STUDY

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

YOUTH IN YEMEN

FES MENA Youth Study: Results Analysis

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December 2022

The ongoing war in Yemen has exacerbated poverty and food insecurity. The results of this survey revealed the catastrophic living standard of Yemeni youth, whose spending patterns, ability to save money and daily lifestyle have tragically collapsed.

The assessment of the economic situation of young people revealed a devaluation of the national currency since the beginning of the war, a lack of jobs and no discernible financial contribution from other sources. Yemeni youth need to be empowered and funded to start their own businesses instead of being registered for one of the livelihood programmes.

During the pandemic, young people in Yemen were able to go on with life by adopting new lifestyles.

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Examining household livelihoods revealed the true consequences of the war's destruction of both public and private infrastructure and how the ongoing war in Yemen has further exacerbated poverty and food insecurity. The protracted conflict has also had a significant impact on the distribution of farm goods and agricultural supplies to households that have suffered due to the war. In addition, the results exposed the catastrophic living standards of Yemeni youth, whose spending patterns, ability to save money and daily lifestyle have tragically collapsed since the beginning of the war.

Besides this, the assessment of the economic situation of young people and their families revealed a devaluation of the national currency by 300 per cent since the beginning of the war, a lack of jobs and no observable financial contribution from microfinance institutions to compensate for the absence of employment. This drew attention to the need to empower and fund Yemeni youth to start their own businesses instead of registering them for a livelihood programme. Most youth believe that getting a sustainable job in the current situation is difficult, while they are at the same time the primary providers of support for their families.

Not unexpectedly, young people in Yemen have a wholly negative attitude towards politics and no longer show any interest in it. After seven years of this devastating war, they have lost faith in politicians since seeing their future disappear before their eyes, unable to do anything about it. Covid-19 is one of many factors contributing to greater suffering and anguish among Yemeni youth, who were already facing multiple challenges. Young people in Yemen, like in many other countries, had tried to continue with their lives during the pandemic by adopting new lifestyles. They developed a new interest in technology and relied on it more and more, discovering new ways of learning, which helped them explore new fields.

Further information on the topic can be found here:
https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study
https://yemen.fes.de

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Content

1

INTRODUCTION

Yemen, officially the Republic of Yemen, is a country in western Asia on the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula. It borders Saudi Arabia to the north and Oman to the northeast and shares maritime borders with Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia.

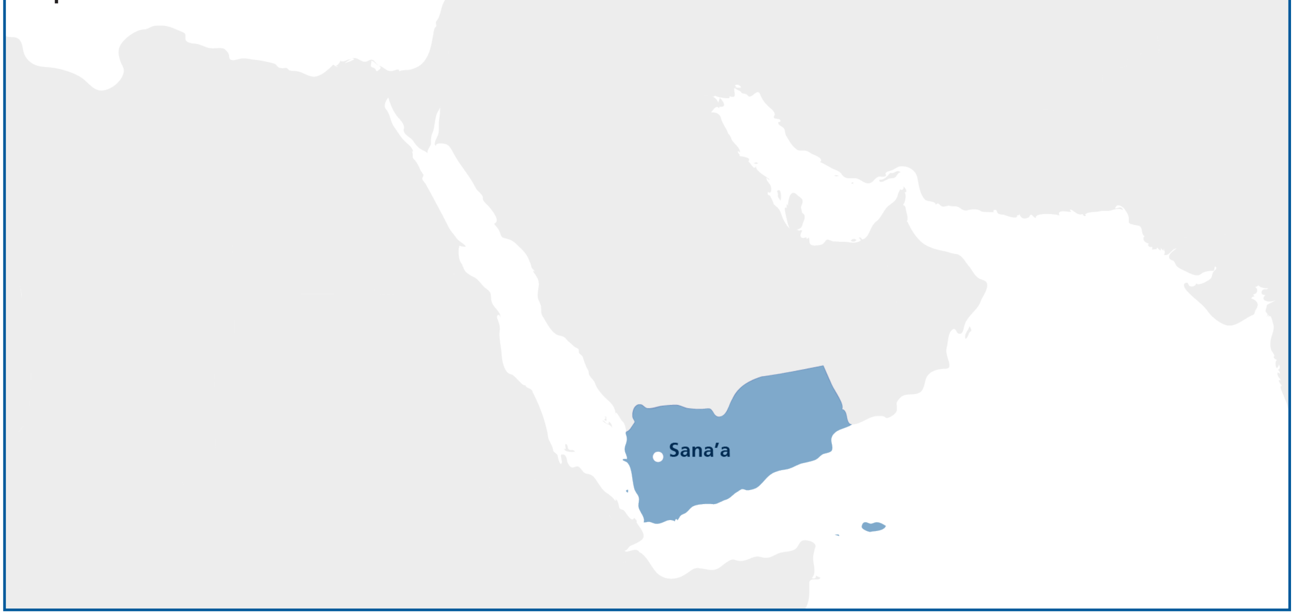
As one of the poorest countries in the Arab world, half of Yemen's population lives in poverty, and their population has one of the highest growth rates in the world—with the population expected to double by 2035 (CNBC Arabia 2021).

The protracted war forced millions of people to flee their homes, left around 80 per cent of the population in extreme need of humanitarian assistance, and caused a severe economic, institutional and infrastructural collapse. In addition to acute shortages of food and safe water, Yemenis faced deadly cholera and diphtheria outbreaks. Recently, the war has continued to exacerbate the hardship of severe currency fluctuation and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (UNICEF 2021).

Young people in Yemen, representing almost 20 million people in a country with a total population of 29 million (UNICEF 2021), struggle to find reliable sources of income to secure their own existence and that of their families. They also lack spaces to freely exchange views on the kind of jobs they need, even though young people can play an important role and positively impact on the country and, given their high number in Yemen, have significant potential to contribute to the country's development.

Based on the survey results of the FES MENA Youth Study, this study analyses the following aspects: (1) household livelihood; (2) economic welfare; and (3) young people and technological trends. The aforementioned themes are pivotal in the country's current situation and are the main areas where shifts in attitudes, perceptions and realities have been witnessed since 2015. Amid the country's current climate, questions surrounding young people's livelihoods, health and well-being have centred on the ongoing decline of the country's economy over the course of the war and the worsening living conditions, particularly for young people.

Figure 1
Map of Yemen



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METHODOLOGY

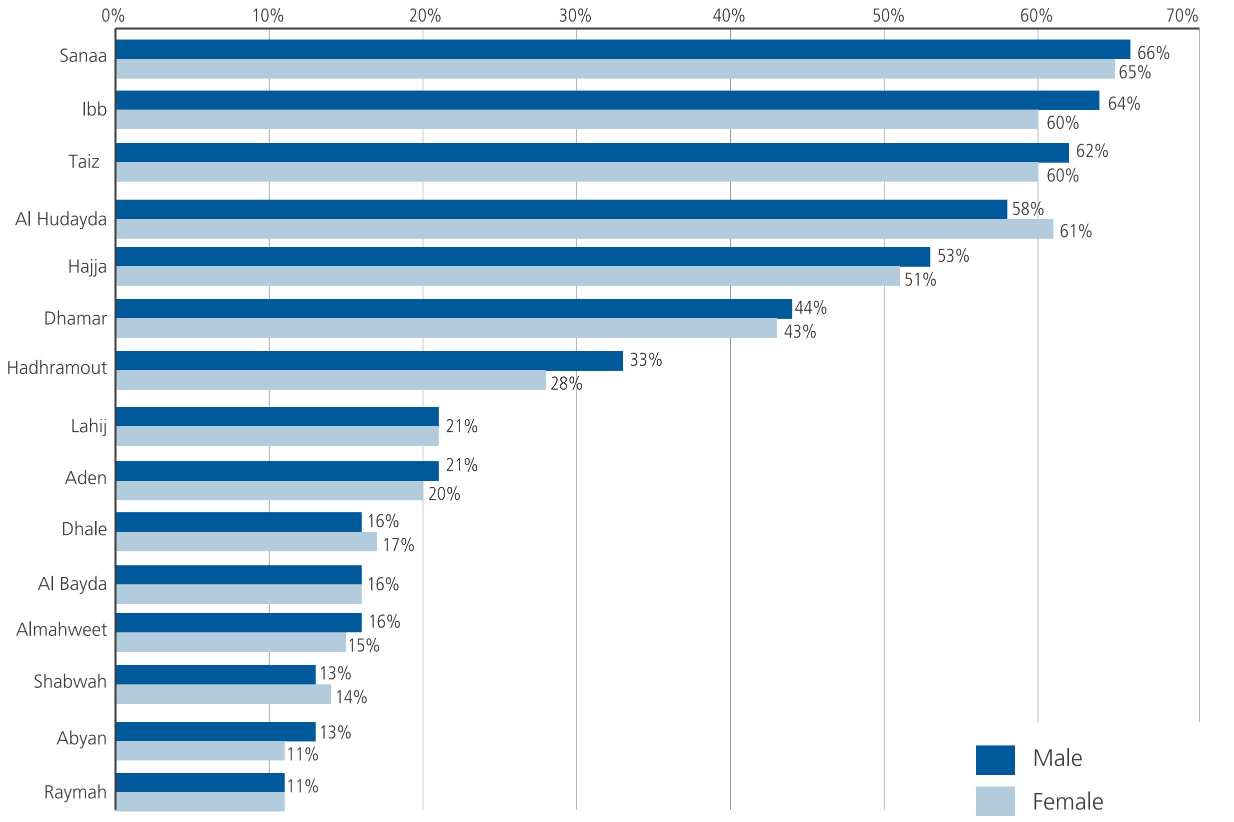
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results a long-term survey launched in 2016, the FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region. In 2021, FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, among Syrian refugees in Lebanon, as well as in Tunisia and Yemen. With the 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, the FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of answers to around 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views on various topics[1].

2.1 SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

For feasibility reasons, a nationwide quota sampling method was chosen, to conduct a total of 1,000 interviews per country. This sample size is considered adequately representative of the target group as well as socio-demographic and regional subgroups (e.g., age, gender, level of education). The data was collected in face-to-face interviews.

In Yemen, the local institute responsible for fieldwork and sampling was the Yemen Polling Center based in Sana'a. The institute has an established set of methods for selecting sampling points and identifying eligible households to survey to randomise the selection process as much as pos-

Figure 2
Respondent by governorate



1 For more information on the FES MENA Youth Study: https://mena.fes.de/topics/youth-study

sible. The aim was to ensure a geographic spread as close as possible to the distribution of the survey universe in the respective country. For each geographic area, the institute provided a list of sampling points.

