fix (for example, lack of urbanisation), they also felt like there are plenty of other root causes that need to be addressed in the immediate term. We outline these below.

Nepotism and ageism

Young people in our qualitative sessions consistently complained about the nepotistic work culture that dominates in Ethiopia. They told us that it is almost impossible to find a job without the right contacts or family relations. Furthermore, young people felt that Ethiopian society looks down on young people, especially if they have little work experience. Age-based hierarchies dominate and young people can find it difficult to make their voices heard in work settings and told us they often lack the confidence to assert themselves.

A qualitative session in Adama with employed men highlighted how nepotism can benefit youth if they have the right connections. Most of the men in the session were employed because of a family member or friend. One man worked for a local radio station as a friend who worked there got him the job, and another was a textile designer as his family had the equipment and experience to teach him.

Young people have degrees in subjects but most people just get work in whatever they can. Normally you rely on friends and family to help you out.

Male, 22, Adama

Lack of job availability and support for entrepreneurship

Young people perceived the biggest barrier to employment to be the lack of job opportunities where they live (see Figure 18). This was cited as the biggest barrier across both rural (63 per cent) and urban (62 per cent) areas and all regions.

The lack of job opportunities available (62 per cent) paired with the fact that the jobs people want are not available (48 per cent) means that many young people are turning towards entrepreneurship, with 75 per cent of our quantitative sample claiming that they would like to set up their own business. This was an attitude we saw more prominently in urban areas (78 per cent) compared to rural (49 per cent) and in specific regions: SNNPR (92 per cent), Addis Ababa (85 per cent) and Tigray (80 per cent). In our qualitative sessions, young people told us that entrepreneurship is the only remaining viable route to employment in Ethiopia – a way to determine your own path and make your voice heard.

I want to set up my own internet café. I would hire my friends from the community and lift everyone up. I want to be my own boss and be in charge of my own destiny.

Female, 25, Hawassa

Though desire for self-employment is high, there are perceptions among many that this is not feasible, with 56 per cent of our sample agreeing that it is achievable to set up your own business in Ethiopia.[81]

Across our qualitative fieldwork locations, very few participants had been able to set up their own business.

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81 > Though this perception was higher in Addis Ababa (64 per cent), Tigray (67 per cent) and SNNPR (71 per cent).

They told us this was because the process of getting a loan from the government was opaque, overly bureaucratic and complicated. For example, applicants are expected to form a union with at least five members and submit their proposals to local authorities. They told us that forming such a union can be difficult and that the process of filling in the application feels purposefully confusing. In addition, young people told us this requires a witness who owns property, something many youth do not have access to.

On top of this, many young people in our qualitative sessions had little understanding of how the loan works or the terms under which they would be expected to repay it, further highlighting the need for entrepreneurial skills in education.

To set up a business is not easy and young people do not have guidance on how to do this. Many times we cannot rely on our parents, because they are not educated and they do not know either.

Male, 29, Debre Berhan

In Tigray (Mekelle), the young people we met who had attempted to secure a loan from the government told us they had simply been told that the money had run out, and that they would have to wait for additional funding from the federal government. This left many young people feeling disillusioned and like they were at the mercy of when more money would become available.

I want to set up my own internet café in Mekelle but the government here could not give me the loan. They said the funds have run out and I will have to wait.

Female, 26, Mekelle

We previously outlined the additional barriers that young females in Ethiopia face when looking for employment, and we saw similar discriminations reflected when exploring attitudes to entrepreneurship. More than a third of our sample (37 per cent) agreed that it was harder for women to set up a business in Ethiopia, while only 25 per cent agreed the same for men.

I would like to start a beauty salon, but I do not have the funds to do so. For now, I am just waiting around.

Female, 25, Mekelle

Figure 18: Barriers to getting a job
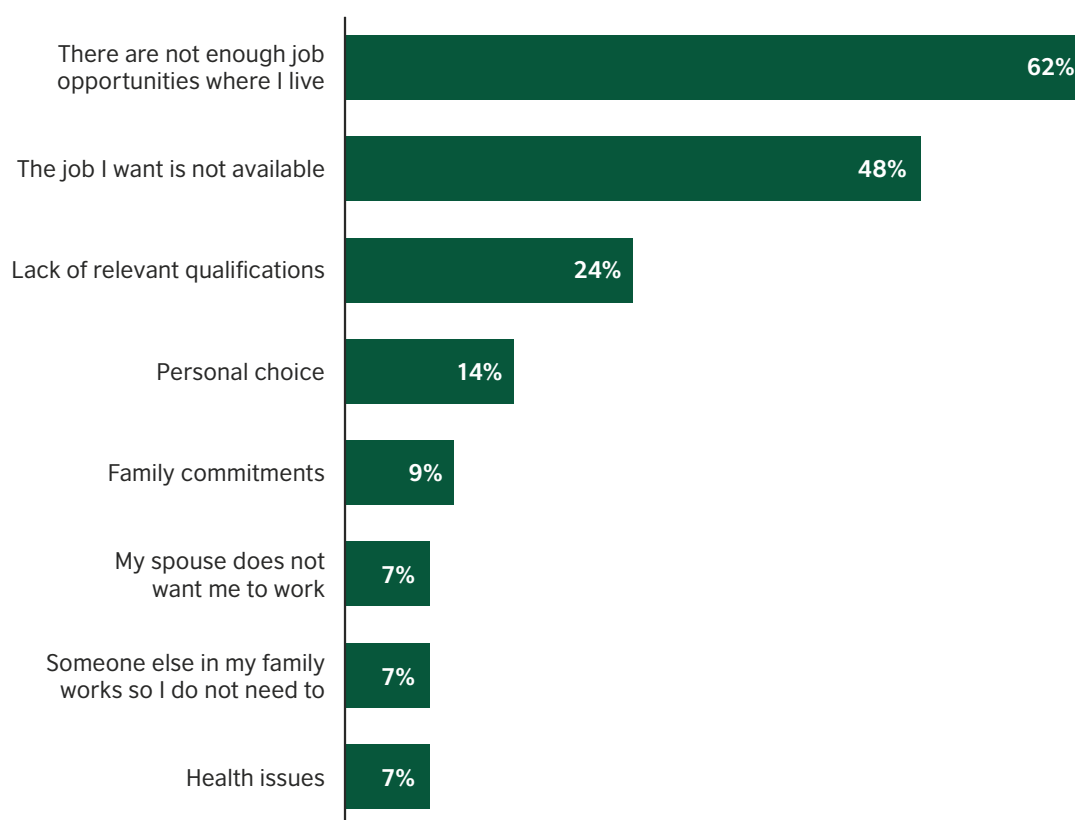
Question: Which of the below do you see as barriers to getting a job?

Base: Those ranking lack of employment in top five issues to overcome (1,243).

The consequences of unemployment: social problems, emigration and large-scale unhappiness

Social problems

A lack of unemployment does not only result in a loss of earnings but can have major personal and social consequences for an individual. In our quantitative survey, the biggest consequence of unemployment was a loss of income (71 per cent),[82] followed by psychological challenges, including increased levels of stress or stress-related illness (37 per cent) and low self-esteem (36 per cent).

This stress and insecurity were apparent across our qualitative fieldwork sessions. Young people told us that substance abuse (e.g. drinking alcohol and chewing khat) is getting worse in their communities and provides a welcome escape from reality for large numbers of unemployed youth. In extreme cases, some young women told us they worried that sexual harassment and rape were on the rise in certain communities, as a result of 'boredom' and substance abuse.

One male participant in Adama told us how the streets of his neighbourhood are lined with khat street vendors, and how boredom and unemployment is directly fuelling the khat trade in the city.

People are bored. They have nothing better to do so they get addicted to khat. Once you start hanging out with the wrong people on the streets, you very quickly get involved in drugs. You walk through my neighbourhood and the streets are lined with khat stalls. I think Adama has a big problem with khat as lots of youth are out of work.

Male, 24, Adama

Emigration

Young people in both our qualitative and quantitative research expressed a desire to move outside of Ethiopia to find employment. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this was mainly driven by economic need and not an intrinsic desire to visit other countries or experience other cultures. A quarter of young people surveyed stated they would move outside of Ethiopia in the future and a further 20 per cent said they would like to but are unable to,[83] with the qualitative research finding that their motivations for moving were driven by economic need.

In our qualitative fieldwork, young people in the rural areas of Mekelle spoke of emigrating to Saudi Arabia to find work as hotel maids or construction workers. Across our fieldwork locations, many of the participants we met had brothers, uncles or even parents who had left Ethiopia in the pursuit of jobs abroad. This is supported by USAID's CYSA research (2018),[84] which found that young people had lost hope in good opportunities in Ethiopia and aspired to emigrate abroad to places such as the USA, the Middle East and Europe. Young people in our research felt grateful for the financial support these individuals often offered. The Ethiopia WIDE research (2018)[85] also found that young people who had found employment in South Africa were often keeping strong links with home, sending back remittances and bringing back savings to invest locally.

My brother lives in China. I try to see him once a year. He brings back Chinese goods and we try to sell them to make some money. I am very proud of him for working so hard to support our family.

