# DEGREES WITHOUT JOBS: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN A DIGITAL NIGERIA

**"A degree no longer guarantees a job**", this is the reality in Nigeria. Every year, Nigeria produces university graduates. Yet in 2023, the number of unemployed graduates continues to increase across all regions. And in a country where 38.9% of the population lives in poverty, the stakes couldn't be higher.
**This analysis shows that what we're training students for doesn't match the jobs that exist because vacancies remain open in roles that power today's digital economy.**
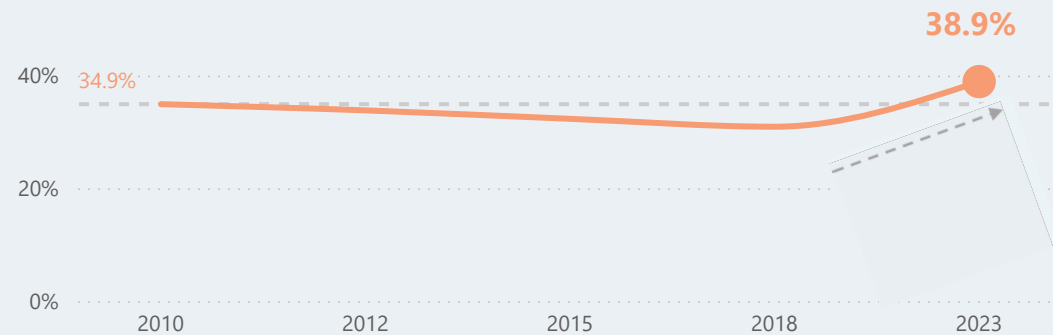
## Poverty in 2023 now worse than 2010 with Poverty Rate climbing to 38.9%

*National Poverty Rate*



34.9%

**38.9%**

40%

20%

0%

2010    2012    2015    2018    2023

## *"Unemployment is a major factor contributing to poverty in Nigeria."*

"When people are unemployed, their source of livelihood depletes over time. The cost of living becomes high and the standard of living goes down."     ~ Chioma  Ucha

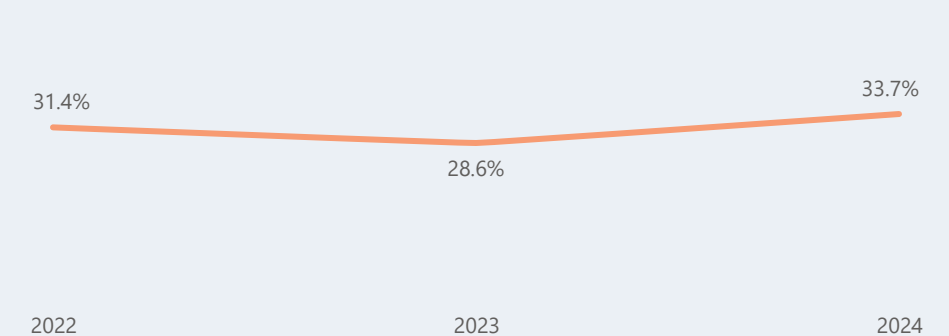## Higher Education participation has been on the rise

*Gross Enrolment Ratio for Tertiary Education*



10

5

0

2000    2010    2020
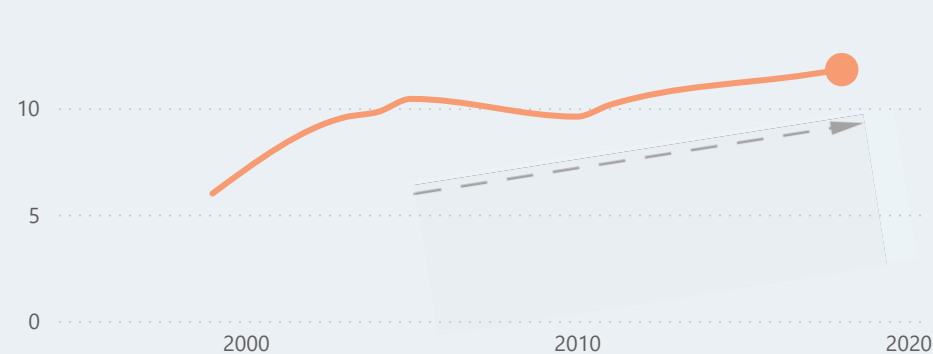
## Yet, many graduates in Nigeria are Unemployed