The fieldwork phase was conducted between September and November 2021. The survey ultimately reached 990 Yemenis aged between 16 and 30 years from 15 governorates (out of Yemen's total of 22), as planned. All interviews were carried out in the local Arabic dialect. Interviews were held at respondents' homes or in public places, such as cafés, community centres, and the like. It was of major importance that the respondents felt comfortable, and the interview locations were chosen accordingly.

The methods of data collection included computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), paper and pencil interviews (PAPI) as well as (computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The data collected was transferred to and stored in a central CAPI database. During the fieldwork, Kantar Public, a specialist research, evidence and advisory business, carried out data validation with sets of interim data via Excel and SPSS (statistical software program) syntaxes. In parallel, Kantar Public and the University of Leipzig conducted the final comprehensive data check.

To ensure that the final structure of the sampling reflected the structure of the survey universe, differences were reduced with factorial weighting. The survey data was weighted for all target groups with respect to the structural variables of age, gender, and region, based on available statistics.

2.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The survey collected a total of 990 valid questionnaires based on the gender percentages shown below of the total respondents. Of the surveyed population, 5 per cent resided in medium-sized cities (100,001-500,000 people), 6 per cent lived in small cities (20,001-100,000 people), 9 per cent resided in a hamlet (>50), 29 per cent resided in villages (50-1,000 people), 20 per cent resided in large cities (500,000 people or more), and 32 per cent resided in ruralcentres (1,001-20,000 people).

Figure 3
Respondent by gender

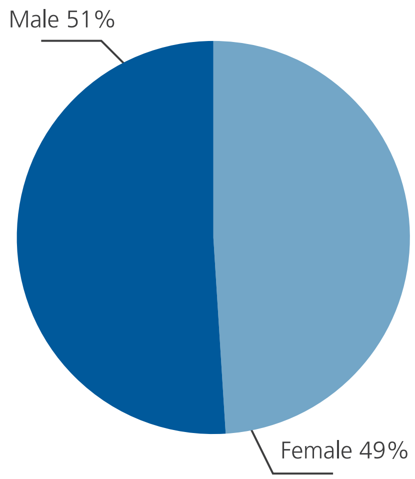
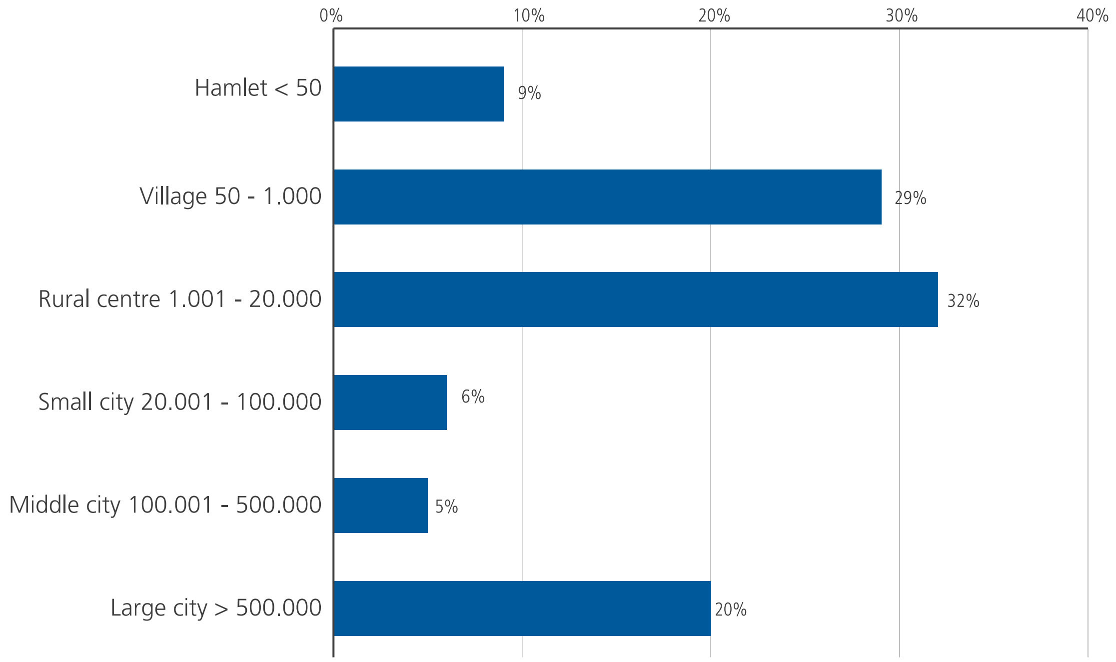


Figure 4
Milieu of residence

Which is your milieu of residence?



Of the total number surveyed, 95 per cent identified as »youth«, and 5 per cent identified as adults (Figure 5), although roughly two-thirds of the respondents were above the age of 18 (Figure 6).

Moreover, 39 per cent of the total sample reported being married, which was more common among females (42 per cent) than males (36 per cent), and 52 per cent stated that they were single (Figure 7).

A little less than half the sample (35 per cent) reported having children (65 per cent said they did not) (Figure 8), with the highest percentage (72 per cent) among respondents in the 26-30 age bracket. Looking at the numbers through a gender lens, 40 per cent of female respondents reported having children (correlated to a higher percentage of them being married). In comparison, 30 per cent of males stated they had children. The average household size across respondents is 8 persons per household, with five family members between 16 and 65 years old.

When asked about their living situation with their families and who mainly manages household affairs, 69 per cent of respondents said that they lived with their parents (within the same household), and 24 per cent lived with their own family (with their partner/without their parents). Less than 2 per cent reported either living alone or with friends. When it comes to who heads of the household, 58 per cent stated that the head of the household was their father, 16 per cent stated they were the head of the household and 17 per cent responded that their husband/wife was the head of the household. Less than 16 per cent said that their mother, or someone else headed the family.

Figure 5
Youth vs adults
Would you consider yourself to belong to the youth or to the group of adults?

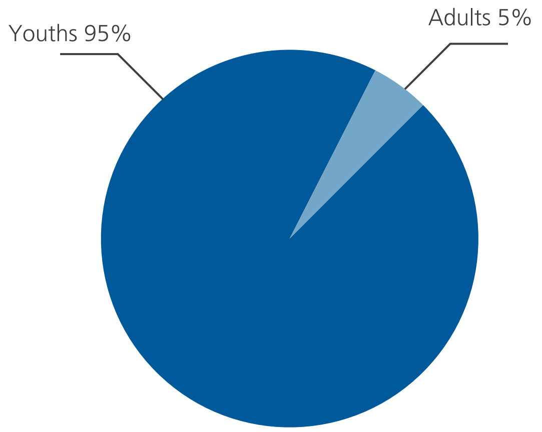


Figure 6
Age variation among respondents

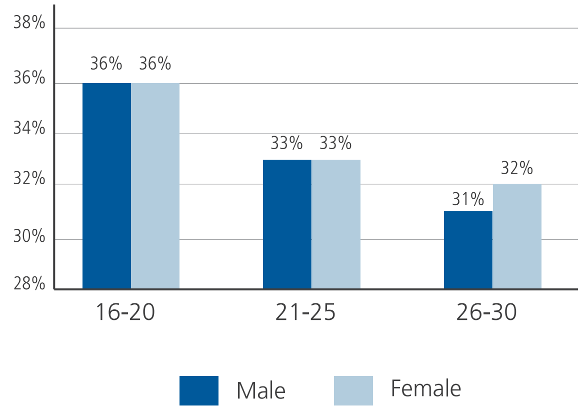


Figure 7
Marital status
Are you…?

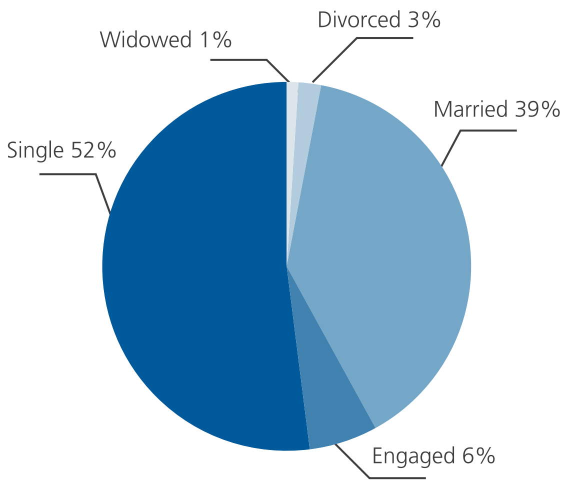


Figure 8
Children
Do you have children?