Female, 27, Addis Ababa

Unemployment as a barrier to happiness

Despite increasing levels of unemployment, young people in Ethiopia still considered having a secure job (80 per cent) and a job that they love (80 per cent) as the two biggest factors contributing to their future success and happiness across both urban and rural locations.

When asked what they had achieved, only 26 per cent claimed to have successfully found a job they loved, with even fewer (22 per cent) having a secure job. Potentially reflective of the dominating agricultural market in Ethiopia, participants in rural areas were significantly more likely to have a secure job (29 per cent) than those in urban areas (22 per cent), though the opposite was seen for having a job you love, with this significantly more likely to be achieved by those in urban areas (27 per cent) than rural (19 per cent), an issue that is likely to be contributing to the rural–urban migration, mentioned above.

Participants in specific regions were also significantly more likely to experience issues with finding a secure job, with this less likely to be achieved in Amhara (20 per cent) and Oromia (17 per cent) – potentially due to big population sizes and therefore increased competition.

82 > Note: Low base size, n=42.
83 > Note: There were no urban/rural differences.
84 > USAID CYSA (2019) https://www.usaid.gov/ethiopia
85 > Ethiopia WIDE (2018) http://ethiopiawide.net/publications/

Relative to other issues, young people have little faith that employment opportunities will improve

While young people are optimistic that most of the key challenges they are currently experiencing will improve in the future, employment is low on the list of issues they think will improve. Of the 13 issues we presented participants with in the quantitative sample, employment opportunities emerged in tenth place in terms of the issues participants believe will improve in the next five years (see Figure 19).

That said, while relative to other issues, participants were less likely to think employment will improve, and 65 per cent of our sample still felt this will get better over time, especially among those in SNNPR (80 per cent) and Oromia (74 per cent), though less so among those in Tigray (27 per cent).

In line with our quantitative data, young people in our qualitative sample consistently ranked unemployment as a top issue currently being experienced and one they feared would be hard to overcome in the future. Lack of certainty about Ethiopia's political future was a major contributor to this uncertainty, with many young people feeling cynical that employment opportunities could improve unless the political situation in Ethiopia stabilises.

Without peace there is no economic growth. And without economic growth there are no jobs for us here.

Female, 24, Addis Ababa

Figure 19: Opportunity areas that will get better in the future
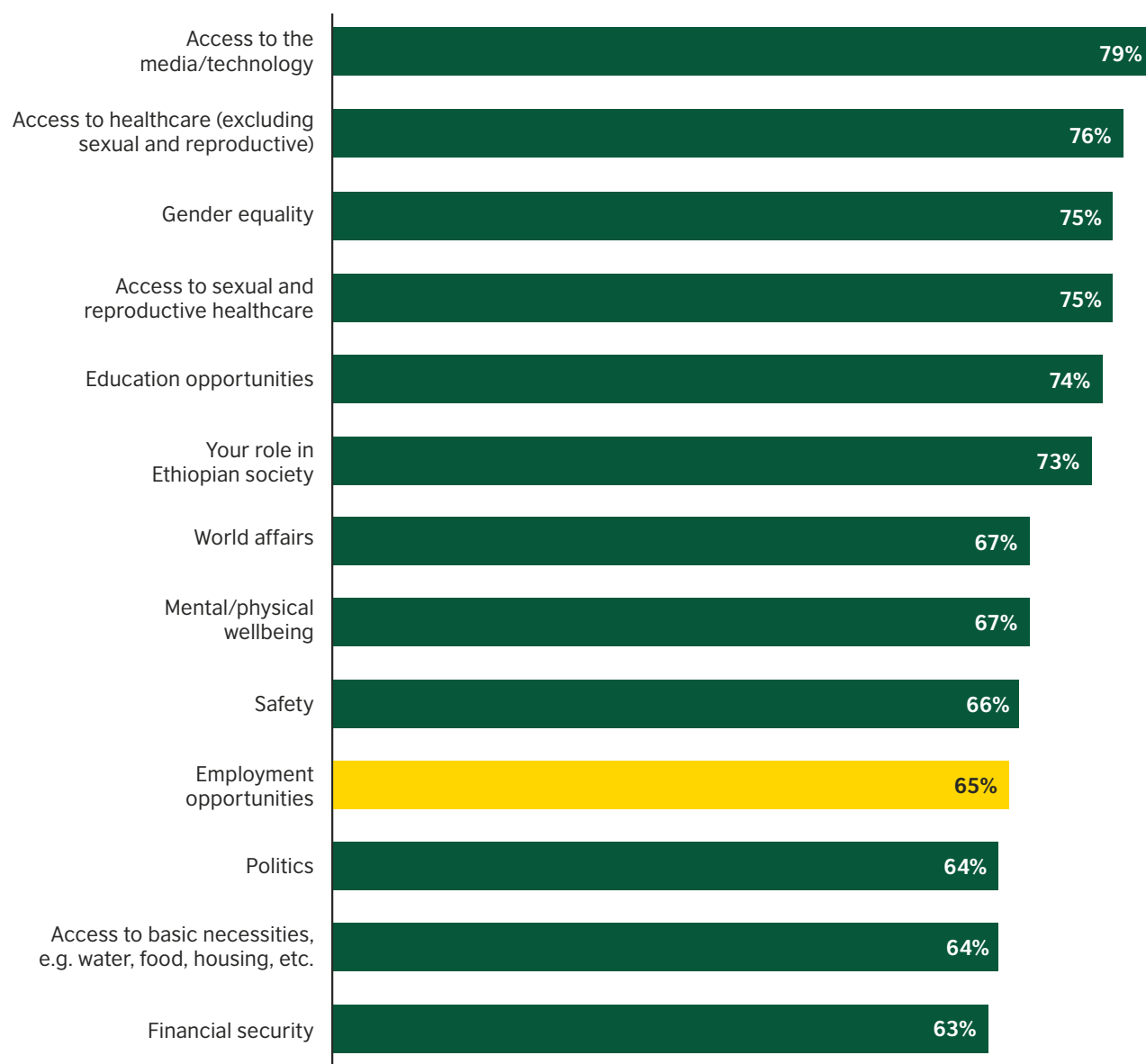
Question: Do you think opportunities in Ethiopia in the below areas will get better, worse or stay the same in the next five years?
Base: All participants (2,332).

CHAPTER 7: ACCESS TO HOUSING AND HEALTHCARE

In this chapter we explore the day-to-day lives of young Ethiopians in relation to their access to housing and necessities such as utilities; food and water; and healthcare. The issues discussed in this chapter are very much shaped by the political situation in Ethiopia. Most notably, corruption is perceived to play a huge role in access to, or lack of access to, basic provisions that young people perceive to be important in their daily lives.

Housing stock is not meeting population demands, notably in Addis Ababa

Across Ethiopia, more and more of its 100 million inhabitants, 80 per cent of whom live in the countryside, are making the move to Addis Ababa in search of work and better opportunities. As a result, the population of the capital is expected to double to more than eight million over the next decade, and the number of houses needed to meet this increase in population is estimated to be as many as half a million (Gardner, 2017).

As a solution to this problem, the Ethiopian government spearheaded an ambitious social housing project, named The Master Plan, an initiative based on Western-style condominium apartment blocks. One of the estates that has been built, the 'Koye' estate, is located 25km south of Addis Ababa and has the capacity to house up to 200,000 people on a space of 700 hectares. However, it has been met with much criticism over the poor quality of the build, unaffordable mortgages and segregated communities, as the poorest individuals cannot afford to live in them (Gardner, 2017).[86]

This plan developed land on the outskirts of Addis that belonged to the Oromia region, and was met with widespread protest and criticism from those who claimed Addis was taking over Oromia territory. The construction sparked fears that Addis was looking to take over land traditionally occupied by the Oromo people and displace farmers from their land, and it was reported that 140 Oromo protesters were killed in 2016 by security forces. The widespread protest of the Oromo people is indicative of a broader housing issue in Ethiopia: land is government-owned (Forbes, 2016).[87] The feudal method of land management means that the farmers who were displaced as part of Addis's expansion had no rights over their farming land.

The issue with the expansion of Addis into Oromia is always on the news. I don't know what will happen in the future as Addis keeps growing.

Female, 24, Addis Ababa

Young people cite a lack of access to quality, affordable housing

Habitat for Humanity (2017)[88] estimates that only 30 per cent of the current housing stock in Ethiopia is in a fair condition, while the remaining 70 per cent is in total need of replacement, and this is in line with the findings from this research. Lack of access to housing or poor-quality housing is a top challenge for young people, ranked in the top three areas that young people are currently experiencing (38 per cent were currently experiencing this). Housing issues were experienced at similar levels to lack of employment opportunities and ethnic conflict and discrimination. Lack of housing was

more of an issue in SNNPR (58 per cent) and Addis Ababa (44 per cent). It was also more of an issue for those with children (46 per cent) compared to those without (36 per cent). In line with this, only 11 per cent of our quantitative sample claimed to have secure housing, with 23 per cent thinking that this was unachievable.

