



## Business Environment Reform Facility

*Title: Skills and School Leavers in the Sierra Leone Labour Market*

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## About Business Environment Reform Facility (BERF)

BERF is funded by the UK Department For International Development (DFID) under the Business Environment for Economic Development (BEED) Programme. BERF is a central facility responding to demand from the DFID's priority Country Offices and stakeholders to initiate, improve and scale up business environment reform programmes. BERF is managed by a consortium led by KPMG LLP. The programme started in January 2016 and will finish in January 2019.

We provide expert advice, analysis of lessons learned, policy research about what works and what doesn't and develop innovative new approaches to involving businesses and consumers in investment climate reform.

BERF has a strong emphasis on strengthening the Business Environment for women and girls, as well as for young adults more generally. It is also aiming to improve the relationship between business and the physical environment including where relevant through linkage to climate change analysis. BERF recognises the need for appropriate political economy analysis in order to underpin business environment reform processes and interventions.

## About this Report

This study was conducted by Robert Sam-Kpakra, Justin Flynn and James Sumberg through the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Research was carried out between February and June 2017.

The views contained in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of any BERF consortium member or DFID or any of their professional advisors.

This is a working paper shared for discussion purposes only. No reliance should be placed upon this report.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
BERF	Business Environment Reform Facility
DFID	Department for International Development
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
JSS	Junior secondary school
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSEIP	Secondary Education Improvement Programme
SSS	Senior secondary school
TOR	Terms of Reference
WAEC	West African Exam Council
WASSCE	West African Secondary School Certificate Examination

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Background	4
1.2 Objective, questions and methodology	4
1.3 Limitations	6
1.4 Study team	6
<b>2. Context</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3. Findings 10</b>	
3.1 School leavers after BECE	10
3.2 School leavers after WASSCE	10
3.3 Additional education	11
3.4 Employment	12
3.5 Not working	12
3.6 The educational experience	13
<b>4. Conclusions and recommendations</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 Conclusions	14
4.2 Recommendations	15
<b>5. References</b>	<b>39</b>

## **List of tables**

Table 1: Different routes to becoming a school leaver.....	5
Table 2: Demographic, educational & employment information 2011/12 Cohort.....	17
Table 3: Demographic, educational & employment information 2014/15 Cohort.....	18
Table 4: Post-exam journeys of male respondents.....	22
Table 5: Post-exam journeys of female respondents.....	23
Table 6: Post-exam journeys of all respondents.....	24
Table 7: Summary of findings across exams, cohorts and gender.....	33
Table 8: Percentage who agree formal education prepared well for job .....	38
Table 9: Suggested educational improvement to better prepare for work.....	38

## **List of figures**

Figure 1: Current activities of male respondents by age.....	19
Figure 2: Current activities of female respondents by age.....	20
Figure 3: Current activities of all respondents by age.....	21
Figure 4: BECE, 2011/12; Boys .....	25
Figure 5: BECE, 2011/12; Girls .....	26
Figure 6: BECE, 2014/15; Boys .....	27
Figure 7: BECE, 2014/15; Girls .....	28
Figure 8: WASSCE, 2011/12; Men.....	29
Figure 9: WASSCE, 2011/12; Women .....	30
Figure 10: WASSCE, 2014/15; Men.....	31
Figure 11: WASSCE, 2014/15; Women.....	32
Figure 12: Current activities of respondents by examination results and gender .....	35
Figure 13: Current activities of respondents by examination results .....	36
Figure 14: Post-SSS educational activities by exam result.....	37



## Executive Summary

DFID commissioned a scoping study in Sierra Leone, under the Business Environment Reform Facility (BERF), to provide insight into the experiences and challenges that school leavers in Sierra Leone face when they enter the labour market. A review of literature and stakeholder interviews supplemented the main data collection exercise, which was a survey of 250 students from two schools in Freetown who took the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) or the West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) exam in either 2011/12 or 2014/15.

The main findings from the study are that:

- **A significant proportion of students do not continue in education following BECE:** they leave school.

### Percent of BECE cohort who do not continue in education

	2011/12 Cohort		2014/15 Cohort	
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Boys	38%	47%	53%	55%
Girls	35%	53%	38%	82%

- **A significant proportion of students do not continue in education following WASSCE:** they leave school.

### Percent of WASSCE cohort who do not continue in education

	2011/12 Cohort		2014/15 Cohort	
	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Men	25%	67%	25%	69%
Women	43%	50%	47%	94%

- **Failing either exam clearly does not close the door to additional education.** Over both cohorts, 50 percent of boys and 35 percent of girls who failed BECE continued in education, while 32 percent of men and 22 percent of women who failed WASSCE continued in education.
- **WASSCE results influence post-Senior Secondary School (SSS) educational activities.** Those who passed opted predominately to pursue a university degree, while those who failed favoured the polytechnic, technical or vocational college (Figure 12).
- **Very few of the respondents, even the older ones, are working.** Overall, only 7 respondents (3 percent) reported that they were working.
- **A significant proportion of those who are not in either education or work, are not looking for work.** Overall, of the 143 respondents who were neither in education nor in work, 70 percent reported that they were not looking for work.

- **Young people's views about how well their education prepared them for getting a job are mixed.** Respondents from the Government Rokel Secondary School were much more likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement "The formal education that I received prepared me well for getting a job" (86 percent) than respondents from Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School (22 percent) (Table 8).
- **Views about how education might be improved to better prepare young people to get work were also mixed.** Respondents from Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School put relatively less weight on basic skills, and more on a more practical orientation and communication and interpersonal skills compared to students from Government Rokel Secondary School (Table 9).

These findings lead to five main conclusions:

1. Many students, including many who pass BECE, do not continue their education beyond Junior Secondary School (JSS).
2. Young people in Sierra Leone are highly motivated to pursue further studies and to add to their educational qualifications, and many will not let a disappointing exam result stand in their way.
3. Students who pass BECE and/or WASSCE are more likely to continue their education.
4. Gender effects are seen throughout the study findings.
5. The school-to-work transition is neither simple, nor easily identified, or quick.

The study highlights the fact that far too little is known about young people's pathways between school, further education and work, and the role that BECE and WASSCE, and other aspects of teaching and learning quality, play in these pathways. Without a better understanding of these pathways it will be impossible to move from common sense interventions to knowledge and evidence-based interventions.

The key recommendation from the study are:

- DFID-Sierra Leone and other partners interested in the links between education and employment should continue to work along the lines of the Secondary Education Improvement Programme (SSEIP) to increase the pass rates in basic and secondary education examinations, and the numbers of students who successfully transition from junior to secondary school and from secondary school to tertiary study and employment.
- Investment should be made in knowledge and evidence generation activities that address these questions:
  - What stops students who pass BECE from continuing to SSS?
  - Why are girls less likely than boys to continue in education after BECE and WASSCE?
  - Why are many young people seemingly neither working nor looking for work, and what does this tell us about the links between education and employment?

- What does the university-to-work transition look like for different groups of young people in different contexts?



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

A key objective of the 2016/17 – 2020/21 Business Plan for DFID Sierra Leone is to accelerate sustainable inclusive economic development. To do this it will be essential that skilled workers are available as the private sector increases its investment. In DFID's view, the country's education system does not produce sufficient young people with adequate levels of learning to build a more secure and prosperous future.

DFID has been supporting the Government of Sierra Leone's Ebola Recovery and Transition Plan by investing in education and the improvement of learning outcomes in secondary schools. High levels of drop out, inequities in access to education, low learning levels and the achievement gap between girls and boys are all part of the education challenge. These factors have subsequent effects on young people's engagement with the labour market and business environment.

### 1.2 Objective, questions and methodology

The objective of this scoping study is to support DFID Sierra Leone to increase youth employment through a better understanding of skills, performance of and constraints faced by school leavers in the labour market. It sought to provide insight into the experiences and challenges that school leavers in Sierra Leone face when they enter the labour market.

The study addresses the following questions:

- What routes do different categories of recent school leavers use to enter the formal labour market?
- Do the skills of different categories of recent school leavers allow for direct entry into the formal labour market?
- How do different groups of recent school leavers attain the skills that allow them to successfully enter the formal labour market?
- How do formal sector employers perceive the skills of different categories of recent school leavers, and the challenges associated with their transition to productive employees?

The study employed a framework that identified four categories of students, including those who completed:

- Junior Secondary School (JSS) having passed the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The West African Exams Council (WEAC) administers both the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and the West Africa Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE)

- JSS without having passed the BECE
- Senior Secondary School (SSS) having passed the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination (WASSCE)
- SSS without having passed the WASSCE

The study TOR refers specifically to “school leavers”. As can be seen in Table 1, everyone eventually becomes a school leaver, but this happens at different points and in different situations. A student who becomes a school leaver through route 1 will be in a very different position that one who leaves school through route 9. We conclude from this that without further specification, the term school leaver is of limited analytical value.

**Table 1: Different routes to becoming a school leaver**

Route	Complete JSS	Pass BECE	Enroll in SSS	Complete SSS	Pass WASSCE
1	<b>No = [Drop out]</b>				
2	Yes	No	<b>No = school leaver</b>		
3	Yes	No	Yes	<b>No = [Drop out]</b>	
4	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	<b>No = school leaver</b>
5	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	<b>Yes = school leaver</b>
6	Yes	Yes	<b>No = school leaver</b>		
7	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No = [Drop out]</b>	
8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>No = school leaver</b>
9	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	<b>Yes = school leaver</b>

In addition to interviews with some stakeholders, the main method used was a questionnaire-based tracer study of students in each of the four categories listed above. The survey instrument for the tracer study focused on education and employment activities since completing either JSS or SSS.

The study team obtained a complete listing of secondary schools in the Freetown area from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in March 2017. This list indicated who owned each school (government, mission, community and private). The study targeted public schools, which were either government, mission or community owned. Private schools were excluded from the sampling frame since they are typically serve children from more affluent backgrounds.

From the list of public schools, the study team made contact with five schools in Freetown for potential participation in the study. Eventually, the team decided to recruit participants from co-educational schools. On this basis, Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School (AMSS) and Government Rokel Secondary School (GRSS) were selected for the study.

Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School combines both JSS and SSS and currently has a student population of 3,500. It is one of the largest schools in Sierra Leone. On

the whole, students perform reasonably well in BECE and WASSCE. Government Rokel Secondary School also combines both JSS and SSS and has a student population of 1,148 JSS and 2,326 SSS students. Student performance in the exams is considered average, and generally below Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School.

Two cohorts of JSS and SSS completers were identified: from 2011/12 and 2014/15. The team assumed that a significant proportion of the 2011/12 SSS cohort would already have already transitioned into the labour market (this proved not to be the case).

The country survey team identified a teacher in each school to provide support in contacting former students for potential recruitment into the survey. Those who were contactable and willing to participate came to the schools on agreed days, where they completed the survey.

A total of 250 surveys were conducted in June 2017 using QuickTap Survey software. Data were exported from QuickTap Survey to SPSS for analysis. As part of the analysis, a number of “post-exam journeys” were identified that help to track the different pathways that young people take as they move from secondary school.

