

**Gender differences in Education and Work among
Young Malaysians: Implications for Policy**

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Abstract

Malaysia has expanded opportunities for education at all levels for many years. As a result, the country has achieved substantially Sustainable Development Goal 4 for inclusive and equitable education. Achieving quality under this goal has remained elusive, however. Despite the gender balance in favour of females in both secondary and tertiary education, significant attrition occurs among males in secondary school despite the provision of universal secondary education. While youths in the labour force are engaged in lower level occupations, a significant proportion of those not in school is unemployed. Of the latter, many are not actively seeking employment. At the same time, despite their educational advantage, women participate less in the labour force. These trends, if not reversed, will produce an under-qualified labour force. Ineffective use of human capital for development also results from those opting out of the labour force. Unless these issues can be overcome, Malaysia will find it harder to move out of the 'middle-income trap' to attain the status of a developed country.