Lack of housing also ranked within the top five challenges that young people think need to be overcome in Ethiopia (40 per cent). In line with the above, participants from Addis Ababa were significantly more likely than other regions to cite this as a key area to be improved in the future (48 per cent), along with those in Dire Dawa[89] (37 per cent). From the qualitative sessions, we also saw that the lack of housing is posing a real issue for those in Addis Ababa. For some, the lack of housing stock and escalating rental costs have meant they have been unable to move out of the family home:

I want to move out and get my own place, but I still live with my mum and sisters in a two-bedroom flat. It's too small for all of us but I can't afford to live anywhere else.

Female, 24, Addis Ababa

I don't know if I'll ever be able to get a place of my own in Addis unless I meet a rich man!

Female, 20, Addis Ababa

This means that young people, especially those in Addis, are staying at the family home for longer, which can lead to feelings of lost independence and a lack of agency and control over their lives. As discussed in Chapter 2, independence that comes with growing up and moving out of the family home is

86   > Gardner (2017) https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/dec/04/addis-ababa-ethiopia-redesign-housing-project
87   > Worstall (2016) https://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2016/01/08/140-dead-in-ethiopia-land-dispute-the-problem-with-government-ownership-of-land/
88   > Habitat for Humanity (2017) https://www.habitatforhumanity.org.uk/blog/2017/11/slum-housing-ethiopia-modernise/
89   > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.

crucial for young people to feel as though they have a voice within their families and communities.

Young people told us that they feel as though the government is not doing enough to provide housing and to make sure that rents are controlled. We heard examples of young people being exploited when paying rent due to corruption or lack of legislative controls:

I know people who have been told to pay large sums of money for their apartments, but not told what for. And if they don't pay they will have to move out.

Female, 24, Addis Ababa

The quantitative survey also indicated that young Ethiopians are placing a portion of the blame on the government. When asked why they do not think that having secure housing is achievable, the biggest reason was monetary restrictions (55 per cent); however, the second most cited reason was a perceived lack of governmental support (36 per cent).

Access to basic necessities is sometimes lacking

Aside from housing, young people also told us about the need to have access to other necessities. Lack of access to food and water was experienced by relatively few young people, with only 13 per cent of the young people surveyed currently experiencing this. Young people were more likely to be experiencing this in urban areas (13 per cent compared with six per cent in rural areas) and in Dire Dawa[90] (52 per cent), SNNPR (24 per cent) and Harari[91] (23 per cent), or if they were unemployed (17 per cent) or in part-time employment (18 per cent).

Despite these low levels, our survey found that along with housing, a third of young people (34 per cent) think access to basic necessities such as water, food and housing has got worse in the last five years. We heard from young people in the qualitative sessions that access to these necessities can sometimes be lacking, which has a real impact on their day-to-day lives. We heard that power and electricity in Ethiopia can be very unreliable. In the Addis Ababa workshop sessions, young people told us that they can feel very frustrated with the power shortages. Combined with escalating rental prices and the cost of living, we heard examples of where young people do not think it is acceptable to be lacking access to power and, in some cases, other necessities such as running water:

We live in Addis, the capital city, and we don't have proper access to the internet and electricity sometimes. And we pay so much money to live here.

Female, 22, Addis Ababa

It should be noted that at the time of research (between May 2019 and July 2019), power rationing was in place after water levels in hydroelectric dams dropped, which led to a power deficit (Reuters, 2019).[92] This meant that while the fieldwork was being conducted, participants were experiencing a lack of access to power and electricity, either in the morning or evening depending on the schedule. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam that we discussed in Chapter 4 has been marketed as the solution to all of Ethiopia's power shortage issues. However, the delay in construction is a cause of much resentment among young people who rely on electricity for their school work, leisure time and jobs, to name a few.

There is high satisfaction with the healthcare provision in Ethiopia and it is not seen as a challenge to be overcome

We did not hear from our research that young people felt as though healthcare is a challenge for them. In fact, only three per cent said they were currently experiencing lack of access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, and four per cent other kinds of healthcare. Further to this, young people felt as though access to healthcare (including sexual and reproductive healthcare) was in the top five areas that have improved in the last five years: 58 per cent thought access to healthcare in general had improved, and 57 per cent access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. There was further expectation that both would continue to improve over the next five years.

In the qualitative sessions, a few participants mentioned the previous Minister for Health, Tedros Adhanom, and his role in improving healthcare in Ethiopia. He is now the head of the World Health Organization. He is attributed with 'galvanising' efforts to achieve the United Nations' eight Millennial Development Goals, such as halving poverty rates, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and reducing infant and maternal mortality (Global Health, 2019).[93]

90 > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.
91 > Note: Low base in Harari of n=50.
92 > Reuters (2019) https://af.reuters.com/article/topNews/idAFKCN1SO07F-OZATP
93 > Global Health (2019) http://globalhealth.eiu.com/ethiopias-healthcare-turning-point/

> CHAPTER 8: ACCESS TO AND TRUST IN INFORMATION

A key change under Abiy Ahmed's leadership has been increasing access to information and technology. The information and communications technology (ICT) landscape in Ethiopia had thus far been greatly determined and controlled by state-owned monopolies, and it is widely argued that these have constituted a major stumbling block for innovation and widespread access to ICT services. Slow digital uptake nationwide resulted in a youth population who were largely disconnected. Ethiopia has had one of the lowest telecommunication penetration rates in Africa, particularly in terms of mobile phone subscribers. This limited tech landscape has restricted young Ethiopian's technology access, and disadvantaged young people (females, lower socio-economic grade) have been even more disconnected.

The Young Lives study of 2016[94] showed low use of digital devices and internet among 22-year-olds. Of their sample, only 18 per cent had used a computer, 18 per cent the internet, and 32 per cent a mobile phone with internet. The study showed:

- 37 per cent of young men had repeatedly used mobile phones with internet access compared to 26 per cent of young women

- a huge digital divide between economic groups, with use of mobile phones with internet being 56 per cent among the richest and 11 per cent among the poorest

- use of mobile phones with internet access was 45 per cent in urban locations and just 15 per cent in rural.

It is important to note that the timing of the research was before the coup attempt took place in Ethiopia's Amhara region and the subsequent five-day government mandated internet shut-down. Since then, the Ministry of Defence on 8 July 2019 announced plans to charge journalists and media houses for 'publishing defamatory information about the Ethiopia National Defense Force'. The opinions of young people discussed in this chapter do not reflect these recent changes to the media and information landscape.

Increasing digital and media access

Ethiopia is now, however, at a significant time of change when it comes to digital and media access. The new Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, is moving swiftly towards privatisation of the telecoms sector in an exercise that he hopes will raise billions of dollars, as well as modernising a network that has fallen behind other African nations. Abiy Ahmed has also made big changes to the Ethiopian media, lifting censorship bans and freeing journalists and other political prisoners.

Responses from our survey reflected these rapid changes in access to technology and information. Of all the areas we asked young people about, access to the media and technology was the area that the most young people thought had improved over the last five years. In line with this, only 13 per cent said that they were currently being negatively affected by a lack of access to the media and information, reduced from 22 per cent who said it had impacted them in the last five years.

Two-thirds of young people thought that access had improved (66 per cent) and more than three-quarters expected it to continue to improve over the next five years (79 per cent). Young people in Tigray were less likely to think that this had improved (32 per cent versus 66 per cent of all young people), reflecting their wider cynicism about the direction in which the country is headed (those in Tigray were least likely to believe there had been improvements in any area).

Access to the media and technology did not rank highly in the list of challenges that young people think need to be overcome in the future, likely because it is seen to have made major advances in the last five years, with optimism that this is an area that will continue to improve.
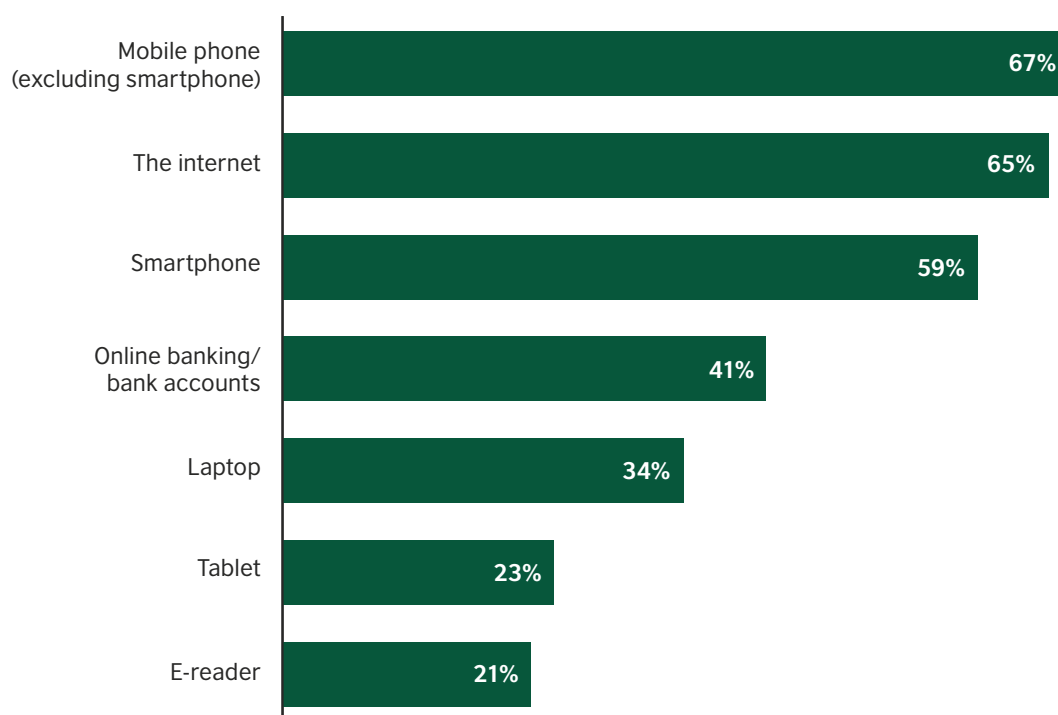
I think information is easy to access now. It's easier than it used to be anyway. Lots of people have televisions and radios.
Female, 24, Hawassa – rural

In addition, when asked about recent government changes, the majority of young people said they felt positively about the unblocking of websites and media access (79 per cent).