### 1.3 Limitations

This study has three main limitations.

1. First, the students who participated were those who could be contacted and who were willing and able to come to the school to participate in the survey. This may have resulted in some bias against those who are employed and could not take the time off. The study team does not think that this potential source of bias has any significant implications for the findings.
2. Second, the resources available were not sufficient to do any follow-up with the survey respondents. As a result, we know relatively little about the current activities of respondents who are neither in education nor in employment.
3. Third, the choice of an earlier cohort might have shed more light on transitions from education to employment. However, an earlier cohort would likely have meant more difficulty in contacting former students.

### 1.4 Study team

The study team included:

- Dr James Sumberg, Research Fellow, Institute of Development Studies (IDS) (study leader)
- Mr Robert Sam Kpakra, independent consultant
- Mr Justin Flynn, Research Officer, Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

## 2. Context

Employment and the labour market in Sierra Leone have received considerable policy attention over recent years (Government of Sierra Leone; Briama, 2014; Statistics Sierra Leone and ILO, 2014; Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2015; Turay et al., 2015; Duramany-Lakkoh, 2016; Margolis et al., 2016; Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016). In addition, there is a related but very limited research literature (Cubitt, 2011; Maconachie, 2014; Enria, 2015; Finn and Oldfield, 2015).

The picture that emerges is of an economy dominated by low-productivity agriculture, with a very small formal sector in which the state is the most important employer. The formal labour market is characterised by a significant imbalance between demand and supply. Access to and success in this market are to an important degree mediated by personal networks and political affiliation.

The 2014 Labour Market Survey suggested that over 95 percent of employed Sierra Leoneans are self-employed, with 59 percent of these working in agriculture (Manuel and Katiyo, 2017). Further, 92 percent are employed in the informal sector (Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2015), with only about around 100,000 formal jobs in the whole country, most of which are in the public sector (DFID, n.d.). The most well-educated workers, i.e. those with tertiary education and/or with technical degrees or certificates, are mainly employed in the public sector, NGOs or international organisations (Margolis et al., 2016). The formal private sector represents a very small part of the economy, and consists of only around 2,500 registered companies (Manuel and Katiyo, 2017).

Young people have fewer opportunities for salaried employment compared to those aged above 35, regardless of their qualifications (Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2015). Indeed, young people's labour market participation is 52 percent versus 81 percent for those above 35. It is estimated that there are currently 800,000 young people who are actively looking for employment (Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2015). A significant proportion of young people do not complete primary education, and the World Bank estimates that even by 2040 almost 30 percent of 15 to 34 year olds who enter the labour market will not have completed primary school (2014, in DFID, n.d.). The public sector tends to exclude young people based on their age and limited experience (Danish Trade Council for International Development and Cooperation, 2015).

Most recently, the economy has struggled to deal with the effects of the Ebola crisis and the global downturn in iron ore prices. Manuel and Katiyo (2017: 1) recently identified a number of "binding constraints" to economic growth:

"... inadequate infrastructure and access to utilities, particularly limited availability and reliability of electricity; weak government policymaking, planning and implementation, including corruption; weak human capital; and limited access to finance. Other key constraints include limited access to land; weak government

procurement and contracting; poor trade logistics, including port and border crossing; and inadequate intellectual property protection.”

This general situation presents specific challenges for young people. The demand for education is high, as are career aspirations, but there are concerns about learning outcomes and work readiness, and as indicated above, there are few formal jobs for secondary or tertiary graduates.

DFID plans to invest £60 million in the Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme (SSEIP) between 2016 and 2021 to improve secondary school learning outcomes. This nationwide programme has a particular focus on access, learning and safety for girls. Greater understanding in three areas will help ensure the success of SSEIP:

- The relationship between secondary education and the labour market in Sierra Leone;
- The effect of improved quality of secondary education on young people’s ability to secure decent work; and,
- Actions needed by DFID and the Government of Sierra Leone to ensure that SSEIP and other relevant programmes improve labour market outcomes for secondary school graduates.

To shed light on these areas, DFID undertook a desk review and carried out a series of discussions and key informant interviews with stakeholders in Western Urban, Bonthe and Moyamba Districts in February 2017 (DFID, 2017). Five key findings emerged:

- Secondary education is of great instrumental importance in providing a pathway to the tertiary qualifications that are required to secure entry to secure wage employment. By itself, a BECE or WASSCE certificate is not seen as valuable in the formal labour market.
- Young people demonstrate lofty ambitions as to the careers which they want to pursue. In many cases, their aspirations do not match reality and they are not able to articulate how, practically, they will achieve their goals. There is an almost complete absence of careers advice and guidance for secondary students.
- WASSCE is an academic examination that acts as an effective screening device for tertiary education but preparation for it does not equip students with the range of practical and soft skills required by employers. Many students are streamed down the SSS/WASSCE route because of a lack of viable alternatives after completing JSS.
- Sierra Leone’s new National Curriculum and Guidelines for Basic Education provides an appropriate basis for JSS content and methodology. The main issue is effective implementation and the fact that teaching methods in many schools are doing very little to develop the soft skills required for success in wage employment or self-employment.
- There is a widespread perception that connections are an essential pre-requisite for securing decent employment. Women and the rural poor are particularly disadvantaged in this regard.

The 2017 BERF study “**Barriers to job creation and labour market access**” speaks particularly to the first, second and fifth findings. Specifically, while it is true that secondary education provides the pathway to tertiary qualifications, for many young people obtaining a tertiary qualification does not guarantee entry to wage employment, and even for those who are successful, this employment may be neither secure nor meet the standards of decent work. The second key finding suggests that young people’s career ambitions are lofty and unrealistic, while findings from the BERF study suggested that characteristics like permanent and salaried employment were particularly important. Finally, while the BERF study also highlighted cases of discrimination, and the importance of personal connections and networks in helping young people access and succeed in the formal labour market, there was no strong indication that women were particularly or systematically disadvantaged in this regard.

This is the context within which the scoping study was undertaken



### 3. Findings

Characteristics of the 250 survey respondents are shown in Tables 2 and 3.<sup>2</sup> Of the 121 respondents who completed JSS, 55 percent passed the BECE, while 49 percent of the 129 who completed SSS passed the WASSCE. For both cohorts, BECE results were better for the Ahmadiyya Muslim Second. School (and nearly twice as high for the 2014/15 cohort). WASSCE results were not consistent over the two schools and cohorts.

Figures 1, 2 and 3 show respondents' current activities by age. As expected, for both males and females, engagement in education tends to decline with age, and older respondents are more likely to be looking for work. Very few of the respondents, even the older ones, are working.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 identify the different post-exam journeys undertaken by the respondents, disaggregated by cohort, exam level and gender. These tables, together with Figures 4 to 11, which are derived from them, provide the basis for the analysis that follows. Key findings are summarised in tabular form in Table 7 and in Figures 12, 13 and 14.

#### 3.1 School leavers after BECE

**A significant proportion of students do not continue in education following BECE: they are clearly school leavers.**

- Failing BECE increased the chances that students left school.
- This effect was strongest among girls (in the 2011/12 cohort, 35 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 53 percent of fails; in the 2014/15 cohort, 38 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 82 percent of fails)
- It was much less strong among boys (in the 2011/12 cohort, 38 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 47 percent of fails; in the 2014/15 cohort, 53 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 55 percent of fails)

#### 3.2 School leavers after WASSCE

**A significant proportion of students do not continue in education following WASSCE: they are clearly school leavers.**

- Failing WASSCE, on average, significantly increased the chances that students left education.
- This effect was strong and consistent among men (in the 2011/12 cohort, 25 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 67 percent of fails; in the 2014/15 cohort, 25 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 69 percent of fails)

<sup>2</sup> All Tables and Figures can be found at the end of the report.

- It was less consistent among women (in the 2011/12 cohort, 43 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 50 percent of fails; in the 2014/15 cohort (47 percent of passes did not continue education compared to 94 percent of fails)
- Generally, failing BECE had a smaller effect on the probability that a student would continue in education than failing WASSCE.

### 3.3 Additional education

**Despite a significant proportion of students leaving school after BECE and WASSCE, the results confirm previous observations that students in Sierra Leone have a very strong interest in educational achievement.**

- Whether JSS students passed or failed BECE had relatively little effect on what they reported they wanted to do when they left school, with 80 percent (of those who passed) and 76 percent (of those who failed) indicating they wanted to continue their education.
- Over both cohorts, 52 percent of men and 51 percent of women taking BECE continued in education.
- Over both cohorts, 60 percent of those who passed WASSCE and 83 percent of those who failed indicated that they wanted to continue their education.
- Over both cohorts, 51 percent of men and 40 percent of women taking WASSCE continued in education

**Failing either exam clearly does not close the door to additional education.**

- In principle, students who fail BECE can retake the exam the following year; in practice, some move to schools that accept grades below the government pass mark, thus they continue to advance their education without passing.
- The result is that a proportion of students who fail BECE still immediately proceed to SSS1.
- Similarly, those who fail WASSCE may make additional attempts to pass, or move to a tertiary educational institution that accepts students with examination results below the government pass mark.
- Over both cohorts, 50 percent of boys and 35 percent of girls who failed BECE continued in education, while 32 percent of men and 22 percent of women who failed WASSCE continued in education.

### **WASSCE results influence post-SSS educational activities.**

- Those who passed opted predominately to pursue a university degree, while those who failed favoured the polytechnic, technical or vocational college route (Figure 12).
- Nearly 30 percent of those who failed went back to secondary school, presumably in pursuit of an improved exam result.

### **3.4 Employment**

#### **Very few of the respondents, even the older ones, are working.**

- It is important to note that in contrast to the main study that focused exclusively on “salaried jobs”, here we asked if the respondents were “currently working”. We have to be open to the possibility that some respondents may have assumed the question referred to “proper” jobs and answered no, even though they may be engaged in some informal income generating activities.
- Overall, only 7 respondents (3 percent) reported that they were working, and 2 of these were also studying.
- The small number who are working limits the analysis that can be done. However, neither exam results nor post-secondary education would seem to have an impact on whether or not the respondent is currently in work.
- Among those few who are in work there is no obvious influence of passing or failing WASSCE on the type of job they are doing. Those who passed WASSCE reported working as an electrician, hairdresser, tailor and teacher, while those who failed are working as a photographer, secretary and teacher.
- In the coming years, as those still in education finish their programmes and transition into the workforce, any effects of academic achievement on success in the labour market will likely become more evident.
- It is possible that an earlier cohort (i.e. before 2011/12) would have better reflected the movement of these older (largely university) students into the workforce.

### **3.5 Not working**

#### **A significant proportion of those who are not in either education or work, are not looking for work.**

- Overall, of the 143 respondents who were neither in education nor in work, 70 percent reported that they were not looking for work.
- For both exams and genders, students who passed were more likely to be looking for work.
- For both exams, there is some indication that males were more likely to be looking for work.

