

# Sudan's Youth Bulge: Challenges, Opportunities, and Aspirations

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## Abstract

The Sudanese youth from both genders mounted a remarkably courageous uprising in December 2018 aimed at unseating the long-reigning regime of Gen Omer Al-Bashir, one of the most repressive regimes in Africa and the Arab world. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the role of economic and political factors that hindered the absorption of Sudanese youth into the developmental process. It also tries to understand the role of youth in the December Revolution and in shaping the political discourse, especially after the October 25, 2021, military procedures. Finally, it investigated the determinants of Sudanese youth's views on government, political parties and their aspiration and interest in public affairs before and after the revolution. A cross-section design was followed. The data on Sudanese youth, aged 18 – 35 years who were surveyed on the Arab Index were obtained from the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. A backward stepwise logistic regression model was employed for testing the hypotheses, with a probability value set at  $p < 0.20$ . Odds ratios were reported as effect size, marginal effects were computed, and the link-test was used for model specification. The majority of the surveyed Sudanese youth do not have political membership and do not trust political parties. Young people from families with good economic conditions were more likely to trust the government during and after Al-Inqaz regime. Adult youth aged 25 – 34 years and those who are unemployed were found to have increased odds of trusting the political parties after the revolution. Young people who are males, aged 25 - 34 years, and studied less than or secondary school and above have an increased likelihood to participate in public affairs during Al-Inqaz and after the revolution. Based on our analysis and international best practices of youth development policies and plans. The policy lessons to be considered include; the formulation of robust policies to integrate Sudanese youth into the economic system, the incorporation of young people in the planning of the national strategic vision, and catalyzing programs for young peoples' capacity building.

***JEL Classification:*** J01, J08, J11, P48

***Keywords:*** Youth Bulge, Political Economy, Labour Market, Job creation capacity, Demographic Trends, Sudan's December Revolution.

## ملخص

قام الشباب السوداني من كلا الجنسين بانتفاضة شجاعة وبشكل ملحوظ في ديسمبر 2018 بهدف الإطاحة بنظام الجنرال عمر البشير الذي حكم البلاد لفترة طويلة، وهو أحد الأنظمة الأكثر قمعا في أفريقيا والعالم العربي، ويهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف دور العوامل الاقتصادية والسياسية التي أعاققت استيعاب الشباب السوداني في العملية التنموية، كما يحاول البحث الخوض لفهم دور الشباب في ثورة ديسمبر وفي تشكيل الخطاب السياسي، خاصة بعد الإجراءات العسكرية في 25 أكتوبر 2021، وأخيرا، ينظر البحث في محددات آراء الشباب السوداني حول الحكومة والأحزاب السياسية وتطلعاتهم واهتمامهم بالشأن العام قبل الثورة وبعدها. ينظر البحث أيضاً في تصميم مقطع عرضي بناء على البيانات المتعلقة بالشباب السوداني ممن تتراوح أعمارهم بين 18 و35 عاماً والذين شملهم الاستطلاع على المؤشر العربي من المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات، وقد تم استخدام نموذج الانحدار اللوجستي التدريجي الخلفي لاختبار الفرضيات، مع تعيين قيمة احتمالية عند (0.20)، وقد تم دراسة نسب الاحتمالات كحجم التأثير، وحساب التأثيرات الهامشية، وتم استخدام اختبار الارتباط لمواصفات النموذج. وقع الاختيار على غالبية الشباب السوداني ممن شملهم الاستطلاع دون أن يكون لديهم عضوية سياسية ولا يثقون في الأحزاب السياسية. كان الشباب من الأسر ذات الظروف الاقتصادية الجيدة أكثر عرضة للثقة في الحكومة. وتبين أن الشباب الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 25 و34 عاماً والعاطلين عن العمل قد زادوا من احتمالات الثقة في الأحزاب السياسية بعد الثورة، ووقع الاختيار على الذكور في المرحلة العمرية بين 25 و34 عاماً، والذين انهوا الدراسة في المدارس الثانوية وما فوقها، ووجد لديهم احتمال متزايد للمشاركة في الشؤون العامة بعد الثورة. استناداً إلى تحليلنا وأفضل الممارسات الدولية لسياسات وخطط تنمية الشباب. وتشمل الدروس المستفادة من السياسات التي يتعين النظر فيها ما يلي: صياغة سياسات قوية لدمج الشباب السوداني في النظام الاقتصادي، وإدماج الشباب في تخطيط الرؤية الاستراتيجية الوطنية، وتحفيز برامج بناء قدرات الشباب.

## 1. Introduction

Young Sudanese men and women sparked a remarkably courageous uprising in December 2018 to unseat the long-reigning regime of General Omer Al-Bashir, whose regime was one of the most repressive in Africa and the Arab world. Despite untold suffering and hundreds of casualties, the youth led the “December Revolution,” as it is usually referred to in Sudan, and eventually managed to topple the regime. The iconic slogan of the Sudanese revolution, which has long been the great motivator behind the popular mobilization of the youth is “freedom, peace, and justice.” However, despite the initial success of the revolution and the creation of the transitional government, after the signing of the Constitutional Charter between the “Freedom and Change Coalition” and the leadership of the Sudan Armed Forces, the country experienced a setback after the coup of 25 October 2021. Nonetheless, youth uprisings persisted in order to reposition the country back to the constitutional path, where youth coordination committees and most political and civil society organizations called for the establishment of a pure civilian-led transitional regime without the involvement of the military.

The anomaly is that the *Inqaz* regime had a historical opportunity to benefit from the human capital (represented by the youth bulge) to achieve economic growth, as is the case of some East Asian countries (the Asian Tigers). However, the failure of the regime (represented in its rentierism and kleptocratic policies) prevented the employment of the emerging youth cohorts to achieve development. The regime imposed its control over the State and maximized the utility of the elites instead of youth, who represent the majority of the population. As a result, youth faced high poverty fueled by a high unemployment rate. Accordingly, youth were disappointed and had no trust in the regime’s institutions. Therefore, youth played a significant role in the uprising that led to the fall of Al-Bashir. The slogans raised by youth were key in addressing the collective action problem. The slogans divided the big problem of developmental failure into different problems that helped most of the affected citizens see how their participation was necessary for their own benefit. After the fall of Al-Bashir, the Constitutional Charter emphasized “strengthening the role of youth and the expansion of opportunities in all aspects, including economic opportunities.”<sup>3</sup> However, youth, especially those from Khartoum and conflict-afflicted areas, were dissatisfied with the transitional government’s achievement of its goals (Carter Center, 2021). This is unsurprising because the capacity of the country to create economic opportunities for youth was influenced by deep structural and institutional factors. These factors were a direct result of the rentierism and kleptocratic policies of *Inqaz*.

This paper analyzes the economic, political, and demographic factors behind the rise of Sudanese youth as the key players in the current revolutionary struggle; in other words, it discusses the economic and political vision of the Sudanese youth movement and the challenges and opportunities for fulfilling their economic and political aspirations in a future economy dominated

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<sup>3</sup> The constitutional Charter, Chapter 2, Article 8. See <https://moj.gov.sd/files/index/28>

by the emerging digital revolution. The digitech economic order is expected to open up wider horizons for high-productivity economies powered by a young and educated labor force, but it also poses serious dangers for lackluster economies that fail to build robust human capital and embrace digital technology under a stable and open political order. Therefore, the premium of achieving the required economic and political transitions is very high for the future of Sudanese youth.

Specifically, the paper analyzes the economic and political factors that contributed to the creation of impoverished youth cohorts, given that unemployment tremendously affected young people. Accounting for the fact that Sudan is at the beginning of the demographic dividend (World Bank, 2019a), assessing the structural and institutional factors that limited the job creation capacity will be key to understanding the failure of the Inqaz regime to turn the growing youth bulge into a boon for the economy. Therefore, this paper prioritizes four primary reasons behind the impoverished youth bulge: (1) the rentier economy and the lack of economic transformation; (2) poor governance and macroeconomic management; (3) the politicization of the labor market; and (4) violence and conflict, as well as their repercussions on the provision of youth-focused spending. The paper also analyzes the role of youth in the 2018/19 uprising as well as the slogans raised by the youth in addressing the collective action problem. Moreover, the paper uses micro-level data to investigate the role of socioeconomic factors on the frustration and distrust of youth in the regime's institutions. Finally, the paper covers some international experiences focusing on youth development in order to summarize the key lessons learned.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 covers Sudan's demography and the economics of the youth bulge. Section 3 addresses the roots of Sudan's impoverished youth bulge, and section 4 covers the role of youth in the 2018/19 uprising. Sections 5 and 6 cover youth's aspirations and views. Section 7 concludes.

## **2. Sudan's demography and the economics of the youth bulge**

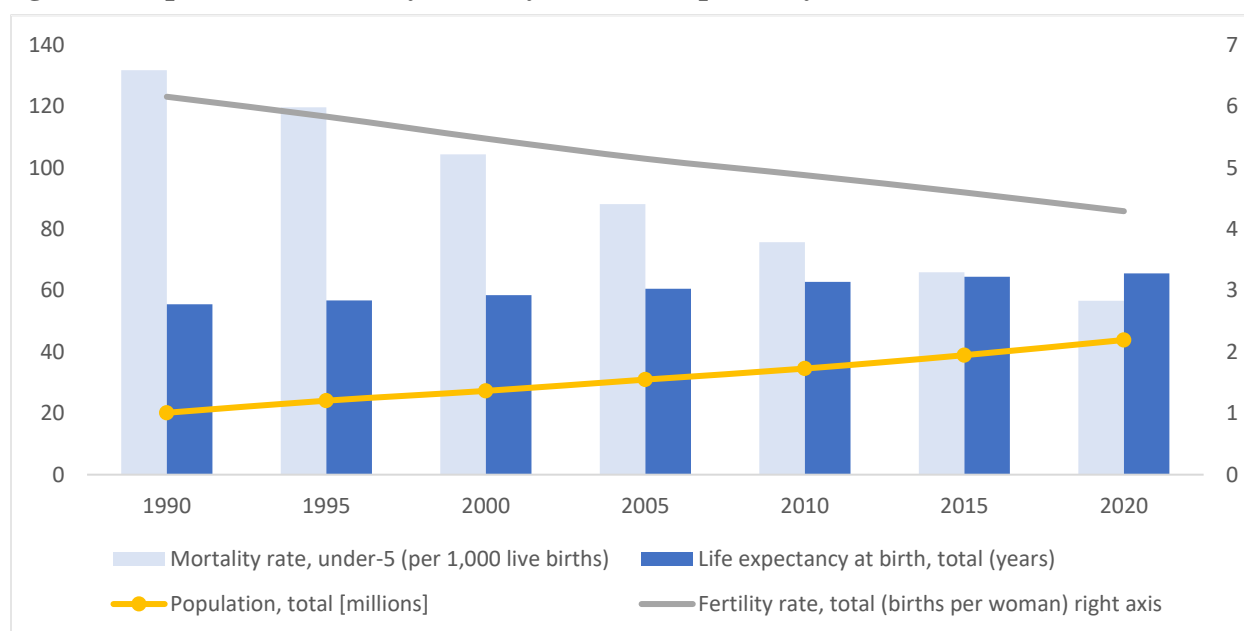
Like most Middle East and North African countries (MENA) as well as Sub-Saharan African countries (SSA), Sudan is a youthful country. Young people in Sudan between zero to 24 years of age account for more than 60 percent of the total population, while youth between 15 to 24 years of age account for just above 20 percent of the population. This is a slightly higher proportion than the percentage of the youth population in other low-income countries (LIC), less developed regions, Africa, and SSA.<sup>4</sup> According to the World Development Indicators (WDI), the average annual growth rate of the total population in Sudan during the period 1990-2020 was 2.6 percent, and the total population was estimated at 43.8 million in 2020. The increase of the young population (0-14 years of age) and youth (15-24 years of age) was a result of a decrease in the mortality rates for infants and children under five years old, as well as the high fertility rate.

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<sup>4</sup> See <https://population.un.org/wpp/dataquery/>

Although fertility rates in Sudan decreased from 6.1 births per woman in 1990 to 4.3 in 2020,<sup>5</sup> the fertility rate is still relatively high.<sup>6</sup> The high rate of fertility, the significant reduction in mortality rates, and the high youth cohort as a percentage of the total population all indicate that the country is at the beginning of the demographic dividend. Although the demographic dividend and the decrease of dependency ratio associated with the growing youth bulge might be a blessing and contribute to economic growth as is the case of some East Asian countries (Asian Tigers) and some European countries such as Ireland (Bloom and Williamson, 1998; Kelly and Schmidt, 2004; Bloom and Canning, 2008), it might also be a curse as is the case of most African and Middle Eastern countries, especially those affected by extreme political instability and civil wars (Urdal, 2006; Ginges, 2005; Flückiger and Ludwig, 2018). The crucial factor that determines which scenario is more likely to occur is the job creation capacity of the economy. If the labor market capacity is limited and cannot absorb the emerging youth labor supply, the large pool of unemployed youth that will ensue will be a major cause of social and political instability (Urdal, 2006).

**Figure 1. Population, mortality, fertility, and life expectancy**



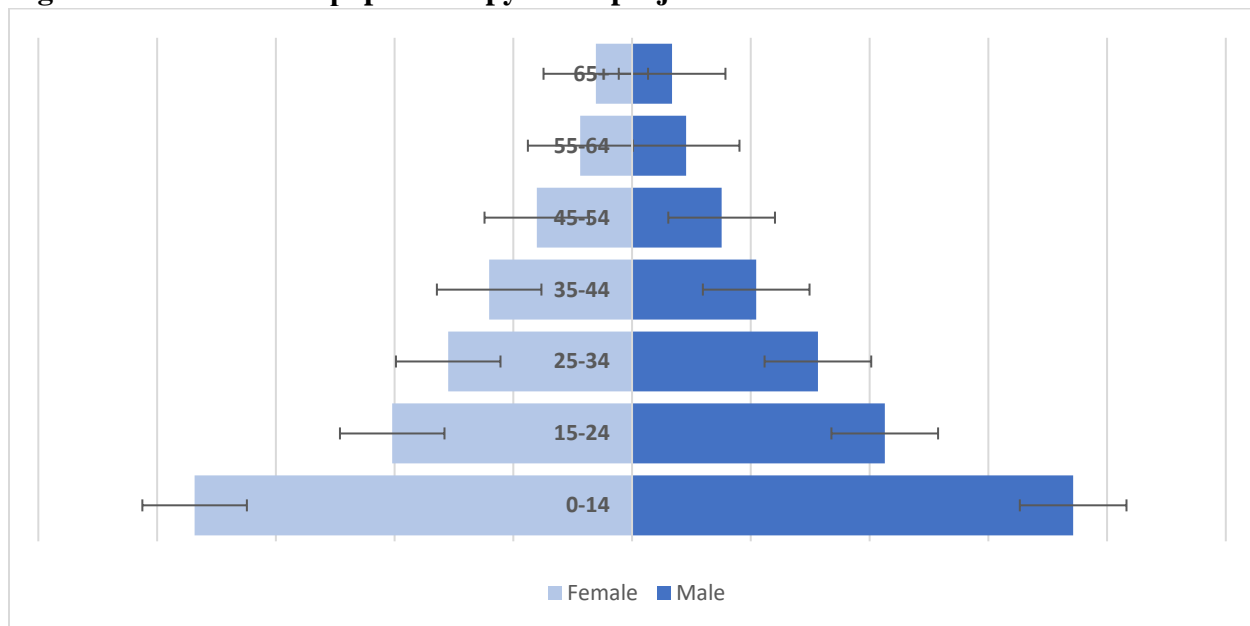
Source: World Bank/World Development Indicators.

<sup>5</sup> The data provided by the World Bank/World Development Indicators sources fertility rate from the UN Population Division based on the census reports and official publications from the Central Bureau of Statistics in Sudan, see <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?end=2020&locations=SD&start=2001>. However, it varies from the estimates based on the National Household Baseline Poverty Survey (NHBPS) 2014/15, as it indicates that the fertility rate in 2014 was 5.2 births per women (World Bank, 2019a), but the World Development Indicators estimate it at 4.7 during the same year.

<sup>6</sup> The fertility rate in Sudan is higher than the rate of low- and middle-income countries, which is 2.5 births per women, and higher than the rate of lower-middle-income countries, which is 2.7 birth per woman, and it is only 0.2 births per woman less than the rate in low-income countries.



**Figure 2. Sudan's 2020 population pyramid projections**



Source: Own calculations based on data from Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and 2020 report on population based on 2008 Census.

Based on projections by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2020), which are developed using the 5<sup>th</sup> Census 2008, there was a predicted minor variation in the age structure of the population at sub-national levels (Table 1 in the Appendix). However, one of the potential ramifications of conflicts, poor service delivery, and the shift of the rentier economy from oil to gold, is the increase of internal migration and displacement, particularly for youth. Thus, it varies the age structure of the population at the sub-national levels. According to the WDI, the age dependency ratio as a percentage of the total working age population was 76.9 in 2020, with 70.4 of young and 6.5 of old people. This indicates a higher burden caused by young dependents compared to adults. In 2014, the ratio of dependents to working-age individuals varied significantly between states, with two dependents out of five in the Northern State, Gezira, Red Sea, and Khartoum to one dependent out of two in South Kordofan and Blue Nile and Darfur (World Bank, 2019a). This indicates a high level of internal migration in the working-age population because of conflict. This also confirms what was noted by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2014) that internal migration and displacement had increased particularly for working-age youth, who are migrating to Khartoum followed by the Eastern and Central regions, thereby causing net losses of population in North and South Kordofan as well as West Darfur.

Although Sudan is endowed with considerable natural resources, Sudanese people, particularly youth, are severely poor. According to the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (2021), poverty has increased considerably from 46.5 percent in 2014 to 61.1 percent in 2019, with significant regional disparities. This poverty is driven by the high unemployment rates as well as the low wages, as

estimates done by the ILO (2014) show that one-third of employed persons live below the poverty line. Moreover, recent assessments suggest that the depth and spread of poverty are far more than the above estimates.<sup>7</sup> By adjusting the 2009 National Poverty Line (NPL), estimates show that the poverty headcount ratio for Sudan in 2019 was 55.3 percent, with Central Darfur and South Kordofan recording the highest poverty rates at 84.4 percent and 82.1 percent, respectively (Table 2 in the Appendix).