This perception of improved access was reflected in the proportions of young people who now personally have access to digital devices, the internet and banking services. Figure 20 shows current levels of digital access among survey participants.

Two-thirds reported having access to a mobile phone (67 per cent) and to the internet (65 per cent), and just over half had access to a smartphone (59 per cent). Mobile phones have become an integral part of daily life and relied upon for social networking, with some young people telling us that they could not imagine not having their phones with them.

94   > Araya, Woldehanna and Pankhurst (2016) https://www.younglives.org.uk/content/youth-transitions-skills-work-and-family-formation-preliminary-findings-round-5-survey

Figure 20: Digital device and service access

Question: Which of the below digital devices and/or services do you have access to?

Base: All participants (2,332).

I love my phone, I actually think I'm addicted!

Female, 24, Hawassa – rural

Four in ten young people had access to online banking or bank accounts (41 per cent). Access to the internet, smartphones and banking services was higher for young people in Addis Ababa, Tigray and SNNPR, with access lowest in Harari and Dire Dawa.[95]

Access among young men was higher than for young women, with internet access at 67 per cent for men (versus 62 per cent of women), and 61 per cent of men had access to a smartphone (versus 56 per cent of women). Access to digital devices and services increased with household income, level of education and age.

Despite young men having higher digital access, they were more likely to say that a lack of access to media/information resources is currently having a negative impact on them personally (16 per cent versus 13 per cent of women). This may be due to men feeling that a lack of access has more of a tangible detrimental impact on their life. When we asked those without access to the internet what impact they believed it had on them, overall, men were also more likely to say it had a negative impact (44 per cent of men versus 32 per cent of women).

When we asked qualitatively whether having access to the internet via mobile phones and computers meant they would have more of a say in matters concerning them as they are better connected (i.e. politics, their local communities and work), few young people made a link between increased access to the internet and their ability to effect change in their lives.

95   > Note: Low base in Dire Dawa of n=32.

Trust in information

The most commonly used source of information for news and current affairs was television, followed by radio (as shown in Figure 21).

Social media is now used to access current affairs and news information by more than half of young Ethiopians surveyed (54 per cent), reflecting widening access to the internet. Family and friends also remain an important source for half of young people (51 per cent). Young men were more likely to get news and current affairs information from social media (57 per cent) than women (50 per cent) and dedicated news websites (14 per cent versus ten per cent), reflecting the higher digital access seen among young men. Men were also more likely than women to use

the radio (77 per cent versus 67 per cent) and local newspapers (21 per cent versus 15 per cent).

Television is by far the most trusted source of news and current affairs information for young people, with 41 per cent ranking it first as their most trusted source and 68 per cent placing it in their top three most trusted sources (shown in Figure 22).

Many young people told us that since Abiy Ahmed came into power and freedom within the press has increased, the way in which state television reports news has changed. Specifically, people referenced the increased emphasis placed on livestreaming from locations of news events and interviews. This in turn has led to young people feeling as though they are getting the most

up-to-date, trustworthy and relevant information through the television.

I trust the news on the TV the most. They do livestreams from events and interview people who are 'in the know'. I like being able to see the news.

Male, 19, Hawassa

Other trusted sources include the radio, religious leaders and friends and family. Level of trust placed in religious leaders did not vary depending on whether a young person was of Ethiopian Orthodox, Protestant or Islamic faith. Men were more likely to trust social media (23 per cent placed it in their top three most trusted sources, versus 15 per cent of women), reflecting their higher social media usage.

Figure 21: Sources of information for news and current affairs
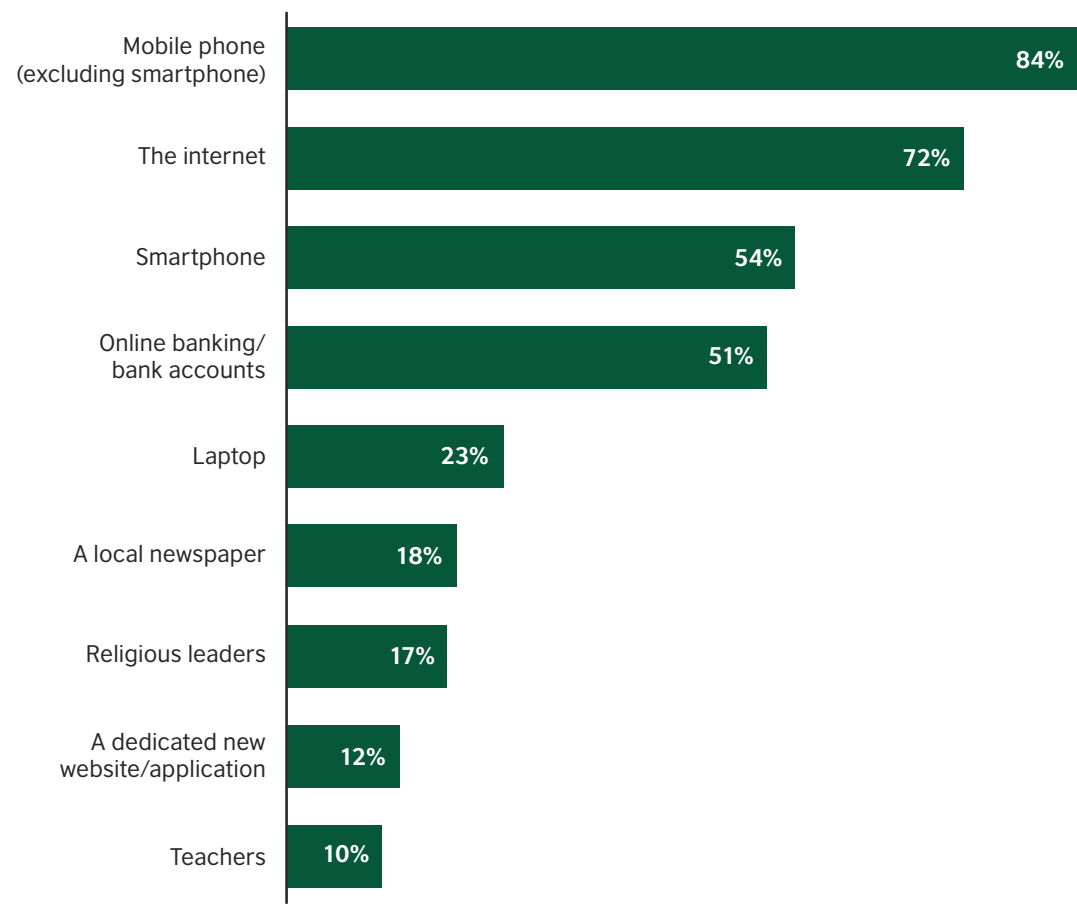
Question: Which of the below digital devices and/or services do you have access to?

Base: All participants (2,332).