### 3.6 The educational experience

**Young people's views about how well their education prepared them for getting a job are mixed.**

- Respondents from the Government Rokel Secondary School were much more likely to strongly agree or agree with the statement **"The formal education that I received prepared me well for getting a job"** (86 percent) than respondents from Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School (22 percent) (Table 8). Many of these respondents are still in education, and have likely had limited engagement with the labour market.
- The same trend is seen among those not currently in education, with 85 percent of those from Government Rokel Secondary School strongly agreeing or agreeing compared to 27 percent from Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School.

**Views about how education might be improved to better prepare young people to get work were also mixed.**

- Respondents from Ahmadiyya Muslim Secondary School, who were very dismissive about the degree to which their education prepared them for getting a job, put relatively less weight on basic skills, and more on a more practical orientation and communication and interpersonal skills compared to students from Government Rokel Secondary School (Table 9).
- Other studies have noted that many of the recommendations made by school leavers focus on the need to revise the curriculum so that it is more practical and vocational (Al-Samarrai and Bennell, 2007).

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusions

The findings from this scoping study lead to **five** main conclusions.

#### 1. Many students, including many who pass BECE, do not continue their education beyond JSS.

- These individuals will likely be very disadvantaged in the labour market; they will have a very difficult time accessing the market and competing for decent employment.
- There is a strong case for addressing the factors that cause students to leave school after BECE, and in the first instance, the factors causing those who actually pass the exam to leave.
- Effective actions will need to be based on a more detailed understanding of these factors – be they financial, parental pressure, early pregnancy or whatever – and how they differentially affect male and female, and urban and rural students.

#### 2. Nevertheless, young people in Sierra Leone are highly motivated to pursue further studies and to add to their educational qualifications, and many will not let a disappointing exam result stand in their way.

- By continuing in education young people are both delaying their entry into a very difficult labour market, and hopefully, adding to their competitive advantage when they do finally seek employment.
- In the meantime, they are contributing to the high rate of economic inactivity among young people (also see Anyanwu, 2013).

#### 3. Students who pass BECE and/or WASSCE are more likely to continue their education.

- While some students continue their education without passing these exams, passing greatly increases the probability of continuing, as well as the range of tertiary educational opportunities.
- Further investigation is warranted to understand the long-term effects of successfully passing BECE and WASSCE, and of the subsequent pursuit of tertiary education.
- In an economic context in which there are few formal sector jobs, what are the private and social benefits of investment in secondary and tertiary education, and how are these benefits distributed over different social groups?

#### 4. Gender effects are seen throughout the study findings.

- Combined over the two school there were four cohort x exam cases (i.e. two cohorts [2011/12 and 2015/16] by two exams [BECE and WASSCE]). In three out of the four of these cases, the pass rate for females was higher than that of males (and in the fourth case, there was no difference).

- Nevertheless, females are less likely to continue education after BECE; less likely to continue education after WASSCE; and if not working, they are more likely not to be seeking work.
- This suggests that there may be factors that differentially affect young females' progression through secondary education and beyond. It is likely that pregnancy, child rearing and domestic responsibilities play a role, but at the moment this is little more than speculation. This represents an important evidence gap.

#### **5. The school-to-work transition is neither simple, easily identified nor quick.**

- For many young people, even after stopping education, it appears that this transition takes place over several years. Is this because of a lack of opportunity in the labour market, a lack of interest on the part of some young people, or their involvement in other activities like child rearing?
- For a significant proportion of young people around Freetown, the school-to-work transition might better be thought of as the “university-to-work” transition, and analysed in its own right.

### **4.2 Recommendations**

The **recommendations** from this scoping study essentially mirror some of the objectives of SSEIP. Specifically, DFID-Sierra Leone and other partners interested in the links between education and employment should work to:

- Increase the percentage of students who pass BECE
- Reduce the percentage of students who pass BECE but then do not go on to SSS
- Increase the percentage of students who pass WASSCE
- Reduce the percentage of students who pass WASCE but then do not go on to tertiary education or find decent employment

There are some common sense things that can be done to address these challenges, and these are part of SSEIP and other programmes. These programmes provide a very important opportunity to learn, and every opportunity to deepen the understanding of the motives and imagined futures of students, and the constraints that they face, should be exploited to the full. Is the SSEIP MEL framework up to this task?

Nevertheless, a critically important and inescapable conclusion from this scoping study and the associated review of the literature is that **far too little is known about young people's pathways between school, further education and work, and the role that BECE and WASSCE, and other aspects of teaching and learning quality, play in these pathways.**

What is needed is an evolution from common sense interventions to knowledge and evidence-based interventions. In order to support this evolution, some of the questions that need to be addressed are:

- What stops students who pass BECE from continuing to SSS?



- Why are females less likely than males to continue in education after BECE and WASSCE?
- Why are many young people seemingly neither working nor looking for work, and what does this tell us about the links between education and employment?
- What does the university-to-work transition look like for different groups of young people in different contexts?

In addressing these questions, two points must be kept in mind:

- A long-term, interdisciplinary view is essential, as is work with a variety of young people in different contexts (e.g. urban and rural), so as to better elucidate the links between their secondary and post-secondary school pathways and their aspirations and achievements in a constrained formal labour market.
- It may be that it is the lack of decent employment opportunities rather than educational outcomes (or skills) that is the primary factor affecting young people's engagement with the labour market and ability to build sustainable and satisfying livelihoods. Put another way, is there a pathway to impact for investment in secondary education in Sierra Leone that is not dependent on an assumption of rapid increase in formal job creation?

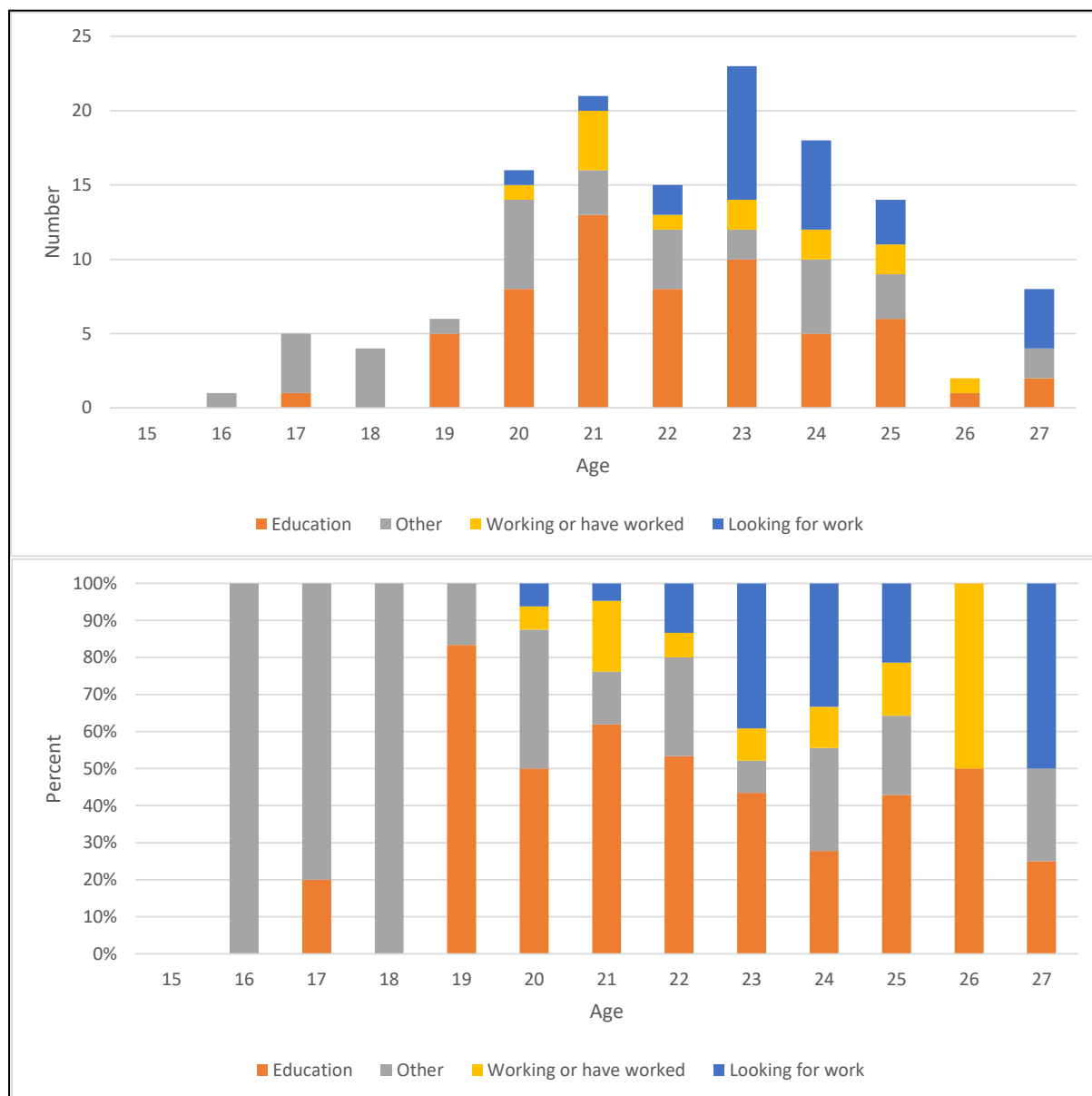
**Table 2: Demographic, educational & employment information 2011/12 Cohort**

Indicator	Ahmadiyya Muslim Second. School		Government Rokel Second. School	
<b>Number of completed responses</b>	66		54	
<b>% by sex</b>	51.5% Male; 48.5% Female		55.6% Male; 44.4% Female	
<b>Age distribution</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	15-16 years	0%	15-16 years	0%
	17-18 years	0%	17-18 years	2%
	19-20 years	24%	19-20 years	17%
	21-22 years	32%	21-22 years	31%
	23-24 years	27%	23-24 years	31%
	25-26 years	9%	25-26 years	15%
	27-28 years	8%	27-28 years	4%
<b>Results</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	JSS – pass exam	65%	JSS – pass exam	50%
	JSS – fail exam	35%	JSS – fail exam	50%
	SSS – pass exam	48%	SSS – pass exam	62%
	SSS – fail exam	52%	SSS – fail exam	39%
<b>Still in education (%)</b>	77.8%		77.3%	
<b>Currently in work (%)</b>	6.1%		1.9%	