The developmental failure prevented the absorption of young people into quality employment opportunities and the enhancement of their well-being, which is key to achieving positive development outcomes. One of the primary stylized facts about the labor market in Sudan is that youth from both genders, especially young females in urban areas, face high unemployment rates, and a significant proportion of employed youth work in the informal sector (Suliman and Elbadawi, n.d.; Nour, 2011; ILO, 2014; Ebaidalla et al. 2018; World Bank, 2019; World Bank, 2021).

Sudan has a limited job creation capacity, which resulted in the significant underperformance of employment and labor participation indicators compared to its income and regional peers, such as lower-middle-income countries, SSA, as well as MENA (World Bank, 2019). The Underperformance of labor market indicators is significant for youth, as according to Nour (2011) and based on the Arab Labor Organization (2007) estimations of youth unemployment, youth unemployment in Sudan is among the highest in the world, as it is higher than the international world rate (2.9 percent), the Latin America and Pacific rate (2.6 percent), the South East Asia rate (2.5 percent), and the Arab rate (1.4 percent).

According to Suliman and Elbadawi (n.d.), the labor force participation of youth males between 15-24 in 1990 and 1996 was highly concentrated in the agricultural sector (40 percent and 50 percent, respectively). For the same youth category, inactivity and unemployment decreased from 20 percent in 1990 to almost 10 percent in 1996, while for youth females between 15-24, inactivity decreased from 80 percent to 60 percent during the same period, and most of the employed females were absorbed by the agricultural sector (Figure 3). In 2009 and 2011, most young males between 15-24 were inactive and unemployed (35 percent and 38 percent, respectively), and the services sector was the main employer for this category (Figure 4).

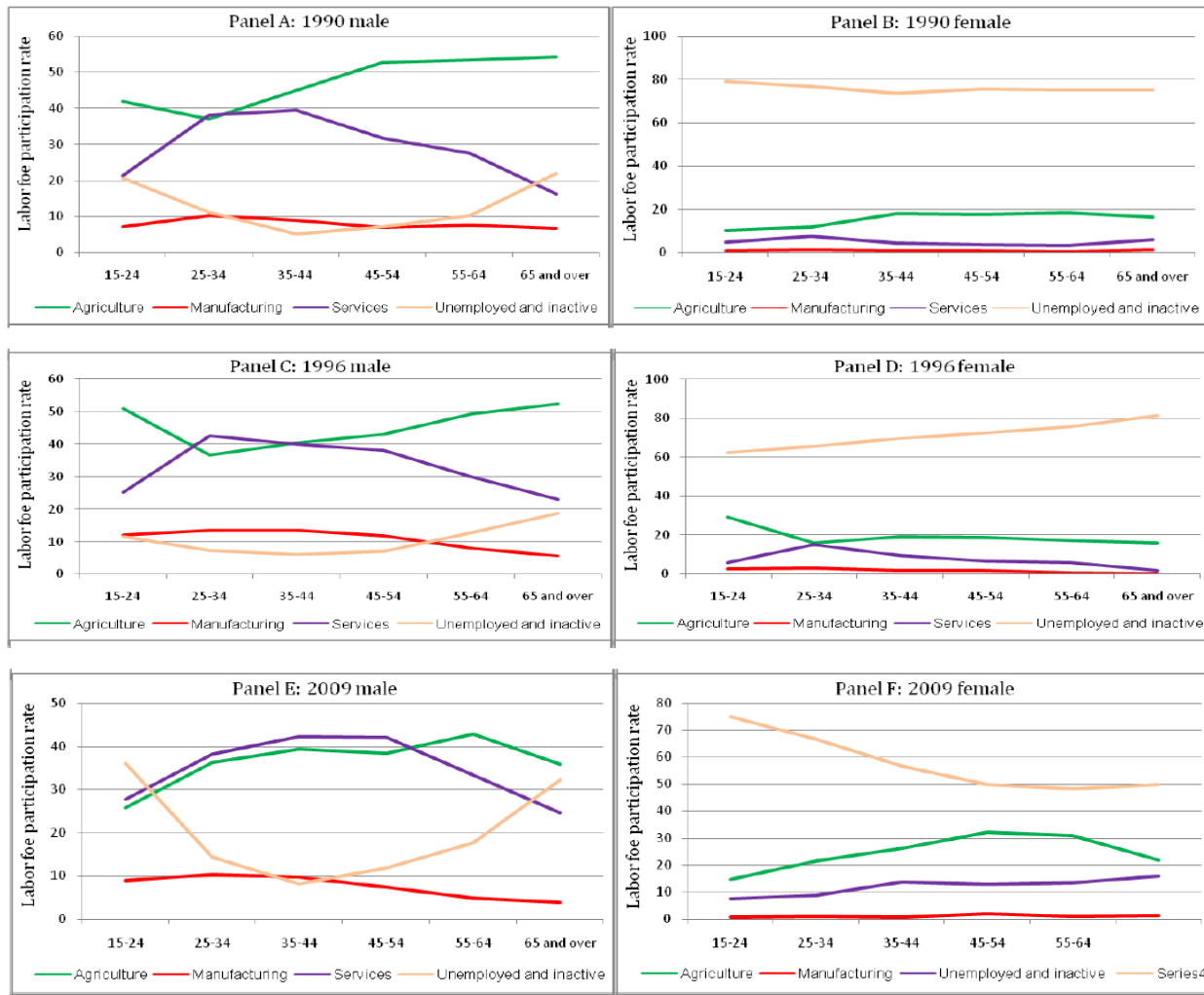
At the national level and according to the 2011 Sudan Labor Force Survey (SLFS), the unemployment rate increased to 18.8 percent in 2011 compared to 16.5 percent in 1990. However, it doubled in absolute terms from 848,836 to 1,750,000, reflecting the decrease in labor force

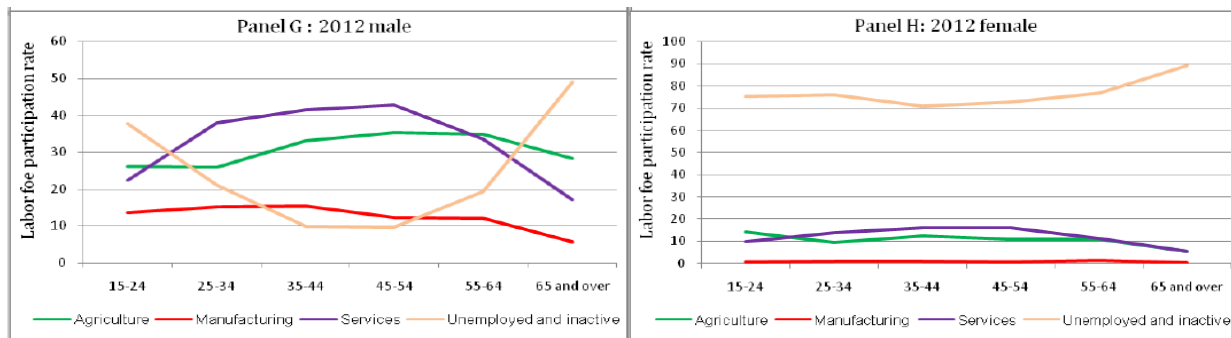
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<sup>7</sup> During the transitional government's negotiations with the armed groups to sign the Juba Peace Agreement, the Ministry of Finance and Economic planning in Sudan, under the leadership of Minister Dr. Ibrahim Elbadawi, estimated the poverty headcount ratio for the states to after adjusting the NPL in order to estimate the required investments at the state level to catch up with the required growth rates to alleviate the poverty by half in 2030.

participation, which amounted to 46.8 percent in 2011. Youth (15-24 years old) unemployment rates in 2011 were much higher compared to adult (25 years of age and older) unemployment rates at 33.8 percent and 14.5 percent, respectively, with a significant gender disparity, as the unemployment rate for young males was 28.6 percent and the unemployment rate for young females was 44.8 percent (SLFS, 2011). The unemployment rate slightly decreased in 2014 compared to 2009 (Figure 3). Nevertheless, unemployment among youth continued to increase, especially in urban areas, and it was above the average of the total unemployment rate.

**Figure 3. Labor force participation rates by age, gender, and sector**



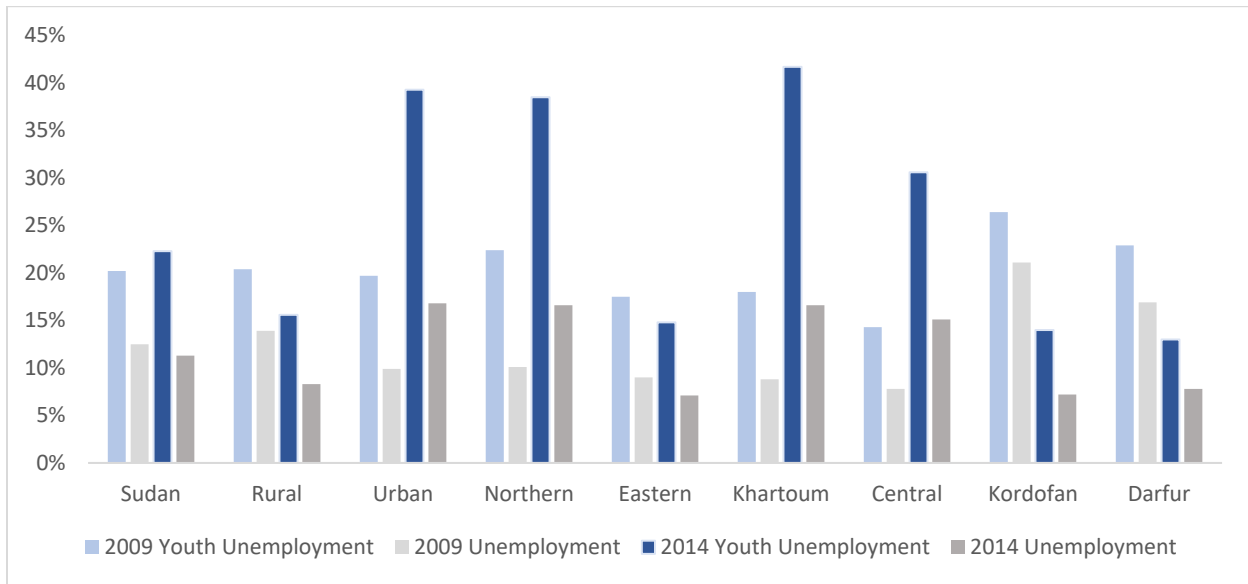


Source: Suliman and El Badawi, (n.d.) based on the Household Labor Survey 1990, 1996, and 2011, and the NBHS 2009.

In 2011, the agricultural sector was the top absorber of employment at 44.6 percent, of which more than 60 percent are females, followed by the services sector, which amounted to 40.1 percent of employment. The industrial sector only recruited 15.3 percent of employment with significant male domination (SLFS, 2011). Nonetheless, a minor transition of labor from the agricultural to services sector was observed, as the employment of the service, industrial, and agricultural sectors was 47 percent, nine percent, and 44 percent, respectively (Figure 4).

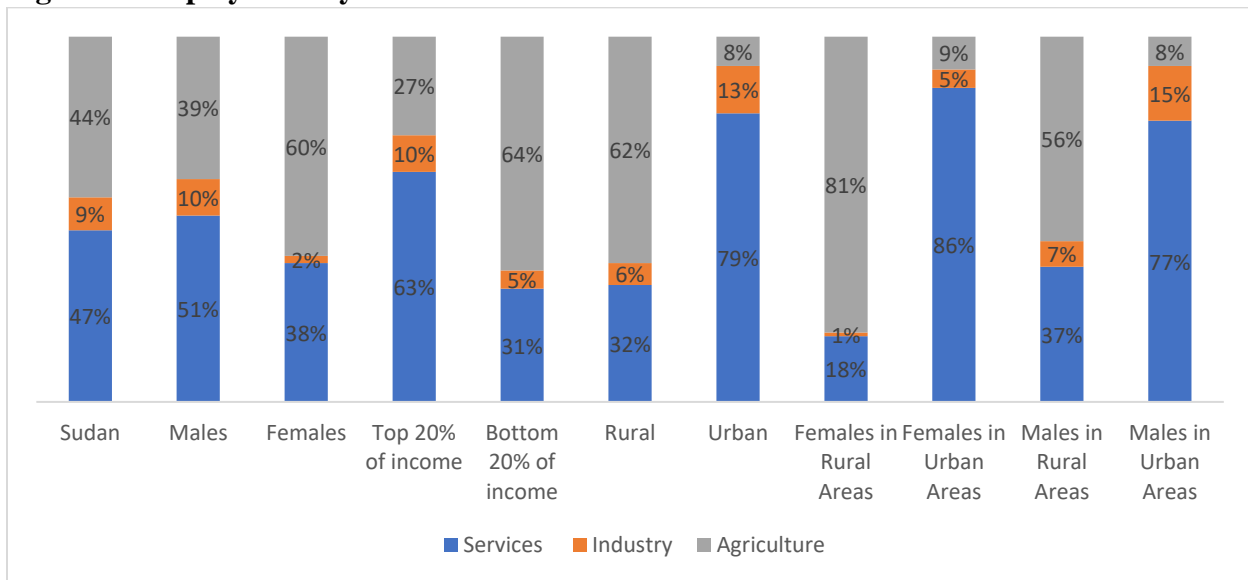
Underestimated figures done by the ILO (2014) show that 25 percent of total employment is in the informal sector, with one out of every five employees aged between 15-24 years old. According to the same report, informality is generally related to the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sectors, yet, for youth between 15-24 years of age, informality is mainly concentrated in the mining and quarrying sector, at almost 35 percent, followed by the agricultural sector, at 26 percent. In 2014, around 51 percent of employed youth worked in vulnerable employment (unpaid workers accounted for 41 percent, and own account workers accounted for 13 percent), while youth employers and paid employees were only 10 percent and 18 percent, respectively (World Bank, 2021).

**Figure 4. Unemployment and youth unemployment in 2009, 2014**



Source: (World Bank, 2019a).

**Figure 5. Employment by sectors**



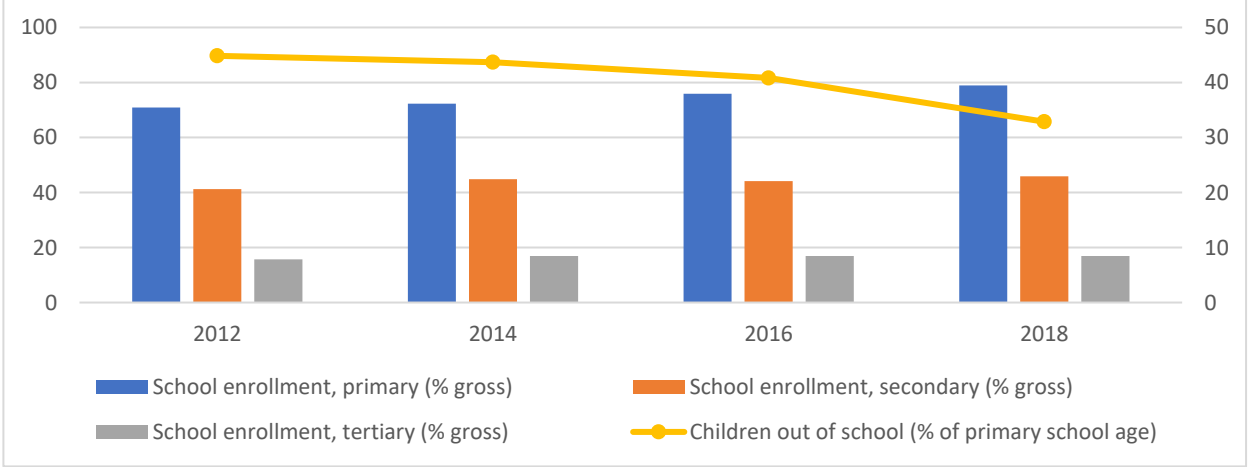
Source: 2014 NHBPS- Central Bureau of Statistics.

According to the SLFS (2011), inactive people of working age accounted for 8.8 million, 70 percent of whom were females. A total of 51 percent of inactive people were aged between 15-24 years old. While education was the primary reason for the high inactivity among youth (66.5 percent in 2011), a significant portion of discouraged youth was observed amounting to 7.2 percent, 5.3 percent of whom were literate youth. This percentage increased in the 2014/15 NHBPS, as 24 percent of youth (15-24 years old) out of the labor force believed there was no hope in finding a job (World Bank,

2021). One intuitive ramification of the high unemployment among youth is the high poverty rate among youth compared to total poverty in Sudan, which was 36.1 percent and 36.2 percent for females based on the 2014/15 NHBPS. However, for young people, it was much higher, which was 40 percent for the 14-19 age group and above 30 percent for the 20-24 age group (World Bank, 2020).

One essential feature of the emerging youth is that they are better educated compared to older individuals, as only less than a third of youth aged between 20-24 have never attended any formal education, compared to almost 80 percent of people aged 65 and above (World Bank, 2019a). This is an important observation for any attempt to investigate the challenges of the demographic dividend in Sudan, as well as to understand the limitation of the labor market to absorb the emerging youth bulge. The school enrollment ratio also increased considerably during the period 2012-18. For primary education, the ratio increased from 70.8 percent in 2012 to 78.9 in 2018, while for secondary school enrollment, it increased from 41 percent to about 46 percent, and for tertiary, the percentage slightly increased from 15.7 to almost 17 percent (Figure 5). Although this indicates a low progression from primary to secondary school as well as from secondary to tertiary, it still indicates that the younger cohorts are increasingly better educated, especially considering the decrease in children out of school from 44.8 percent of primary school age to 32.8 percent.