Challenges with Ethiopia's media

Overall, most young Ethiopians had a level of trust in the media, with 74 per cent having some trust and ten per cent saying they trust it a lot. Only 16 per cent said they have no trust in the media, with this higher among men (18 per cent) than women (13 per cent). Regionally, young people in Tigray reported having the least trust in the media, with 38 per cent saying they have no trust (compared with 16 per cent of young Ethiopians overall). Trust was higher for younger Ethiopians, with 14 per cent of 15- to 18-year-olds saying they had a lot of trust in the media compared with ten per cent of 25- to 29-year-olds.
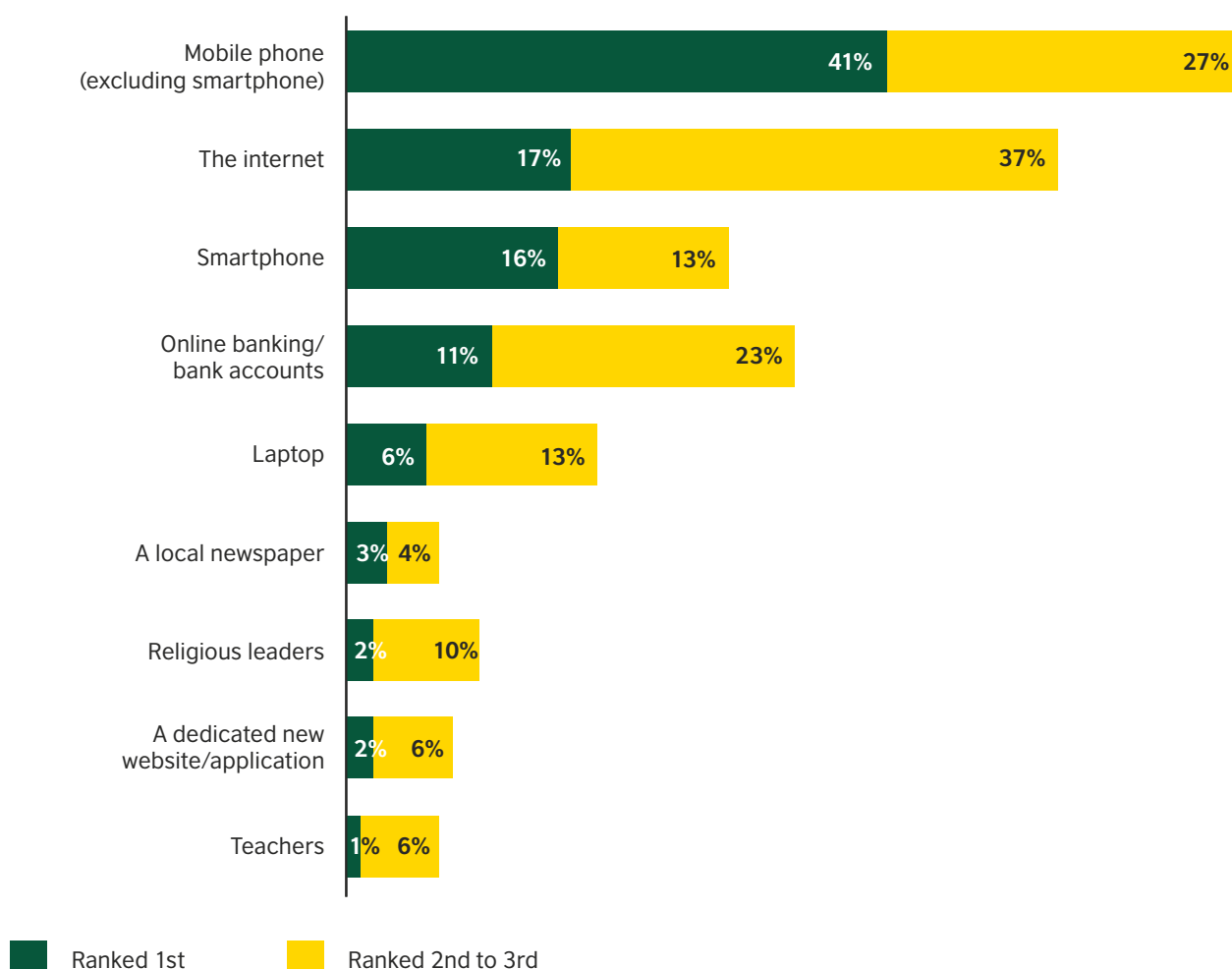
Fake news was seen to be biggest issue with Ethiopia's media, with almost three-quarters of young people thinking this was an issue (72 per cent). Young people did tell us that since Abiy Ahmed came into power, the level of trust has improved; however, cynicism remains around just how much official media can be trusted.

I would never really watch official state media because it was so fake. I think it's better now, but you wonder how much truth they are telling us.

Male, 14, Hawassa

Figure 22: Most trusted sources of information for news and current affairs

Source	Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd to 3rd
Mobile phone (excluding smartphone)	41%	27%
The internet	17%	37%
Smartphone	16%	13%
Online banking/ bank accounts	11%	23%
Laptop	6%	13%
A local newspaper	3%	4%
Religious leaders	2%	10%
A dedicated new website/application	2%	6%
Teachers	1%	6%

Question: And which of the below sources do you trust the most? Please click on the codes to rank them, where 1 is the source that you trust the most (ranked by first).
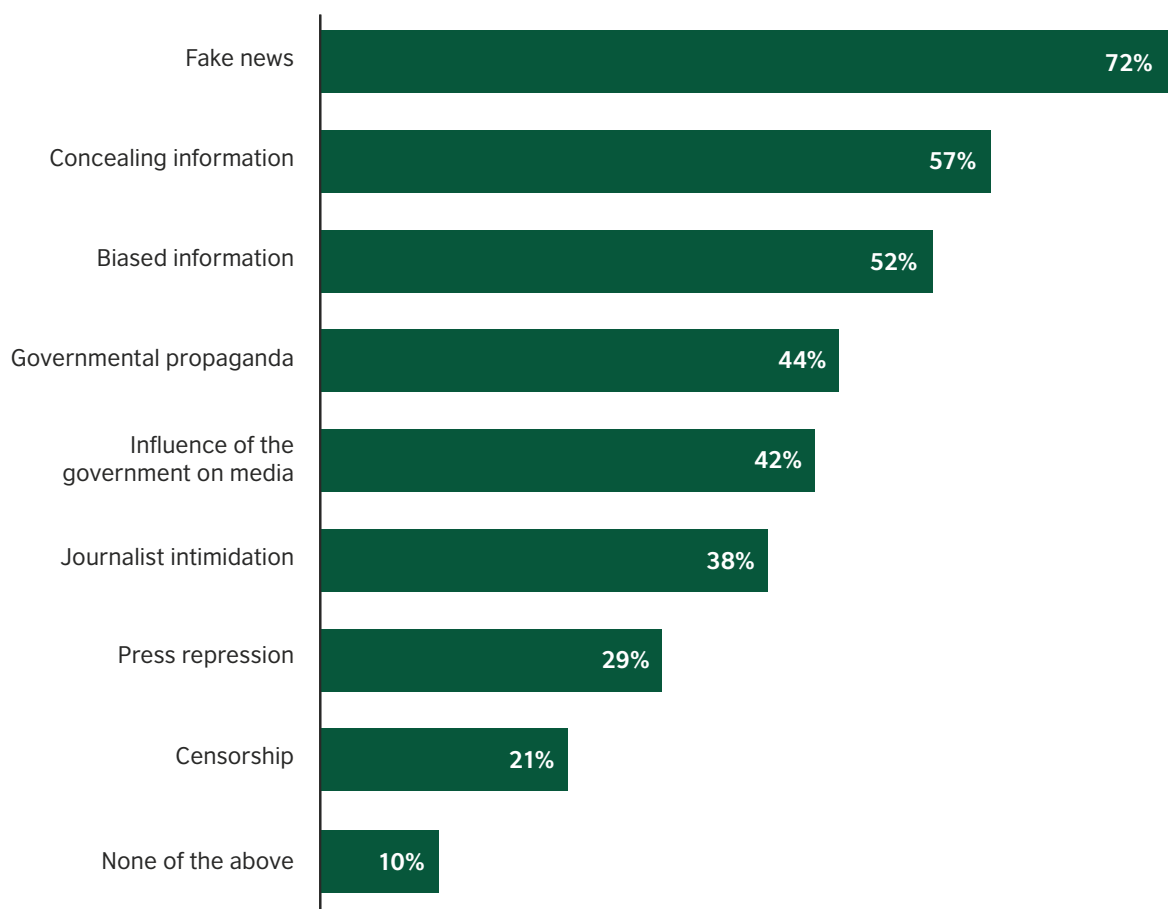
Base: All participants (2,332).

Concealing information (57 per cent) and biased information (52 per cent) were also seen to be an issue by just over half of young people. Figure 23 shows the proportion of young people who thought each was an issue.

In line with their lower trust for the media overall, men were more likely than women to see most of these areas as an issue, as were 25- to 29-year-olds when compared to those aged 15–24. Young people living in Tigray, SNNPR and Addis Ababa were also more likely to think these were issues, compared to the other regions.

Figure 23: Issues and/or challenges with Ethiopia's media

Question: Which of the below do you think are issues and/or challenges in the Ethiopian media?

Base: All participants (2,332).

CHAPTER 9: SUPPORT AND SOLUTIONS: THE CHANGES YOUTH WANT TO SEE

This chapter outlines youths' views on the support and solutions they need to achieve their ambitions and dreams in the future.

As referenced in Chapter 2, young people place a lot of emphasis on their faith, and this influences how they approach the challenges they face in their daily lives. Speaking to young people in the qualitative fieldwork, it quickly became apparent that they expect very little institutional support (other than financial support, for example government loans) to help them achieve their goals. Instead, the young people in this research placed a lot of emphasis on hard work, determination and 'strong faith', which they demonstrate through activities like attending church, daily prayer and working hard at school/helping the community. 'God willing' is a term of phrase we heard time and time again in the qualitative sessions, and many young people felt that if they demonstrated strong faith, their dreams would come true. The fact that young people place a lot of emphasis on the role of 'the self' in realising their ambitions made it challenging for them to articulate what support outside the family or community might be helpful. On top of this, as we've seen in this report, there was very low awareness of any policies or initiatives that are aimed at supporting young people on this journey.