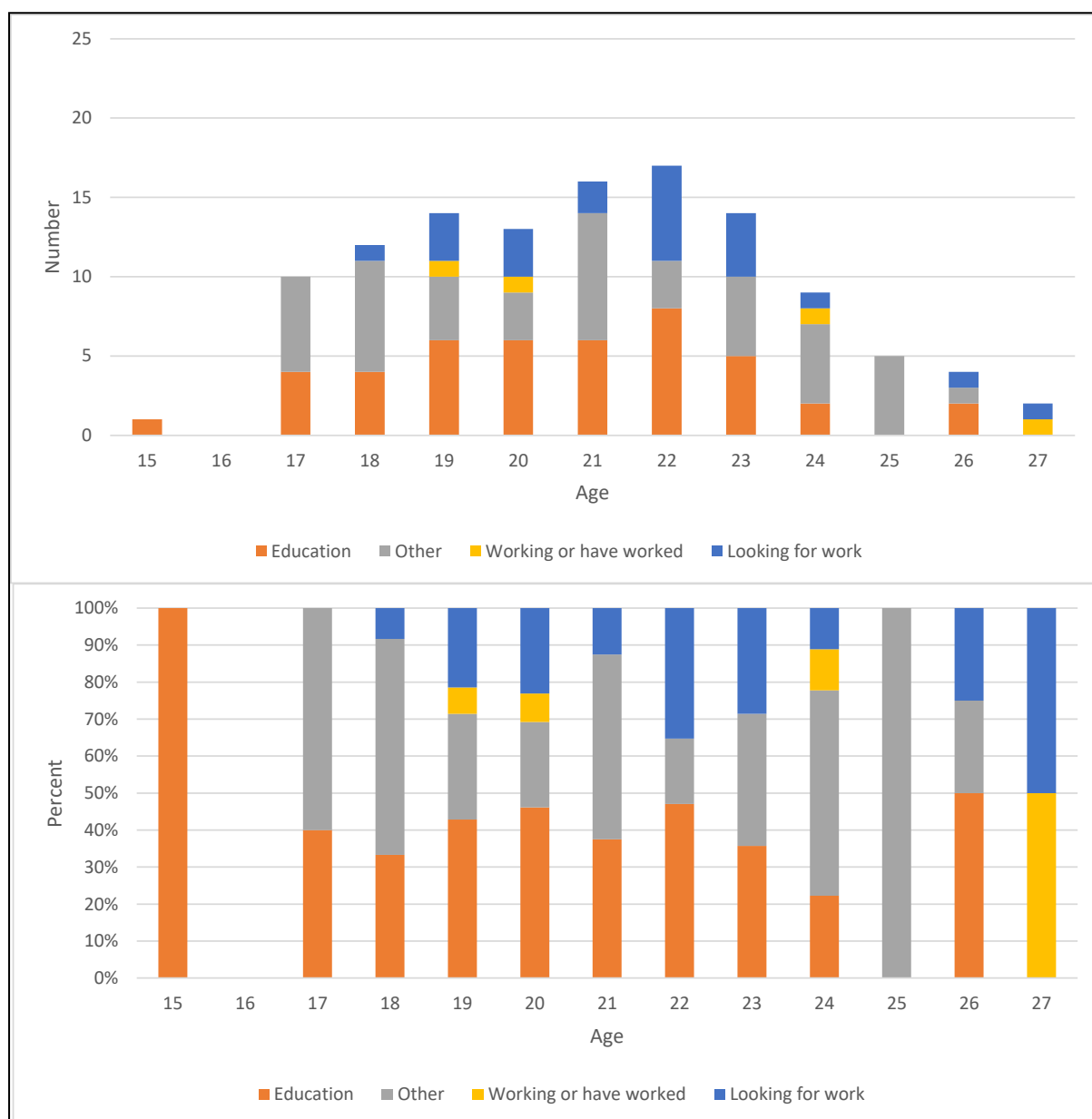
**Table 3: Demographic, educational & employment information 2014/15 Cohort**

Indicator	Ahmadiyya Muslim Second. School		Government Rokel Second. School	
<b>Number of completed responses</b>	66		64	
<b>% by sex</b>	51.5% Male; 48.5% Female		54.7% Male; 45.3% Female	
<b>Age distribution</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	15-16 years	2%	15-16 years	2%
	17-18 years	17%	17-18 years	30%
	19-20 years	21%	19-20 years	16%
	21-22 years	24%	21-22 years	23%
	23-24 years	21%	23-24 years	23%
	25-26 years	11%	25-26 years	6%
	27-28 years	5%	27-28 years	0%
<b>Results</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Percent</b>
	JSS – pass exam	72%	JSS – pass exam	32%
	JSS – fail exam	28%	JSS – fail exam	68%
	SSS – pass exam	49%	SSS – pass exam	39%
	SSS – fail exam	51%	SSS – fail exam	61%
<b>Still in education (%)</b>	95%		100%	
<b>Currently in work (%)</b>	6.1%		0%	

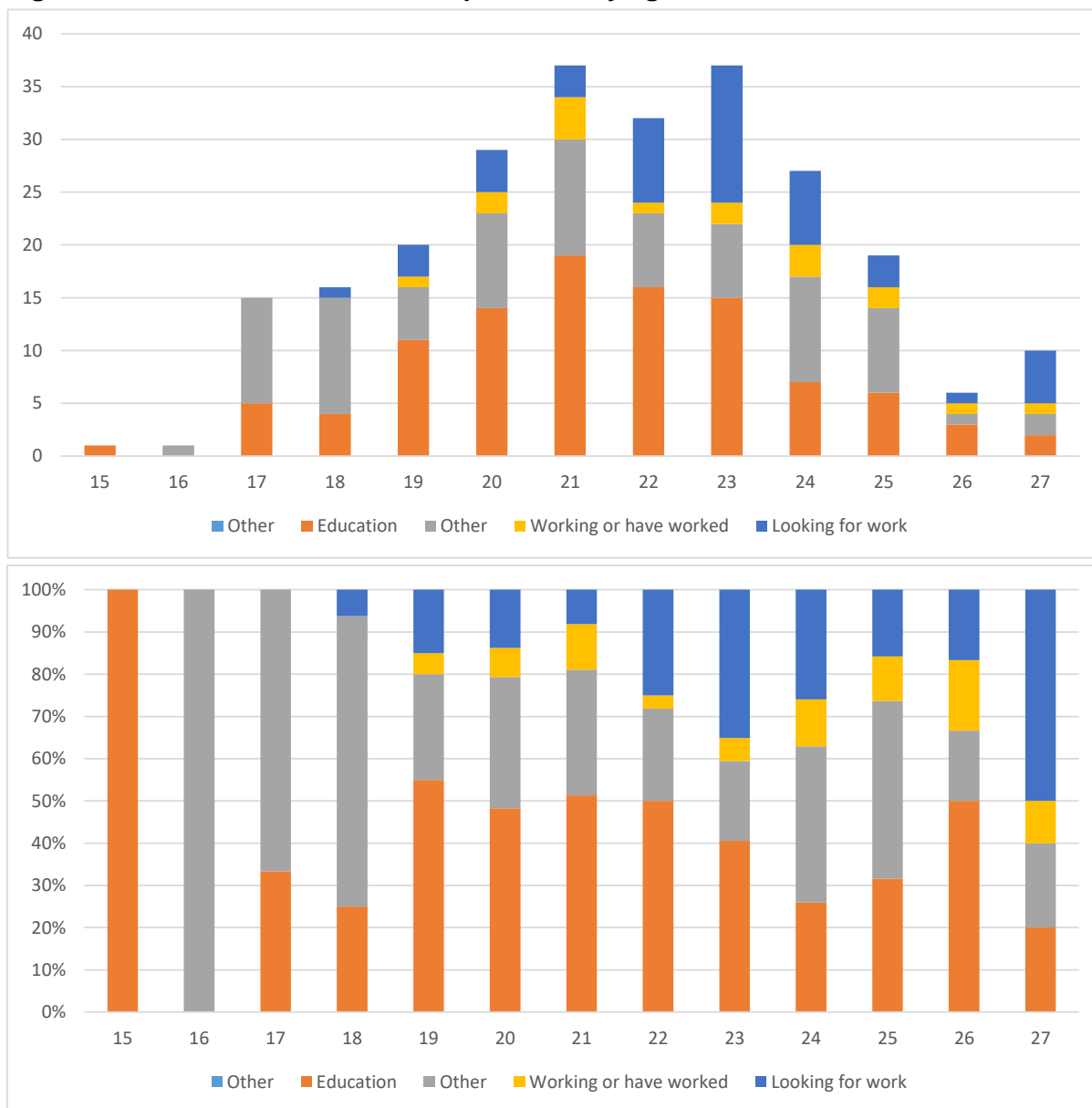
**Figure 1: Current activities of male respondents by age**



**Figure 2: Current activities of female respondents by age**



**Figure 3: Current activities of all respondents by age**





**Table 4: Post-exam journeys of male respondents**

Post-exam journey	Cohort 2011/12		Cohort 2014/15	
	No.	%	No.	%
BECE (pass) → Education (continuing)	9	56%	8	47%
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work				
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	1	6%		
BECE (pass) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (pass) → Not Working + Looking for Work	3	19%		
BECE (pass) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	3	19%	9	53%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>17</b>	
BECE (fail) → Education (continuing)	8	47%	5	45%
BECE (fail) → Education (continuing) + <b>Working</b>	1	6%		
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work				
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work				
BECE (fail) → <b>Working</b>	1	6%		
BECE (fail) → Not Working + Looking for Work				
BECE (fail) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	7	41%	6	55%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>11</b>	
WASSCE (pass) → Education (continuing)	7	44%	12	75%
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	1	6%		
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	4	25%		
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work				
WASSCE (pass) → <b>Working</b>				
WASSCE (pass) → Not Working + Looking for Work	3	19%	1	6%
WASSCE (pass) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	1	6%	3	19%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>16</b>	
WASSCE (fail) → Education (continuing)	3	20%	5	19%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (continuing) + <b>Working</b>			1	4%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>				
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	2	13%	2	8%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work				
WASSCE (fail) → <b>Working</b>			1	4%
WASSCE (fail) → Not Working + Looking for Work	3	20%	7	27%
WASSCE (fail) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	7	47%	10	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>26</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>64</b>		<b>70</b>	