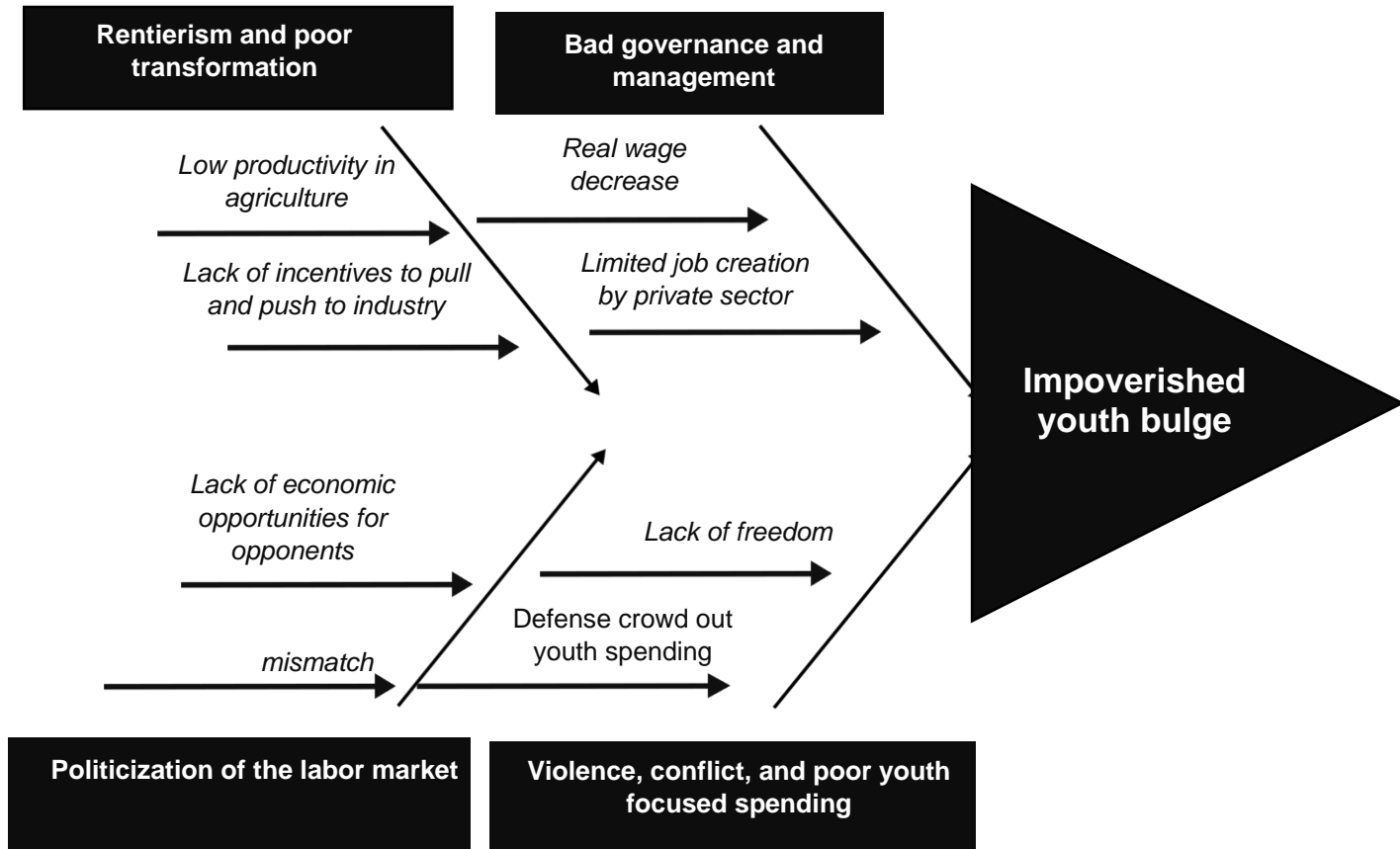
**Figure 6. Children out of school and school enrollment**



Source: World Bank/World Development Indicators.

### 3. The roots of Sudan's impoverished youth bulge

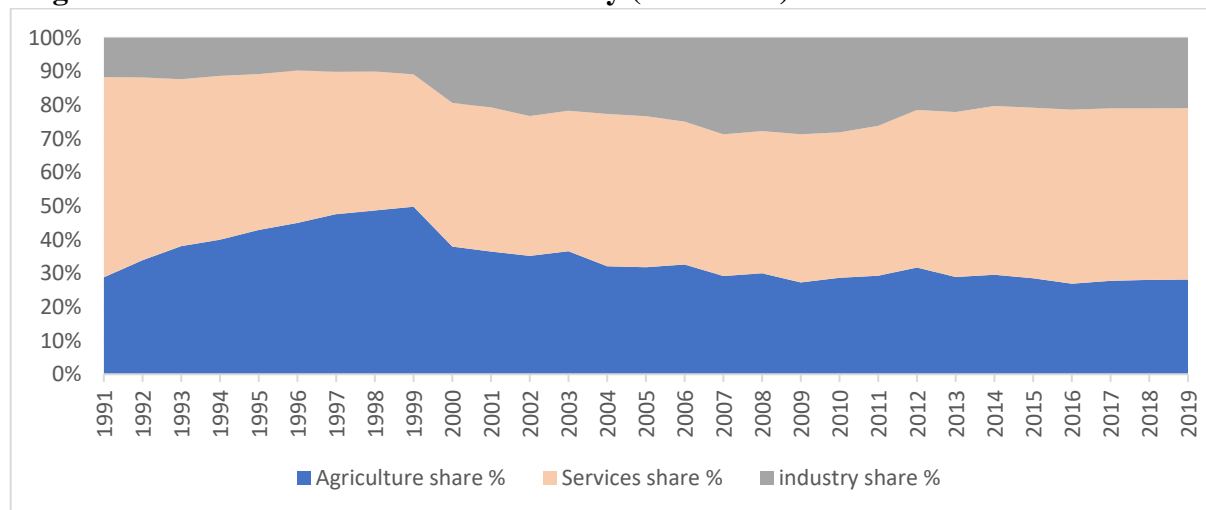
Diagram 1. Causes of Sudan's impoverished youth bulge



#### 3.1. The rentier economy and the lack of transformation

During the oil era, Sudan was a rentier oil economy par excellence. One essential feature of the rentier economy is that it is built on a mentality that ends the link between work and income and replaces it with an opportunity and income link (Beblawi, 1987). The economic policy of Inqaz was built on maximizing the surplus of extraction rather than the expansion of the surplus generation (Elnur, 2008). By default, the rentier economy failed to lead to broad-based economic growth that creates jobs and reduces poverty.

**Figure 7. The structure of Sudan's economy (1991-2019)**



Source: Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Sudan.

For a long time, Sudan failed to achieve structural transformation by shifting from low-productivity activities to high-productivity activities (Ali and Elbadawi, 2004). Sudan highly depended on agriculture before the discovery of oil at the end of the 1990s, as the share of agriculture was about 45 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), while the share of services constituted 41 percent and industry constituted 14 percent.

Although the agricultural sector was and still is highly traditional, it was the main contributor to economic growth in the 1990s. During the period 1991-99, the agricultural sector led economic growth. However, the growth of the agricultural sector did not occur due to technological adoption; it was mainly due to favorable weather conditions,<sup>8</sup> the removal of the domestic tax on agriculture, and the liberalization policies that enhanced production incentives (IMF, 1994; IMF, 1997; IMF 2003). After the discovery of oil in 1999, agriculture was neglected, and the share of industries and services increased at the expense of the agricultural sector, as the contribution of agriculture decreased to 36 percent, while the industry's contribution increased to 25 percent. It is worth mentioning that this increase in the industrial value-added share to GDP was mainly driven by the oil, not the manufacturing industries. The oil sector was nine percent of the GDP in 2002 and it decreased to around three percent in 2012 after the secession of South Sudan. A recent study by Elbadawi et.al. (2022) highlights some critical challenges faced by the agricultural sector in Sudan. Two of the deeply rooted challenges were the absence of a national industrial policy that could achieve agricultural transformation and the unencouraging macroeconomic policy environment.

After the sudden stop of oil rents, the economy shifted from oil to gold. Accordingly, the mining sector increased its share as a percentage of GDP dramatically from less than one percent before

<sup>8</sup> As rain-fed farming was the primary source of agricultural production.



the separation of South Sudan to more than nine percent in 2019. However, large-scale gold mining was highly dominated by militia leaders (De Wall, 2019), and the poor combined monetary policies affected non-gold exports due to the resulting loss of competitiveness (Elbadawi and Suliman, 2018). The agricultural sector continued to deteriorate, as its contribution to the GDP decreased from an average of 36 percent between 2005 to 2010 to 28 percent in 2019. The same was true for the industrial sector, which was affected by the loss of oil, as its contribution decreased from 25 percent on average between 2005 to 2010 to 20 percent in 2019, while the contribution of the services sector increased from 39 percent to 51 percent during the same period (Figure 6).

This economic structure had serious ramifications on unemployment and poverty. Despite the great potential of Sudan's agricultural sector to lead to wide-based growth and reduce poverty as it absorbs more than 45 percent of the labor, 64 percent of which is from the bottom 20 percent of income (Figure 4), the sector was neglected and suffered from weak public expenditure, poor governance, and absence of agricultural technology (MoFEP, 2020). Accordingly, low productivity, primitivity, and fragility to climate change were the primary features of the sector. Consequently, the job creation capacity of the sector was dominated by low-skill, low-paying jobs. While this explains the high accessibility of the poor to the sector, it also attributes to the unattractiveness of employment in agriculture to educated youth, especially young males. While agricultural employment is relatively more accessible, some youth prefer to be unemployed and wait for better employment opportunities rather than be employed in agriculture. Another important attributer for the unattractiveness of employment in the agricultural sector is associated with the conflicts and weak service delivery in rural areas, which resulted in high migration from rural to urban areas. Youth who migrated from the agricultural regions to Khartoum preferred to work in the informal sector until they found better jobs rather than going back to work in farming (Daoud et al., 2017).

The job creation capacity of the industrial sector was very limited. The industrial sector recruited only 15.3 percent of total employment in 2011, and this share decreased significantly in 2014 to nine percent (Figure 4). During the oil boom, the growing share of the industrial sector in GDP was fueled by the rentier oil sector, not because of manufacturing industries. The capital-intensive nature of the oil sector as well as the expansion in politically-connected firms associated with the sector (De Wall, 2019) prevented its contribution to providing employment opportunities. The production of oil was dominated by small, highly technically skilled, and highly paid labor (Gallopín et al., 2021).

The rentier economic policy of Inqaz and its lack of diversification was reflected in the weak contribution of the labor market in achieving inclusive growth through the pull and push of labor from the agricultural sector to the industrial and manufacturing sectors. According to Suliman and Elbadawi (n.d.), after 1990, there was a low response from labor market participants to wage incentives. Labor productivity and real wages in non-agricultural sectors decreased significantly

between 2009-14 (World Bank, 2019b). Decreasing wages and productivity in the non-agricultural sectors prevented the incentives from shifting labor from the agricultural sector to the industrial sector. The job creation capacity of the industrial sector was weak and driven mainly by the emerging gold sector. According to the World Bank (2019a), job creation in the manufacturing sector grew by 20 percent between 2009 and 2014, while the mining and quarrying sector grew by more than 140 percent during the same period. With the expansion in gold mining after the secession of South Sudan in 2011, an increasing portion of labor was employed in the mining sector estimated at one million workers (Gallopín et al., 2021). However, employment in mining was mainly attractive to poor, uneducated males because it was highly informal, artisanal, and dominated by small-scale mining (World Bank, 2019a).

### **3.2 Macroeconomic mismanagement and lack of good governance**

Lack of good governance was the primary feature of Inqaz's kleptocratic management of the country, especially in the oil era. The bad governance was represented in high corruption, lack of accountability, and a growing untransparent state-owned enterprises (SOEs) sector. These kleptocratic policies prevented the country from taking advantage of the (short-lived) oil resources in laying the building blocks for structural transformation. After the secession of South Sudan and the loss of almost three-quarters of oil production, the economy witnessed substantial deterioration. This deterioration, combined with a lack of good governance, affected the labor market in two ways: it decreased real wages and limited the job creation capacity of the private sector.

**Table 1. Selected macroeconomic indicators**

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	*2019
GDP growth%	2,2-	2,2	3,2	3,0	3,5	0,7	2,3-	2,5-
Inflation%	35,1	37,1	36,9	16,9	17,6	34,1	63,0	50,4
<b>Fiscal sector (% GDP)</b>								
Revenue and grants	9,4	10,4	10,8	9,1	8,3	9,1	8,6	7,4
Tax	6,9	7,7	7,8	7,2	7,0	7,7	6,7	5,6
Current expenses	11,6	11,6	11,1	9,4	9,2	10,4	11,4	9,9
Development expenses	1,5	1,3	1,1	0,9	1,0	0,7	0,5	0,5
Total expenses	13,1	12,9	12,2	10,3	10,2	11,1	11,9	10,4
Deficit	3,4	2,1	1,0	1,1	1,7	1,8	2,8	2,2
<b>Monetary sector</b>								
Money supply growth, %	40,2	13,3	17,0	20,5	29,0	68,4	111,8	49,3
<b>External sector (million USD)</b>								
Exports	4,067	4,790	4,454	3,169	3,094	4,100	3,485	3,973
<b>Exports under-invoicing oil</b>	1214.9	862.8	880	144.9	65.3	297.1	651.8	
<b>Exports under-invoicing gold</b>	906.6	722.5	501.9	516.7	611.9	704.7	129.6	
Imports	8,123	8,728	8,106	8,368	7,491	8,220	7,065	8,362
Trade balance	4,056-	3,938-	3,652-	5,199-	4,397-	4,120-	3,580-	4,389-
Current account	6,242-	5,398-	3,546-	5,461-	4,226-	4,851-	4,928-	4,981-
Transfers	596	620	507	151	153	213	425	622
Foreign direct investment	2,313	1,688	1,251	1,728	1,063	1,065	1,136	825
Foreign reserves	2,093	1,931	1,449	1,007	863	901	1,019	
External debt	42,0	43,8	43,7	43,9	45,4	48,2	49,9	
<b>Exchange rate SDG-USD</b>								
Official exchange rate	3,7	4,7	5,7	6,0	6,2	6,7	24,3	45,8
Parallel exchange rate	5,7	5,6	8,8	9,7	14,1	20,1	41,5	68,6

Source: International Monetary Fund reports - Article IV consultations, annual reports of the Central Bank of Sudan and Global Financial Integrity 2020.

The economic situation after the sudden stop (Table 1) was similar to the situation before the discovery and exportation of oil in terms of weak revenue mobilization and low exports. However, after the secession of South Sudan, it became worse, as the government and individuals (especially those who reaped the fruits of rentier growth) changed their consumption patterns. For instance, the government had an increasing financial burden because of the fuel subsidies growing at the expense of development expenditure, as current expenditure was 10 times greater than development expenditure, on average (Table 1). The fiscal imbalance was mainly caused by the poor performance of public revenues, especially tax revenues, as Sudan's tax revenues, which are six percent of the GDP, are lower than the average of low-income countries, which is 12 percent (IMF, 2016). On the other hand, it was politically difficult to reduce public spending due to the continuous rise in the amount of subsidies caused by the exchange rate deterioration. Even though the government took different austerity measures in 2013 and 2016, it faced widespread protests. Therefore, with the limited external funding opportunities, government-imposed inflation tax

through the monetization of fiscal deficit – and consequently, money supply – grew, and inflation increased significantly (Table 1). The increasing inflation rate affected all segments of the population; however, it was harsher for poor and public sector employees as wages were very sticky and adjustments to inflation were slow, and real wages decreased significantly as a result. The reduction in oil exports also caused a continuous increase in the deficit of the trade balance. Although there was an increase in gold exports, it did not substitute the significant reduction in oil exports. Again, it was difficult to cut imports, which was affected by the previous levels of consumption in the oil era.

The kleptocratic regime also contributed to the increasing deterioration in the exchange rate and weak revenue mobilization through the under-invoicing of exports. According to the Global Financial Integrity Report on Sudan (2020), the under-invoicing of exports was largely concentrated in the oil and gold sectors<sup>9</sup> (Table 1). These sectors are highly politically connected, as oil was dominated by politically-connected firms (De wall, 2019) and large-scale gold mining controlled by militia leaders (Gallopín et al., 2021). According to the same report, total trade mis-invoicing in the period from 2012-18 amounted to about USD 31 billion. The increasing under-invoicing of exports, in addition to the monetization of fiscal deficit, has been reflected in a high deterioration in the exchange rate, and thus, increasing black market premium. Much literature has shown that continuous exchange rate volatility has a negative consequence on the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (Rashid and Wagar, 2017).

This economic mismanagement was combined with very poor governance, represented by high corruption, low transparency, and low accountability in the public sector. According to the World Bank’s CPIA Transparency, Accountability, and Corruption in the Public Sector rating,<sup>10</sup> Sudan scored 1.5 during the period 2012-19, indicating a high level of corruption and a low level of transparency.

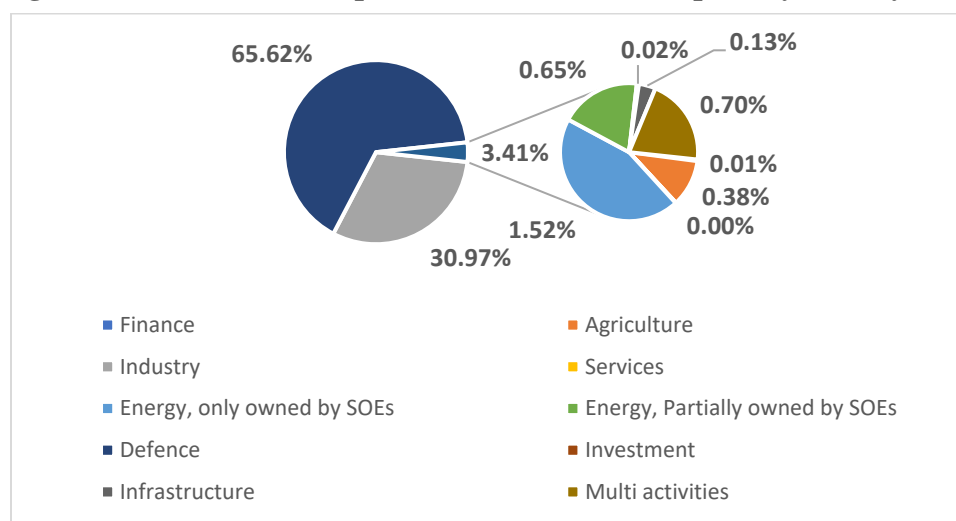
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<sup>9</sup> Different incentives may include evading taxes and duties, circumventing currency controls (export proceeds), and transferring funds abroad to evade capital controls and convert wealth into hard currency. See the 2020 Global Financial Integrity Report on Sudan.