That said, when young people were prompted and given dedicated space to think about this, they did have some ideas of the types of support that would facilitate their goal achievement. In this section, we outline the sorts of support young people told us they wanted/ needed across the key topic areas discussed in this report.

The suggestions for support and solutions below came from the young people we spoke to. Suggestions have been divided according to the key topic areas in the preceding chapters.

Politics
Engagement and voice

Young people have a natural interest in politics, yet formal engagement is low. This suggests that the channels that are currently being used to reach the younger generation are ineffective. Furthermore, young people told us they are put off by the corruption, ethnic allegiances and nepotism that plague the political landscape. To increase their engagement and amplify the youth voice, young people called for:

- More accessible and easier to understand political information
  - As television is the most trusted information channel, young people are interested in political channels that are targeted at young people specifically and make political news engaging and interesting for their demographic.
- More support to understand and identify 'fake news'
  - Young people told us they suddenly have access to a whole new world of information but have very few tools to help them navigate this new space. Young people called for more education and support on how to discern a 'credible' news source from a 'fake' one and assess the overall credibility and validity of information. Young people felt that schools would be a good starting point for these new skills but that it was important that the older generation, who are also using social media, do not get left behind.
- More formal and informal avenues for young people to get involved and make their voice heard
  - Young people were unaware of any platforms (local or national) that allowed young people to organise and debate politics.

  - At an 'informal' community level, they welcomed the idea of more safe spaces for young people to gather and debate issues of importance to the community, with a guarantee that they would be given a platform at community gatherings to air grievances and share ideas. They also called for funding of community projects to be allocated according to the needs of local people, rather than the demands of higher-up officials in the government.
  - At a more 'formal' level, young people liked the idea of having political clubs at schools and more formal get-togethers with other local youth (perhaps organised through social media) to share and debate ideas. Young people also saw this as an opportunity to practise their public-speaking skills and boost their confidence.
- More direct lines of communication with politicians
  - As we have seen throughout this report, the agenda of the EPRDF is opaque to most young people and many feel out of touch with the priorities of the government. With elections looming, young people called for ways to be 'closer' to politicians and communicate with them more directly. According to young people, social media presents an exciting avenue for more direct communication with the politicians that claim to serve them.
- More representation of young people in government posts
  - While young people are excited about having a relatively young leader, they feel Abiy Ahmed represents the exception, not the rule. Young people told us they want to see more younger politicians moving up the ranks of government.

Corruption

As we have seen in this report, corruption is an issue that touches all young people across many areas of life – at both a local and national level. Young people called for:

- More transparency and accountability in government spending
  - One of the biggest grievances from young people was the existence of anti-corruption policies that do not get enforced on the ground. Young people called for policies to be properly enforced and for information on government-funded projects (e.g. the building of roads and dams) to be published online – available for the public to see – to increase accountability.
- Greater consequences for corrupt government officials
  - In line with the above, young people called for greater punishment of those who misappropriate money and government funds.
- More public engagement in government spending
  - Particularly at a local level, young people told us they wanted to a) see how budgets for the year were allocated and b) be able to have a vote on exactly how this money is spent.

Ethnic conflict/discrimination

Ethnic conflict/discrimination is such an all-consuming and emotive topic in Ethiopia that the task of thinking up solutions to it felt daunting for most young people. Despite this, young people across this research agreed that resolving this issue was key for their personal futures and the economic and political future of Ethiopia. While they were not sure how to make these changes, they told us the following were important milestones to achieve:

- Youth called for ethnic and political interests to be less intertwined
  - Young people told us that the link between economic opportunity and ethnicity was ingrained in Ethiopians' minds and that, unless this changed, it would be hard for the issue to be resolved. They told us that if they were guaranteed they would not be economically disadvantaged in any way, it would not matter which ethnicity was in power.
- Young people expressed a desire for social norms around ethnicity to shift – with schools and universities playing a key role
  - In line with the above, young people told us that Ethiopians need a 'mindset shift' to move them towards a united Ethiopia mentality, not an ethnic one.
  - Young people told us that because ethnic conflict often plays out at universities, it was important to start addressing the issue there. For example, they felt that universities needed to take more responsibility for the conflict that is playing out on their campuses by, for example, creating more formal student-led organisations that are ethnically mixed and spreading a message of unity.
  - In addition to universities, young people told us that primary and secondary schools could play an important role in teaching children about the ethnically mixed nature of Ethiopia, teaching them to appreciate both the differences and commonalities and fostering a sense of unity and togetherness (e.g. facilitating discussion and networking between young people from different backgrounds).

Education

Young people were optimistic about the increase in education provision but felt that quality continues to be an issue. Of all themes discussed in this report, young people produced the most 'solutions' in this area, indicating that this is an issue young people think about a lot and feel is important to address. They had ideas across access, quality and preparation for working life.

Education access

- Youth called for better provision for disabled youth, those with learning difficulties and young women
  - Young people with a disability told us they wanted better accessibility for disabled students (e.g. ensuring all schools are fitted with ramps and lifts) and more 'normalisation' of disability in Ethiopian society to overcome stigma and misinformation regarding the abilities of this audience.
  - They also told us there is a need for better education provision for those with learning or behavioural difficulties, or anyone who may fall 'through the cracks' in the standard educational system.
  - Young people told us that while progress has been made, young women still face additional barriers to going to school and that, even if they do attend, they often have a more difficult time because they do most of the housework. Young women called for a fairer distribution of household chores and for continued efforts to ensure parents see the value in girls' education.

Quality of education and preparation for work

- Young people called for better trained teachers to improve quality in all schools
  - Young people complained that teaching standards are often low and that teachers are badly paid, reducing their motivation. Young people felt that ensuring Ethiopia has high-quality teachers who are fairly reimbursed for their work should be a top government priority.
- Youth want more practical experience in school – not just *listening* but also *doing*
  - Young people across all levels of education felt that getting more practical experience was key. They called for government funding to be poured into creating high-technology, high-quality classrooms that allow pupils to practise their skills (e.g. laboratories with microscopes and other important scientific equipment).
  - They also called for more practical experience that would benefit them outside the classroom and help them get a job. Young people wanted more support learning how to write CVs and cover letters, how to conduct a good interview, how to write professional emails, etc.
  - Lastly, young people wanted clearer links to the working world in terms of opportunities for apprenticeships and internships that were based on merit, not personal connections.

- More efforts to ensure the skills taught in education match those required by the labour market
  - Young people told us that the 70:30 policy and push towards science had not worked, as jobs in this field are still unattainable. Young people called for the government to ensure that education and job opportunities link up so that the education–employment pathways can become clearer for youth.
  - In line with this, young people also wanted more support in schools for entrepreneurship, as this is what the labour market increasingly demands. Youth wanted more practical skills required to start and manage a business: finance and accounting, how to do taxes, how to manage a budget, etc.
- Youth called for more emphasis on nurturing creative talent and innovation in the classroom
  - Youth told us that 'cultural respect' for 'creative' fields was relatively low in Ethiopia and young people who wanted to do something in the creative industry (e.g. write, paint, graphic design, etc.) often felt that their opportunities to nurture these skills in the classroom were limited.
  - In line with this, young people called for more 'innovation' in classrooms to nurture young people's writing, debate and creative/critical thinking skills.
  - Young people felt that if these skills could not be taught in the classroom, there should be a space dedicated to them in the form of extracurricular courses or activities.

- TVET in its current form is not attractive to young people – it needs a 're-brand'
  - Across our research, TVET was not an attractive option for young people and was often seen as 'inferior' to going down the university track. While young people did not ask for this specifically, the fact that TVET suffers such a bad reputation suggests it needs an overhaul and 're-brand' to become attractive to youth.

Employment

Young people felt that more can be done to increase employment opportunities in Ethiopia, especially given the mismatch between the skills taught at school and those required from the labour market. Ideas from young people included:

- More support for entrepreneurship
  - As entrepreneurship is one of the only viable routes to employment, young people felt that much more needs to be done to support young people on this journey, in terms of both:
  - financial support in the form of loans (and more transparency and clear-cut procedures around how to obtain a loan and the terms of repayment)
  - skill-based support to fill information gaps around practical business skills (e.g. how to 'register' a business, how to file taxes and how to manage budgets).