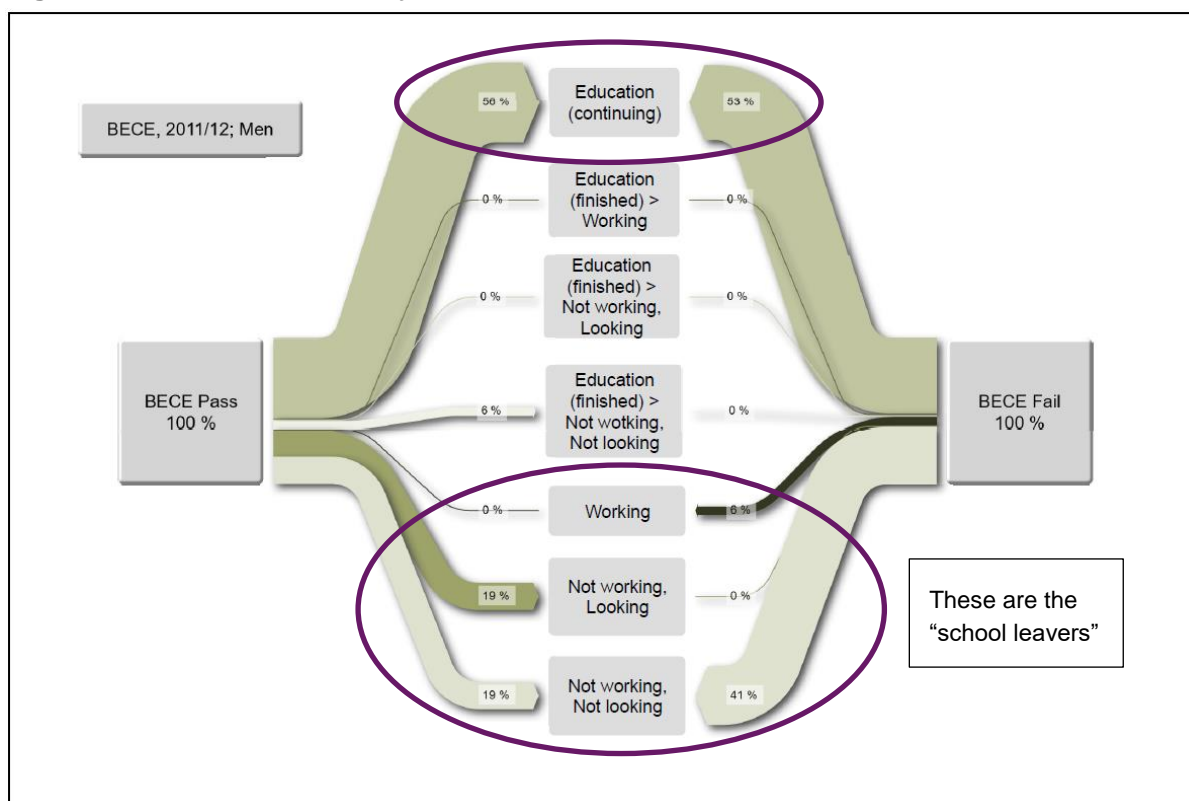
**Table 5: Post-exam journeys of female respondents**

Post-exam journey	Cohort 2011/12		Cohort 2014/15	
	No.	%	No.	%
BECE (pass) → Education (continuing)	10	59%	10	63%
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	1	6%		
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work				
BECE (pass) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (pass) → Not Working + Looking for Work	1	6%		
BECE (pass) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	5	29%	6	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>		<b>16</b>	
BECE (fail) → Education (continuing)	7	47%	2	18%
BECE (fail) → Education (continuing) + <b>Working</b>				
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work				
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work				
BECE (fail) → <b>Working</b>				
BECE (fail) → Not Working + Looking for Work				
BECE (fail) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	8	53%	9	82%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>		<b>11</b>	
WASSCE (pass) → Education (continuing)	4	29%	7	41%
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	1	7%		
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	3	21%	2	12%
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work				
WASSCE (pass) → <b>Working</b>				
WASSCE (pass) → Not Working + Looking for Work	1	7%	3	18%
WASSCE (pass) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	5	36%	5	29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>17</b>	
WASSCE (fail) → Education (continuing)	3	30%	1	6%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (continuing) + <b>Working</b>				
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	1	10%		
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work				
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	1	10%		
WASSCE (fail) → <b>Working</b>				
WASSCE (fail) → Not Working + Looking for Work	3	30%	4	24%
WASSCE (fail) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	2	20%	12	71%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>17</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>56</b>		<b>61</b>	

**Table 6: Post-exam journeys of all respondents**

Post-exam journey	Cohort 2011/12		Cohort 2014/15	
	No.	%	No.	%
BECE (pass) → Education (continuing)	19	58%	18	55%
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	0		0	
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	1	3%	0	
BECE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	1	3%	0	
BECE (pass) → <b>Working</b>	0		0	
BECE (pass) → Not Working + Looking for Work	4	12%	0	
BECE (pass) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	8	24%	15	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>		<b>33</b>	
BECE (fail) → Education (continuing)	15	47%	7	32%
BECE (fail) → Education (continuing) + <b>Working</b>	1	3%	0	
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	0		0	
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	0		0	
BECE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	0		0	
BECE (fail) → <b>Working</b>	1	3%	0	
BECE (fail) → Not Working + Looking for Work	0		0	
BECE (fail) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	15	47%	15	68%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>		<b>22</b>	
WASSCE (pass) → Education (continuing)	11	37%	19	58%
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	2	7%	0	
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	7	23%	2	6%
WASSCE (pass) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	0		0	
WASSCE (pass) → <b>Working</b>	0		0	
WASSCE (pass) → Not Working + Looking for Work	4	13%	4	12%
WASSCE (pass) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	6	20%	8	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>33</b>	
WASSCE (fail) → Education (continuing)	6	24%	6	14%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (continuing) + <b>Working</b>	0		1	2%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → <b>Working</b>	1	3%	0	
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Looking for Work	2	8%	2	5%
WASSCE (fail) → Education (finished) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	1	3%	0	
WASSCE (fail) → <b>Working</b>	0		1	2%
WASSCE (fail) → Not Working + Looking for Work	6	24%	11	26%
WASSCE (fail) → Not Working + Not Looking for Work	9	36%	22	51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>		<b>43</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>120</b>		<b>131</b>	

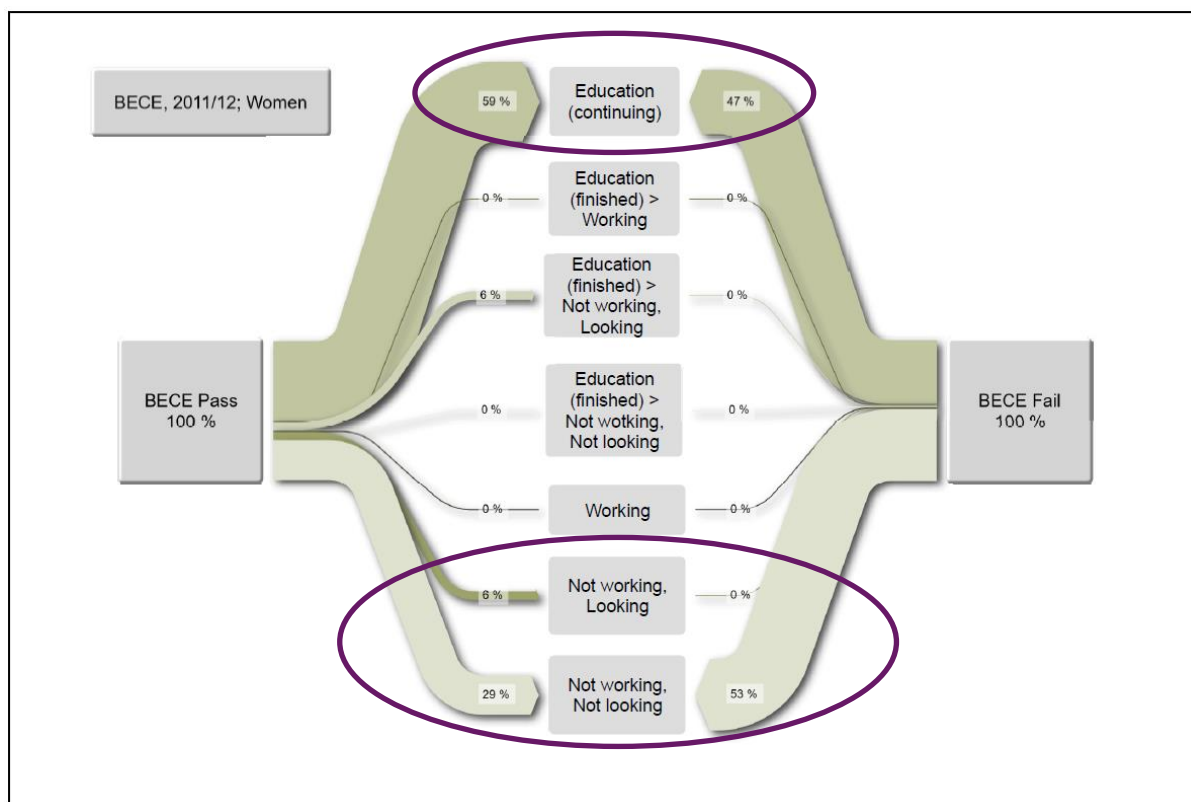
**Figure 4: BECE, 2011/12; Boys**



**Notes:**

- Exam results do not change the percent continuing in education
- Among the "school leavers", exam results do not affect the percent not working, **but half of those who passed are looking for work, compared to none of those who failed**
- Have those who failed the exam, and are not working or looking for work, previously tried to get work? Have they effectively withdrawn from the labour market?
- What are they actually doing?

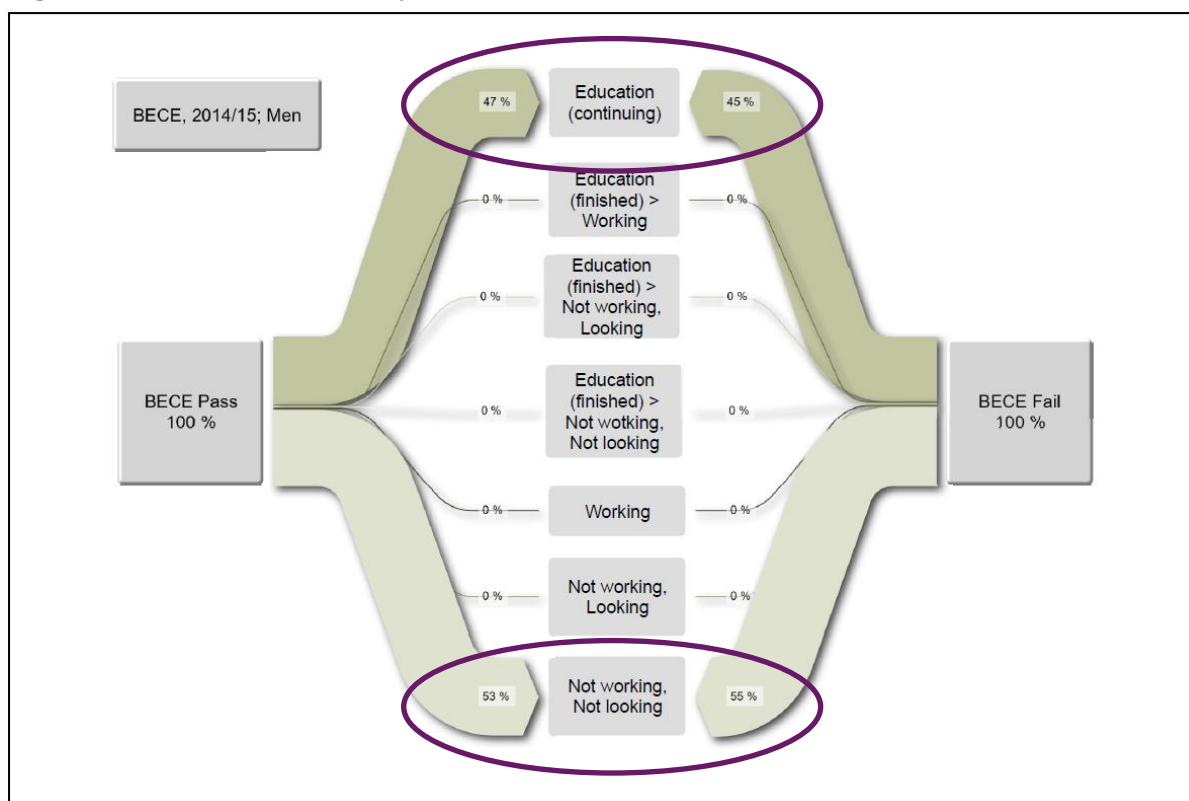
**Figure 5: BECE, 2011/12; Girls**



**Notes:**

- Those who passed were somewhat more likely to continue education than those who fail
- Those who failed were more likely to be not working, and not looking and not looking for work
- Are some of those women who are not working or looking for work at home raising young families?
- **Compared to men**, roughly the same proportion of those who passed and those who failed continued in education
- **Compared to men**, women who passed and women who failed were more likely to be not working and not looking for work