<sup>10</sup> “Transparency, accountability, and corruption in the public sector assess the extent to which the executive can be held accountable for its use of funds and for the results of its actions by the electorate and by the legislature and judiciary, and the extent to which public employees within the executive are required to account for administrative decisions, use of resources, and results obtained. The index is scaled on a rate between 1 (low transparency, low accountability and high corruption in the public sector) to 6 (high transparency, high accountability and low corruption in the public sector).” See <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IQ.CPA.TRAN.XQ?locations=SD>

An important implication of poor governance was exemplified in the growing untransparent SOEs. A large number of SOEs was established during the oil boom,<sup>11</sup> with capital highly concentrated in defense and industry. Nevertheless, most of the companies were registered as defense even though they engage in other non-military manufacturing and services. With their privileged position and the lack of enforced competition rules, SOEs are expected to crowd out the private sector as they are more competitive for many reasons, including not limited to better access to finance, priority in public tenders, and better accessibility to decision makers (which may interpret the unjustified tax credits). The capital of the SOEs was highly concentrated in the industrial sector; this might be one of the attributers to the low portion of the labor working in the sector.

**Figure 8. Share of SOE capital (%) of total SOE capital by activity**



Source: Own calculation based on Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 2021.<sup>12</sup>

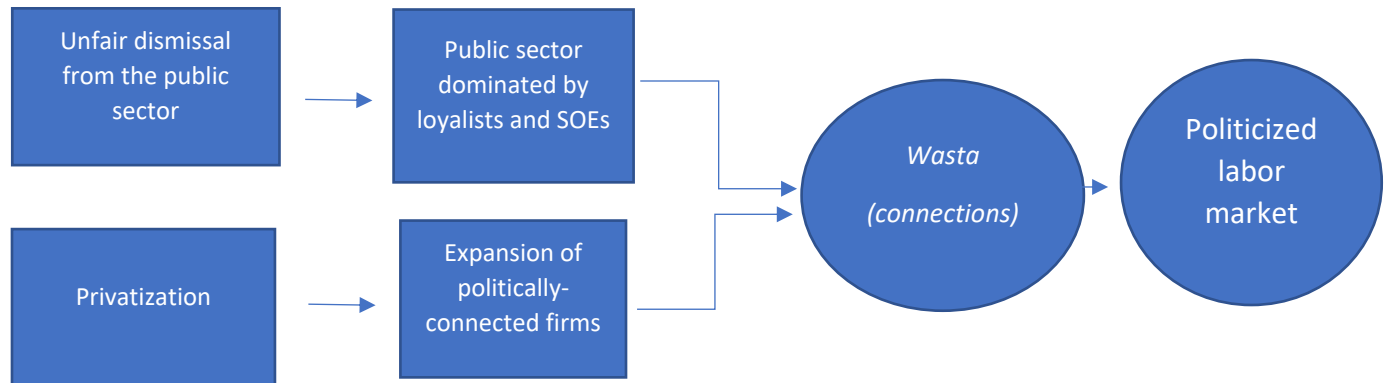
Even after the separation of South Sudan and the reduction in foreign direct investment oriented toward oil (Table 1), the government did not enhance the investment environment, which is very important for national and foreign private sectors. Accordingly, Sudan was ranked 171 out of 190 in ease of doing business in 2019.

<sup>11</sup> After 1999, the number of new companies announced according to the activity was: seven in industry, 19 in defense, 41 in energy partially owned by SOEs, 17 in energy totally owned SOEs, 13 in multiactivity, and seven in infrastructure.

<sup>12</sup> SOE data was published by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in Sudan in 2021. Considering the SOE reforms under the Extended Credit Facility Arrangements 2021, see: <http://www.mof.gov.sd/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%86%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9>

### 3.3. The politicization of the labor market

**Diagram 2: The roots of the politicized labor market in Sudan**



Consolidation of power, or what is known as *Tamkeen*, took different phases throughout the ruling period of Inqaz, and all of them had serious consequences on job creation in the public sector as well as the private sector. The Tamkeen mentality was based on the control of the State (Mann, 2014), but it soon developed to weakening oppositions and empowering the ruling party members and loyalists in terms of economic opportunities such as jobs, access to finance, business tax exemptions, and quality education and training. The channels in which the consolidation of power cast a shadow on the labor market include but are not limited to the dismissal of oppositions and non-loyalists, expanding the network of crony capitalists through implementing a home-grown privatization program, reestablishing *wasta* (connections) as an essential informal channel to access the labor market, and the inflation of qualifications.

In its early days, the Islamic movement regime, as an illegitimate government, was suspicious of the State institutions existing at that time, including civil service, military entities, and universities because of their vital role in the downfall of previous dictatorships (Mann, 2014). Therefore, the new government unfairly dismissed a considerable number of employees in the civil service, army officers, and police officers. According to the Sudan Democracy First Group (2014), the number of dismissed civil servants was estimated at 73,640 during the period 1989-99.

Although the Islamist movement had economic power before 1989, which was concentrated in the banking sector and was used to empower the movement (El-Affendi, 1991), it needed to build a wide network of crony capitalists to assure political finance (De Wall, 2019) and to weaken non-politically-connected firms in the private sector under the umbrella of Tamkeen. Therefore, in 1992, the former regime implemented the privatization and liberalization policy in Sudan. Unlike other indebted countries that implemented privatization under the Structural Adjustment Programs, privatization in Sudan was a home-grown program, which was not negotiated nor supported by the International Financial Institutes (IFIs) (Khalafallah and Ahmed, 2015). Nevertheless, it was one way to empower the regime. As Elnour (2008) noted:

“[T]he economic empowerment drive of the NIF’s regime aimed at broadening and strengthening its grip of the commanding heights of the economy and was also perpetuated and legitimized by the liberalization policies.” - (Elnour, 2008, p.93).

Under the first phase of the program (1993-95), the government sold 17 public corporations, and for the second phase (1995-98), it intended to sell the largest enterprises<sup>13</sup> (IMF, 1996). Therefore, the regime built a wide network of Islamic capitalists and got control of a wide share of the private sector (Abd-Elgader, 2018). This network of politically-connected firms was one of the most important sources of political finance (De Wall, 2019). The network of politically-connected firms grew even bigger with the extraction and exportation of oil in 1999 and the growing foreign direct investment directed to oil (Mann, 2014).

With the expanding politically-connected firms and civil service dominated by loyalists, the labor market in the public and private sectors was increasingly shifting toward a politicized labor market. An essential tool that facilitated the act was the *wasta*, an important informal institution that affected the accessibility of youth and females to the labor market (World Bank, 2021). *Wasta* was soon becoming more important. As Mann (2014) noted, *wasta* was not deeply rooted in the past, but it was dynamically feeding upon liberalization and privatization policies. With the growing privatization and FDI in the oil sector, the politically-connected firms grew to include some of the international enterprises that work in the oil sector (Mann, 2014). The literature on politically-connected firms in the Arab world shows that politically-connected firms’ entry to previously unconnected sectors reduces aggregate employment growth, as it reduces the growth of unconnected firms (Diwan et al., 2015; Diwan and Haider, 2016).

On the other hand, the regime weakened the quality of higher education by constructing 20 universities in seven years under the “revolution education” that was implemented in the early 1990s (Mann, 2014). The Education Revolution was a *Tamkeen* policy par excellence. It included the Islamization and Arabization of the curriculums, the controlling of the governance of the universities such as the University of Khartoum by cancelling the electoral system of university administrators and the academic-freedom act and appointing party loyalists as vice-chancellors, deans, and department chairs (Bishai, 2008). Poor university curriculums are one of the primary reasons that contributed to unemployment among youth graduates. Studies show that the mismatch between educational outcomes and required labor market skills is one of the main justifications for the high youth unemployment rate, especially for educated youth with university degrees (Nour, 2014; Ebaidalla, 2018).

Youth training and access to finance were highly politicized. The World Bank (2021) notes that only 10 percent of young adults had a bank account in 2014. According to the same report, some

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<sup>13</sup> These enterprises included the four sugar corporations (Guneid, New Halfa, Assalaya, and Sennar), the National Railways, Sudan Airlines, and the National Electricity Corporation (IMF, 1996).

of the businesswomen said that banks were unwilling to fund persons without personal connections. According to Mann (2014), the Islamist regime had established some organizations to empower youth, such as the Youth Federation (*Shabab Al-wantan*) and the Youth Building Association (*Shabab Al-benaa*), which provided training and micro-credit to unemployed youth. However, it depended on political connections.

### **3.4. Violence, conflict, and poor youth-focused spending**

For a regime that lacked a social base, violence was deeply rooted in its mentality. Since it started ruling Sudan in 1989, the Inqaz government has rebuked and restricted the freedoms and political participation of youth and females, and it established many militias to control the State and rebuke its opponents and critics (Aldow, 2015; Aldow, 2012; Bishai, 2008). One of the important militias responsible for the rebuke of opponents and critics among youth included the youngest members and students of the National Islamic Front (later known as the National Congress Party after the separation of the National Islamic Front) who were recruited and trained in the Popular Defense Forces (PDF)<sup>14</sup> (Kostelyanets, 2021). In 1991, after the loss of the National Islamic Front's students in the elections of the Students' Union of the University of Khartoum, they seized the University of Khartoum Students Union's building (Bishai, 2008). They were a crucial unit alongside the security forces in suppressing youth demonstrations and violating government critics, including women, and the role they played in repression has expanded to include most of the public universities in Sudan. Consequently, according to the Freedom House Index, the country was highly "not free" in terms of political rights and civil liberties.<sup>15</sup>

Widespread violence and conflicts have affected youth in different ways. The military doctrine of the former Islamist regime was largely reflected in the provision of pro-youth services. According to the Carter Center's 2021 report, youth prioritized unemployment and the need for better access to health and education services as the top concerns regarding the economic situation. However, the military expenses crowded out the expenses on health and education, which are essential sectors for human development in general and youth development in particular (Figure 8). This resulted in the underperformance of the Human Development Index in Sudan, as it is ranked 170 out of 189 countries (Human Development Report, 2020).

In addition to the direct implications of conflict on the population, youth have been affected in many ways, as evidenced by micro-level data. Hamid et al. (2021) show that young adults from conflict-afflicted regions are less likely to enroll in university-level education. In addition, internally migrated youth from conflict-affected areas to Khartoum were more likely to work in the informal sector (Daoud et al., 2017).

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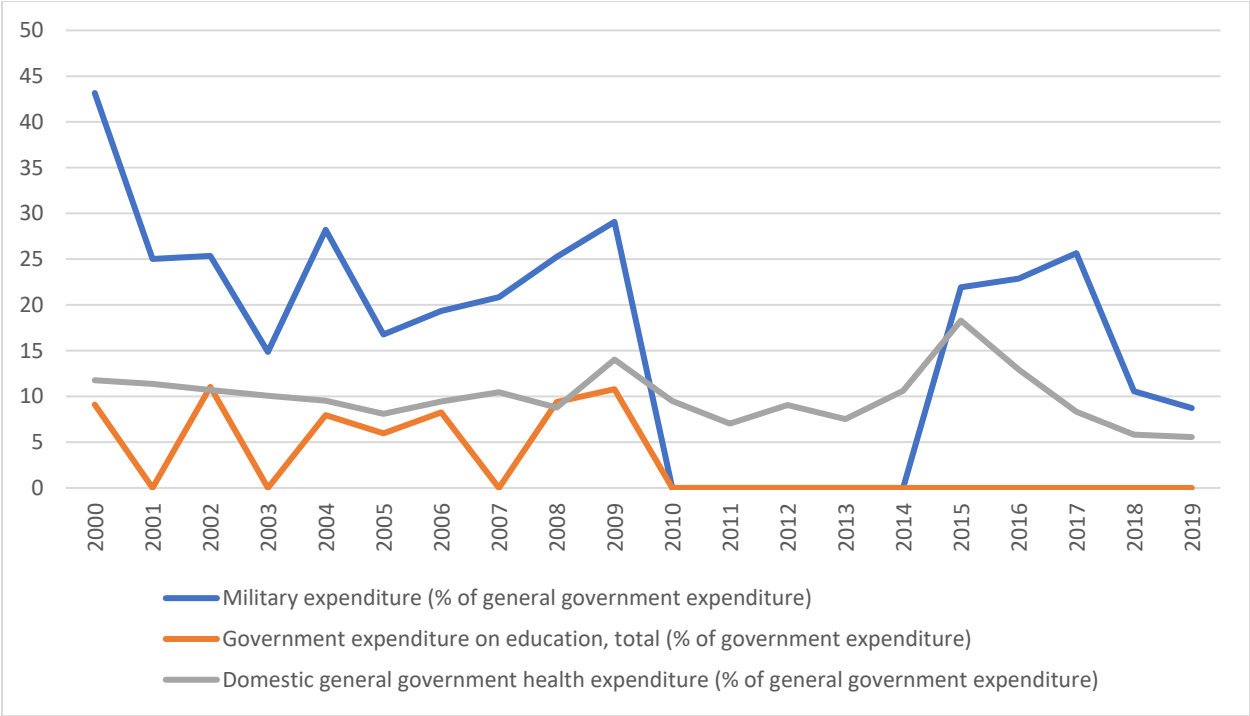
<sup>14</sup> An irregular militia that was entrusted with guarding the gains of Inqaz. For more details, see Kostelyanets (2021).

<sup>15</sup> See <https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-net/scores>



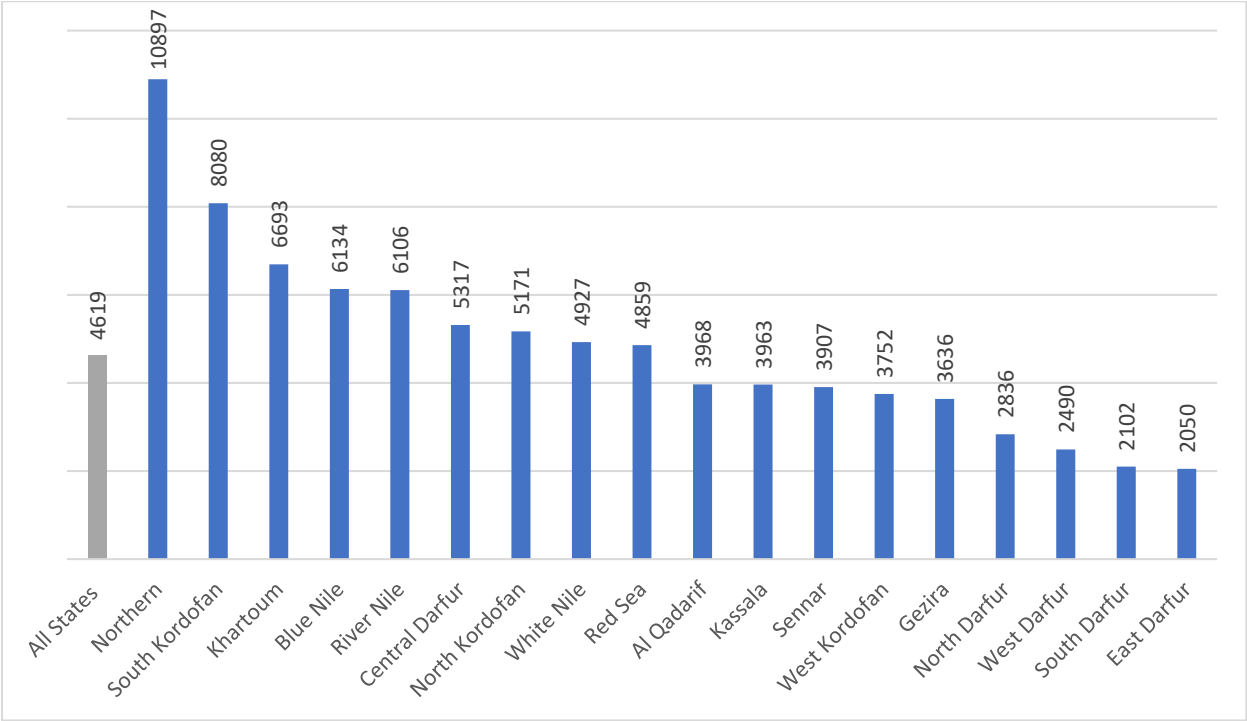
The former regime’s mismanagement was not only limited to the economy; it included the diversity of the Sudanese society, which was harshly reflected in the youth. Instead of building comprehensive societies, the former government utilized tribalism and regionalism (which were inherited from the colonial regime) for political polarization, leading to intensified, ethno-regionally oriented conflicts (Musa, 2018). One of the polarization instruments was the allocation of resources at the sub-national levels, which caused developmental disparities and marginalization. Consequently, there were regional disparities in youth’s access to public services, particularly health education and training (World Bank, 2021). East, South, West, and North Darfur were among the lowest per capita expenditure on average during the period 2012-18 (Figure 9).

**Figure 9. Military, education, and health expenditure as % of total expenditure**



Source: World Bank/World Development Indicators.

**Figure 10. Subnational real expenditure per capita (SDG per capita - constant 2020 prices) average 2012-18**



Source: IGC 2021.

States’ per capita expenditure witnessed significant disparities, as the Northern State’s per capita expenditure was more than five times greater than that of East Darfur on average during 2012-18. There is a significant vertical fiscal imbalance due to the limited revenue capacity at the sub-national level. Thus, states were highly dependent on central government transfers to finance their expenditure (Elshibly et al., 2021). The dependency on central government transfers varied across states, with Khartoum having the greatest ability to create its own revenues, as almost 80 percent of its revenues were generated from its own revenues during the period 2012-18 compared to 22 percent and 27 percent for South Kordofan and Blue Nile, respectively (Logan et al., 2021), reflecting a considerable horizontal fiscal imbalance.