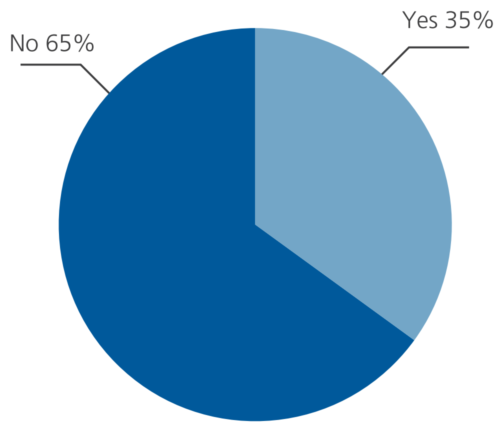
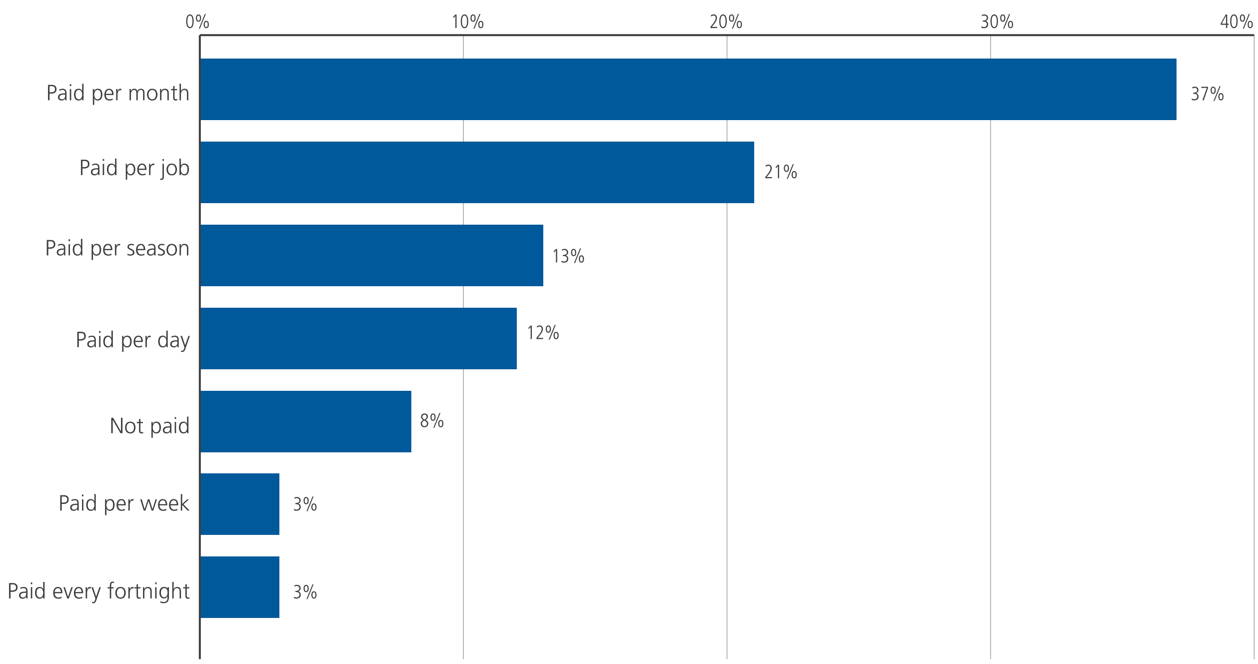


Figure 9
Income status

What about your father's income? In his main occupation is he …



To better understand the economic impact of the war on young people and their families, survey participants were asked to broadly assess the situation of their families at the time of the survey. The overwhelming majority of respondents (45 per cent) viewed their family situation as very/rather bad—up nearly 28 per cent from 2016, with an average monthly income of no more than 72174.4 Yemeni rials (120 US dollars). The source of household income varied between the households, including whether or not jobs were permanent (see Figure 9).

Regarding their level of education, one in three respondents reported currently being at school or university. Most of these (59 per cent) stated that they were in school and 34 per cent reported being university students, with the highest percentage (80 per cent) being in the 21-25 age bracket. Less than 6 per cent had some vocational training (see Figure 10). In the 26-30 age bracket, only 26 per cent had completed a university degree.

The youth literacy rate (among 15-24year-olds) increased from 82.8 per cent in 1994 to 97.6 per cent in 2015 for males and from 35.4 per cent to 82.8 per cent for females (UIS 2013: 39). Despite this progress, Yemen still struggles with gender inequality, as well as an urban-rural divide, with lower enrolment rates and fewer schools in rural areas.

Figure 10
Level of education

I am currently enrolled in...

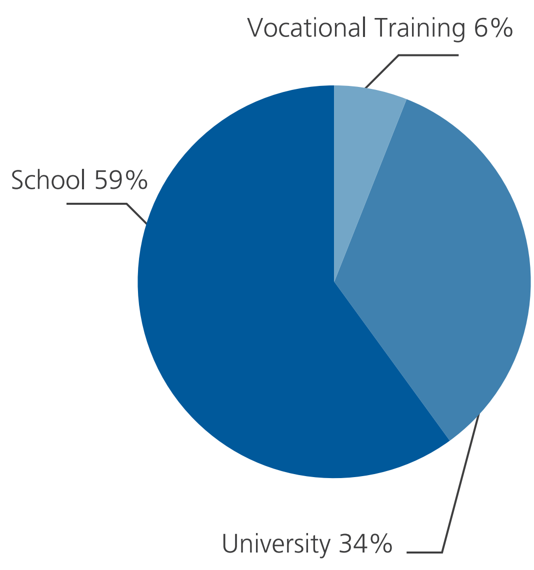
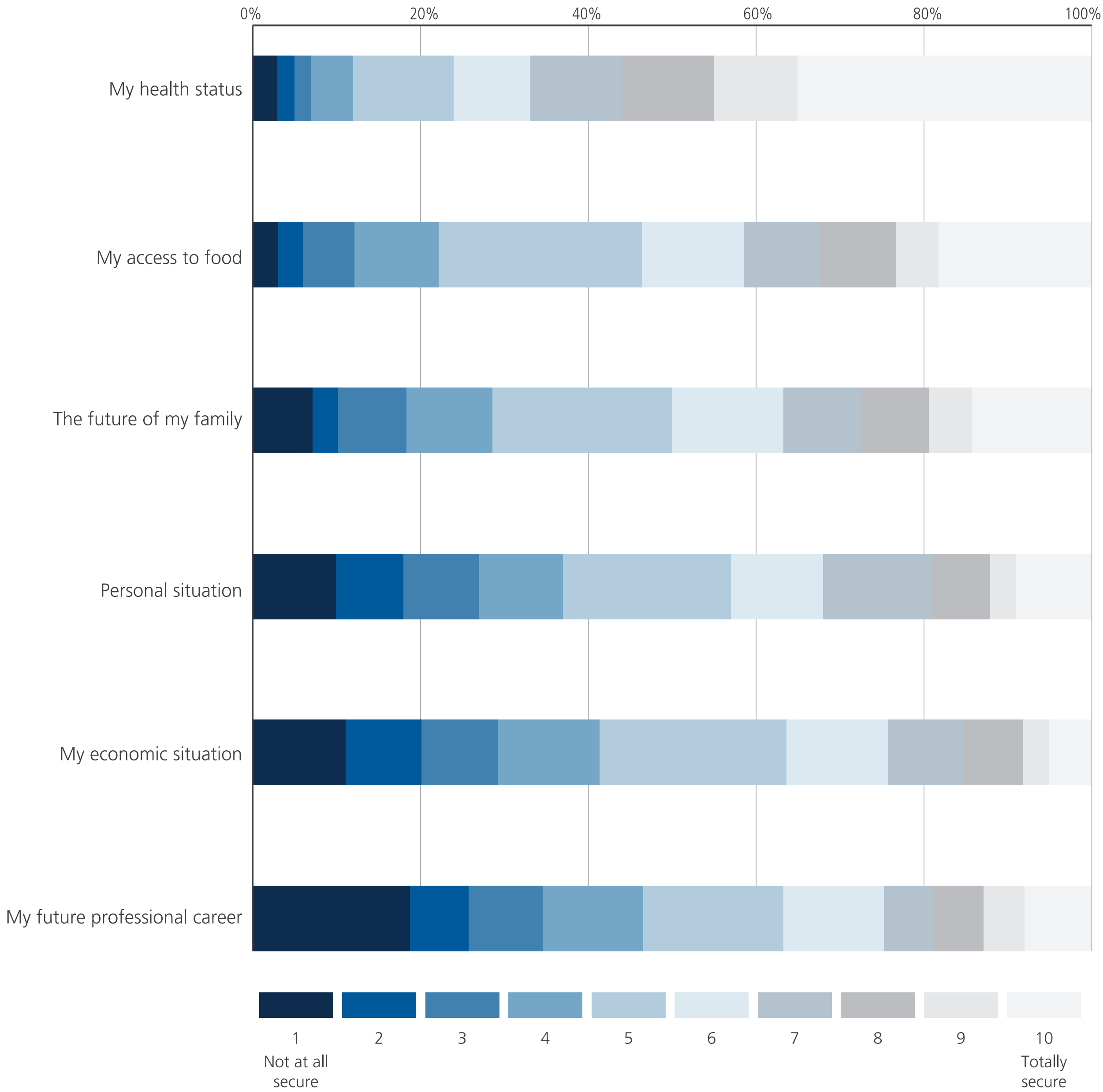


Figure 11
Certainty of livelihood
Can you specify the area of security: I feel secure / insecure in the following fields?



Asked about specific aspects of their livelihoods, 16 per cent of respondents felt that their future professional career was not secure and just 7 per cent who said it was totally secure. Regarding the future of their families, 7 per cent said this was not being totally secure, while 14 per cent said it was totally secure. When it comes to access to food, 3 per cent said this was not totally secure, and 18 per cent said that it was totally secure. To a question about health status, 3 per cent responded that their health status was not at all secure, in contrast to the 35 per cent who said it was totally secure. In the category pertaining to the economic situation of young people, 11 per cent of the total respondents said their economic situation was not entirely secure. In comparison, only 5 per cent said it was. In terms of the respondents' personal situation, 11 per cent said this was not secure, while nine per cent felt it was totally secure (Figure 11).

3

HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD

3.1 BACKGROUND

The ongoing war has further exacerbated poverty and food insecurity by destroying public and private infrastructure, devastating livelihoods due to the removal of the social safety net and end of livelihood programmes, the loss of private businesses, and the freezing of public investment plans and donor-supported development programmes. In addition, the conflict has negatively impacted the supply and distribution of adequate agricultural inputs and products to households negatively affected by the war.

3.2 RESPONSES AND ANALYSIS

In the category of overall satisfaction with life among those living in Yemen, the average response (across the full sample, independent of gender, age, education level and place of residence) was 4.1 (1 being the lowest level of satisfaction and 10 being the highest).

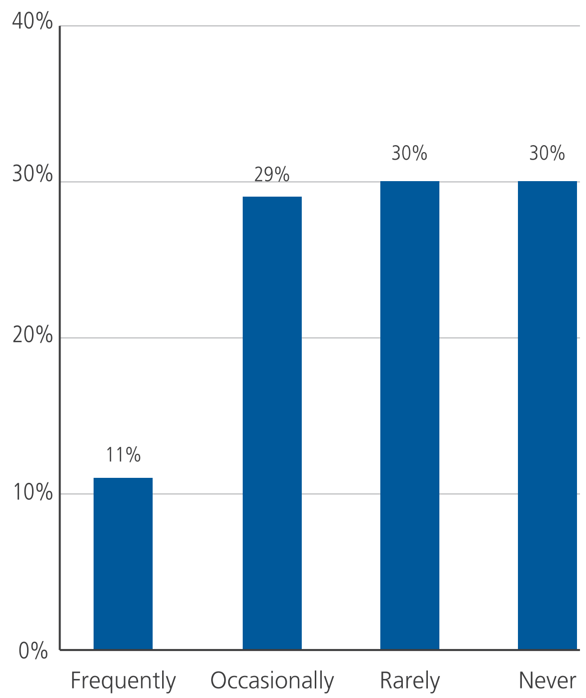
Education became less important among those who identified as being members of the working class because of the need for more family members to contribute to the family's income. The percentage of people who identified as working class and had a »high« level of education was 11 per cent, compared to 33 per cent and 38 per cent for those with »medium« or »low« levels of education. Respondents with high or moderate levels of education only saw a slight increase. In contrast, those with low levels of education saw a decline due to the current situation in the country.