**Figure 6: BECE, 2014/15; Boys**

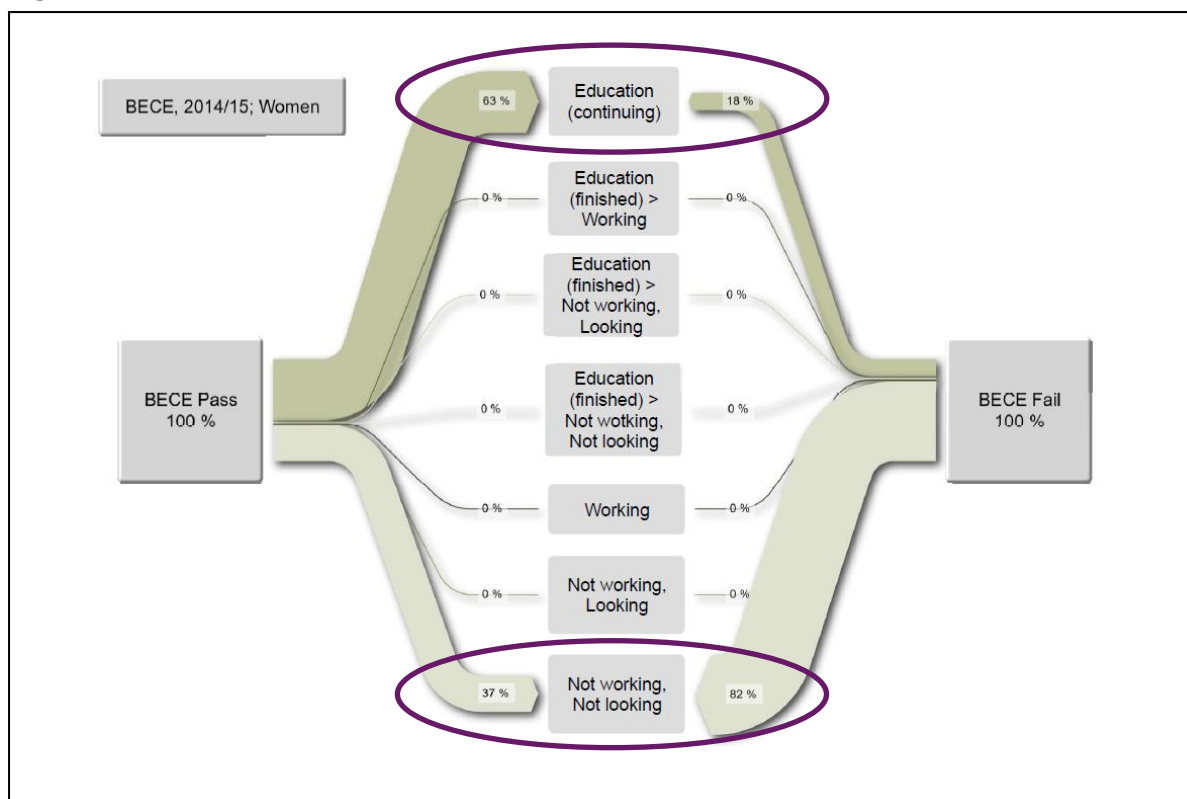


**Notes:**

- Exam result do not change the percent continuing in education
- Exam results do not affect whether those not working are looking for work
- What are the over 50% of respondents doing who are not in education, nor working, nor looking for work? What is their future in the labour market?
- Will some of those who passed eventually seek to continue their education?



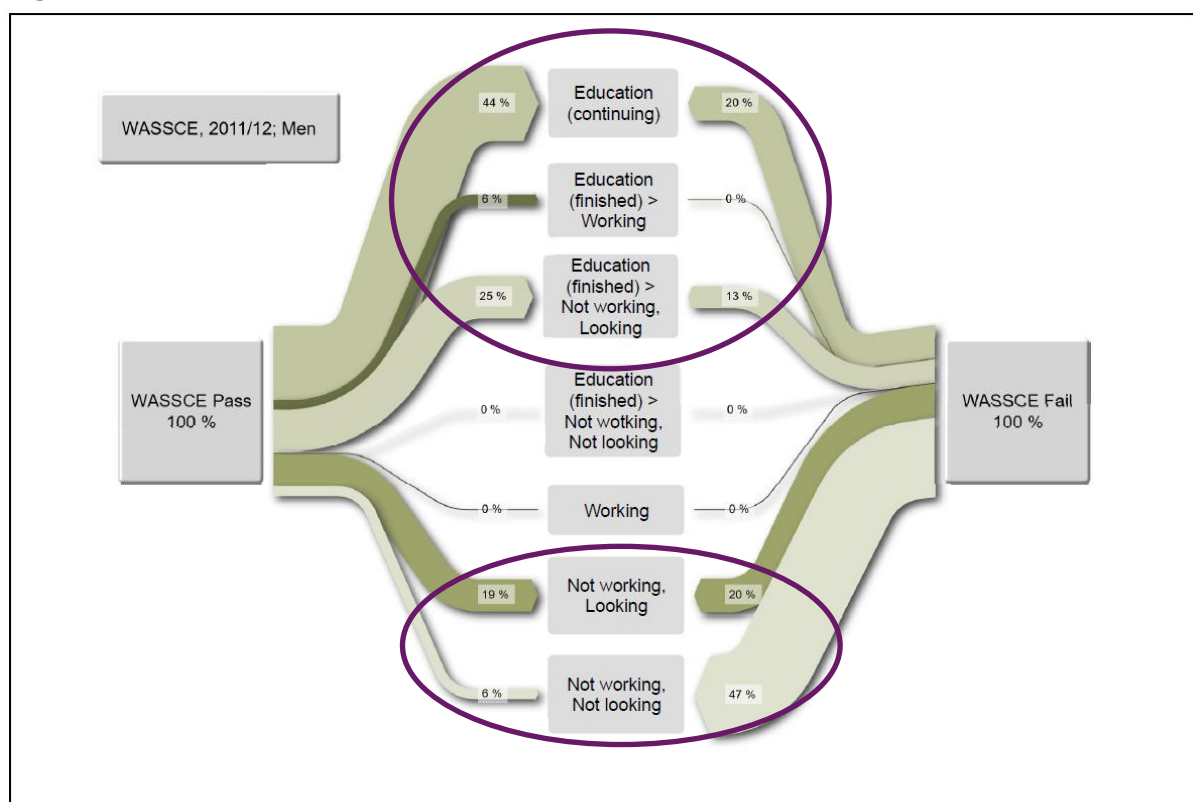
**Figure 7: BECE, 2014/15; Girls**



**Notes:**

- Those who passed were much more likely to continue in education
- Those who failed were much more likely to be not working or looking for work. **What are they doing?**
- **Compared to men**, women who passed the exam were more likely to continue in education
- **Compared to men**, women who failed the exam were much less likely to continue in education

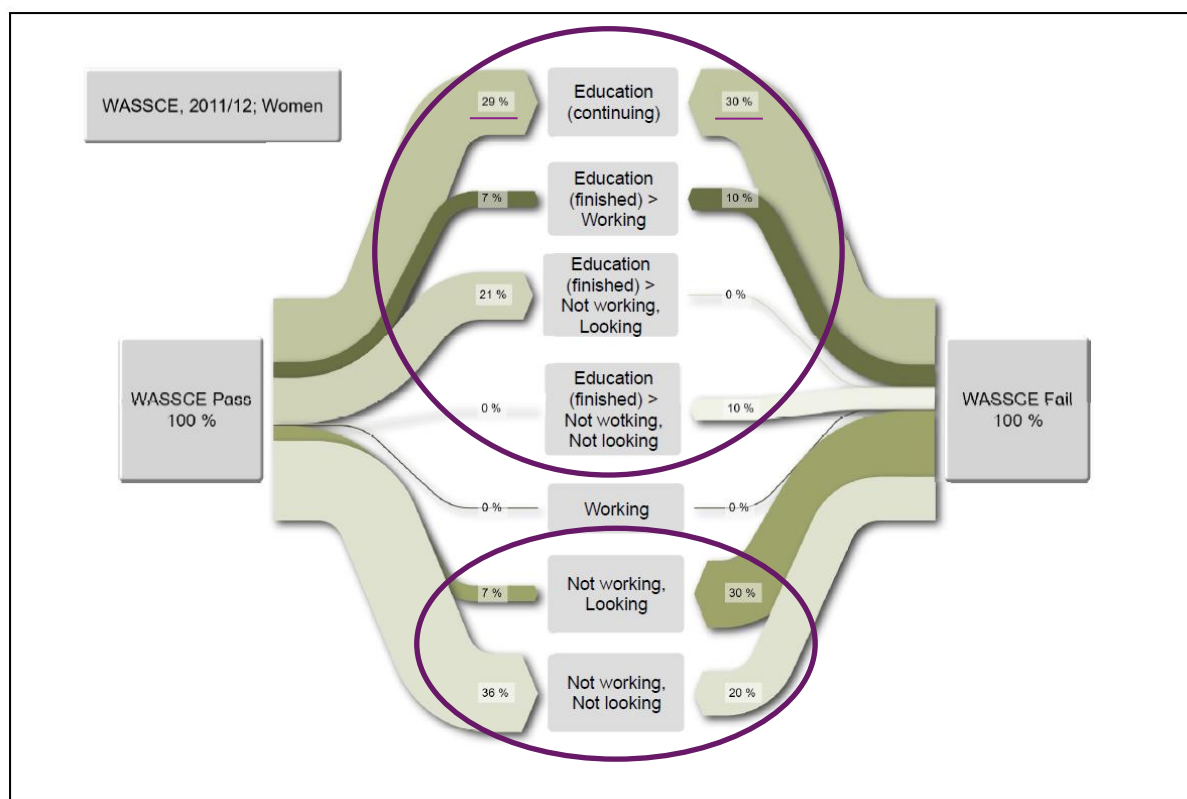
**Figure 8: WASSCE, 2011/12; Men**



**Notes:**

- Those who passed were more than twice as likely to continue in education
- Those who passed and did not continue education, and who are not working, **are much more likely to be looking for work**