**4. Sudanese youth and the demand for redistribution in the 2018/19 uprising**

The state of the youth, represented in high unemployment, poverty, weak participation in public life, and repression was mirrored in great frustration, distrust in the government, and a persistent desire to change the kleptocratic regime. The Inqaz regime maximized the utility of the elite rather than the preferences of the youth, which represents the medium voter’s preferences in a democratic regime as they are the greatest segment of Sudan’s population. Youth’s participation in revolutionary activities was a learning-by-doing process (Aalen, 2020), as after the secession of South Sudan, youth were key elements in all the demonstrations that took place in 2011-13, 2016, and 2018. The first engagement of youth born in the Inqaz era in revolutionary activities was in

the 2011-13 protests. At that time, youth lacked technocratic expertise and political maturity compared to youth in the first and second *Intifada* (Berridge, 2015). This was mainly due to the Tamkeen policy that weakened opponents as shown in the second section. The Inqaz regime had strong de facto political power.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, it was able to end all previous demonstrations before the 2018 uprising in a repressive way, as 200 people were killed in the 2013 protests (Berridge, 2015). Before the 2018 uprising that led to the fall of the Inqaz regime, and due to the frustration of youth with the existing traditional parties, youth organized their own political networks such as “Grifna” and “Sudan Change Now” (Aalen, 2020). Youth also began to organize local resistance committees (LRCs) in 2010 and 2012, however, the LRCs emerged as a new strong political actor in the 2018 uprising (El-Battahani, 2021). Together with the Sudan Professional Association (SPA),<sup>17</sup> the LRCs had an essential role in the mobilization of youth and in organizing neighborhood processions. LRC members mainly included unemployed youth from a large variety of ethnical backgrounds and different socioeconomic classes, with members from the middle class and the poor who were relatively more active (El-Battahani, 2021). Apart from the logistical role, LRCs played vital roles in decentralizing the resistance of the centralized kleptocratic regime, and they were responsible for delivering the announcements and statements of the SPA (Zunes, 2021). This role was very important for the success of the 2018 revolution. According to WDI,<sup>18</sup> individuals using the Internet were only 25 percent of the population in 2018. Consequently, the role of LRCs in the mobilization of the revolution and addressing the collective action problem was essential.

The literature on revolutions and transition emphasizes the importance of addressing revolutionary collective action problems for the success of demonstrations (Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005; Javeline, 2003; Douglas and Van, 1996). Since taking part in revolutionary activity is costly, Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) normalize this cost by the average income and define an equal payoff for participated and non-participated citizens. Therefore, the importance of addressing the collective action problem comes from the fact that all citizens prefer not to take the risk of participating and instead prefer to enjoy the after-revolution payoff. While Acemoglu and Robinson (2005) highlight the important role of ideology and the exclusion of non-participants from after-revolution payoff, work done by Javeline (2003) highlights the importance of the role of blame in collective action. The breakdown of large problems into small ones is essential in addressing the collective action problem, as all citizens can see how their contributions are

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<sup>16</sup> The regime built a wide range of security forces, some of which was official and others were parallel and highly politicized. These forces included: Sudan Armed Forces; Rapid Support Forces; National Intelligence and Security Service; popular defense forces; border intelligence units; and the Central Reserve Police. For more details see De Wall (2019).

<sup>17</sup> It is an association of 17 different Sudanese unions. Founded in 2012, it became an official association in 2016 after an alliance between the Central Committee of Sudan Doctors, the Sudanese Journalists’ Network, and the Democratic Lawyers Alliance. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudanese\\_Professionals\\_Association](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudanese_Professionals_Association)

<sup>18</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IT.NET.USER.ZS?locations=SD>

essential and how they will all benefit directly (Popkin, 1979, as cited in Acemoglu and Robinson, 2005).

We believe that the slogans chanted by young people in LRCs played an essential role in addressing non-violent, revolutionary collective action problems. The slogans divided the big problem of developmental failure into different problems that made most of the affected citizens see how their participation was necessary for their own benefit.

Some slogans and their link to the developmental failure include, but are not limited to:

<b>Slogan</b>	<b>Sub-problem of developmental failure</b>
“Freedom, peace and justice.”	Violence and lack of expression. 43 percent of population live in conflict-affected areas. Regional disparities, high inequality.
“We protest against the people who stole our sweat, not for sugar and gasoline; we protest against religion merchants.”	Kleptocratic regime. Corruption.
“Oh racist, oh arrogant, the whole country is Darfur.”	Utilization of tribalism and regionalism. Political polarization, marginalization, and racism.
“Oh dancer, you made people hungry.”	Macroeconomic mismanagement, high inflation, and poverty.
“Get up, you unemployed; join the procession.”	High unemployment and poverty.
“It will fall, and we will get married.”	High unemployment and poverty among youth. Delayed adulthood.

## **5. The December Revolution and youth views and aspirations**

This section followed a cross-sectional design of all Sudanese youth (aged 18-35 years old) who were surveyed on the Arab Index, which was conducted during the Inqaz regime (31 January 2018 and 15 March 2018) and after the revolution (2019/20) (ACRPS, 2018).

Data were obtained from the Arab Index that is annually performed by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) in the Arab countries. These data have been collected through a developed questionnaire, consisting of 11 sections, which measures diverse dimensions, such as economic, social, and political situations from citizens’ perspectives. Data were cleaned and prepared to enable an informed analysis.

Two main dependent variables were identified based on relevance to the aim of the study and context in Sudan. They were mainly chosen from two sections: section 2, which evaluates Sudan's institutional performance, and this was assessed by the level of trust in government and political parties; and section 3, which assesses the participation in public affairs, and this was measured by the interest in political affairs in Sudan.

Each of the dependent variables has been coded as a binary variable, as below:

1. Let the government be a dichotomous variable equal to unity if Sudanese youth trust it, and zero otherwise.
2. Let the interest in public affairs be a dichotomous variable equal to unity if Sudanese youth are interested and zero otherwise.

The independent variables include all socioeconomic information such as sex, age, marital status, education level, employment status, geographic area, family size, and family economic status.

Categorical variables were described and summarized with frequency and percentages, whereas means and standard deviations were used to summarize continuous variables. The Chi-square test was used to evaluate whether there was a relationship between categorical variables. An independent T-test was used to detect a statistical difference for continuous variables after the normality assumption is fulfilled.

Since this section aims to estimate the probability of Sudanese youth on their level of trust in the government and participation in public affairs, we account for a vector of control variables. Accordingly, A backward stepwise logistic regression model was appropriate for testing the hypotheses, and hence it was implemented with a probability value set at  $pr(0.20)$  (Stoltzfus, 2011; Wooldridge, 2015). the odds ratios are reported as effect size, and marginal effects were computed alongside the model. The link-test was used for model specification. The mathematical model specification can be written as follows (Stoltzfus, 2011):

$$Prob(\hat{Y}_i) = \frac{e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 \dots \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon_i}}{1 + \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 \dots \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon_i}$$

$\hat{Y}_i$  denotes the estimated probability of being in one category ( $\hat{Y}$ ) of the binary outcome versus the other ( $1 - \hat{Y}$ ).  $e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 \dots \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon_i}$  denotes the linear equations of the explanatory factors expressed in the logit scale.

To obtain the logit of the odds of being in one category ( $\hat{Y}$ ) of the binary outcome versus the other ( $1 - \hat{Y}$ ), we introduce the logit scale to mathematically transform the original linear regression, as follows:

$$\ln(\hat{Y}/1 - \hat{Y}) \longrightarrow \ln(\hat{Y}/1 - \hat{Y}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 \dots \beta_i X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Government and interest in public affairs.

Explanatory variables  $\longrightarrow$  Gender, age, education, family economic status, region, family size, and marital status.

The following two main hypotheses are of interest to be explored:

### Hypothesis 1: Trust in the government

$H_0$ : There is no statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic factors and the government.

$H_1$ : There is a statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic factors and the government.

### Hypothesis 2: Interest in public affairs

$H_0$ : There is no statistically significant association between socioeconomic factors and public affairs.

$H_1$ : There is a statistically significant association between socioeconomic factors and political affairs.

## 6. Findings

**Table 2. Socioeconomic factors of surveyed Sudanese youth presented by revolution period**

Variables	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)		After the revolution (transitional period)	
	Frequency <i>N = 867</i>	Percentage (%)	Frequency <i>N=1306</i>	Percentage (%)
<b>Sex</b>				
Female	466	53.25	669	51.23
Male	401	46.75	637	48.77
<b>Age group in years</b>				
18 – 24	430	49.60	674	51.61
25 - 34	437	50.40	632	48.39

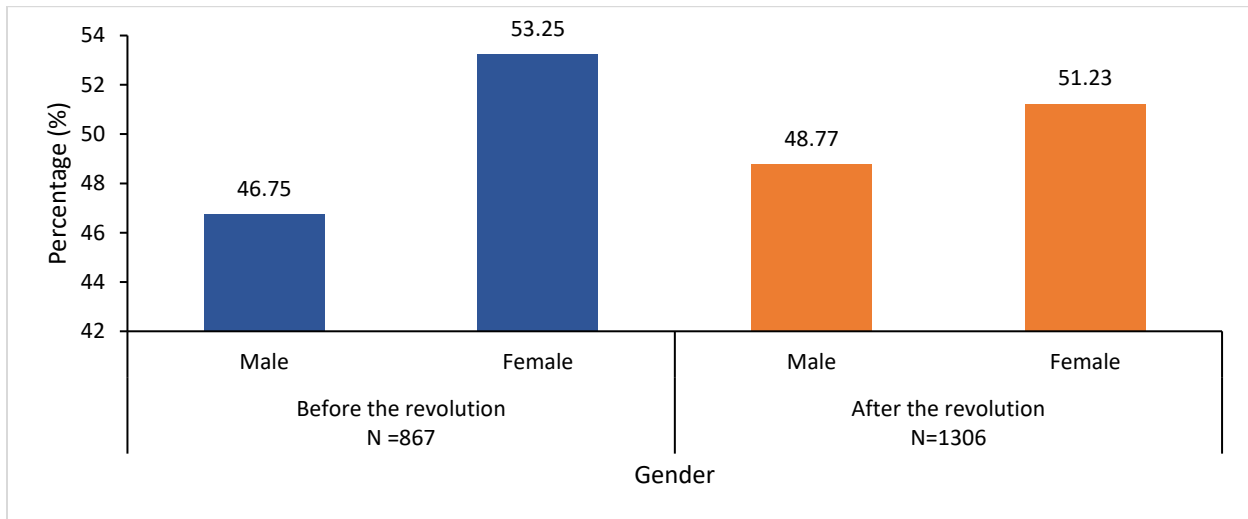
**Table 2. Socioeconomic factors of surveyed Sudanese youth presented by revolution period (contd.)**

<b>Marital status</b>				
Single	487	56.17	885	67.76
Married	362	41.75	411	31.47
Other	18	2.08	10	0.77
<b>Educational level</b>				
Illiterate	43	4.96	65	4.98
Less than secondary school	360	41.52	559	42.80
Secondary school	207	23.88	309	23.66
Above secondary school	257	29.64	373	28.56
<b>Employment status</b>				
Unemployed	556	64.13	997	76.34
Employed	311	35.87	309	23.66
<b>Geographic area</b>				
Rural	490	56.52	779	59.65
Urban	377	43.48	527	40.35
<b>Family headcounts</b>				
<= 3	345	39.79	390	29.86
4 – 7	434	50.06	833	63.78
>= 8	88	10.15	83	6.36
Log family income ( <i>mean ± sd</i> )	8.12	1.15	8.83	0.82
<b>Family economic situation*</b>				
Good	548	63.21	865*	66.23
Not good	319	36.79	437	33.46

<sup>a</sup>Data are reported as n (%), otherwise specified. \*Missing values (0.31)

Results reveal that a larger proportion of the total surveyed sample (867) before the revolution (i.e., during the Inqaz regime) were females, representing 53.25 percent, while 46.75 percent were males. Likewise, in the other survey round after the revolution, females account for 51.23 percent of the total surveyed sample (1,306) (Figure 11).

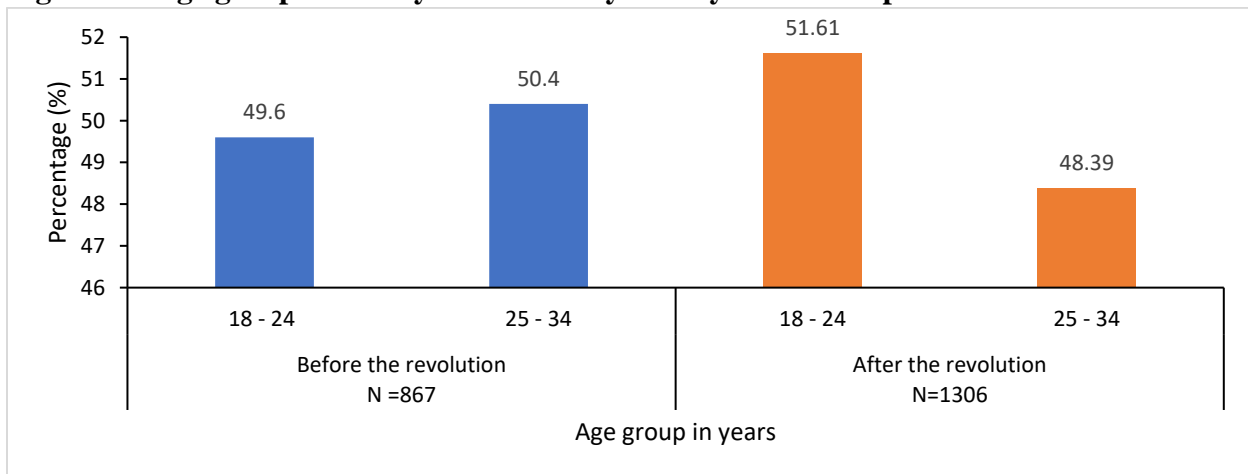
**Figure 11. Gender of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

50.40 percent of the sample surveyed before the revolution (n=867) were between 25 and 34 years of age, and those aged 18-24 years old account for 49.60 percent. After the revolution period, the youngest category (18-24 years old) was the category that participated in the survey the most (51.61 percent) and those aged 25-34 years old represent 48.39 percent of the total sample (n=1306) (Figure 12).

**Figure 12. Age group of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**

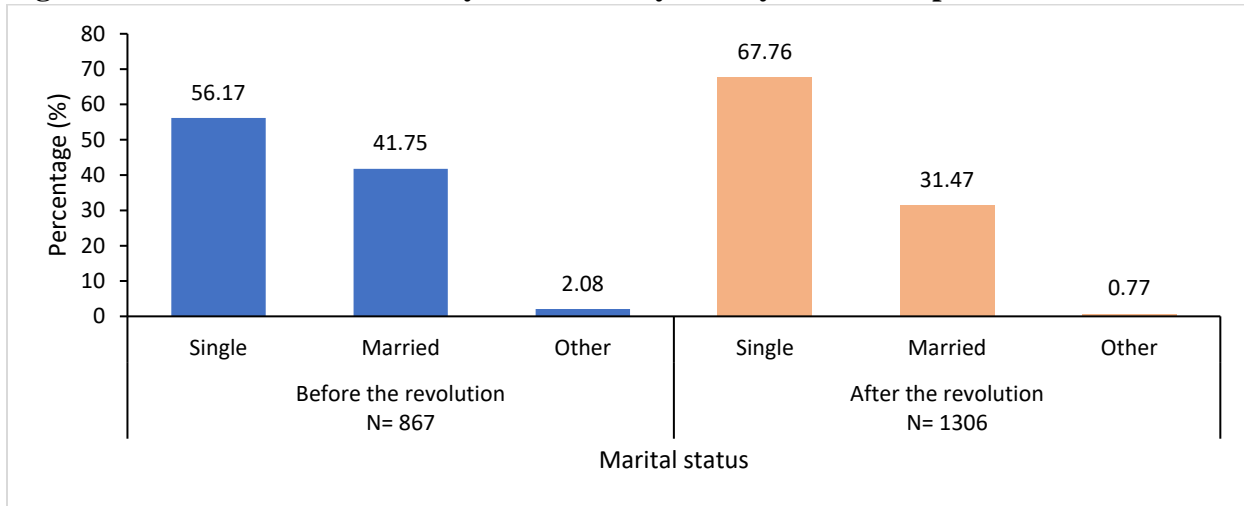


Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/2019-2020.

There is a clear trend that nearly all the youth who participated in the survey during both periods (before and after the revolution) were single (56.17 percent and 67.76 percent, respectively). The percentage of married young people was 41.75 percent and 31.47 percent, independently (Figure 13).



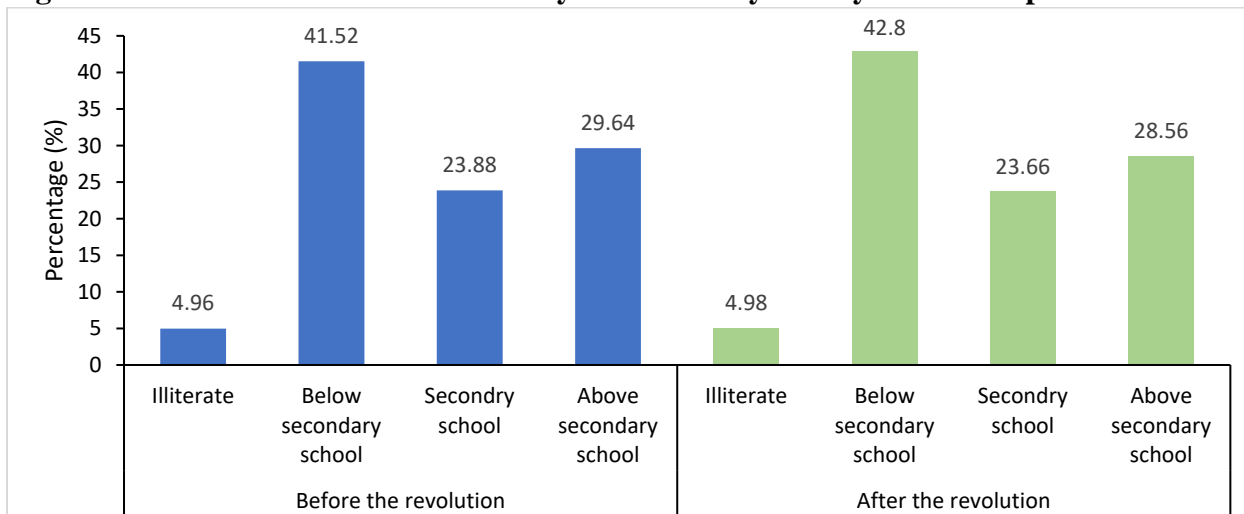
**Figure 13. Marital status of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

Before the revolution, 41.52 percent of the surveyed Sudanese youth had below secondary school education. This was followed by 29.64 percent and 23.88 percent who studied above secondary school, and secondary school, respectively. A similar trend was also observed after the revolution, in which 42.80 percent, 28.56 percent, and 23.66 percent had studied below secondary school, above secondary school, and secondary school, individually. However, only around five percent were illiterate during both periods (Figure 14).

