Generation What? Arabic Countries
EGYPT

National Report

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March, 2019

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Project implemented by AISBL EBU-UE in partnership with ASBU, COPEAM, Upian and Yami 2
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1. Introduction and Literature Review

In November 2018, the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAMPAS 2017) estimated Egypt’s population at 99.4 million. A significant part of it, about 20.2 million, is aged from 18 to 29 years old (CAPMAS 2017)\(^1\). Consequently, demographers have argued that Egypt’s demographic transition has been characterized by a remarkable “youth bulge”, which could either turn into a demographic opportunity, a threat or an enormous developmental challenge (SYPE 2010: vi). The same source indicates that males represent a little more than half of the country’s youth (50.6%), while 49.4% is female. State records also show a gender gap when it comes to literacy: 13.5% of the male population is illiterate, compared to 18.5 % of the country’s female population in the same age group\(^2\).

The Egyptian youth is in a precarious situation. A slow economy, unemployment crisis, gender gap in educational achievement, limited participation in political life, political turmoil and limited freedom of expression, exposure to nuanced understandings of morality, unachieved aspirations with no resolution at sight have a fundamental effect on the outlook and attitude of the young generation\(^3\).

The 2018 Generation What? survey generated a unique database on the situation of the youth in Egypt, covering a broad set of areas crucial to the transition to adulthood, including how the youth are represented, their social integration, their perception of society, their conception of morality, freedom, religion, their views on the public/private divide, their position in the Arab world and finally, their political life as well as how they perceive the political institutions in their country and their relation to them.

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\(^1\) https://www.capmas.gov.eg/
\(^2\) CAPMAS, ibid.
*Generation What?* interviewed a sample of 1,227 respondents among the Egyptian youth, all aged between 18 and 34, 40% of which are still students. Among the sample, the percentage of males (50.7%) was slightly higher than their female counterparts (49.3%). More than half of the respondents still live with their parents (62.6%). This is an expected result, given that the Egyptian youth typically move out from their parents’ houses upon marriage. However, given that the median age at first marriage in Egypt is 21.3 and 21.1 for the age groups between 25-29, and 30-34 respectively and that the sample included respondents until the age of 34, one plausible explanation is that a group of respondents were married when they took the survey and therefore lived with their partners. But this observation needs further investigation, given that the respondents were not asked about their marital status as part of their demographic characteristics.

Slightly over half of the sample completed an upper secondary education (51.5%), whereas 23.5% completed a post-secondary tertiary education, and 15.7% finished a tertiary education.

Almost 39.4% of the sample of respondents are still students, while the majority of the remaining have diverse contracting arrangements. Among the remaining, 60% are employed, 36.7% have permanent contracts, 15.4% have temporary contracts and 13.2% are self-employed. It is interesting to observe that 21.2% of the respondents selected “other”. This could be due to the fact that a large number of the educated youth, with high diplomas and above, are wageworkers in employment relations that are not documented by work contracts. The questions asked in the survey, however, do not reveal the consequences of each contract arrangement on the youth’s sense of social security and their access to medical insurance.

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4 Source: EDHS 2014.
In terms of employment status, 11.7 % of the respondents are unemployed. This figure is less than figures indicated in other surveys on the youth. For instance, one of SYPE’s findings is that the unemployment rate among people aged between 15 and 29 is 16%. This is maybe because over half of the respondents who took the survey completed their upper secondary education and belonged to the middle or upper/middle classes. In terms of employment positions, 23.1 % are employees, 14,1% are executives, 32.1 % are in intermediate positions, 25,2% are independent and 5,5% are workers.
Research on the youth in the Arab Middle East – Egypt included – has attracted little scholarly attention, compared to other social and cultural categories such as “women” and the “poor”. In development literature, the youth refers simultaneously to a “cultural group, an age cohort, and a socio-political category”\textsuperscript{6}.

