

These Title¹

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Abstract

This paper uses a novel longitudinal dataset of 752 youth living in Cotonou, Benin, collected over 2 years, to analyze the school-to-work transition in a highly informal, urban environment. We conduct five waves of in-person and mobile phone surveys over three years with youth aged 20-29. We find evidence of queuing for wage jobs: relatively well-educated youth endure long periods of inactivity waiting for wage employment. Even wage jobs are informal and low-paying, and almost none fulfill the ILO formality criteria. Quantifying the transition, we find that the average youth in our sample needs between 5 and 18 months to find their first employment after graduation and between 23 and 27 months to find steady employment. Transition propensities show that casual, but full-time work following a spell of inactivity is the most common path taken; it is more likely to occur directly after graduation for men than from women. Finally, we find that youth who have transitioned to the labor market experience more life satisfaction, though no effect is detected for particular types of transitions.

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Lost in Transition

Abstract

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1.1 Introduction