The most shocking finding was that 30 per cent of respondents said they never read books, while the same percentage said they rarely read books and 29 per cent said they occasionally did so. If the war continues, these percentages could increase the number of illiterate young people (see Figure 12).

Moreover, when it comes to family status, education is a decisive factor. For example, among all respondents with high level of education, 12 per cent identified as belonging to the upper middle class. One per cent said they were wealthy, and most young people surveyed said they were lower middle class (53 per cent) or poor (29 per cent).

The majority of respondents surveyed reported living in private houses (97 per cent), with only two per cent stating they lived in informal housing. When asked to describe their housing type, 27 per cent of respondents said their houses were detached, 57 per cent said they lived in a townhouse, and nine per cent said they lived in an apartment. Of all respondents across both genders, 52 per cent stated they did not have their own room, while a surprising 48 per cent said they did.

Figure 12
Reading frequency
I read books...

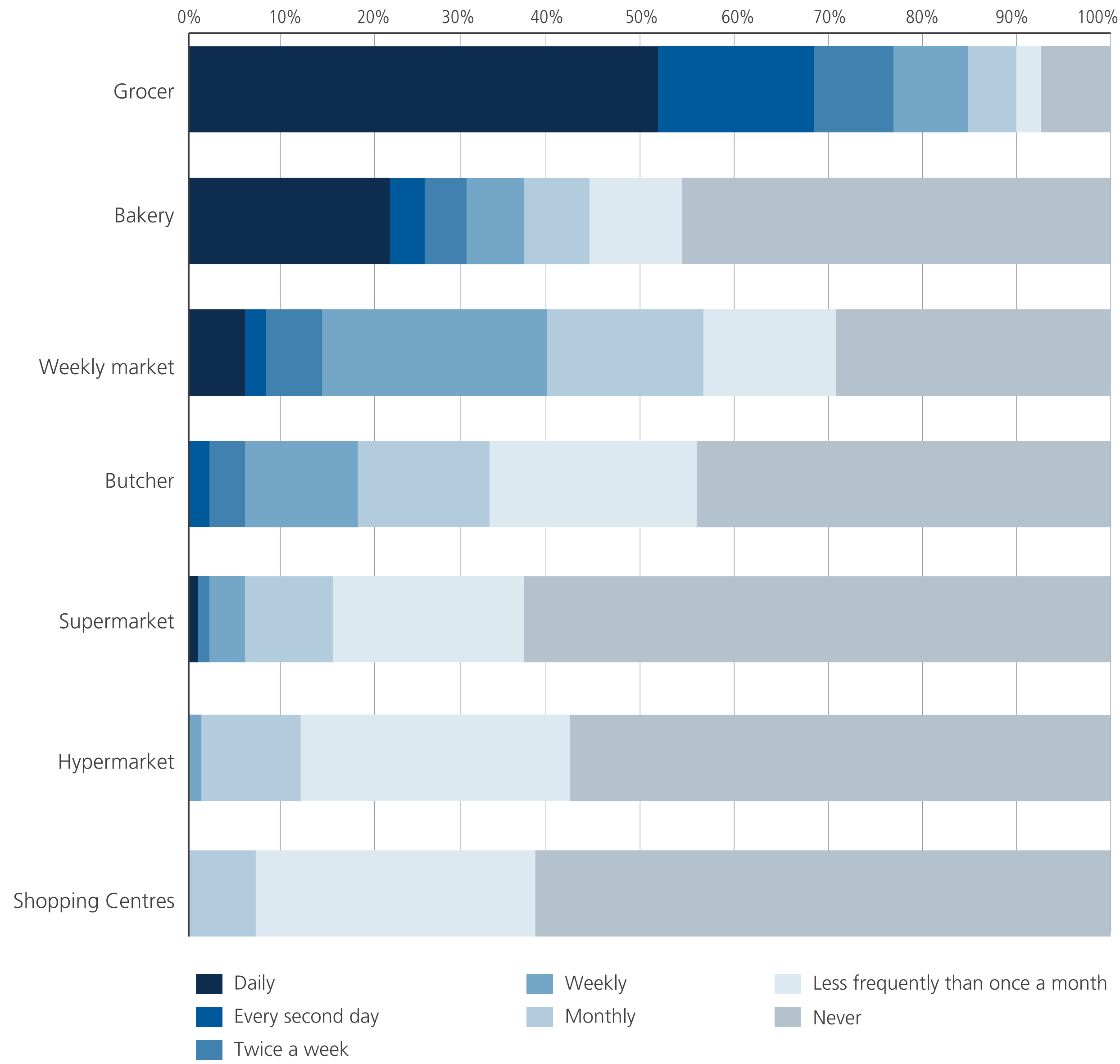


Among both male and female respondents, 47 per cent said their food security status was very/rather bad at the time of the survey, while 57 per cent said it was very/rather good. The vast majority of Yemenis are now facing food insecurity due to the devastating war that continues to affect the country's population.

As a country that is well known for its diverse agricultural production, which has the potential to contribute to the food security of its people, of all the respondents, when asked whether their household owned a piece of agricultural land, 51 per cent answered that they did not, and 49 per cent said they did. A total of 65 per cent stated they could not produce enough food for their own consumption, while 35 per cent stated they could. Moreover, 62 per cent reported not owning their own livestock for household use, while 38 per cent said that their household did have livestock.

90 per cent of respondents said having affordable bread was very important to them, and a further ten per cent of respondents said it was important. On average, respondent's households spent 5.2 euros per day on bread. When asked whether they had the ration cards required to purchase or receive food, 66 per cent said they had not, 33 per cent said they had, and of the 33 per cent who reported having ration cards, 91 per cent said these were crucial to them and their families.

Figure 13
Spending pattern
How often do you buy food items at each of the following outlets?



When respondents in the 16-30 age range were asked how frequently they visited markets, grocery stores, butcher's shops, bakeries, super and hypermarkets and shopping centres, 62 per cent said they never bought anything from a shopping centre, 30 per cent said they visited shopping centres less than once a month, and 64 per cent said they never went to a supermarket, according to a sequential response in contrast, 52 per cent of respondents said they go to the grocery store every day. It goes without saying that Yemeni households currently find themselves in devastating circumstances, with many facing poverty and as a result showing new spending patterns, as shown in Figure 13. Overall, 45-46 per cent of all respondents said they had never visited a butcher or a bakery.

87 per cent of respondents claimed they were not in a position to save money, while just 13 per cent said they were. Based on respondent's spending and saving habits, it was determined that the average monthly savings for respondents could be around 80 euros, with 57 per cent stating that saving was primarily for the purpose to secure their family's immediate well-being.

Due to the poor living conditions and protracted crises, respondent's lifestyles are very simple and young people have little interest in visiting museums and pay little attention to fashion. A total of 78 per cent said they never went to art exhibitions and galleries, and 69 per cent were entirely against the idea of spending money on any fashionable clothing, saying being able to eat is more important.

Young people's social lives are very limited and households lack variety and options, particularly during leisure time. Overall, 57 per cent of respondents said they only watch TV at home. In comparison, 38 per cent said they occasionally visit neighbours or other family members, indicating that Yemeni families have no access to entertainment facilities. That said, even where they do exist, in major cities such as Sana'a or Aden, these entertainment facilities still offer very little for the general population.

4

ECONOMIC WELFARE

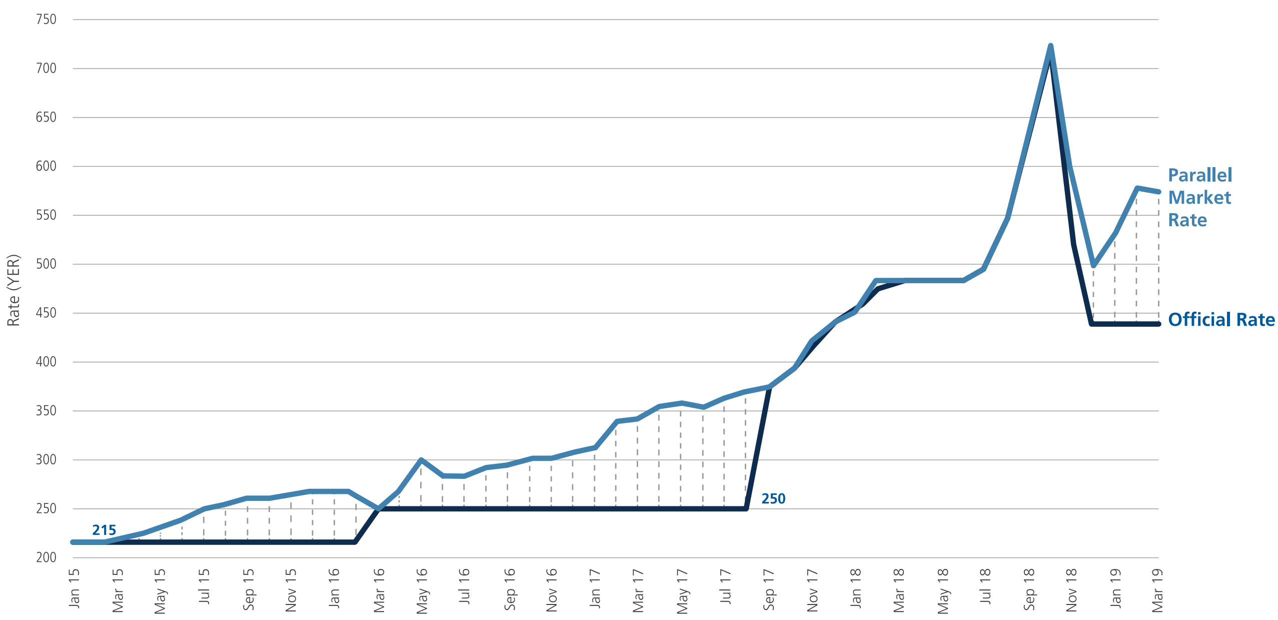
4.1 BACKGROUND

Yemen's economic prospects remain dim. The ongoing war still has a significant impact on economic activity. Since the start of the war, employment has decreased in both the public and private sectors; business costs have gone up due to restrictions on the flow of supplies and inputs, and risk premiums have gone up due to insecurity. Based on anecdotal information, the World Bank estimates (World Bank 2019) that Yemen's GDP has shrunk by 39 per cent since the end of 2014. According to estimates, 80 per cent of the population now lives below the poverty line of 3.20 US dollars PPP (purchasing power parity) per day, and 50 per cent of people survive on less than 1.90 US dollars PPP. At two-thirds of the GDP, Yemen still has a very high level of debt. Rebuilding the economy, the private sector and basic services will be extremely difficult without international assistance and peace.