Prior to 2011, studies typically focused on describing the youth’s features and analysing their failed transition to adulthood. For instance, a nationally representative Survey of Young People in Egypt (SYPE) was conducted by the Population Council in 2010 with the aim of providing a snapshot of the profile of the youth (aged between 10 and 29) in Egypt, while focusing on five key life transitions for the youth’s life including: health, education, employment, livelihoods, family formation and civic participation. SYPE findings indicate several key issues including the fact that the structure of opportunities in Egypt is highly gendered and that the poverty of the household to which each of the youth belongs limits his/her education and employment potentials and increase his/her exposure to health risks. The report offers some significant data that could be helpful for governmental policies on development.

Anouk de Koning’s ethnography, \textit{Global Dreams: Class, Gender and Public Space in Cosmopolitan Cairo} (2009), offers an interesting account of how neoliberal development has led to a reconfiguration of class and gender in Cairo. She highlights that the westernization of public life in Cairo widened the gap between the middle and the upper-middle youths, whereby the latter managed to pursue cosmopolitan identities and social statues and the former was left excluded. She adds that such identities are borrowed from both Western and religious (Islamic) registers\textsuperscript{7}. One year later, Heba El Sayed (2010) analysed how the unlikely young Cairo cosmopolitans, members of the lower middle-class, resort to consume Islamic media where they feel represented, meaningful

and included unlike in the city, a place they consider immoral, where foreign values prevail and from which they are excluded and marginalized.\(^8\)

Since the unprecedented series of political changes that have occurred since the Arab uprisings of 2011, however, the Egyptian youth have attracted media and policy attention notwithstanding given their central roles in political mobilization during the infamous 18 days that led to the ousting of former president Hosni Mubarak\(^9\). During this time, scholars, media analysts and policy makers noted that today's Egyptian youth, the most numerous and educated generation in the country's history, "are recognized simultaneously as critical objects and agents of change"\(^10\). Such studies, however, undermine the relation between the economy and young people's everyday life.

It is in that context that critical youth studies emerged in order to highlight the missing political economy through analysing not only the perceptions and actions of young people by researching them but also the activities, interests and agendas of elite social actors – such as international development organizations, high level policy-makers, think tanks and foundations, trade unions and faith groups, who play an enormous and indisputable part in shaping young people's lives.\(^11\)

The meaning of the *Generation What?* survey lies in the fact that it targets the “youth” that are not typically represented in previous surveys and studies, which typically focused on the rural/illiterate Egyptian youth. In this survey, respondents were reached through Mada readership; they mostly live in capital cities such as Cairo and Alexandria, the majority of them are educated, work and belong to the middle/upper middle-class. On the hand, they are in the privileged positions compared to the other youths in Egypt. Their answers should therefore

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be read with that cautious note in mind. On the other hand, it is these youth who are often seen as agents of change, and hence, while their views may not be typical or representative of the youth in Egypt, they maybe in a privileged position to initiate and influence change in the short and long term.
2. Definitions and Representations of the youth in the Present and in the Future

Statistical accounts usually define the youth as an age group of people ranging from 10 to 29. In media representations and public relation campaigns circulated in the Arab world, the youth is represented as pessimistic and bounded by a psychological feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. This, in the view of Arab elites in positions of power, results in increasing problems of unemployment and more seriously the spread of religious fundamentalism. On the opposite, Generation What?‘s findings contradict such depictions, for the majority of its respondents, regardless of other variables, saw their future as bound to be better than their parents’ lives. In fact, one of the survey’s filmed interviewees is a dentist in his early 30s, who claimed that what distinguishes this generation from previous young generations is that “it’s different, persevering and open-minded,” and that he’s optimistic about the future.

![Graph showing responses to a question about future prospects.]

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13 Ibid.
14 Interview code: OB6A3484
The issue of whether or not the youth masters its destiny was recently discussed by anthropologist Samuli Schielke in his work *Egypt in the Future Tense*, where he describes the dilemma of the youth in a rural village not far from Alexandria. In this account, Schielke notes that the male youth live in a state of tension between the frustration of the present and the expectation of something better that is *yet* to come in the future. Schielke shows that this tension lies in the ambiguous (Islamic) religious idea of destiny whereby Muslims’ futures are dictated by God but also guided by their actions in life.\(^{15}\)

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When asked about the extent to which they master their destiny, more than half of the respondents noted that they do. Interestingly, there was a correlation between gender and the sense of mastering the future whereby females felt more in control of their destiny that their male counterparts. This is maybe due to the fact that males in Egypt are increasingly put under financial pressures in order to prove their masculinity. Such pressures are linked to marriage, having a family, supporting your elderly parents, etc\textsuperscript{16}.

