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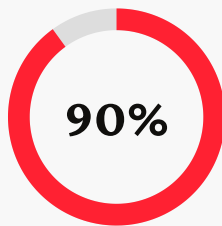


**Youth Excel**  
Our Knowledge, Leading Change

# How can we Combat Youth Unemployment in Kisumu, Kenya?

KNBS (2019) indicates that the population of Kisumu is close to 1.15 million. **Youth comprise approximately 60% of the population**, and out of this, **41% of the youth remain unemployed**, despite having completed the free and mandatory primary school education, secondary education, and a number up to tertiary education. The situation is exacerbated by more and more youth who are released into the job market annually from institutions of higher learning, with between 15,000–20,000 graduates being churned annually into the limited job market, and the absorption rate remaining seemingly stagnant. Even with alternatives to employment such as government opportunities including Ajira Digital trainings, the National Youth Service, and Kazi Mtaani youth remain functionally idle, resorting to menial jobs and business for survival. This research sought to identify how youth are accessing job opportunities and factors driving the high unemployment rates in Kisumu specifically, to use the findings from our research to inform strategies to combat unemployment.

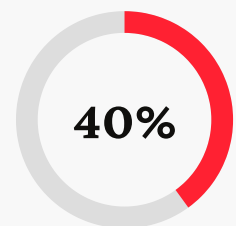
## Key Findings



**Government and Private sector interventions for job opportunities for youth are well known:** over 90% of youth knew about or knew someone who had benefited from government/private sector opportunities. KYEOP, NITA, and Ajira were the most widely known opportunities, though Safaricom's BYOB was also highlighted. Approximately 50% of youth respondents had benefited from such interventions. However, close to 33% of youth mentioned needing connections to access these opportunities

**Dissatisfaction about Government Actions:** despite government efforts, 40% of graduate respondents do not feel the government is doing enough to provide a way forward after school. Attributed to this response is the widespread requirement to pay a bribe to get a job, and open nepotism

*"[Public Service] ...the process of getting opportunity in those areas is burdened by bribes"*



## Barriers Youth Face in Getting Employment

**Corruption and political biases in the selection process:** close to 50% of the respondent graduates talked about their encounters with extensive corruption in the form of unfairness, bad governance, and tribalism in their search for jobs and opportunities.

*"...I was asked to produce KSH. 200,000 in order to land the job, and that I would recover that from the lucrative salary offered. I did not have the money, and I did not have a quick plan to get it. I lost the opportunity to get the job, and it was given to someone else who held a community fundraiser to get the money..."*



**Sexual demands by some employers:** 17% of the female respondents from the online surveys highlighted that they were regularly asked for sexual favors in order to get jobs after interviews, or in order to keep some jobs or attain promotions

**Lack of confidence during job search:** approximately 1 in 4 of the fresh graduates interviewed admitted to lacking confidence in seeking employment opportunities

**Taught skills via higher learning curriculum not producing work-relevant competence:** 36% of youth mentioned this as a barrier to employment, with employers mentioning that the tertiary curriculum needs to be tailored to hone identified skills, abilities and interests that may become opportunities for self-sustenance in the future. 35% of youth said their courses are not relevant to market opportunities available, and so have a steep learning curve to catch up in the jobs available in a field they are not experienced in.

## Recommendations

- The devolved governments need to **develop localized policies against corruption and sexual offenses against job seekers in the public sector with harsh punitive measures to violators of the same.** Toll-free numbers to report such offenses should also be put in place for Kisumu county.
- The County Government of Kisumu needs to **put mechanisms to strengthen partnerships and collaborations with the development and private sectors that will enhance youth employability and readiness** e.g., develop a database that combines the available opportunities for graduates and job seekers to take up, including a job matching database which highlights the competencies of the youth with regards to the jobs.
- The County Government of Kisumu should also **develop a two-way (open source) feedback mechanism with regards to the government opportunities.** The feedback will need to be managed by an independent body that can help the CGK adapt opportunities based on feedback from beneficiaries.

**Methodology:** this product is the result of a mixed methods research, conducted by Steve Wonder and Nelson Onyimbi, that involved 147 participants from Kisumu Kenya. The research respondents comprised youth between the ages of 22-35 from Kondele & Railways wards of Kisumu Central sub-county. The data was collected through the following mechanisms:

- 95 Surveys
- Focus Group Discussions with 32 participants
- 20 Key Informant Interviews



**Steve Wonder / Nelson Onyimbi**  
Kisumu, Kenya



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