Economically, the conflict has resulted in a drop in per capita income, the collapse of the national currency and an increase in the price of essentials as the value of the Yemeni rial fell. Two-thirds of Yemen's population requires humanitarian aid in addition, not to mention the problems caused by the reduction in oil product output and the stoppage of oil exports, which were the primary sources of hard currency (UN News 2021).

At the moment, ten per cent of young Yemenis between the ages of 15 and 25 work to support their families, with two per cent of them doing so full-time and eight per cent working as day labourers. In the current environment, youth see little to no work opportunities and feel excluded from their communities. The few options that young people cite as being available include working in agriculture, starting their own business in construction or transport and selling Qat. Many young people feel they should start minor enterprises to help their families, but they frequently lack funding (UNICEF 2017).

Figure 14
Official and market rate of Yemeni rial vs US dollar (Source: WFP 2019)



4.2 RESPONSES AND ANALYSIS

To gain a deeper understanding of the participant's perspectives on how the state of the economy may be affecting the job market and their potential future, in comparison with the results gathered from a similar study conducted in Yemen in 2016, we asked participants several direct questions about several topics which gave us a clear idea of their economic situation.

In evaluating their own economic situation, families gave the responses shown in Figure 15, which offers a striking similarity between the results in 2016 and 2021. Across both male and female respondents, 45 per cent described their personal economic situation at the time of the recent interview as very/rather bad. In comparison, 55 per cent said it was very/rather good.

Since the start of the war in 2015, Yemen's currency has declined by about 300 per cent (CNBC Arabia 2021). Yemen has been unable to provide adequate public services throughout the war and in some locations, these services are entirely gone. Yemen is ranked 179th (out of 189 countries) in the Human Development Index (HDI) 2020. Yemen has to import all of its food, including 70 per cent of its petroleum, 90 per cent of its wheat and 90 per cent of its rice. Only half of the food required to sustain the Yemeni people could be imported because of the air, land and sea embargo imposed by Saudi Arabia. To those who can afford it, the private sector and NGOs still offer access to energy, food, clean water and services in the fields of education and health (BTI Transformation Index 2022).

Out of all the respondents working for money (across all age groups), 91 per cent said they only had one job and 7 per cent said they had two jobs (see Figure 16). Day labour accounted for the highest percentage (25 per cent) of jobs mentioned in the survey, with day labourers reporting an average payment of around 24 euros per day. A total of 16 per cent said they worked without benefits or even insurance and eight per cent said they were state employees, which reflects the public sector's inability to provide jobs for young people in the current economic situation. The remaining respondents (across all age groups) said they worked other jobs.

Figure 15
Families' assessment of the economic situation
How would you assess the economic situation of your family?

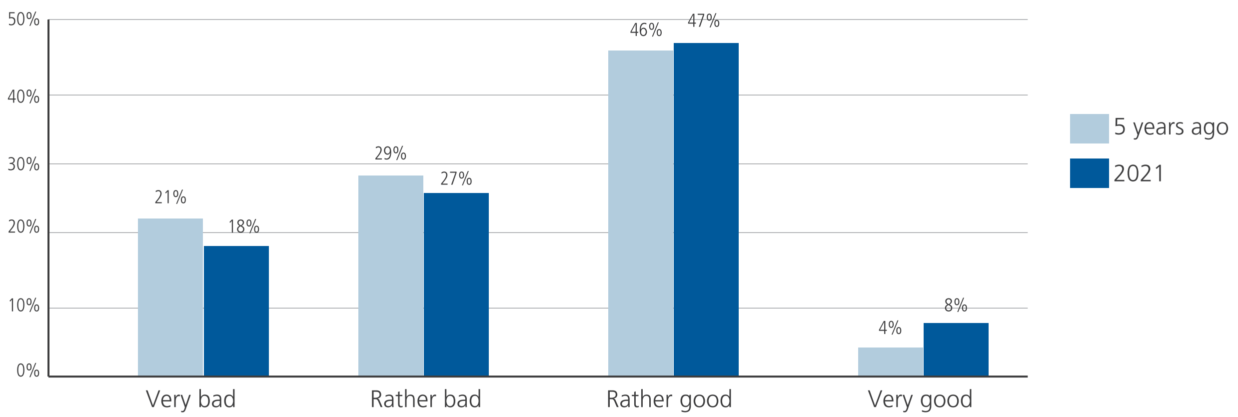


Figure 16
Main job
What is your main job (concerning income)?

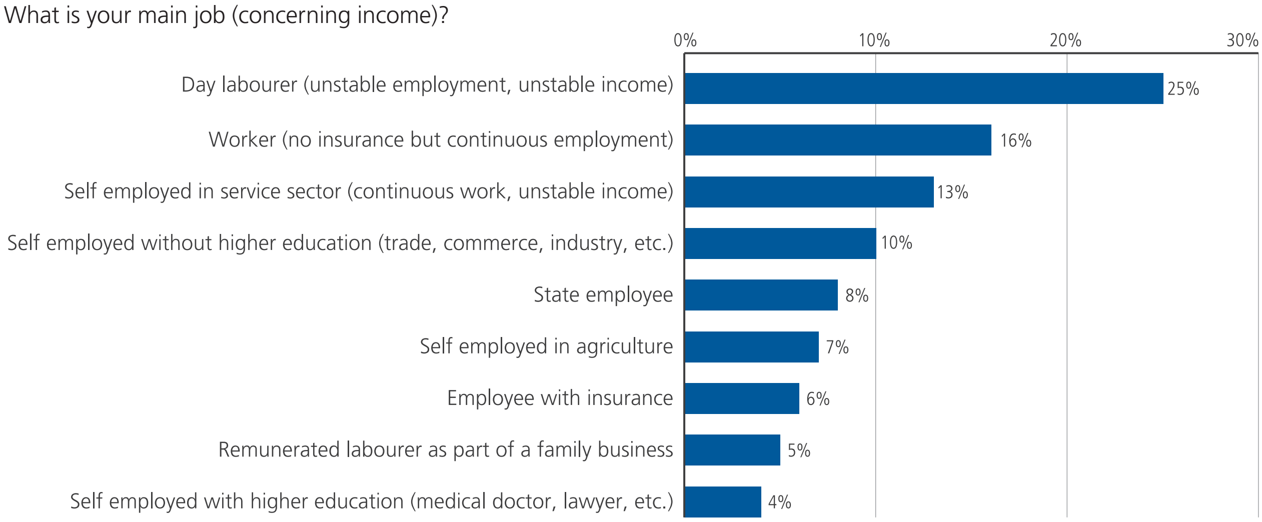


Figure 17
Youth job prospects (Source: UNESCO 2021)

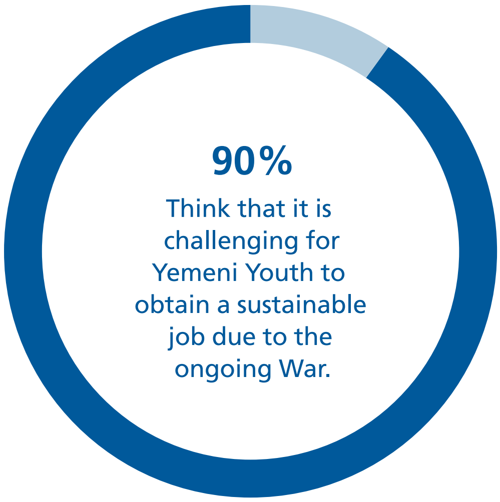
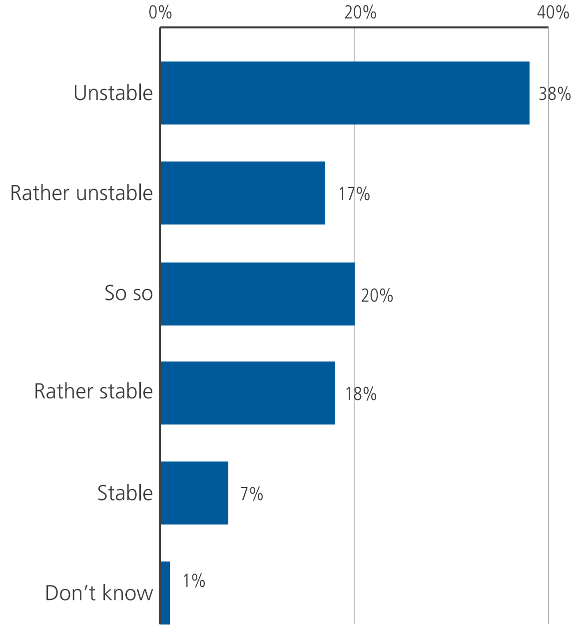


Figure 18
Economic situation
How do you assess your personal economic situation?



Of the respondents who said they provided a living for their family, 63 per cent reported having no written contracts, 35 per cent reported having written contracts, 80 per cent reported not being paid in the event of sickness, and 20 per cent reported receiving their wages when off sick. Moreover, 80 per cent stated that they were not entitled to any retirement pension, while only 20 per cent said they were entitled to a pension. Of the working population surveyed, the average monthly wage was 369 euros.

Regarding employment availability, 34 per cent of working youth reported finding their jobs through friends and 29 per cent said they found work through a family member. A total of 53 per cent claimed these jobs were the only ones available to them, although 22 per cent said that there were other options. In addition, 18 per cent of working respondents said they liked their work a little, while half of them said they liked it »a lot« or »in all respects«.