- A cultural shift away from nepotism, sexism, ageism and ableism in the workplace
  – Young people felt frustrated by the lack of transparency around hiring practices and the often 'obvious' signs of various 'isms' in the workplace, despite multiple policies aimed at addressing these. Young people wanted guarantees that they would have equal chances to get a foot in the door – regardless of gender, ethnicity or disability.
  – This feeling was especially strong among disabled youth, who often reported feeling that their employment prospects were hopeless. In addition to a shift in 'culture', they also called for practical changes to the built environment – lifts and ramps in all office buildings.
- Better office infrastructure (e.g. access to power and internet) to ensure people can work and gain trust internationally
  – Young people felt frustrated that frequent power cuts and internet blackouts continue to be an issue in Ethiopia. Young people wanted reassurance from the government that this issue would be addressed, to allow them to work competitively in a global market.
- More investment in commercial farming and more incentives for farmers to invest in land
  – Young people told us that farmers currently have little incentive to take good care of the land, as this is government owned and farmers are frequently moved from one plot of land to another. With a big trade deficit, young people were eager to see more investment in profit-yielding crops, also to ease the pressure of rural–urban migration.

- Continued investment in the private sector
  – Young people want to see more multi-national organisations setting up offices in Ethiopia and providing more employment opportunities for youth. They feel Ethiopia is making steps in the right direction and want to see this continue.

Housing and basic necessities

Young people told us that they want assurance that there will be adequate housing provisions to keep up with the growing population. They also expressed a desire for policies to fix the issues that Ethiopia is currently facing, before focusing on other, international problems.

- Ensuring there is adequate housing provision for the growing population – getting ahead of the challenge
  – Young people were very aware of the housing challenges that Ethiopia is facing and many told us they have first-hand experience of a lack of adequate housing. They told us they want to see the government taking steps to ensure that there will be enough affordable housing for all in the future.

- Ensuring that policies prioritise addressing issues in Ethiopia first
  – Some young people reported feeling that the government is placing a lot of emphasis on international relations (such as Abiy Ahmed making peace with Eritrea), and that important issues in Ethiopia are not getting the priority attention they deserve. The water dam in Tigray that is supposed to provide power for the whole of Ethiopia and abroad is a good example of what young people want the government to fix first.

CHAPTER 10: IDEAS TO INSPIRE POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Following the primary research with young people, the Youth Task Force members were given an opportunity to review the findings and brainstorm early policy intervention ideas based on the insights. The below ideas represent the aspirational voice of the Youth Task Force members and will be used by the British Council as a starting place to inform more targeted policy dialogues and consultations in the future.

Politics

- Create and fund youth-led and youth-focused media channels with a focus on disseminating political information in an easy-to-understand and engaging way.
- Create clear pathways for youth into the political arena by establishing programmes for participation from a young age, through school and community engagement. It will be important to draw in youth from diverse backgrounds and regions, ensuring ethnic representation is proportional.
- Create more communication pathways between government representatives, politicians and young people; ideally these communication channels should be youth-led.

Corruption

- Ensure there are effective law enforcement measures in place to end impunity.
- Increase public engagement in, and transparency of, government spending (particularly at a local level) through creating inclusive and participatory budgeting measures (i.e. publishing budget plans online).
- Continue to put measures in place that promote press freedom, transparency and access to information.

Ethnic conflict/discrimination

- Create more ethnically inclusive political institutions (such as legislative and executive councils).
- Design constitutional tools that facilitate genuine minority participation.
- Create effective mechanisms of judicial redress where instances of human rights violations occur.
- Create a clearer division of power between the federal governments and the regions, to avoid federal democratic centralist policy prevailing over regional views.
- To minimise ethnic conflict, consider how representation in the House of the Federation is distributed to avoid domination by large ethnic groups.
- Put measures in place (for example, make it part of the curriculum) to celebrate and promote Ethiopian unity in schools.
- The government should work to make advertising more inclusive – particularly in terms of clothing, food and culture – to ensure all young people feel represented.

Education

- Create incentives for young people to train as teachers (e.g. provide benefits, better pay, better training).
- Facilitate access to remote education through online learning tools and tutors, especially for young people in rural areas who may not have easy access to schools.
- Ensure policies around the physical accessibility of the built environment are enforced by putting more stringent checks in place and administering more serious repercussions for schools who do not adhere to these policies.
- Challenge current reputational issues with TVET by including important soft skills in the curriculum.
- Invest in school equipment and facilities for all schools, particularly access to materials such as textbooks. Money should also be invested in facilitating practical experiences with subjects through investing in science laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, technology, etc.
- Work with the private sector to revise the current curriculum to be more in line with the demands of the labour market (i.e. revise the 70:30 policy), and focus on the development of entrepreneurial skills from a young age.
- Revise educational systems that currently focus on measuring the quantity of university graduates produced to focus on quality – creating tougher entry exams and ensuring university education is in line with international standards.
- Invest in programmes and/or offer financial support to provide free school lunches for more vulnerable students.

Employment

- Continue to include youth in dialogues about employment policies; create employment programmes that are evidence based and ensure these are adequately monitored and evaluated.

- Remove obstacles to youth employment by revising 'unnecessary' or 'antiquated' bureaucracy and making it easier for young people to register businesses, access start-up capital, etc.

- Put in place (and enforce) quotas to ensure diversity in the workplace to counter ageism, sexism, nepotism and ableism. Encourage greater transparency by requiring organisations to publish diversity figures.

- Encourage private sector investment in small-scale farmers to make them part of supply chains.

- Incentivise international organisations to operate in Ethiopia.

- Invest in more rapid urbanisation to create growth in secondary cities and rural areas to curb rural–urban migration.

- Provide platforms and grants for young people to create local creative solutions to rural issues.

Housing and other necessities

- Ensure there is more public engagement in how land is developed to avoid conflict and give citizens a say in solving the housing crisis, particularly in urban areas (and among low-income households).

- Create better infrastructure to ensure all households have access to power and water.

- Continue community-based initiatives in improving sanitation and working towards a greener Ethiopia.

- Invest in more affordable housing provision, especially in urban areas like Addis Ababa.

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> APPENDIX: METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

Literature review

2CV conducted a literature review of published sources to understand the social, political and economic landscape for young people in Ethiopia. The findings from this literature review were used to give context to and inform our lines of questioning for the primary phases or research.

What was included?

More than 40 pieces of literature were included within this review. The literature review drew upon research from Young Lives, GAGE, World Health Organization, HoLLA, UNFPA, USAID, Girl Effect, World Bank, African Development Bank, Ethiopian Development Research Institute, Central Statistics Agency and a variety of academic journals and research articles. We also reviewed youth policies as outlined by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

When deciding what to include, the following factors were considered:

- **date:** more recent studies and reports were prioritised, and anything dated pre-2003 was excluded; it is worth noting that there was limited recent literature dated 2016 or later
- **the credibility of the source:** the author or commissioning body
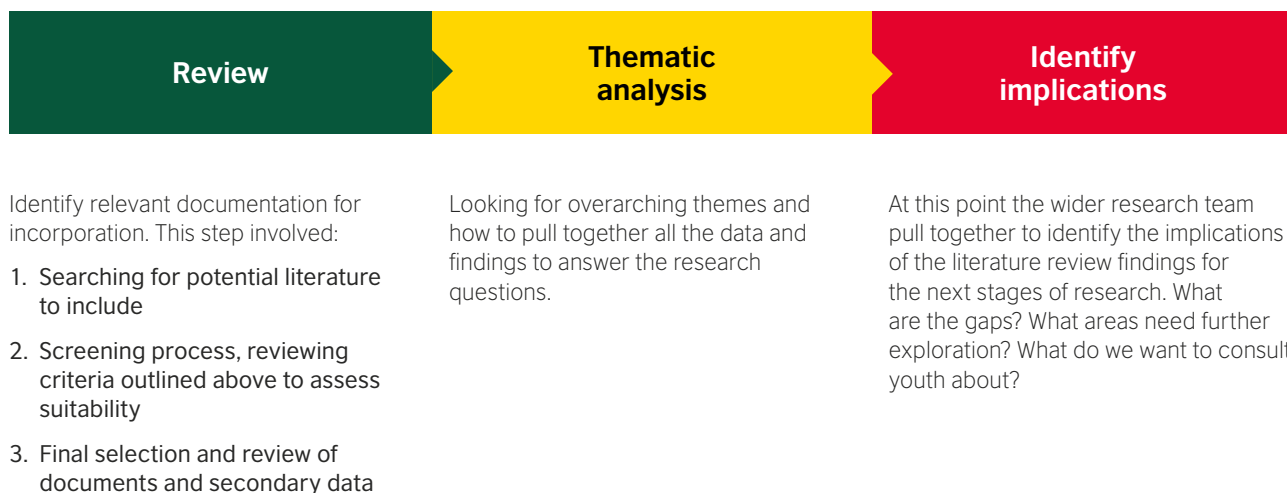- **research approach and sample:** reviewing the robustness and reliability of data and findings
- **relevance:** this included:
  - **youth focus:** aiming to include as many youth perspectives and voices as possible
  - **geographical focus:** looking for Ethiopia-specific insight rather than general Horn of Africa or development literature.

Search terms

We searched using Google Scholar, the Ethiopian Open Data Portal, Young Lives datasets and JSTOR by using the search terms 'youth' or 'young people' and 'Ethiopia'.

The process: There were three key steps to reviewing the literature and writing this report.