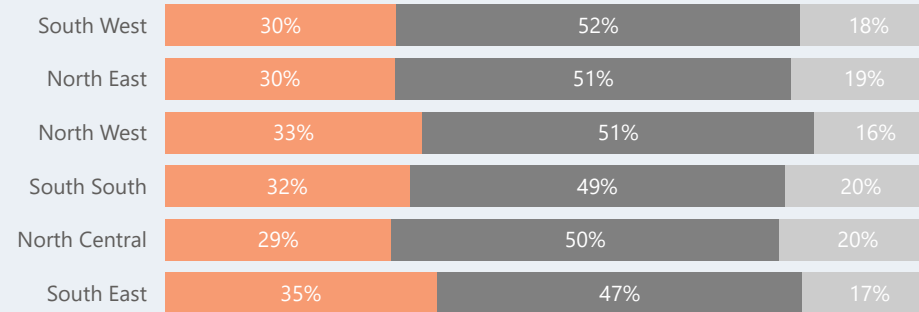*Unemployed Rate*



31.4%

33.7%

28.6%

2022    2023    2024

# SKILLS ACQUIRED BUT STILL UNDERVALUED: HOW SERIOUS IS UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA?

## South East faces highest unemployment rate
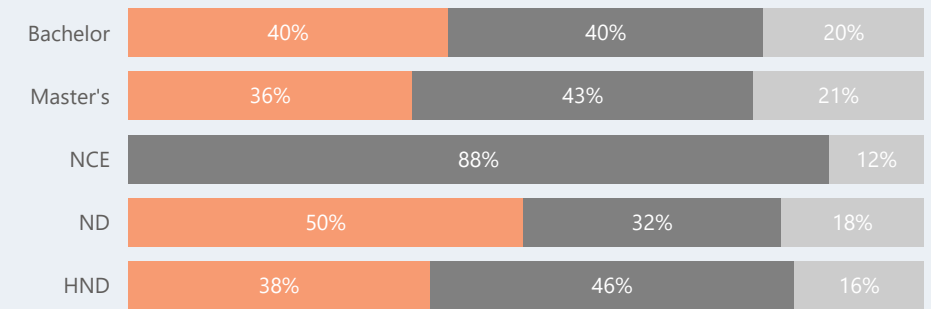
*Graduates by Region and Pay Distribution*

● Unemployed ● Underpaid ● Well-Compensated

| Region | Unemployed | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|---|
| South West | 30% | 52% | 18% |
| North East | 30% | 51% | 19% |
| North West | 33% | 51% | 16% |
| South South | 32% | 49% | 20% |
| North Central | 29% | 50% | 20% |
| South East | 35% | 47% | 17% |

## ND holders face the harshest outcomes, at 50% unemployment rate

*Graduates by Education Level and Pay Distribution*

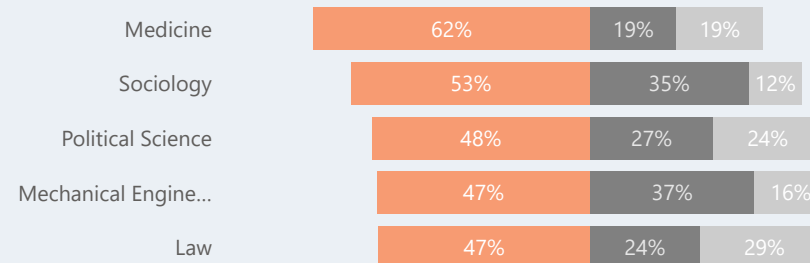● Unemployed ● Underpaid ● Well-Compensated

| Education Level | Unemployed | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bachelor | 40% | 40% | 20% |
| Master's | 36% | 43% | 21% |
| NCE | | 88% | 12% |
| ND | 50% | 32% | 18% |
| HND | 38% | 46% | 16% |

## Medicine leads in unemployment rate while Mass Communication ranks lowest

Top 5 | Bottom 5
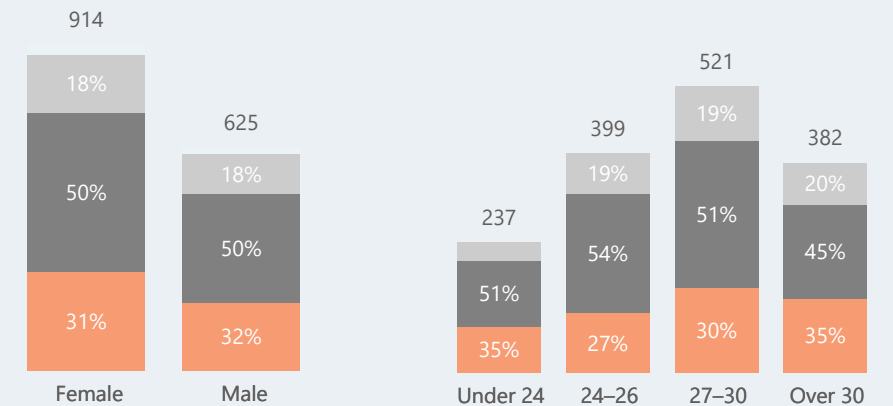
*Unemployed, Underpaid and Well-Compensated by Course*