**Figure 14. Educational level of the surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**

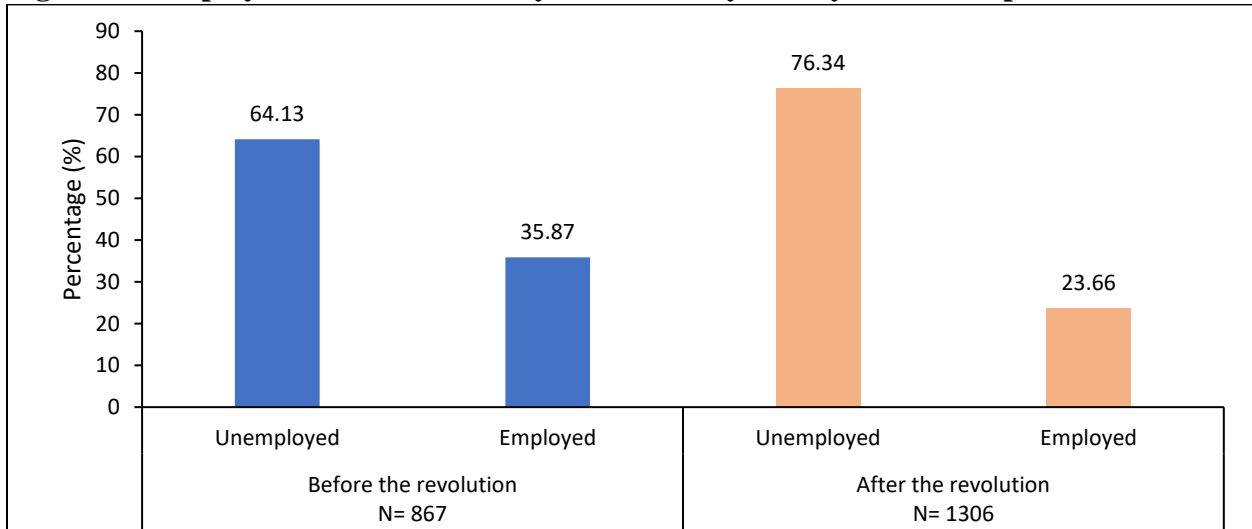


Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

Unemployment was a common attribute in both surveyed samples during the Inqaz regime and the transitional period. In the former period, 64.13 percent of the surveyed young people were unemployed and 35.87 percent were employed. In the latter period, 76.34 percent were

unemployed and 23.66 percent were employed. This could indicate that unemployment persists even after the revolution due to the deteriorating economic conditions (Figure 15).

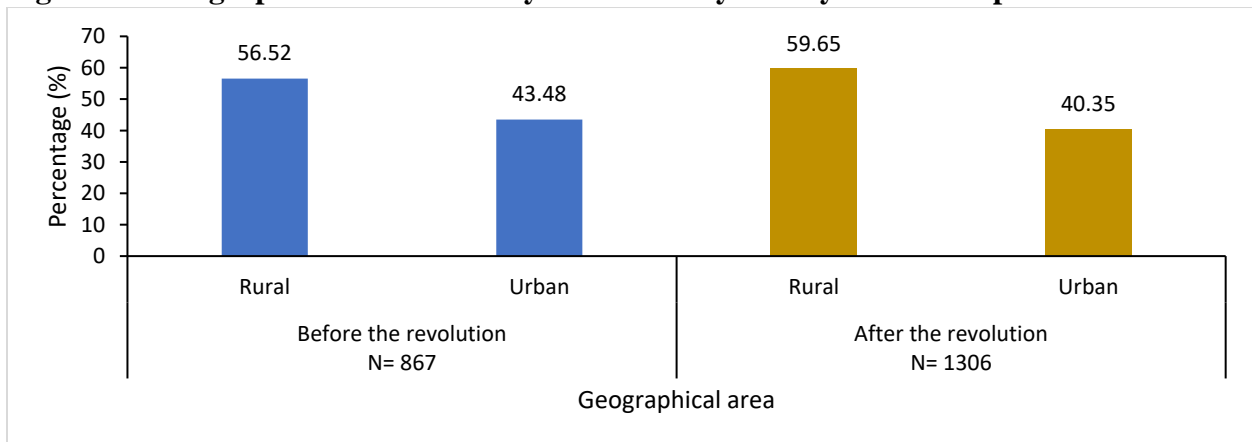
**Figure 15. Employment status of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

Many of the surveyed young people were from rural areas in both samples during the Inqaz regime and the transitional period. In the former period, 56.52 percent of the surveyed young people were from rural areas and 43.48 percent were from urban areas. Similarly, in the latter period, 59.65 percent were from rural areas and 40.35 percent were from urban areas (Figure 16).

**Figure 16. Geographical area of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**

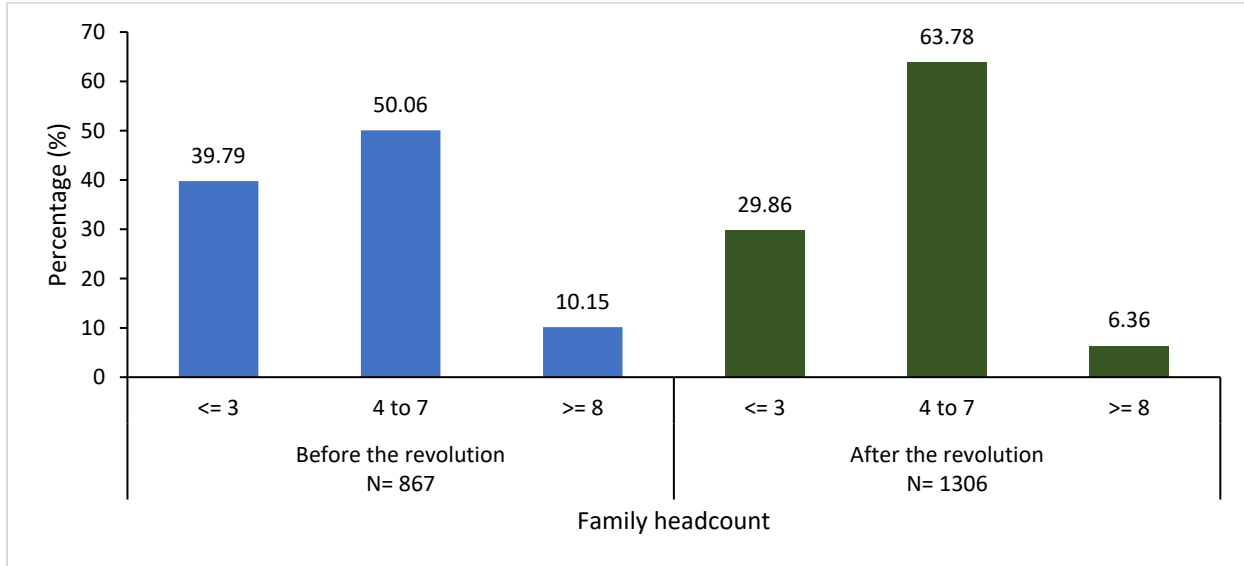


Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

In both samples, the larger proportion of surveyed young people are from medium families comprising four to seven individuals, recording 50.06 percent and 63.78 percent for the period before and after the revolution, chronologically. Those from small families represent 39.79 percent and 29.86 percent, while those from larger families are the least represented in the surveys at 10.15

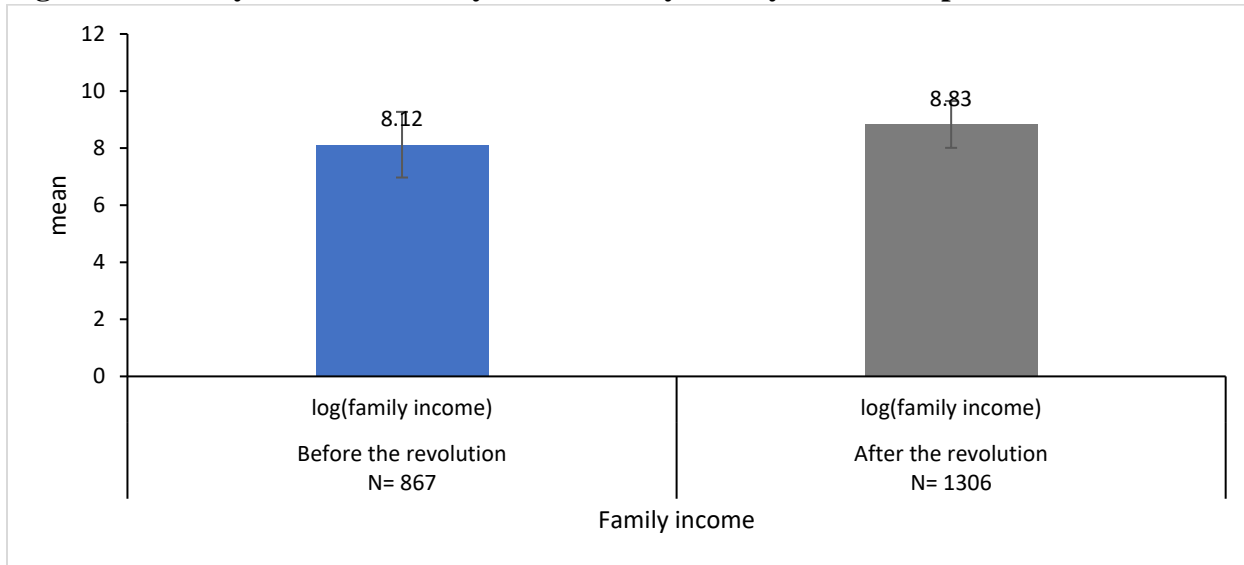
percent and 6.36 percent, respectively (Figure 17). On the other hand, the mean family income was almost similar between the two periods (Figure 18).

**Figure 17. Family headcount of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

**Figure 18. Family income of surveyed Sudanese youth by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on the AI data 2018/19-2020.

## 7. Country performance evaluation

### 7.1. Measurement of trust in different institutions

During the Inqaz regime, the majority of surveyed young people express that they do not trust the government (57.09 percent), and only 40.37 percent show their trust in the ongoing government.

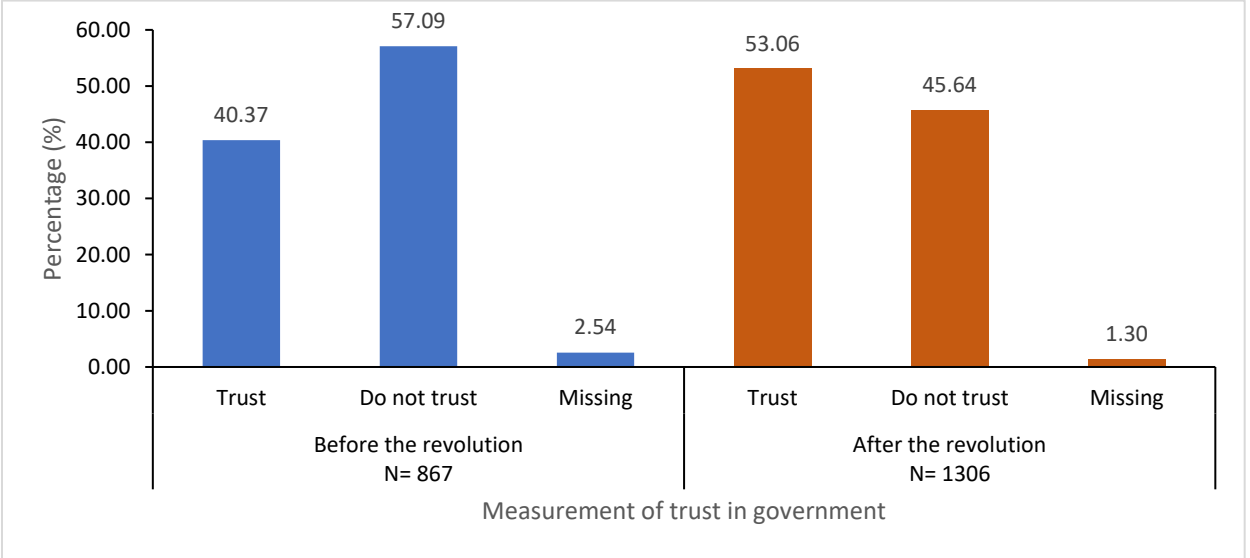
However, after the revolution, the level of trust increased among youth, where 53.06 percent of respondents appear to trust the transitional government, and 45.64 percent do not (Figure 19). This view about the level of trust is in line with what has been reported by the Carter Center, in which 52 percent of the responders were satisfied with the overall performance of the transitional government (Carter Center, 2021).

For political parties, there is obvious evidence that a substantial fraction (approximately 70 percent) of respondents in both periods lean toward not trusting political parties, compared to only around 26 percent who do (Figure 20).

**Table 3. Sudanese youth’s views on trusting the following institutions**

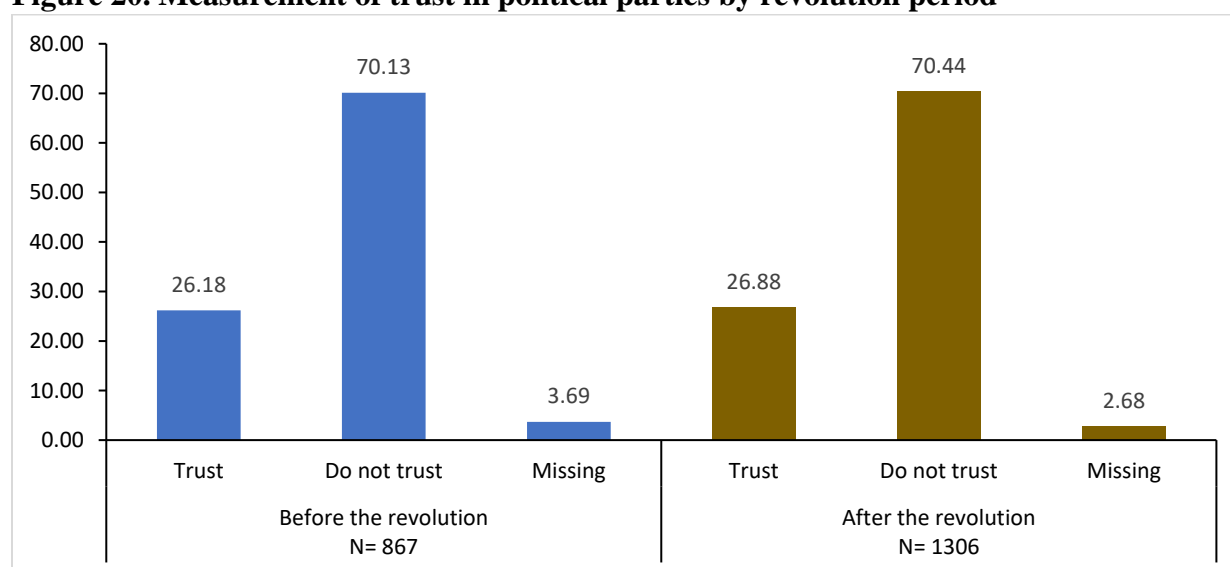
Variable	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)			After the revolution (transitional period)		
	Trust	Do not trust	Missing	Trust	Do not trust	Missing
Government	350 (40.37)	495 (57.09)	22 (2.54)	693 (53.06)	596 (45.64)	17 (1.30)
Political parties	227 (26.18)	608 (70.13)	32 (3.69)	351 (26.88)	920 (70.44)	35 (2.68)

**Figure 19. Measurement of trust in government by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/19-2020.

**Figure 20. Measurement of trust in political parties by revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/19-2020.

## 8. Participation in public affairs

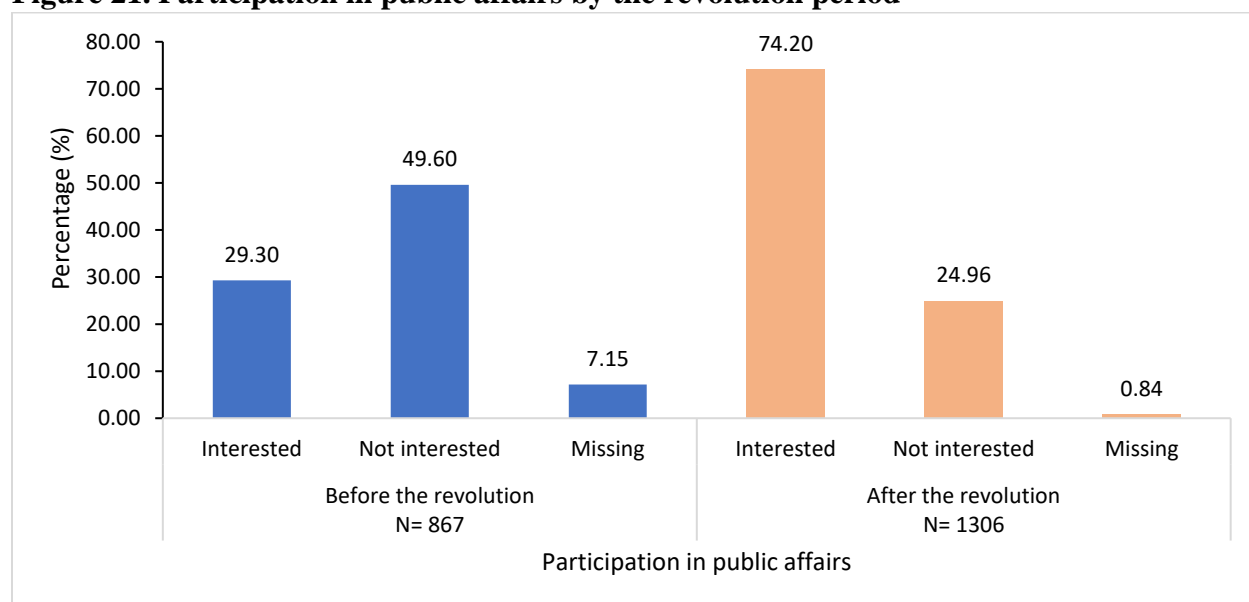
### 8.1. Youth interest in public affairs

During the Inqaz regime, nearly 50 percent of the respondents show that they have no interest in participating in public affairs, while only 29.30 percent are interested in taking part. On the other hand, the proportion of participation in public affairs increased, where 74.20 percent of youth became interested and 24.96 percent are not interested in the transitional period (Figure 21).