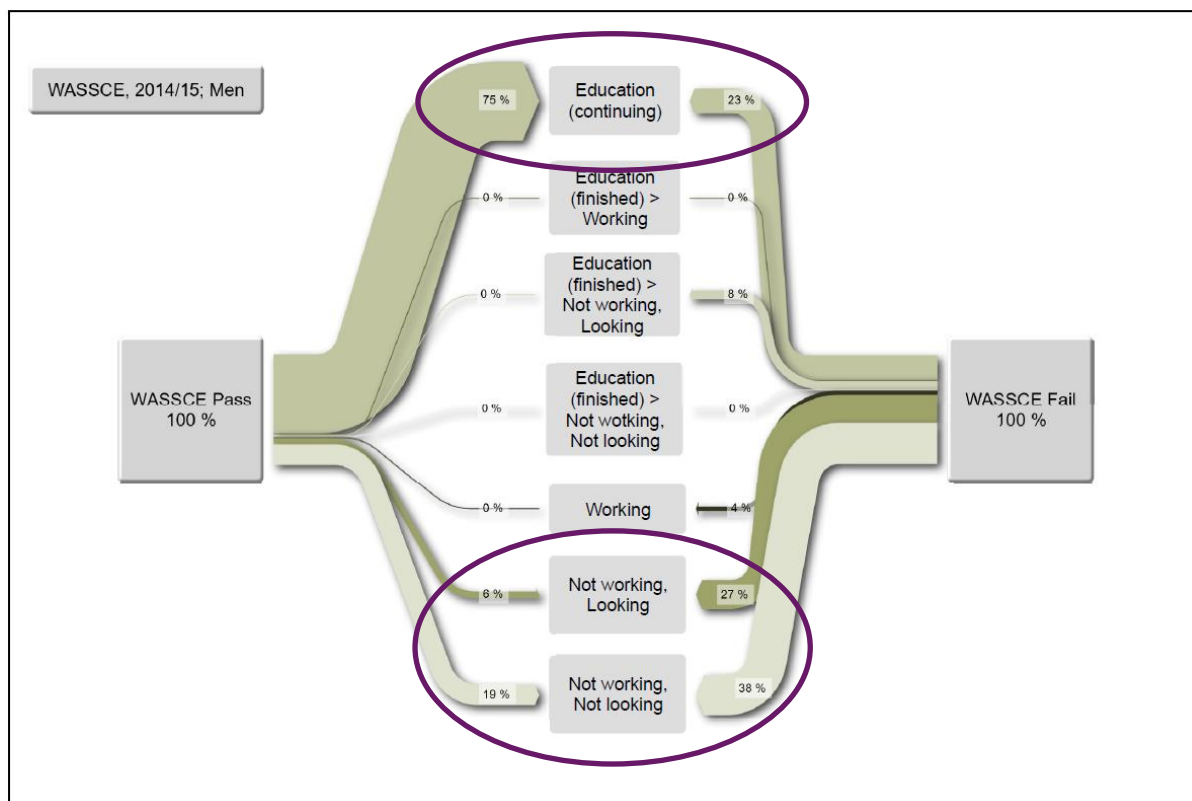
**Figure 9: WASSCE, 2011/12; Women**



**Notes:**

- While exam results do not change the percent currently in education, when those who have already finished their post-exam education are brought in, those who passed were somewhat more likely to continue education
- Among those who did not continue in education and are not working – compared to those who passed the exam, a much greater proportion of those who failed the exam are looking for work
- **Compared to men**, a much greater proportion of women who passed and did not continue their education and are not working, **are not looking for work**

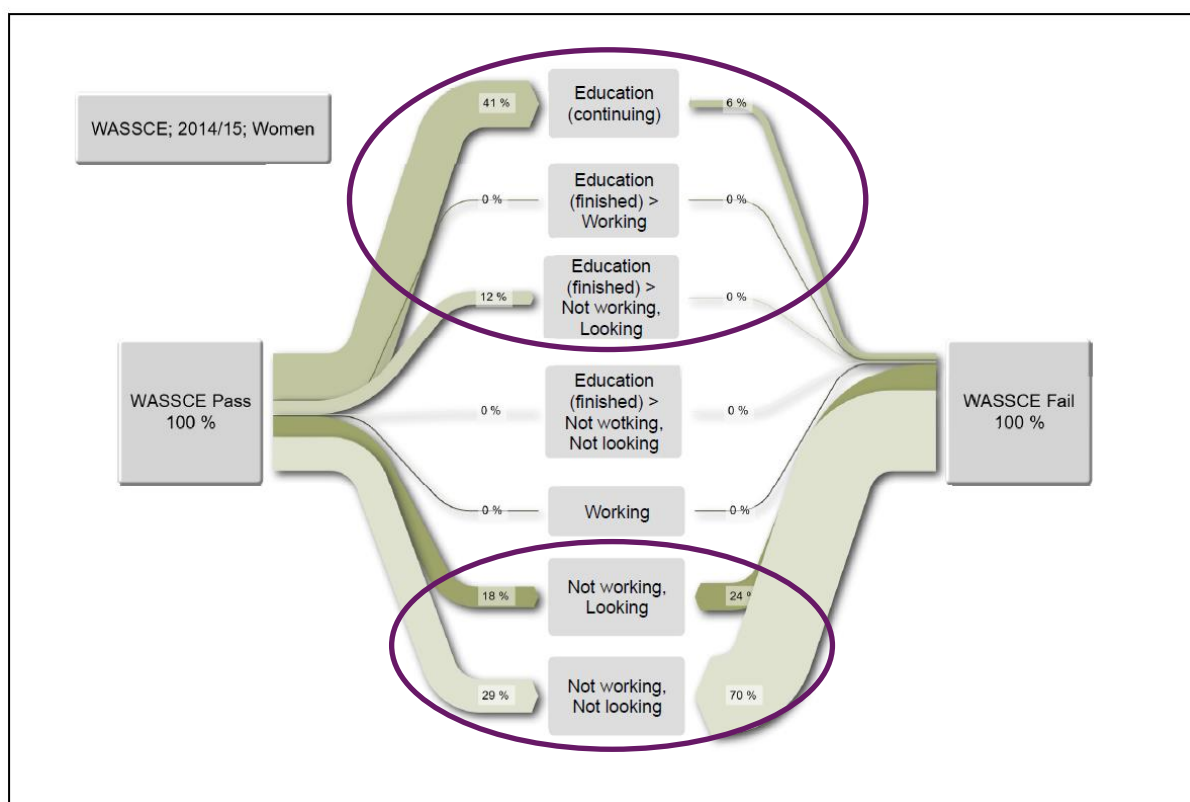
**Figure 10: WASSCE, 2014/15; Men**



**Notes:**

- Those who **passed** are **three times more nearly likely to continue education**
- Among those who did not continue in education and are not working – compared to those who passed the exam, **a greater proportion of those who failed are not looking for work**

**Figure 11: WASSCE, 2014/15; Women**



**Notes:**

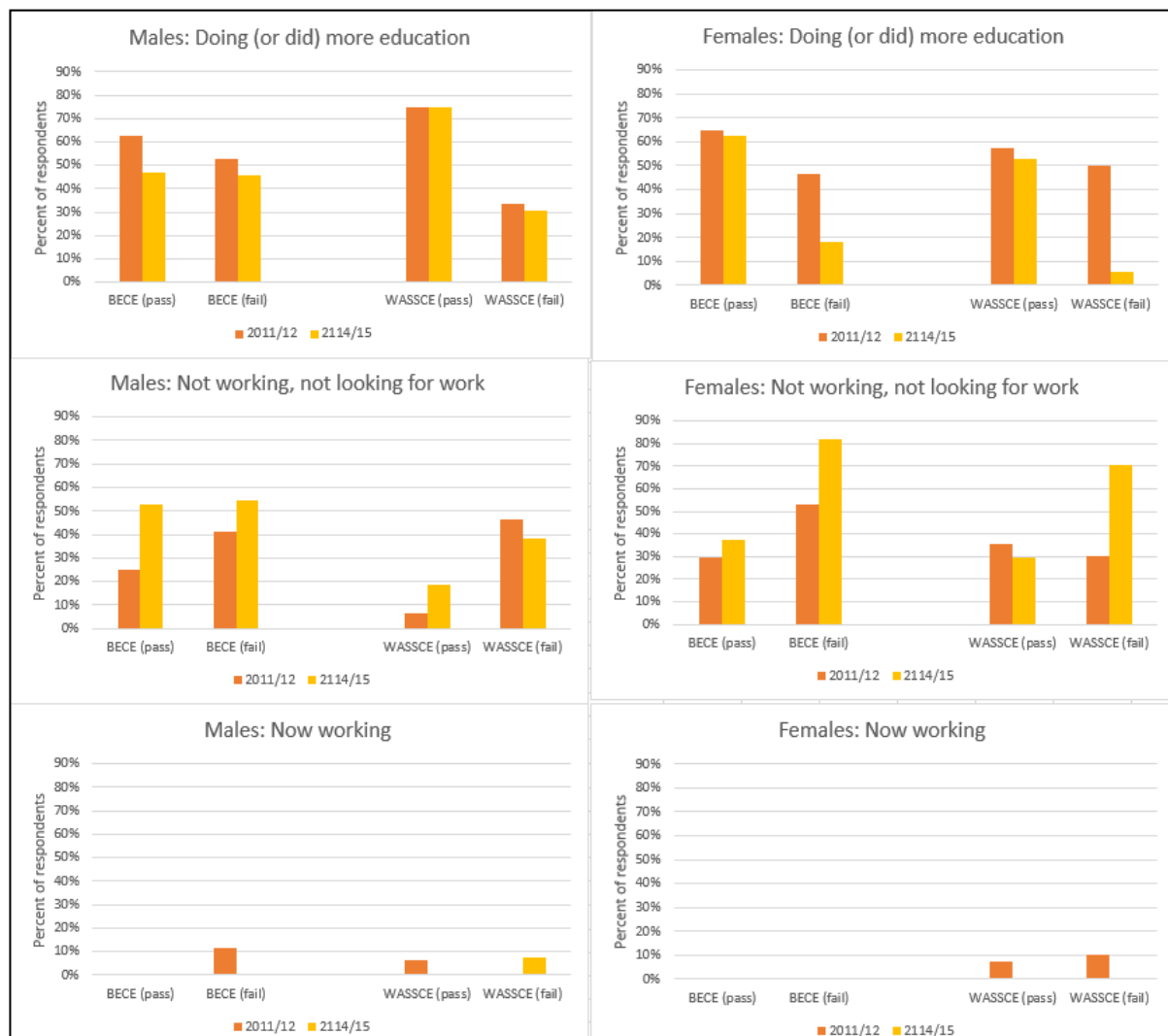
- Those who **passed** were **nine times more likely to continue education**
- Among those who did not continue in education and are not working – compared to those who passed the exam, **a much greater proportion of those who failed are not looking for work**. What are they doing?
- **Compared to men**, regardless of exam results, a smaller proportion of women continue education
- **Compared to men**, women who failed the exam and are not working, **are much more likely to not be looking for work**