Review	Thematic analysis	Identify implications

Identify relevant documentation for incorporation. This step involved:

1. Searching for potential literature to include
2. Screening process, reviewing criteria outlined above to assess suitability
3. Final selection and review of documents and secondary data

Looking for overarching themes and how to pull together all the data and findings to answer the research questions.

At this point the wider research team pull together to identify the implications of the literature review findings for the next stages of research. What are the gaps? What areas need further exploration? What do we want to consult youth about?

The literature reviewed included:

Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (2018) *Adolescent and youth status report.*

FDRE (2014) Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture, Youth Policy.

Horn of Africa Leadership and Learning for Action programme (2018) Ethiopia Youth Engagement Contextual Analysis.

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GAGE (2017) Exploring Ethiopian adolescents' gendered experiences and perspectives.

Ethiopia data portal (2019) http://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/apps/atlas/Harari

Wondim, AK and Eniyew, K (2018) Gender and youth challenges and opportunities in rural community: The case of Goregora, West Dembia district of North West Ethiopia.

Kebede et al. (2005) Khat and alcohol use and risky sex behaviour among in-school and out-of-school youth in Ethiopia.

WHO (2017) Regional atlas on adolescent and youth 2017: monitor the health status and trend of adolescent and youth in Africa.

OECD (2018) Key Issues affecting Youth in Ethiopia.

Berhanu, Z et al. (2017) Sexual and Reproductive Health Services Use, Perceptions, and Barriers among Young People in Southwest Oromia.

UNFPA (2019) Youth Dashboard: https://www.unfpa.org/data/adolescent-youth/ET

Gebrie, A, Alebel, A, Zegeye, A, Tesfaye, B (2018) Prevalence and predictors of khat chewing among Ethiopian university students: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *PLOS ONE 13/4.*

Geldof, M (2011) Gendered ICT Use Among Youths in Ethiopia and Malawi.

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Young Lives (2013) Nutrition and Health: Round 4 Preliminary Findings Factsheet.

Young Lives (2013) Youth and Development: Round 4 Preliminary Findings Factsheet.

Young Lives (2013) Education and Learning: round 4 Preliminary Findings Factsheet.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (2013) National Labour Force Survey.

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Guarcello, L and Rosati, F (2007) Discussion Paper: Child Labor and Youth Employment: Ethiopia Country Study.

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Ethiopia WIDE (2018) Economic experiences of rural young people in 2018.

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (2004) Welfare Monitoring Survey.

Wondemagegn, AT et al. (2017) Perceived Psychological, Economic, and Social Impact of Khat Chewing among Adolescents and Adults in Nekemte Town, East Welega Zone, West Ethiopia.

Youth Power USAID (2018) Ethiopia cross-sectoral youth assessment situational analysis.

Workitu Hordofa (2017) Youth's Perception towards Youth Center Services Delivery: The case of Arada Sub city.

Alemayehu Ayele (2014) Determinants among youth self-employment in Selected Sub-Cities of Addis Ababa.

Abera, A (2011) Demographic and socio-economic determinants of youth unemployment in Debere Birham Town, North Showa Administrative Zone, Amhara National Regional State.

Getachew, M (2014) The Roles of Family Members and Friends in Youth International Migration Decision: The Case of Returned Migrant Youths in Wore-Illu Woreda- South Wollo.

SRHR Alliance (2016) Operations research on Meaningful Youth Participation in Ethiopia.

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2016) Demographic and Health Survey.

Institute for Security Studies (2017) Ethiopia Trends Assessment.

United States Census Bureau (2017) International Data Base.

Edmeades, J, Hayes, R and Gaynair, G (2014) Improving the Lives of Married Adolescent Girls in Amhara, Ethiopia.

Girl Effect Ethiopia (2015) What do we know about girls in Ethiopia?

Gebyehu, AT (2014) Contribution of Youth Programs for Life Skill Development.

Ministry of Education (2008) National Technical & Vocational Training (TVET) Strategy.

International Growth System (2013) Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Ethiopia.

Imiru, S (2015) Effectiveness of Youth Reproductive Health Service in Youth Centers to Promote Youth Reproductive Health.

Hordofa, W (2017) Youth's Perception towards Youth Center Services Delivery: The case of Arada Sub city Woreda Six Youth Center.

Nationally representative quantitative survey

We conducted a nationally representative 30-minute face-to-face survey resulting in 2,332 interviews with young people aged 15–29, living in Ethiopia. This sample size allows for a ~two per cent margin of error at a 95 per cent confidence level. It also allowed us to explore a range of sub-groups for analysis purposes – essentially anything at an incidence level of five per cent or above within our population.

Our sample was sourced through a trusted local Ethiopian research agency, with interviewers approaching a random selection of participants within each region and conducting a screening questionnaire with them to assess their suitability to take part in this research. Recruitment of our sample was done via a random selection of primary selection units within each region.

The final questionnaire used was developed in collaboration with the British Council and local team members. The research was carried out in a phased approach, with an initial piloting phase carried out among a small group of participants to gather feedback on the elements of the survey that needed to be adapted to better fit the local context. We were then able to implement this feedback to ensure the questionnaire was in line with potential cultural and language sensitivities. Findings from this stage were used to inform the focus of the later qualitative stages.

Participants were screened for eligibility using a standard quantitative screener, capturing key demographical data including gender, age, region and religion. Certain quota controls were implemented as per discussions with the British Council and final data was weighted to ensure consistency across quotas.

Qualitative research

Following the survey research, we conducted primary qualitative research to dig into the quantitative findings in depth, add the 'why' behind the 'what' and capture rich, holistic data about how the issues that emerged in the survey played out in the lives of young Ethiopians.

This was achieved through the combination of in-home immersion interviews (two hours) with a young person and their family and/or friends, and longer (three hours) workshop style sessions with six to eight young people.

Our research partners Havis Research and SART were in charge of recruiting participants for the study. They worked with a group of on-the-ground recruiters who selected participants based off the screening criteria required for them to take part. A full breakdown of who we recruited and the sample considerations can be found below.

Quotas			
Demographic		Quota %	Final %
Age	15–24	Min. 45%	55%
	25–29	Min. 25%	44%
Gender	Male	Min. 45%	52%
	Female	Min. 45%	48%
Region	Addis Ababa	Due to the nature of face-to-face interviewing, interviews were done across several locations to ensure a spread across regions.	42%
	Amhara		20%
	Dire Dawa		2%
	Harari		3%
	Oromia		24%
	SNNPR		5%
	Tigray		5%

Summary of workshops and immersions

Addis Ababa	
Workshop 1 (urban) (age 20–24, female, 1 PWD*, employed)	Immersion 9 (urban) (age 25–29, female, unemployed)
Workshop 2 (urban) (age 15–19, male, in school)	Immersion 10 (urban) (age 15–19, male, PWD, out of school)

Tigray (Mek'ele)	
Workshop 4 (urban) (age 25–29, female, 1 PWD, unemployed)	Immersion 3 (urban) (age 20–24, female, employed)
Workshop 5 (rural) (age 20–24, female, unemployed)	Immersion 4 (rural) (age 15–19, male, in school)

SNNPR (Hawassa)	
Workshop 3 (urban) (age 15–19, male, 1 PWD, out of school)	Immersion 1 (urban) (age 20–24, male, PWD, unemployed)
	Immersion 2 (rural) (age 25–29, female, PWD, employed)

Amhara (Debre Birhan)	
Workshop 8 (urban) (age 20–24, male, 1 PWD, employed)	Immersion 6 (urban) (age 15–19, male, out of school)
	Immersion 8 (rural) (age 20–24, female, PWD, unemployed)

Oromia (Adama)	
Workshop 6 (urban) (age 25–29, male, employed)	Immersion 5 (urban) (age 15–19, female, in school)
Workshop 7 (rural) (age 15–19, female, in school)	Immersion 7 (rural) (age 25–29, male, unemployed)

* PWD = person with disability

Sample breakdown

Workshops (8):
- Gender:
  – female = 4; male = 4
- Location:
  – urban = 6; rural = 2
- Age:
  – 15–19 = 3
  (2 in school; 1 out of school)
  – 20–24 = 3
  (2 employed; 1 unemployed)
  – 25–29 = 2
  (1 employed; 1 unemployed)

Immersions (10):
- Gender:
  – female = 5; male = 5
- Location:
  – urban = 6; rural = 4
- Age:
  – 15–19 = 4
  (2 out of school; 2 in school)
  – 20–24 = 3
  (2 unemployed; 1 employed)
  – 25–29 = 3
  (2 unemployed; 1 employed)

For all qualitative sessions:

- six to eight young people recruited per workshop session
- one young person recruited per immersion
- ethnicity broke out naturally as per makeup in location
- socio-economic groups were determined by the LSM predictor questionnaire
- 'disability' included physical/mobility, mental health, learning difficulties, etc.

2CV is a research agency that gives people a voice so they can influence the world around them. 2CV designs research to help change happen, using innovative, immersive methodologies, and sensitivity for people and cultures, to uncover inspiring truths. 2CV works with NGOs and public and private organisations to explore opportunities for change.

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