● Unemployed ● Underpaid ● Well-Compensated

| Course | Unemployed | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|---|
| Medicine | 62% | 19% | 19% |
| Sociology | 53% | 35% | 12% |
| Political Science | 48% | 27% | 24% |
| Mechanical Engine… | 47% | 37% | 16% |
| Law | 47% | 24% | 29% |

## Females and graduates in 27-30 age group are most unemployed

*Demography by Pay Distribution*

● Unemployed ● Underpaid ● Well-Compensated

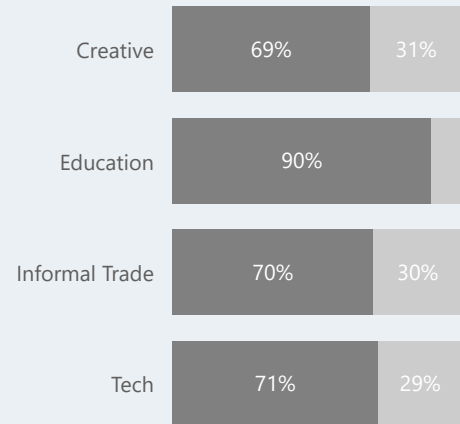| Demography | Total | Unemployed | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 914 | 31% | 50% | 18% |
| Male | 625 | 32% | 50% | 18% |
| Under 24 | 237 | 35% | 51% | |
| 24–26 | 399 | 27% | 54% | 19% |
| 27–30 | 521 | 30% | 51% | 19% |
| Over 30 | 382 | 35% | 45% | 20% |

# DIGITAL & VOCATIONAL SKILLS: THE WAY FORWARD

Only **12%** of graduates work in their field of study (all are NCE graduates currently employed as teachers)
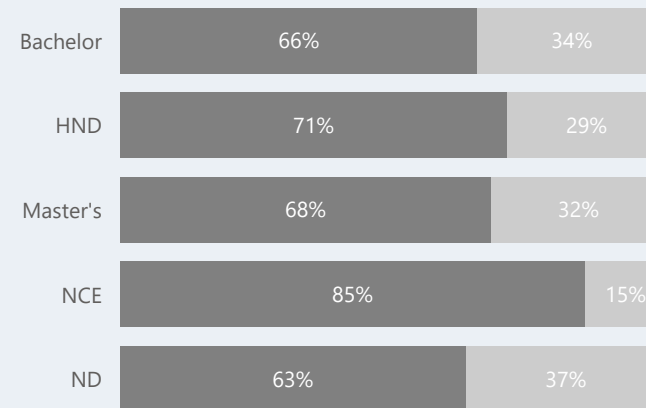
Although **44%** have vocational skills, none is **unemployed**

The same for those with digital skills

**22%** have digital skills, none is **unemployed**

*Applicant by Employment Sector*

● Underpaid  ● Well-Compensated

| Sector | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|
| Creative | 69% | 31% |
| Education | 90% | |
| Informal Trade | 70% | 30% |
| Tech | 71% | 29% |

*Vocational Graduates by Education Level and Pay Distribution*

● Underpaid  ● Well-Compensated

| Level | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|
| Bachelor | 66% | 34% |
| HND | 71% | 29% |
| Master's | 68% | 32% |
| NCE | 85% | 15% |
| ND | 63% | 37% |

*Digital Graduates by Education Level and Pay Distribution*

● Underpaid  ● Well-Compensated

| Level | Underpaid | Well-Compensated |
|---|---|---|
| Bachelor | 64% | 36% |
| HND | 79% | 21% |
| Master's | 64% | 36% |
| NCE | 83% | 17% |
| ND | 77% | 23% |
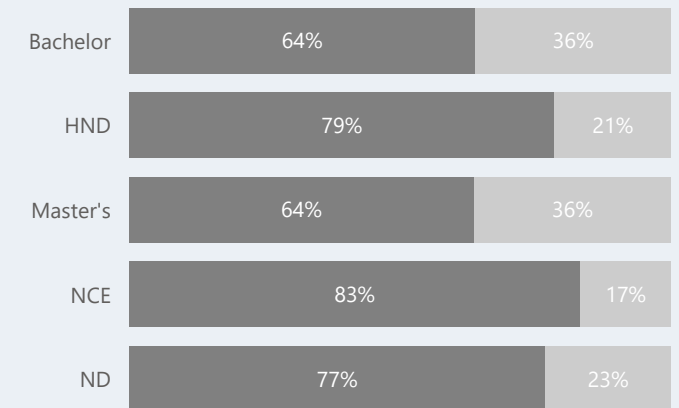
## Recommendations

- **Mandate practical internships** before final year graduation in all public institutions.
- **Partner with digital employers** to co-design curricula for high-demand fields.
- **Fund vocational incubation programs** where graduates with practical skills get startup grants and mentoring.
- **Create university job matching dashboards**, connected to local and and national employer needs.
- **Build local remote work hubs** with internet, power, and mentorship support in underserved LGAs.