**Table 4. Sudanese youth's views on participation in public affairs**

Variable	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)			After the revolution (transitional period)		
	<i>Interested</i>	<i>Not interested</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Interested</i>	<i>Not interested</i>	<i>Missing</i>
Public Affairs	254 (29.30)	605 (69.78)	62 (7.15)	969 (74.20)	326 (24.96)	11 (0.84)

**Figure 21. Participation in public affairs by the revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/19-2020.

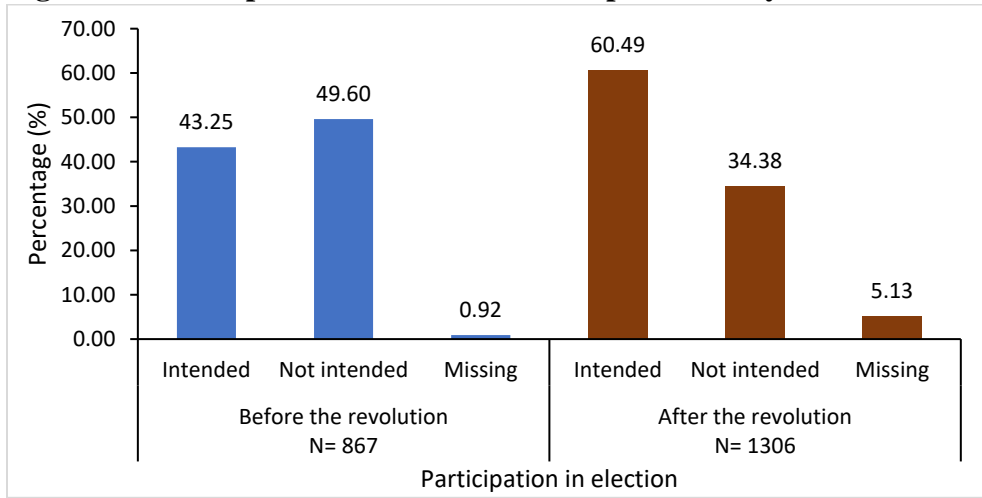
## 8.2. Youth participation in the next elections

During the Inqaz regime, almost 50 percent of the participants demonstrate that they have no intention to participate in the elections planned in 2020, though only 43.25 percent have intentions. On the other hand, this proportion of participation in the next elections after the transitional period increases, where 60.49 percent of youth are willing to take part and 34.38 percent do not intend to do so (Figure 22).

**Table 5. Sudanese youth's views on participation in the next election**

Variable	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)			After the revolution (transitional period)		
	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Not intended</i>	<i>Missing</i>	<i>Intended</i>	<i>Not intended</i>	<i>Missing</i>
Election	375 (43.25)	430 (49.60)	8 (0.92)	790 (60.49)	449 (34.38)	67 (5.13)

**Figure 22. Participation in the next election presented by the revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/19-2020.

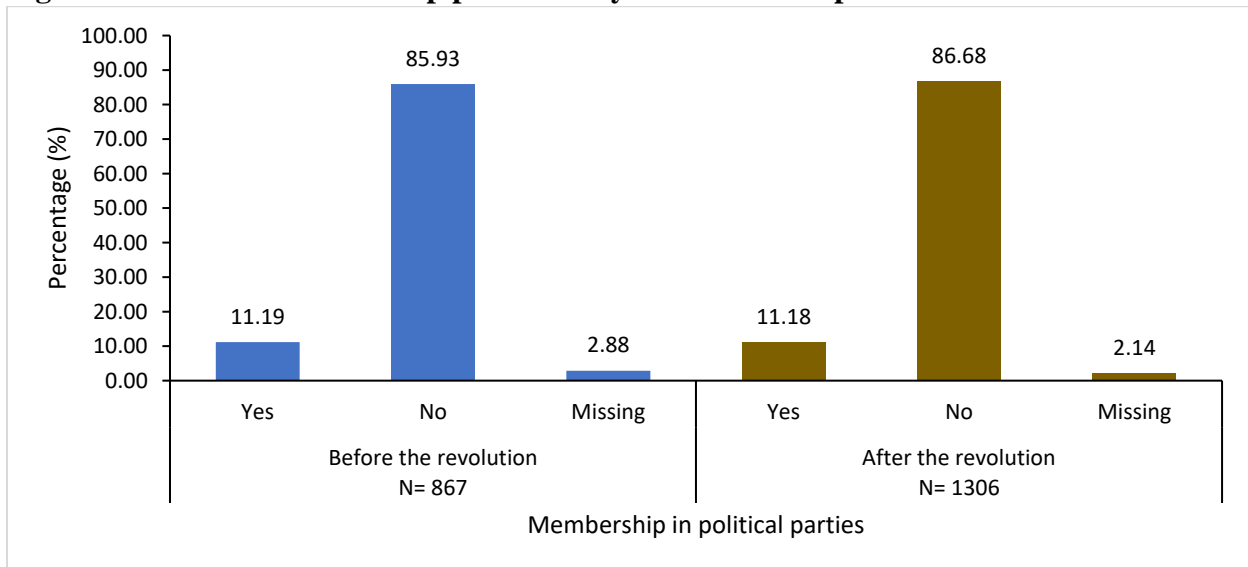
### 8.3. Young people's membership in political parties

It can be shown that most of the Sudanese youth who took the survey do not have a political membership with political parties (around 86 percent) during both periods. Only around 11 percent are associated with political parties (Figure 23).

**Table 6. Sudanese youth's membership in political parties**

Variables	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)			After the revolution (transitional period)		
	Yes	No	Missing	Yes	No	Missing
Political membership	97 (11.19)	745 (85.93)	25 (2.88)	146 (11.18)	1132 (86.68)	28 (2.14)

**Figure 23. Political membership presented by the revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/19-2020.

## 9. Evaluation of the public situation in the country

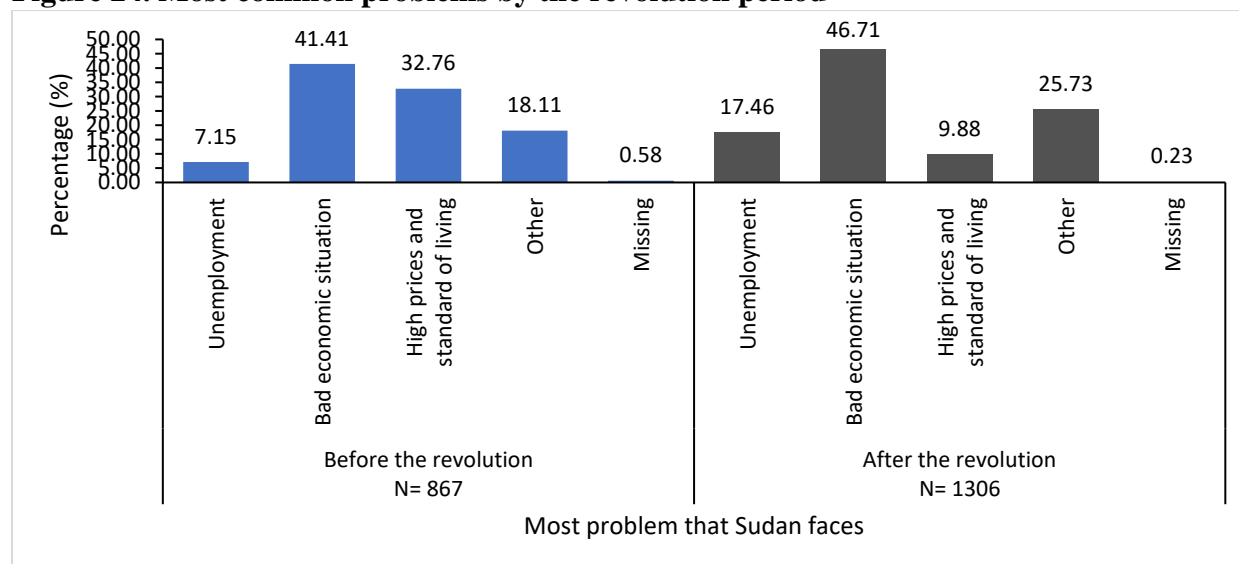
### 9.1. The most important problems faced in Sudan

The most prevalent problem that has been reported during the Inqaz regime and the transitional period is the bad economic situation at approximately 41 percent and 46 percent, respectively. This was followed by high prices and standard of living during the former period, but only 9.88 percent reported it after the revolution (Figure 24). This finding is consistent with participants' identification of most of the challenges that they face in Sudan, where a rising cost of living/bad economic situation and lack of employment was rated by 96 percent and 70 percent of the total sample (Carter Center, 2021). This finding could be due to the fact that Sudan has undergone a substantial sectoral reform that led to an incremental increase in the inflation rate.

**Table 7. Sudanese youth's views on the most important problems faced in Sudan**

Variables	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)		After the revolution (transitional period)	
	Frequency N = 867	Percentage (%)	Frequency N=1306	Percentage (%)
<b>Most common problem</b>				
Unemployment	62	7.15	228	17.46
Bad economic situation	359	41.41	610	46.71
High prices and standard of living	284	32.76	129	9.88
Other	157	18.11	336	25.73
Missing	5	0.58	3	0.23

**Figure 24. Most common problems by the revolution period**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/19-2020.



According to the regression outputs, it can be observed that the economic status, gender, employment status, region, educational level, family size, and age of Sudanese youth's families significantly determine their probability of trust in governmental institutions. For example, Sudanese youth who are from families with good economic conditions are more likely to trust the Inqaz government. This chance of trust also persists with the transitional government. This may explain the fact that those who suffered from hard economic conditions are the ones who participated in the revolution against the Inqaz regime the most. Those young people tend to trust other institutions such as the military, police, and judiciary, during both periods (i.e., before and after the revolution). Similarly, Sudanese youth who are from rural areas tend to have an increased likelihood of trusting the judiciary and political parties during the Inqaz regime. However, their trust turns to the military and the police during the transitional period.

Moreover, youth who are employed are likely to trust in the judiciary and military during the Inqaz regime. Contrarily, those who are unemployed are less likely to trust the police but they are more likely to trust political parties after the revolution. This may be because they dream that political parties could afford them job opportunities after they came in ruling the country during the transitional period.

In terms of age and education, older youth aged 25-34 years old are more likely to trust political parties when they jumped into governing the country after the revolution. This could be due to the fact that these are graduates who seek jobs, and they may have thought that political parties could offer them better job opportunities. For education, Sudanese youth who studied less than secondary school level are less likely to trust the military after the revolution, although those who study secondary school are more likely to trust the judiciary.

In relation to family size, Sudanese youth who belong to larger families (eight or more individuals) are less likely to trust in the judiciary and the police, but those from medium families (four to seven individuals) tend to trust the government during the transitional period.

Males appear more likely to participate in public affairs than females through both periods. Sudanese youth aged 25-34 years old were found to be more interested in public affairs during the transitional period. In addition, young people who are from large families (eight or more individuals) are less likely to participate in public affairs during the Inqaz regime. Similarly, those who are from rural areas have decreased chances of taking part in public affairs. For education, young people who studied above secondary school level were significantly more interested in participating in public affairs (Table 9).

**Table 8. Logistic regression outputs for selected outcomes (before and after the revolution)**

Variable Outcome	Before the revolution (Inqaz regime)					After the revolution				
	Judiciary odds ratio	Military odds ratio	Police odds ratio	Government odds ratio	Political party odds ratio	Judiciary odds ratio	Military odds ratio	Police odds ratio	Government odds ratio	Political party odds ratio
Gender (female)	1.266 (0.206)							1.222* (0.143)		
Employment status (employed)	1.730*** (0.301)	1.846*** (0.344)	1.276 (0.193)							
Family economic status (good)	1.641*** (0.261)	1.443** (0.248)	1.505*** (0.220)	1.548*** (0.230)	1.238 (0.205)	1.823*** (0.234)	1.779*** (0.223)	1.831*** (0.220)	2.006*** (0.242)	1.573*** (0.221)
Marital status (other)	0.472 (0.241)	0.501 (0.267)		0.345 (0.224)						
Region (rural)	1.432** (0.223)				1.723*** (0.280)	1.209 (0.153)	1.291** (0.159)	1.267** (0.146)	1.201 (0.140)	
Educational level (secondary)	1.588** (0.302)									
Family size (4-7)	0.797 (0.123)								1.223* (0.145)	
Marital status (married)			1.232 (0.181)		1.292 (0.205)					
Age group (25-34)				1.203 (0.170)					0.860 (0.101)	1.385** (0.181)
Family size (>=8)				0.722 (0.173)		0.632* (0.152)		0.610** (0.145)		
Employment (unemployed)							1.251 (0.175)	0.790* (0.110)	0.814 (0.112)	1.306* (0.205)
Educational level (<secondary school)							0.805* (0.0983)			
Constant	1.068 (0.232)	2.349*** (0.347)	0.989 (0.141)	0.511*** (0.0739)	0.212*** (0.0403)	1.551*** (0.198)	1.166 (0.201)	0.701** (0.114)	0.725* (0.141)	0.191*** (0.0377)
Observations	847	846	856	845	835	1,282	1,286	1,288	1,285	1,267

Standard error in parentheses, and \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. ¥male, 18 to 24 years, single, illiterate, and employed, not good, <=3 individuals were the reference group .

**Table 9. Logistic regression output for interest in public affairs (before and after the revolution)**

Variable	(1) odds ratio	(2) odds ratio
Gender (female)	0.663*** (0.101)	0.544*** (0.0731)
Age group (25-34)	1.233 (0.193)	1.366** (0.186)
Family size (4-7)	0.814 (0.130)	
Family size (>=8)	0.594* (0.168)	
Educational level (< school)	2.204* (0.952)	2.620*** (0.729)
Educational level (secondary school)	1.874 (0.838)	1.648* (0.476)
Educational level (> secondary school)	2.412** (1.055)	3.563*** (1.045)
Region (rural)		0.675*** (0.0939)
Constant	0.257*** (0.112)	1.953** (0.580)
Observations	859	1,291

Standard error in parentheses, and \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1. ¥male, 18 to 24 years, single, illiterate, and <=3 individuals were the reference group

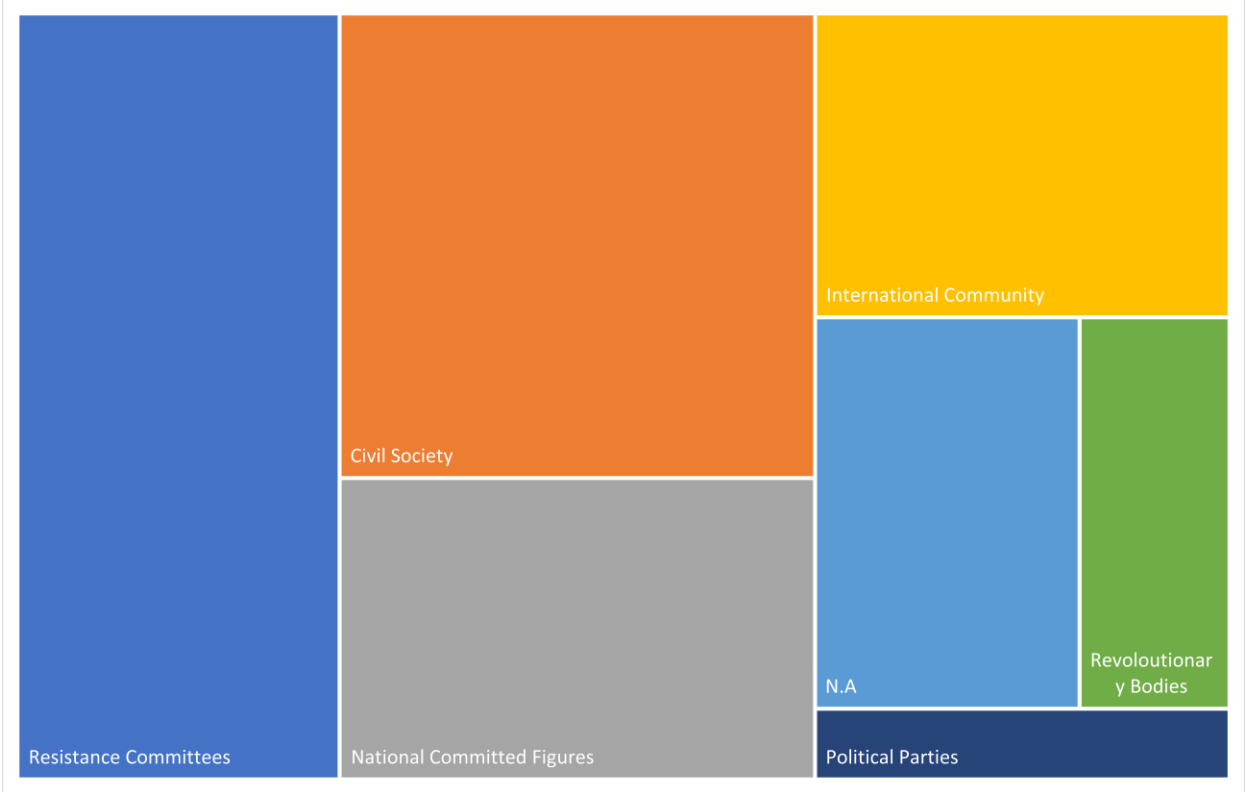
## 10. The youth movement and revolutionary politics in Sudan

After the December Revolution, and especially after the 25 October coup, youth of both genders have been playing a significant role in shaping the political discourse in Sudan. Even though youth had their reservations about the transitional government and its performance (Carter Center, 2021), they were the main political actor in resisting the coup and preventing its success. The role played by youth, represented by the decentralized LRCs, was growing beyond the invitation for demonstrations toward reshaping the balance of power and the revolutionary movement from the opposition elites to the youth grassroots. This can obviously be seen by the slogans raised by youth after the coup, namely the “Three Nos” (no negotiation, no partnership, no bargaining), and their ramifications on the failure of the 25 October coup, which is represented by the fact that almost a year later, the coup leaders are still unable to form a government.