While the educational level did not make a difference, those who aged between 25 and 34 noted that they master their destiny more than the younger category. Furthermore, those who have permanent contracts expectedly stated that they master their lives more than those who are still students. One plausible explanation is that those who have financial independency somehow feel more in control of their lives.

**Overall, do you feel like you’re the master of your destiny, that you’re in control of your life?**

Answers by sex:

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{chart.png}
\end{figure}

Answers by age in two slices:

**De manière générale, penses-tu que tu es maître de ton destin, que tu es aux commandes de ta vie ?**

- **18-24 ans**
  - Oui ("3" ou "4" ou "5 = Je maîtrise totalement ce qui m'arrive")
  - Non ("0 = Non, je subis les choses qui m'arrivent" ou "1" ou "2")
  - 51% Oui, 45% Non

- **25-34 ans**
  - Oui ("3" ou "4" ou "5 = Je maîtrise totalement ce qui m'arrive")
  - Non ("0 = Non, je subis les choses qui m'arrivent" ou "1" ou "2")
  - 57% Oui, 40% Non

**De manière générale, penses-tu que tu es maître de ton destin, que tu es aux commandes de ta vie ?**

- **ISCED<4 ou autre**
  - Oui ("3" ou "4" ou "5 = Je maîtrise totalement ce qui m'arrive")
  - Non ("0 = Non, je subis les choses qui m'arrivent" ou "1" ou "2")
  - 54% Oui, 42% Non

- **ISCED ≥4**
  - Oui ("3" ou "4" ou "5 = Je maîtrise totalement ce qui m'arrive")
  - Non ("0 = Non, je subis les choses qui m'arrivent" ou "1" ou "2")
  - 53% Oui, 42% Non
Responses according to certain status categories (with enough data to examine subcategories of respondents):

It's interesting to observe how respondents commented on their age. When asked about whether or not twenty was the best age to be, half of the respondents did not agree. Slight variations occurred when other variables were taken into account such as gender, age group, and employment status.
Avoir 20 ans, c'est le plus bel âge de la vie.

18-24 ans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pas d'accord</th>
<th>D'accord</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
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</table>

25-34 ans

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>42</td>
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Avoir 20 ans, c'est le plus bel âge de la vie.

ISCED<4 ou autre

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<tbody>
<tr>
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ISCED ≥4

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<td>43</td>
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Furthermore, when asked whether or not they could you be happy without having their own family, living in their country, access to the news and information, or without having sex, the majority of respondents noted that they would be happy to live in a country other than their own. This possibly reflects the amount of economic and social pressures put on the youth. An interesting result however, is that the majority of respondents noted that they would be happy to live without having a family and very few noted that they would be happy to live without having sex. Furthermore, the majority of them answered that being successful in life is linked to being happy on a daily basis, without necessarily having a job or a family. These findings contradict cultural assumptions and stereotypical depictions of the youth as considering marriage and family life as their ultimate goal.
Réponses "Oui" à "Pourrais-tu être heureux sans..." pour chaque proposition en abscisse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>ISCED&lt;4</th>
<th>ISCED ≥4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sans fonder une famille</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans vivre dans ton pays</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans infos ni actualités</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sans sexe</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Social Integration and Beginning of Adult Life

Recent studies on the youth in Egypt reported several obstacles that would make their transition to adult life challenging. Previous surveys indicate that these obstacles include high unemployment, their lack of access to social security, health issues, disability, only to mention a few. In this survey, respondents had a sense of responsibility concerning a successful integration to adult life, as we can see that most of them answer that they are the only ones responsible for their success in life.