Young people in Yemen are the primary providers of support for their families, which means that the lack of job opportunities and low-income levels have had a particularly negative impact on this segment of the population. An overwhelming 64 per cent of respondents said they could not provide for their parents financially because they could not afford their own daily living expenses. In comparison, 26 per cent said they occasionally provided for their parents. Among those who reported occasionally or regularly supporting their families financially, the average amount provided was 179 euros per month.

When asked whether they had ever taken out a microcredit from a local institution, 94 per cent of respondents said they had never done so, which is surprising given that Yemen has a large number of microfinance institutions (MFIs), with 13 of them currently operating across the entire country (Alshebani/Khandare 2014). However, only six per cent of respondents said they had ever applied for a loan from one of these organisations.

Regarding their economic situation, most respondents said they believed it was unstable (38 per cent) or somewhat unstable (17 per cent). In comparison, one in five respondents appeared indecisive (20 per cent), and one in four respondents said it was rather (18 per cent) or actually stable (7 per cent) (Figure 18).

Despite the dire economic situation and numerous difficulties faced by Yemen's youth, the majority of respondents who were asked whether they were afraid that they would have to leave the country for economic reasons said that this would never happen (27 per cent) or they were not at all (17 per cent) or only slightly (12 per cent) worried this would happen. Two in five respondents said they were fairly (16 per cent) or very (23 per cent) worried this might happen if the current economic crisis persisted.

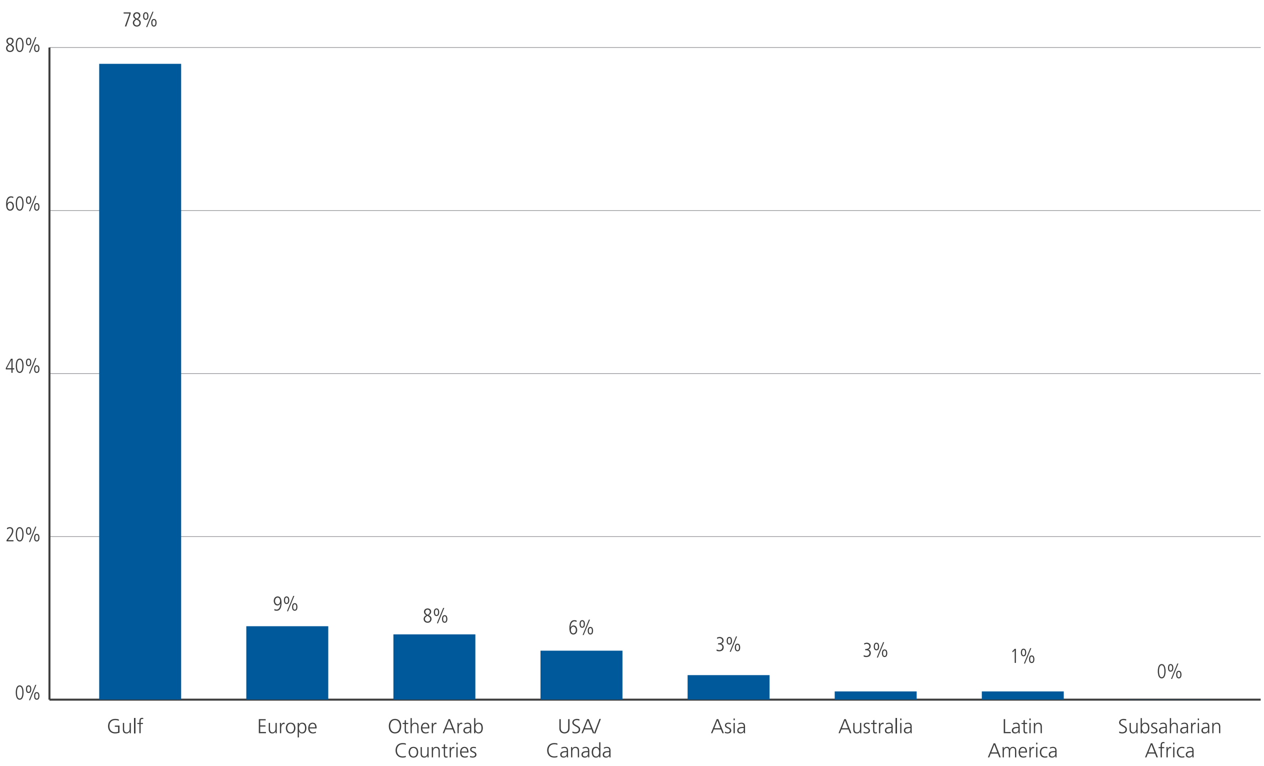
Our respondents were asked whether they had family members who had migrated abroad due to the country's poor economic situation and difficulty finding suitable jobs. A total of 20 per cent of respondents said yes, they had, while 79 per cent said no. Of the 20 per cent who responded in the affirmative, the majority of these family members (78 per cent) had migrated to the Gulf countries in the search of a steady job opportunity to contribute to the welfare of their families. The percentages accounted for by other countries vary (see Figure 19).

In the same context, 62 per cent of respondents across all age groups claimed to have benefitted directly from family members who had migrated to other countries, compared to 38 per cent who said they did not. Of those who claimed to have advantages from this dynamic, 71 per cent received remittances from family members working abroad. When asked whether they were interested in leaving their home country, 56 per cent said definitely not, while 31 per cent said they would like to emigrate or were sure they would do so, referring to the uncertain future they faced in Yemen. Out of those who said they wanted to immigrate, 47 per cent said they would prefer to move to one of the Gulf countries, even if the kind of jobs they could find there did not match their qualifications.

With regard to the economic situation of their families, five years ago, our respondents felt that the economic crisis was not that bad. In 2016, a total of 27 per cent said it was very good, compared to just eight per cent in 2021. Through their answers to the survey questions, respondents revealed the history of the economic decline and the tragic scenarios they had experienced since the beginning of the war. A total of 17 per cent stated already five years ago that the economic situation was very bad. In comparison, 18 per cent of the 2021 respondents felt that the current situation is very bad (see Figure 21).

This assessment of the economic situation was reflected, for example, in the capacity of respondents to replace necessary electronic gadgets if they break or are damaged. Here, just 12 per cent of respondents said they could replace broken devices in their household, while 85 per cent reported not being able to do so, which is a very high number and a clear indication of their economic predicament.

Figure 19
Migration destinations of family members
Where do your family members migrate?



In the 2016 FES MENA Youth Study, when asked about their interest in politics, 69 per cent of respondents said they had none, while 31 per cent of them responded that they were interested in politics (Transfeld 2018). In the current study, however, 75 per cent of respondents said that major economic and political events happening around the world are (somewhat) not on their list of interests, indicating that their current top priority is what is happening domestically.

In the same context, in a comparison between 2016 and 2021 of respondents' answers to the same question: »Are you interested in politics?« in 2016, ten per cent of young people reported being »very interested« in contrast to 2021, when only five per cent reported being »very interested«. The number who said they were not interested in 2016 was a mere 38 per cent, compared to 2021, when more than 50 per cent said they were in no way interested in politics.

Youth in Yemen and their families are currently facing great suffering and struggles. Now, six years after the beginning of the war, they have lost hope that politics could improve their situation and focus on surviving and supporting their families.

Figure 20
Interest in politics
Are you interested in politics?

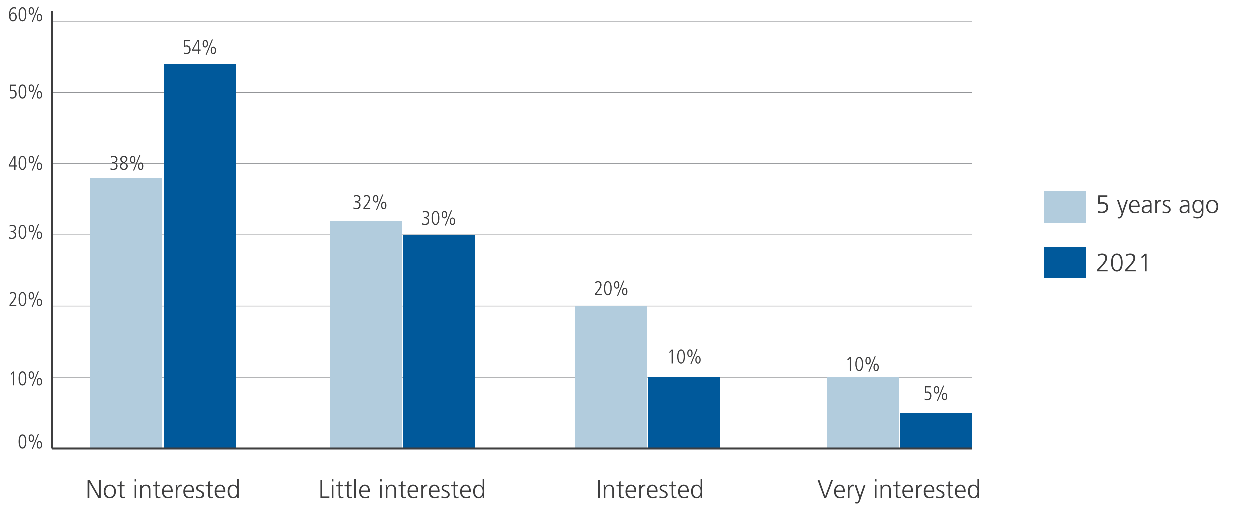
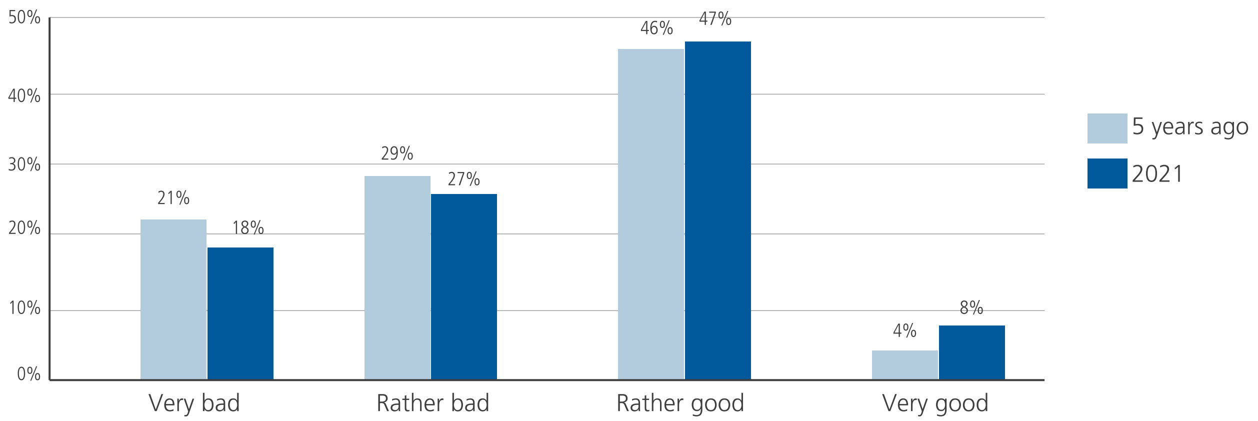


Figure 21
Assessment of the economic situation
How do you assess your economic situation?