Regardless of the reservations that can be raised about the principle, this position taken by youth has changed the Sudanese political landscape away from the up-bottom elite arrangements to a new political arena that is dominated by youth. Beyond the rejection of the Coup, the Three Nos slogan was a standoff against all the traditional political actors in Sudan. This position of youth

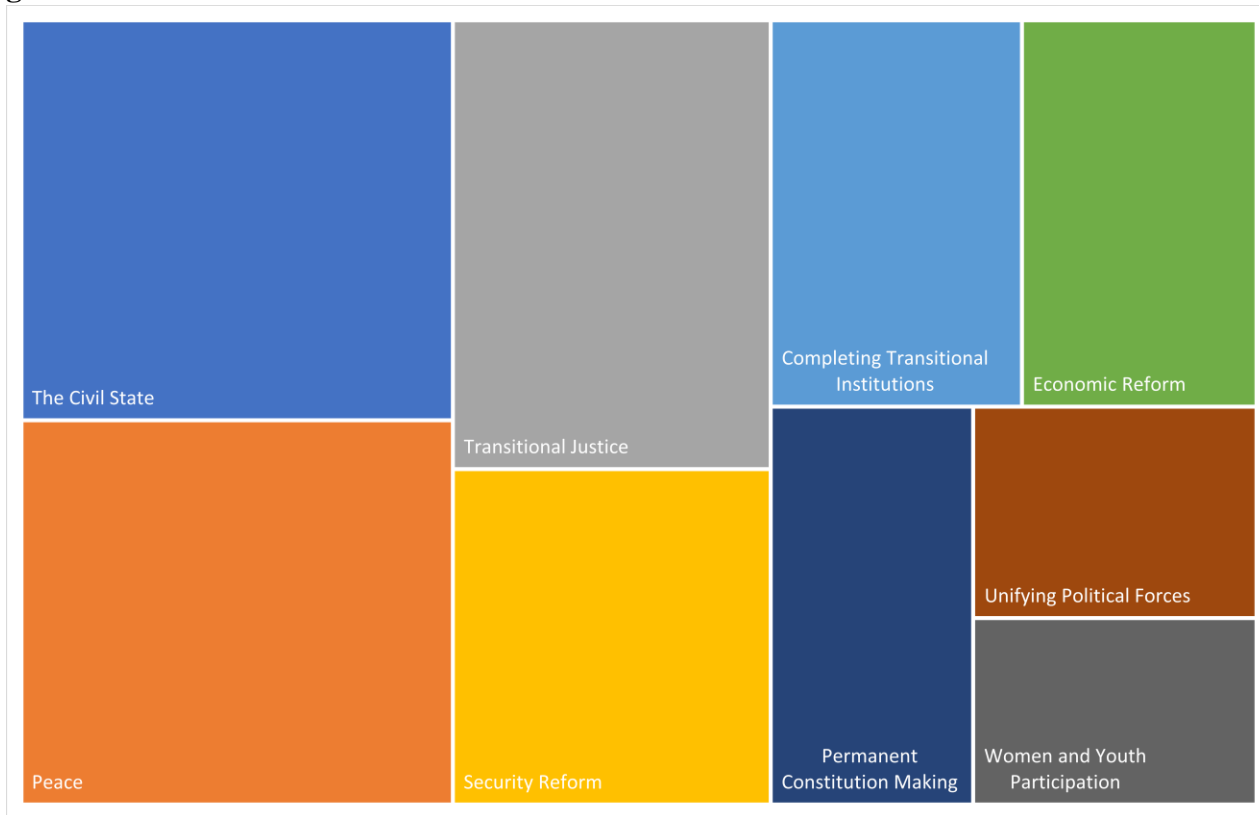
was fueled by mistrust in the military institutions as well as all the political entities that were trying to legitimize the coup, including some of the movements that signed the Juba Peace Agreement.

**Figure 25. Who do you think can be trusted to lead initiatives toward national reconciliation, good governance, and justice?**



Source: Carter Center 2022.

**Figure 26. What are your top concerns regarding Sudan's transition to a civilian government?**



Source: Carter Center 2022.

According to the Carter Center, which organized focus group discussions with 500 youth from the LRCs and youth-led organizations right after the 25 October coup, youth mainly trusted the LRCs and civil society in leading initiatives that achieve national reconciliation, good governance, and justice. The main concerns of youth regarding the democratic transition were building the civil state, inclusive peace, transitional justice, and reforming the security sector.

According to the same report, youth do not want to be part of the executive governmental bodies; instead, they want to be a core element in the legislative council in the transitional government and the peace commission, to act as a monitoring body of the transition.

“These [s]treets will remain roaring torrents to topple every attempt to circumvent our glorious revolution, and those who tend to sit with the military and militias whose hands are stained with the blood of our martyrs must know that we do not accept any bargaining that gives the perpetrators a lifeline for the crimes they committed against our people, and we will not grant any political organization the right to negotiate to legitimize the military coup and pave the way

for their impunity.” - Coordination of Kalakla and South Khartoum Committees, Media Office,  
11 June 2022<sup>19</sup>

It's worth mentioning that politically-affiliated youth were also affected by the political elitism within their parties and the lack of representation. Therefore, the LRCs were an incubator for all youth, even politically-affiliated ones.<sup>20</sup>

After the coup, the LRCs organized themselves under bigger coordination bodies and committee gatherings. It started with the LRCs in Khartoum, which organized themselves under the Coordination Body of Khartoum State's Resistance Committees. This body included an elected representative from all gatherings of LRCs in Khartoum. Two months after the coup, the coordination body of Khartoum's LRCs raised their slogan. “[O]ur destiny is that we are the generation that will pay the cost of the end of the military coups, and we will not postpone this battle,” announced the Charter for the Establishment of People's Power, which included their vision for building the structure of the transitional institutions. In June 2022, almost all LRCs from all the states of Sudan (except Kassala, White Nile, and West Kordofan) were organized in one entity: the Committee of the Unified Charter of the Resistance Committees (CUCRC).

The CUCRC announced another inclusive political charter (the Revolutionary Charter for People's Power), which included the vision of Sudanese youth for the transitional government, its goals, governance bodies, the economy, and social justice. Some political analysts see this move as a first stage for youth and LRCs to play the role of a locomotive that pulls all the other components of the political scene (Ali, 2022).

## **11. Conclusion, policy lessons, and key messages**

This paper aims to explore the role of the economic and political factors that hindered the absorption of Sudanese youth into the developmental process. It also attempts to understand the role of youth in the December Revolution and in shaping the political discourse, especially after the coup of 25 October 2021. The paper also investigates the determinants of Sudanese youth's views on the government, political parties, and their aspirations and interest in public affairs before and after the revolution.

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<sup>19</sup> See: [shorturl.at/fMVZ3](https://shorturl.at/fMVZ3)

<sup>20</sup> Although this has resulted in some difficulties represented in the political polarization attempts of the politically affiliated members in the LRCs, their attempts to incite the LRCs to organize demonstrations as a political response to some issues that may not necessarily represent the positions of the youth, but rather the positions of the political parties to which they belong. This happened during the transitional government on issues such as the fuel subsidy reforms and normalization with Israel.

Evidence indicates that political and economic factors play a vital role in impeding job creation in both the public and private sectors, given the fact that the youth category was greatly growing. Hence, the job market was not able to absorb this growth into the economy, which turns into higher unemployment. These factors include a rentier economy that does not increase real productivity, macroeconomic distortions, conflict and violence, and the politicization of the labor market. This also increased the level of frustration among young people about the Inqaz regime, and it explains why unemployed young people do not trust the government, which could have probably led to the revolution. This could likely be the case because Sudanese youth from families with good economic conditions were found to have no issues with governments before and after the revolution. On the other hand, the unemployed and youth aged 25 to 34 years of age who are probably college graduates turn to trust political parties after the revolution as they aim for better job opportunities that get them into the country's employment system.

Although the majority of surveyed Sudanese youth do not have a political membership with political parties, our analysis suggests that males are more interested in public participation than females during the Inqaz regime and after the revolution. Young adults (25-34 years old) were also more willing to take part in political affairs, along with those who are from families of large sizes (more than eight individuals), and those are possibly the poorest families. However, those young people were not interested to participate during the Inqaz regime. In addition, those who studied above secondary school had an obvious interest in participating in public affairs.

Ahead of the 25 October procedures, Sudanese youth played a crucial role in reshaping the political discourse as they demonstrated a considerable organizational capacity. The LRCs organized themselves under bigger coordination groups and committees, forming their own vision for the transitional period and the future of Sudan, thereby fighting for democratization. Moreover, they see themselves as watchdogs for the democratic transformation and they also want to participate in the legislative councils in the coming democratic government.

In summary, based on our analysis and international best practices of youth development policies and plans, the main policy lessons that should be considered in absorbing the youth bulge and contributing to their development would be:

- Robust policies are to be put in place to integrate Sudanese youth into the economic system by affording better and decent job opportunities to absorb emerging youth cohorts and hence decrease unemployment.
- The incorporation of Sudanese young people in the formulation of a national strategic vision that addresses youth demand as they make up a larger proportion of the population and are expected to grow further.
- Increasing government expenditure on youth development policy creates political stability and can promote poverty reduction, especially in rural areas.

- The formulation of youth councils as a State body will help produce a well-informed patriot statement and reduce the chances of civil war and identity conflicts. Also, the transitional governments should tailor suitable training programs to meet local livelihoods to import technology in traditional sectors, especially in agriculture.
- Becoming training-oriented to enhance the capacities of youth bodies in areas of organization, coordination, negotiation, and transformation of their visions to programs will facilitate the transition of these coordination bodies to youth-led political parties.
- Becoming training-oriented to enhance the knowledge of youth coordination bodies on public financial management will allow them to play a vital role as watchdogs and hold the government accountable.



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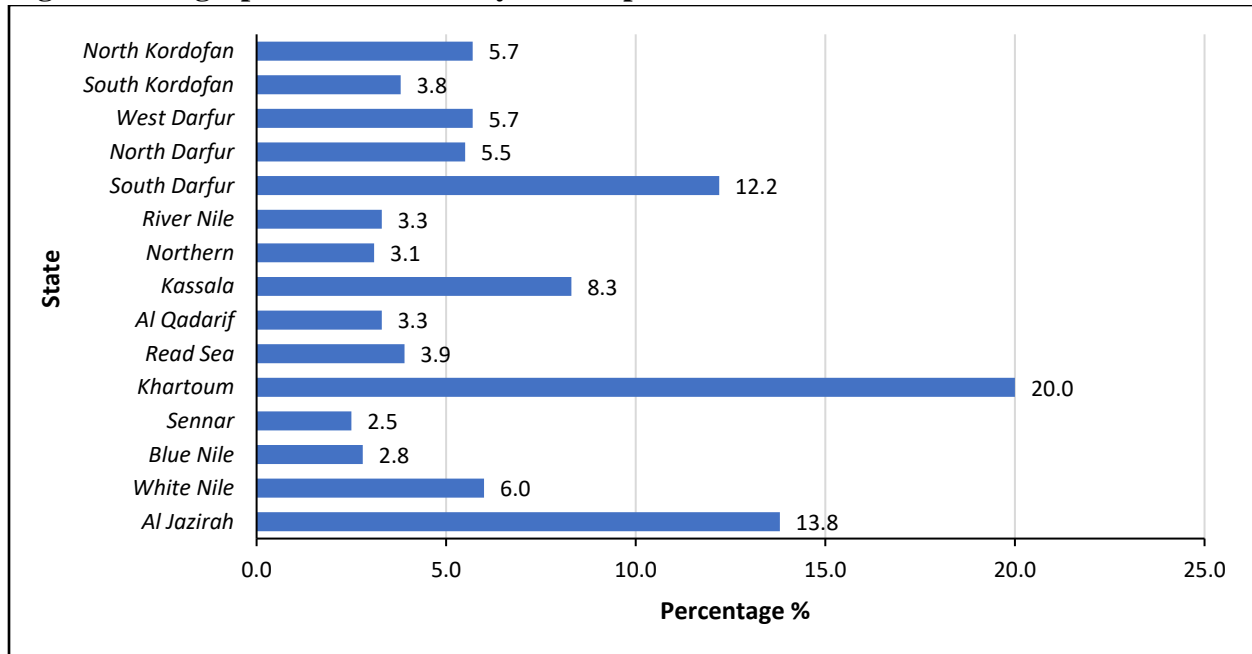
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## Appendix

**Figure 1. Geographical locations of youth respondents**



Source: Author calculations based on AI data 2018/2019-2020.

**Table 1. State poverty rate, HCR 2019 (based on adjusted 2009 NPL)**

State	State poverty rate %
Northern	36.4
River Nile	41.1
Red Sea	68.5
Kassala	48.6
Al-Gadarif	48.3
Khartoum	38.1
Al-Gezira	43.7
White Nile	61.3
Sinnar	51.3
Blue Nile	62.4
North Kordufan	60.3
South Kordufan	82.1
West Kordufan	64.7
North Darfur	68.6
West Darfur	77.7
South Darfur	67.7
Central Darfur	84.4
East Darfur	70.2

**Table 2**

**International experience of youth development policies**

Country	Issue	Policy intervention	Outcomes
<b>Malaysia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of political drive (Malaysia Youth Council (MBM) and its relevance to youth development 2012).</li> <li>• Lack of membership and participation in youth associations (Malaysia youth data show that only 10 percent of youth actually join these associations. Moreover, according to Samsudin (2007), the capacity of existing youth associations to accommodate the 11.1 million youth in Malaysia is limited).</li> <li>• Low priority in the social agenda compared to issues such as job security, wage, and unpaid home workers (many youth associations do attract leaders or members with a personal interest in opportunities, such as joining international tours or attending seminars to achieve a perceived a higher social status).</li> <li>• Limited associations have programs for producing successful leaders (Azimi and Turiman, 1996).</li> </ul>	<p>The 1996 Seventh Malaysian Plan (ISD 2019) was the first governmental plan to mention youth development, even though the Malaysian Youth Council was established nearly 50 years earlier in 1948 (Malaysia Country Youth Profile 2019).</p> <p>The Seventh Malaysian Plan, implemented from 1996 to 2000, was the country’s first development plan to include a specific chapter on youth leadership development, the main objective of which was to provide them with the necessary skills to increase their participation and contribution to nation-building, as well as to develop leadership skills and positive values.</p> <p>The plan stressed the importance of the Malaysian Youth Council as a focus point for all policies concerned with youth development through the Youth Advisory Council. Also, the plan introduced reforms in education and built a seven-year plan to help formulate policies to encourage building up youth character, leadership qualities, and a healthy lifestyle (ISD 2019).</p> <p>Reducing the voting age in national and state elections from 21 to 18. On 16 July 2019, the Dewan Rakyat, the lower house of the Parliament of Malaysia, passed a constitution amendment bill in 2019 (BenarNews, 2021).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malaysian youth recently achieved a historical milestone in the political rights of youth by reduces the voting age in national and state elections from 21 to 18. The lowering of the age for voting opened a new horizon for political parties to develop youth-inclusive programs for youth aged 18 to 20 years old as they represent the new voting bloc in the political arena.</li> </ul>

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**Rwanda**

The youth represent 35 percent (the highest proportion) of the classified low-income demographic, according to a 2016 labor force survey (UK Government, 2017).

According to Ruth Charo, a senior education specialist, and Rolande Pryce, the World Bank Country Manager, “Many challenges persist, more than 90 percent of enterprises are in the informal sector. 14 percent of the workforce is unemployed and not involved in capacity building activities relevant to the market needs. Youth unemployment is 21 percent and the ones that are working about 60 percent of them are in low-productivity jobs (World Bank Blogs, 2002, Banking on youth: Rwanda’s path to a 21st century economy).

A research paper by Twagilimana and Manniko-Barbutiu (2018) categorized ICT pro-youth government policies into seven stages, especially in education, including:

**2000 Rwanda Vision 2020:** Transforming from an agrarian economy to a knowledge economy

**2001 Economic Development and Poverty Reduction**

**Strategy:** Developing skills for a knowledge-based society to increase innovation in ICT and leverage ICT in education.

**2000 National Information and Communication**

**Infrastructure Plan:** Addressing challenges in information technologies to accelerate socioeconomic development.

**2006 Policy on Science:**

Improving technology, innovation, and the integration of science as well as computer literacy, and promoting them in schools and workplaces.

**Education Sector Strategic Plan (2013/14/17/18):**

Promoting ICT in education.

Since 2000, Paul Kagame has been running the country and he has successfully managed to bring significant changes in the youth issues, such as involving them in the formation of youth policies, increasing the literacy rate among youth, and introducing ICT in primary education (the ‘one tablet for every child’ initiative) and the formation of a national youth council.

In terms of Internet and mobile coverage, a 4G LTE mobile network covers 96.75 percent of the total country territory. The number of Rwandans with access to these services is 96.6 percent of the total population. In terms of electronic financial services and the adoption of e-transactions, mobile payment subscribers increased in 2018 by 12 percent from 2017. The total number of values transacted through mobile payment increased in 2018 by 31 percent from 2017. In general, the Rwandan economy is rapidly changing toward mobile services (Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Innovation, 2022).

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