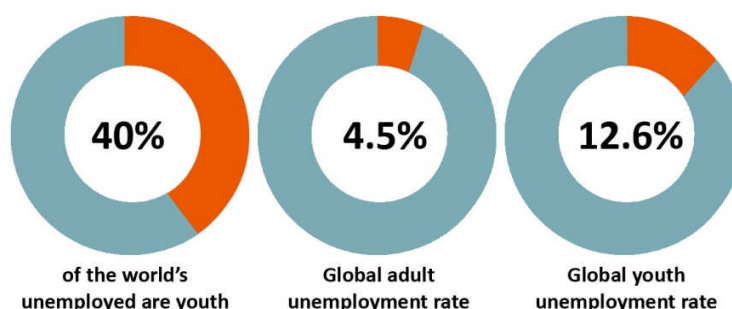


## Mentioning the Family in the Sustainable Development Goals

### 7. Youth Unemployment

**Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.**

#### Youth unemployment



SOURCE: World Economic Forum

Globally, many societies are unable to integrate young people into work and family life. Young people have been hit harder by unemployment than any other age group. The global unemployment rate among 15- to 24-year-olds is estimated at 12.6% in 2013, with 73 million people jobless worldwide, according to the International Labour Organization (2011). Levels of informal employment among young people are soaring and youth are finding it ever more difficult to find jobs that match their skills and education. Unless we equip youth with the education and workforce skills they need to succeed, we are in danger of leaving millions of young people who we need for economic growth on the sidelines.

Why is Youth Unemployment a Global Concern? These trends are worrisome for several reasons, three of which are mentioned here. First, youth continue to live with their parents beyond the age of emancipation that was the norm in previous generations. Because young people depend on their parents and grandparents for a longer period of time, we have gone from an 'empty-nest syndrome' to 'full-nest syndrome'. (International Labour Office, 2010).

Second, men and women tend to wait until they get consolidated into the labour market before starting a family, which has contributed to the increase of the age at first birth and the decrease in the number of children compared to previous generations. This is due to a lack of employment opportunities, but also because the labor market is designed for men, without considering the needs of women who want to become mothers (International Labour Office, 2010). Third, lower employment and fertility rates are occurring alongside increases in life expectancy, which means fewer workers are available to support the social insurance of the growing number of elders (OCDE, 2011). Third, this can trigger intergenerational poverty and social exclusion, which can contribute to a downward cycle of violence, delinquency, addiction, health problems, etc. (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011; International Labour Office, 2010).

Why are Families Central to Promoting Youth Employment and a Sustainable Economy? Families are not mere units of consumption, but are the contributor most responsible for the development of human capital (Longman, 2004). In the midst of a global economic transformation, every nation's competitiveness depends on its human capital, specifically the education and social skills of its labor force (Reynolds & Temple, 2005). Human capital in the new knowledge-based economies requires cognitive (hard) and noncognitive (soft) skills. These skills are shaped largely by socialization that occurs early in family life and in preschool programs (Heckman, 2006). Nobel Prize Laureate James Heckman (2006) compared a number of policy options and concluded that investing in disadvantaged young children is a "rare" public initiative that "promotes productivity in the economy and society at large" (p. 1,902). Based on U.S. estimates, Bartik (2006) estimated that universal preschool participation will add over 3 million jobs to the economy, almost \$300 billion to annual earnings, over \$200 billion to annual government tax revenues, and almost \$1 trillion to the nation's Gross Domestic Product over the next 7 decades (Bartik, 2006).

Researchers studied the European Union's (EU) adoption of the 1992 Recommendation on Childcare (Bleijenbergh, Bussemaker, & de Bruijn, 2006). The authors concluded that the main justification for European involvement in child care appeared to be economic—the need for women's labor force participation to keep social insurance programs affordable in the context of an aging society.

Social scientists have examined whether these government investments in families pay off using data from seven countries. When public support for preschool education increased, children's math and science achievement rose, with the largest advantages for those children who were the most disadvantaged (Waldfogel, 2010). Also, when parents have access to high-quality and affordable child care, they are able to work more or pursue education, improve their productivity, and miss less work (Bartik, 2011). In a global economy that is rapidly changing and becoming ever more demanding of a competent labor force, public investments in early childhood education can be a policy lever for supplementing the private investments that families make in generating productive workers.

In addition to the contributions families make to human capital, building youth workforce skills also contributes to family life. For example, Career Academies in U.S. secondary schools collaborate with employers to provide career-based learning opportunities. Compared to their peers not involved in the programs, young men enrolled in Career Academies were more likely to be married, to be custodial parents, and to be living independently with their children (Kemple & Wilner, 2008).

This information is adapted with permission from Karen Bogenschneider's book, 'Family Policy Matters: How Policymaking Affects Families and What Professionals Can Do' (3rd edition). New York, NY: Routledge Books, Taylor and Francis Group. (See Chapter 8 of the book for a more complete discussion).

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