5

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS

5.1 BACKGROUND

On 10 April 2020, 14 weeks after the first case was announced in China, Yemen was one of the last countries worldwide to confirm a case of a Covid-19 infection among its population. The country's infrastructure had been devastated by five years of war, leaving it with little capacity to respond to the emerging pandemic. Only 51 per cent of health centres are fully functional. Medicine, medical equipment, and personal protection equipment were limited and only three testing sites (Sana'a, Aden and Al Mukalla) were reportedly established (ACAPS 2020).

In addition, the price of food and other essential items rose as demand soared and the movement of goods becomes increasingly restricted at local levels. Low-income households struggled to stock up on goods for periods of quarantine or self-isolation. Import companies could still bring in goods but face more significant costs and challenges distributing them across the country. Markets, shops and local businesses closed in an attempt to control the spread, negatively impacting the livelihoods of Yemenis in a struggling economy and a situation of increasing food insecurity (more than one-third of households currently consume inadequate diets) (UNDP 2019).

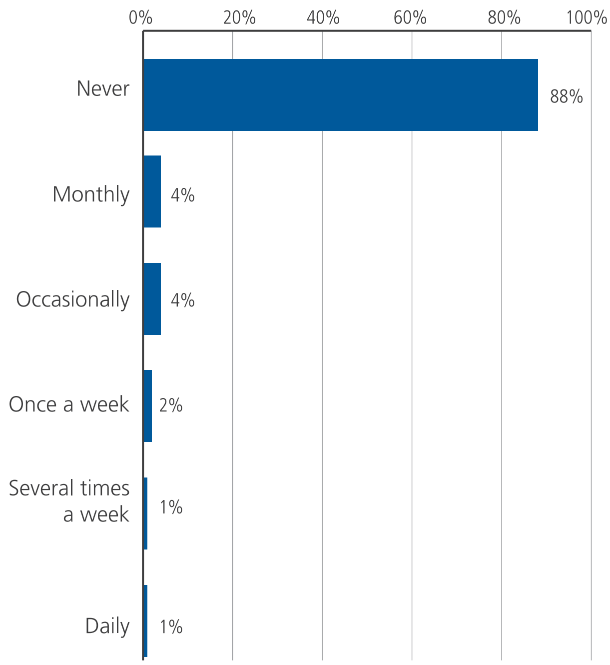
From a different perspective, due to lockdowns, internet and online commerce thrived, as they did in many other countries, and electronic information sources became increasingly important and widespread throughout the pandemic. Young Yemenis were forced to enhance their skill sets to take advantage of the new online educational offers provided by universities and other educational institutions.

5.2 RESPONSES AND ANALYSIS

When asked what would happen if they had no internet connection, responses varied. A total of 15 per cent stated that they could hardly function without the internet, and 17 per cent indicated that it would sometimes be difficult for them to operate without an internet connection In comparison, 66 per cent said they would be able to work and live without the internet, which is a huge share. This was supported by responses to the question about whether they made payments using their mobile phones: 88 per cent reported never doing so.

Figure 22
Payments via mobile phone

How frequently do you use payment systems via mobile phone?



In 2021, when asked whether they use a computer or smartphone for their work, 55 per cent of working Yemeni youth said yes, compared to 45 per cent who said no (bearing in mind that about 76 per cent of young people have smartphones). This difference shows that many Yemeni youth work in manual labour or agriculture, neither needing any connection with outside parties. In addition, 45 per cent of respondents confirmed that they had not found a job via the internet or an electronic app.

Respondents' average monthly budget for smartphone communications is eight euros, which does not even cover the cost of a standard phone call. Economic challenges have denied young people the opportunities to refresh their knowledge and skills to meet market demands. The average year our respondents started using the internet was 2017. When asked whether they used the internet, 68 per cent said yes and reported spending an average of four hours a day surfing the internet, while 32 per cent said they did not use the internet. If we compare these numbers with young people living in the UAE, for instance: the regional gap becomes even more apparent. Of a total population of 10 million, 9.9 million are active internet users (Kemp 2022).

In January 2022, there were 8.24 million internet users in Yemen and the country's internet penetration rate stood at 26.7 per cent of the total population. For perspective, these user figures reveal that 22.59 million people in Yemen did not use the internet at the start of 2022, meaning that 73.3 per cent of the population remained offline at the beginning of the year (Global Media Insight 2022).

When asked whether they used the internet as a means of finding a job, surprisingly, 47 per cent said »never«, 14 per cent said they only sometimes looked for new opportunities via the internet. More than 55 per cent primarily used the internet for their own entertainment. The level of awareness among Yemeni youth about the internet and its importance in shaping their future careers is shockingly low.

Figure 23
Use of digital devices at work
Do you need a computer or smartphone for your work?

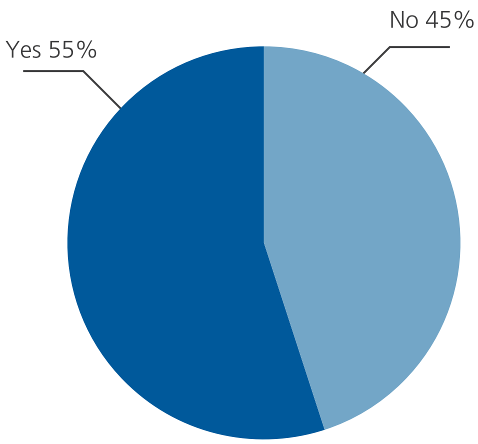
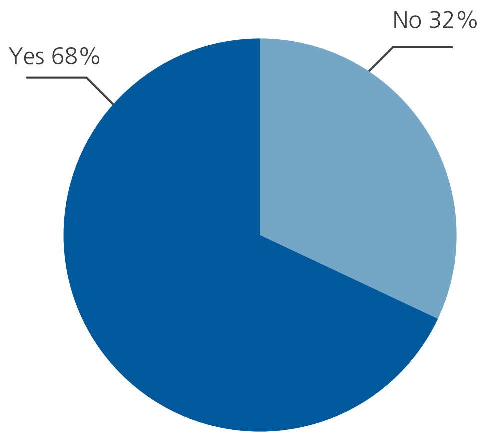


Figure 24
Internet users
Do you use the internet?



The Figure 25 below shows the ranking of the main apps used most frequently by the respondents. WhatsApp was in first position, with 98 per cent of internet users stating that they used it on a daily basis to contact their families and friends. Facebook then came in second with 52 per cent of the total number of respondents with an internet connection.

There is a close relationship between Covid-19 and technological trends among young people in Yemen, with many reporting having changed their daily habits and interests due to the lockdowns. The nature of their own work and the work that others do has changed dramatically despite the fact that two Covid-19 waves that hit Yemen were not as severe as in other countries. The number of cases in Yemen was not as high as elsewhere in the world, and this was confirmed by the respondents themselves, who, when asked whether they, a family member or a friend had been infected, the majority reported that they didn´t know of no cases in their immediate circles. If so, the symptoms er described as rather mild (see Figure 26).

Figure 25
Most popular apps
Which apps do you use?

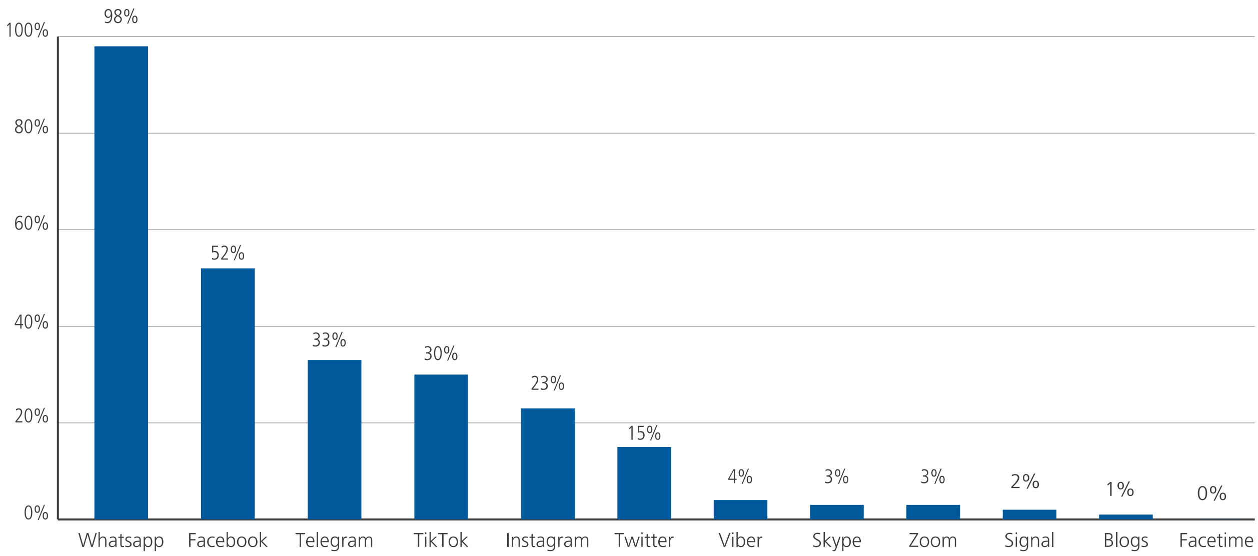
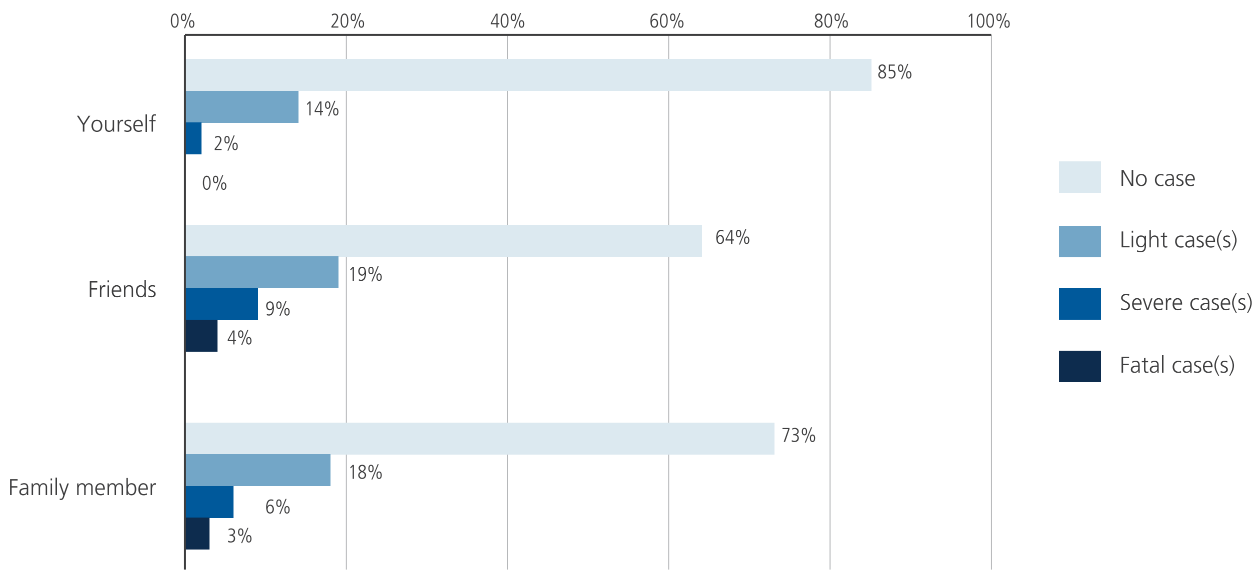