There are two plausible explanations for this result. It may reflect a lack of trust in the government in providing employment opportunities, even though previous statistical evidence shows that young people predominantly prefer working in the public sector (governmental jobs). For instance, SYPE shows that about 72% of young people have expressed a preference for a governmental job because it provides them with social security and health insurance\(^{17}\). However, the difference between the *Generation What?* Survey and SYPE may be due to the fact that SYPE respondents predominantly belong to the youth from poor households, whereas *Generation What?*, as explained earlier, seems to have included more those who belong to the middle-, upper-middle classes living in capital cities. This explanation is substantiated by the fact that over half of the respondents do not believe that the educational system provides an equal chance to all. Furthermore, the majority of working respondents feel fulfilled in their current jobs and believe that the latter are in line with their qualifications — a result that the youth from poorer backgrounds may not share since their educational credentials and training do not match the needs of the labour market\(^{18}\). Another possible explanation is the rise of interest among the middle-class youth to engage in entrepreneurship or to have their own businesses and the impact of the neoliberal logic of governance in cultivating a sense of individual responsibility towards the future among the youth.

\(^{17}\) SYPE p. 14.  
\(^{18}\) SYPE p. 19.
Meanwhile, *Generation What?*’s respondents claimed that in periods of high unemployment, jobs should be reserved to the youth. Interestingly enough, there was no preference for male employment over their female counterparts. This reflects a sense of entitlement among the youth and possibly a realization that both males and females are equally entitled to employment at times of hardships, thereby questioning the idea of males being predominantly the main heads of households as shown in previous surveys such as SYPE, which revealed that young people in Egypt have patriarchal views towards gender roles\textsuperscript{19}.

\textsuperscript{19} Findings of SYPE includes that one in three young males believed that “educating boys is more important than educating girls; The majority do not agree that boys should do equal amounts of domestic work as girls; and that More than 70% of the young men and 41% of young women agree that a girl must obey her brother’s opinion even if he’s younger that she is” (SYPE 2010, p. 20).
Réponses "D’accord" à : "En période de fort chômage, les emplois devraient être réservés en priorité..."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
<th>Femmes</th>
<th>Hommes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;aux hommes&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;aux citoyens de mon pays&quot;</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;aux jeunes&quot;</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Perception of Society

Previous studies show that in Egypt, gender discrimination is prevalent in labour force, educational achievements and exposure to health risks associated with practices such as female gender mutilation. For instance, data from SYPE shows that 82% of females aged 10-29 are circumcised. It is thus not surprising to find that the majority of the Generation What? respondents view that the Egyptian society is at a far cry away from gender equality. The question of whether or not respondents are in favor of gender equality was not asked. However, based on the rest of the responses, one may anticipate that the Generation What? respondents are in favor.
In terms of perceptions of freedom in their country, the majority of respondents claim that there is none. Trying to define what freedom means is not straightforward. Freedom could be linked to individual/personal freedom; the power and right to act as one is pleased in his/her private life. But it could also mean freedom to speak freely in the public and domestic spheres. Of course, these two meanings may overlap at times. Looking at the filmed interviews, we can see that the question was asked as part of a set of queries about personal freedom, followed by a set of questions related to drug consumption, and the rise of individualism. Despite this negative connotation, the majority thought that there is no freedom. In one of the filmed interviews, a female respondent, who is a PhD student in her mid-30s, noted that the sense of freedom “is much better than before but still...”

If considered in terms of political freedom, then the answers should be interpreted quite differently. In that case, they should be understood in the context of the recent governmental policies constraining activism, through the government’s attempt to control cyberspace, digital activism and protesting. Before 2008 and until 2014, the government would persecute individuals for their activism on the bases of their “misuse” of cyberspace. In the current political climate, the ordinary youth are found guilty of this, even some who are not politically active but who still express opinions on the cyberspace, given its

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20 Interview code : OB6A3116
centrality for the youth to expressing political opinions. Furthermore, the issuance of the 2013 protest law imposed further restrictions as it allowed sentencing those who participate in any demonstration not approved by the interior ministry and dictates a minimum sentence of two years’ imprisonment for an blurry range of offenses including “violating public order”. In addition, the new “Terrorist Entities law” employs a vague terminology “that can easily be applied to human rights advocates and peaceful political opponents.”