**Table 7: Summary of findings across exams, cohorts and gender**

Exam	Cohort	Males	Females
BECE	11/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam results do not change the percent continuing in education</li> <li>Among the “school leavers”, exam results do not change the percent not working; <b>but half of those who passed are looking for work, compared to none of those who failed</b></li> <li><i>Did those who failed the exam, and are not working or looking for work, previously try to get work? Have they effectively withdrawn from the labour market?</i></li> <li><i>What are they actually doing?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those who passed were <b>somewhat more likely to continue education than those who failed</b></li> <li>Those who failed were <b>more likely to be not working, and not looking and not looking for work</b></li> <li><i>Are some of those females who are not working or looking for work at home raising young families?</i></li> <li><b>Compared to males</b>, roughly the same proportion of females who passed and failed continued in education</li> <li><b>Compared to males</b>, females who passed and females who failed <b>were more likely to be not working and not looking for work</b></li> </ul>
BECE	14/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exam result do not change the percent continuing in education</li> <li>Exam results do not affect whether those not working are looking for work</li> <li><i>What are the over 50% of respondents doing who are not in education, nor working, nor looking for work? What is their future in the labour market?</i></li> <li><i>Will some of those who passed eventually seek to continue their education?</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those who passed were <b>much more likely to continue in education</b></li> <li>Those who failed were <b>much more likely to be not working or looking for work. What are they doing?</b></li> <li><b>Compared to males</b>, females who passed the exam were <b>more likely to continue in education</b></li> <li><b>Compared to males</b>, females who failed the exam <b>were much less likely to continue in education</b></li> </ul>

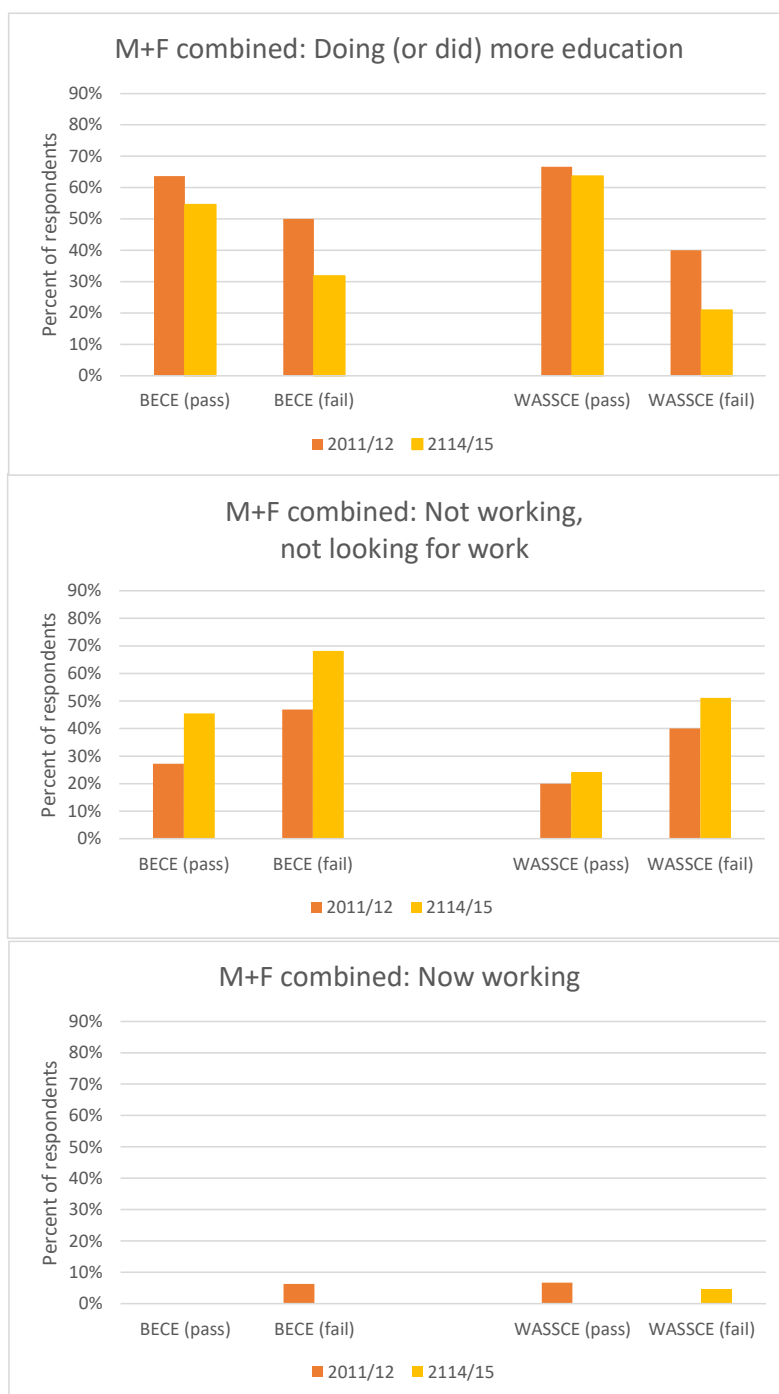
Exam	Cohort	Males	Females
WASSCE	11/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those who passed were <b>three times more nearly likely to continue education</b></li> <li>Among those who did not continue in education and are not working – <b>compared to those who passed the exam, a greater proportion of those who failed are not looking for work</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While exam results do not change the percent currently in education, when those who have already finished their post-exam education are brought in, <b>those who passed were somewhat more likely to continue in education</b></li> <li>Among those who did not continue in education and are not working – <b>compared to those who passed the exam, a much greater proportion of those who failed are looking for work</b></li> <li><u>Compared to males</u>, a much greater proportion of females who passed and did not continue their education and are not working, <b>are not looking for work</b></li> </ul>
WASSCE	14/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those who passed were <b>more than twice as likely to continue education</b></li> <li>Among those who did not continue in education and are not working, compared to those who passed, <b>a greater proportion of those who failed the exam are not looking for work</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those who passed were <b>nine times more likely to continue education</b></li> <li>Among those who did not continue in education and are not working – <b>compared to those who passed the exam, a much greater proportion of those who failed are not looking for work. What are they doing?</b></li> <li><u>Compared to males</u>, regardless of exam results, <b>a smaller proportion of females continued in education</b></li> <li><u>Compared to males</u>, females who failed the exam and are not working, <b>are much more likely to not be looking for work</b></li> </ul>

**Figure 12: Current activities of respondents by examination results and gender**



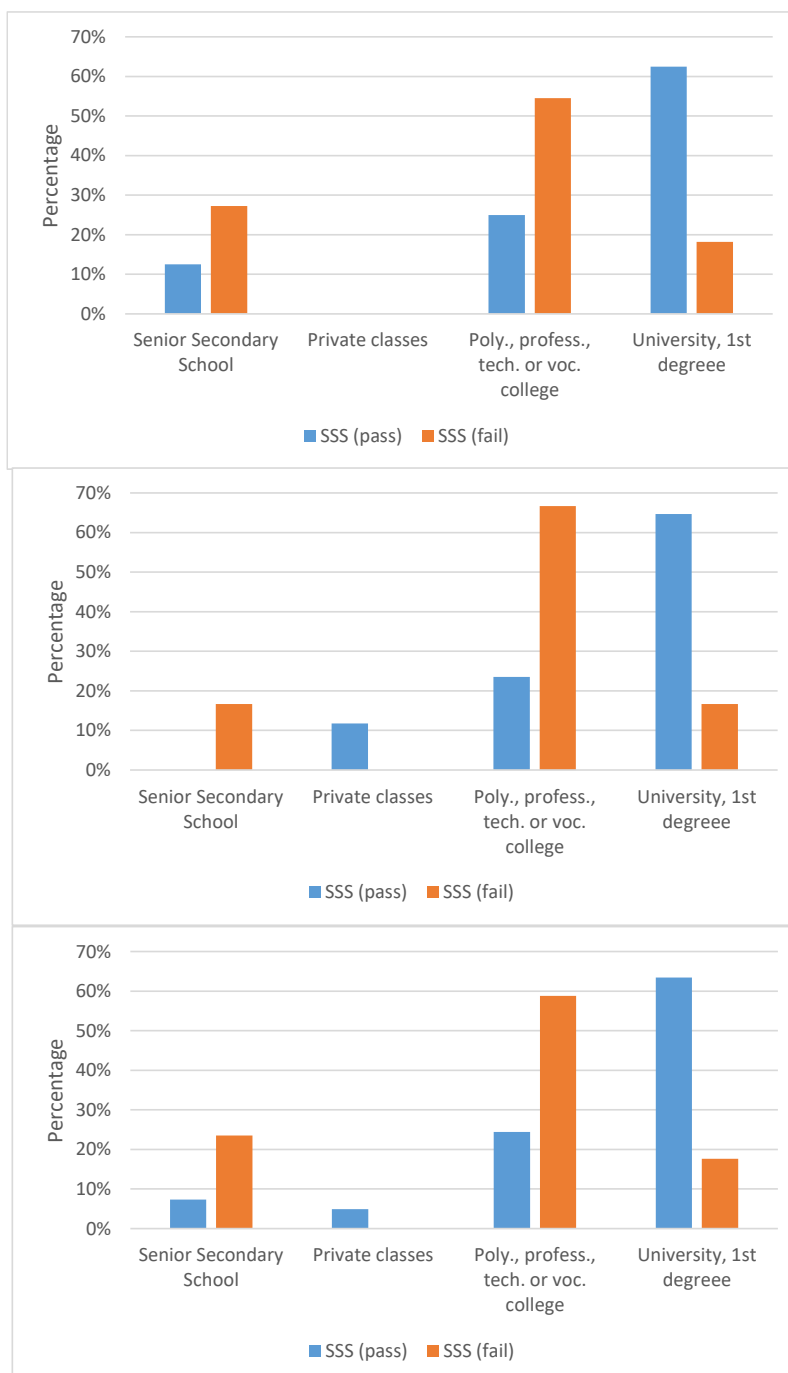


**Figure 13: Current activities of respondents by examination results**



**Figure 14: Post-SSS educational activities by exam result**

(NB: top figure is men; middle figure is women; bottom figure is men and women combined)



**Table 8: Percentage who agree formal education prepared well for job**

**(Strongly agree + Agree)**

Country	Males	Females	Combined
Ahmadiyya Muslim Second. School	27%	17%	22%
Government Rokel Second. School	88%	83%	86%

**Source:** Scoping study

**Table 9: Suggested educational improvement to better prepare for work**

Potential improvement	Ahmadiyya Muslim Second. School	Government Rokel Second. School
Improve quality of teaching	72%	62%
More emphasis on basic skills	36%	90%
Make it more practical	18%	31%
No change needed	16%	0%
More emphasis on communication and interpersonal skills	8%	34%
Pay teachers more / on time	2%	4%
Percent of cases		

**Source:** Scoping study

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