Figure 26
Covid-19 infections
Have you or someone close to you been infected with Covid-19?

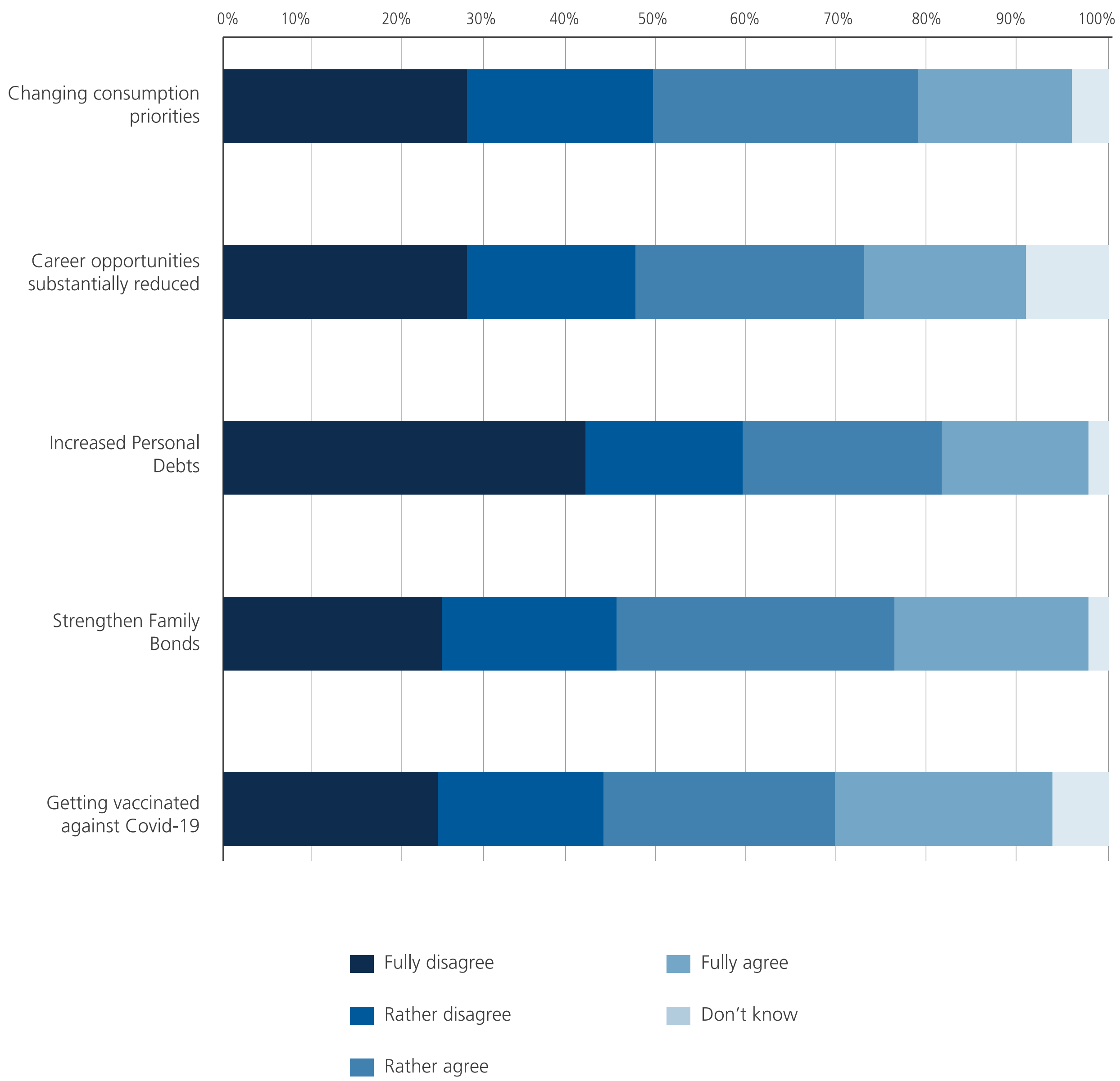


When asked how consumption priorities had changed as a result of Covid-19, a total of 47 per cent said the changes had been (rather) positive, while 48 per cent said they had been (rather) negative. A total of 47 per cent of respondents said that they (rather) felt that nothing has changed, while 44 per cent (rather) agreed that the pandemic had limited the range of occupations available to them and that the employment situation before the pandemic had been different. One of the negative effects of Covid-19 is thus a lack of jobs.

Allowing people to work from home was the only option for both the private and the public sector to avoid the kind of losses that would be incurred if people had to stop doing their routine jobs because of the pandemic.

Overall, 36 per cent of respondents (rather) agreed that the closure of several businesses impacted on the growth of families' debt, but 59 per cent (somewhat) disagreed, arguing that Covid-19 was not to blame. Another perspective is that families get stronger as the pandemic brought them back together. While 53 per cent of respondents confirmed the beneficial effects of the pandemic, 44 per cent confirmed its adverse effects.

Figure 27
Impact of Covid-19
Do you agree with the following statements?



6

CONCLUSION

This study surveyed nearly a thousand Yemeni youth in 15 governorates to determine their positions regarding the critical areas of household livelihood, economic well-being and the impact of Covid-19 on technological trends among young people. The study also sought to determine the effects of these three areas on Yemeni youth, especially because young people represent two-thirds of the country's total population. The study results show that young people have an in-depth understanding of the key issues in the country, even though their options to adapt to them remain limited.

The first dimension of household livelihoods revealed the actual consequences of the war's destruction of both public and private infrastructures and livelihoods as a result of the breakdown of the social safety net and livelihood programmes, the closure of private businesses, freezing of public investment plans and the suspension of donor-funded development programmes. The ongoing war has further exacerbated poverty and food insecurity. The protracted conflict has also significantly impacted the distribution of farm goods and agricultural supplies to households suffering from war. In addition, the results exposed the catastrophic living standards of Yemeni youth, whose spending patterns, ability to save money, and daily lifestyle have tragically collapsed since the beginning of the war.

Regarding the second dimension, which pertains to the economy, the war has led to a decline in per capita income, the devaluation of the national currency and an increase in the cost of necessities due to the declining value of the Yemeni rial. The decline in oil production and the cessation of oil exports, which were the primary sources of hard currency, led to two-thirds of Yemen's population needing humanitarian relief. Besides this, the assessment of the economic situation of young people and their families revealed a devaluation of the national currency by 300 per cent since the beginning of the war, a lack of jobs and no real financial contribution from microfinance institutions to compensate for the absence of employment. This drew attention to the need to empower and fund Yemeni youth to start their own businesses instead of registering them for a livelihood programme. Young people have all the prerequisites to rebuild the country, and programmes should therefore be redirected and realigned towards achieving this ultimate goal.

Not unexpectedly, young people in Yemen have a wholly negative attitude towards politics and no longer show any interest in it. After seven years of this devastating war, they have lost faith in politicians as they have watched their future disappear before their eyes, unable to do anything about it.

Last but not least, the third dimension examined was the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which unsurprisingly was reported as being unfavourable. Covid-19 appears on a long list of factors contributing to tremendous suffering and anguish among Yemeni youth, who already face multiple challenges. The lockdowns added to the problems of being unable to find an adequate job. Young people in Yemen, like in many other countries, had tried to continue with their lives during the pandemic by adopting new lifestyles.

Other nations dealt with the lockdown by working remotely using the internet. While the majority of young people surveyed said that internet connectivity was not their top priority and that they had never used the internet for work, the results showed that 88 per cent of the population do not work online. This illustrates the need to change the priorities for the education of young people, especially given that online education has become so important in tackling such situations.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBY	Central Bank of Yemen
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
MFIs	Microfinance Institutions
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ROYG	Republic of Yemen Government
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program

LIST OF FIGURES

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Dr. Kamal Naif Tamim has 20 years of practical and academic experience in both the private and public sectors. He has participated in multiple commercial international conferences as an assistant professor and commercial manager.

ABOUT THE FES MENA YOUTH STUDY

The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) views young women and men as instrumental for democratic development in the region and is keen to strengthen their potential to initiate change in the world of politics and across society. Based on the results of a long-term survey, launched in 2016, FES seeks to provide insight into young people's situation in the MENA region.

In 2021, FES launched its second large-scale representative survey in 12 MENA countries: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Tunisia, and Yemen. With its 1,000 in-depth interviews conducted for each country, FES MENA Youth Study generates a large database of responses to more than 200 questions concerning the personal background of the interviewees and their views to a variety of topics.

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