The topic of freedom in the streets was reflected in questions about harassment. The Egyptian streets are known for being a space where women are exposed to sexual harassment. For example, a 2009 study reveals that 83% of the Egyptian women and 98% of foreign women have been the victims of sexual harassment\textsuperscript{21}. The situation worsened in the context of the 2011 uprising, where cases of rape and sexual assault were well-documented\textsuperscript{22}.

*Generation What?* respondents disapprove of harassment in the streets, and more than 90 % across all sub-groups are shocked by men who whistle at girls in the streets. Their answers come as a confirmation of youth-led activism on the significant role that the youth had played in countering sexual violence against women in public spaces during and in the aftermath of the Egyptian uprisings of 2011. In a recent study, political scientist Mariz Tadros (2015) draws on three initiatives: *Bassma* (imprint), *Shoft Taharosh* (Harassment Seen) and *Opantish* (Operation Anti Sexual Harassment), to show that informal youth-led initiatives had a major role in countering street violence against women at times of political protests\textsuperscript{23}.


Les mecs qui sifflent les filles dans la rue...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statut (non exhaustif)</th>
<th>Ça me choque</th>
<th>Ça ne me choque pas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>still student</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>permanent contract</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Morals, Private Life (marriage, family), Love and Sexuality

*Generation What?* revealed interesting results concerning morals, private life, love and sexuality. The research tool includes questions on views about online dating, and more taboo issues such as sex before marriage, polygamy and alcohol consumption. However, one key question was missing: to which extent self-identify responds to religious belief and practices. Some of the results thereby need further investigation, given that previous studies indicated a direct relation between religiosity and perceptions of gender egalitarianism in the Arab world.24

The following are some highlights of the results pertaining to these issues, which once again, challenges conservative and patriarchal views depicted in earlier surveys and studies.

Young people in Egypt have liberal views on moral issues. Overall, only a minority of respondents across gender, age, level of education, employment status considered online dating and seeing women wearing tight clothes in the streets as shocking.

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The majority of respondents perceived alcohol consumption as either a pleasure or as non-disturbing. Such views were maintained across sex, level of education and employment status.
Furthermore, the majority of respondents across all sub-groups claimed that sex before marriage should be permitted in Egypt. Females more than males, those who aged between 25 and 34 years old and with higher educational credentials were in favor of sexual activity before marriage.
Penses-tu que les relations sexuelles avant le mariage devraient être autorisées dans ton pays ?

**Sexe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexe</th>
<th>Oui</th>
<th>Non</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>femmes</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hommes</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35</td>
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**Âge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Âge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 ans</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 ans</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>37</td>
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**Niveau d'éducation**

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<th>Niveau d'éducation</th>
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<th>Non</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISCED&lt;4 ou autre</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED ≥4</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>39</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Polygamy is defined as the legalized practice of marriage to more than one wife (up to four) simultaneously but only if they are all treated equally. The majority of the respondents to the Generation What? survey across all sub-groups expressed opposing views to polygamous practice. Such results mirror some recent controversies surrounding polygamy, whereby feminists have questioned the reason for which polygamy should be allowed in Islam for men and not for women. They opposed the idea that polygamy serves a social purpose whereby widows, divorcees and unmarried women find a chance to (re)marry married men.
6. Religion

Building on the previous section, respondents of *Generation What?* maintained liberal views on the intersection between religion, politics and private life. The majority of respondents did not want to see religious leaders intervene in political life. In fact, most of the filmed interviewees were quite straightforward when disapproving the interference of religious leaders in politics. This result is interesting, given that the Second article of the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that the principle of Islamic Sharia is the main source of legislation.
However, when it comes to the relation between ‘urfi marriage (a customary marriage contract that requires witnesses but does not need to be officially registered with state authorities) and religious marriage, views were divided between those who are in favour of institutionalizing ‘urfi marriage and those who were against it. The results echo controversy surrounding ‘urfi marriage in Egypt.

In the context of harsh economic conditions, ‘urfi marriage has been on the rise over the last two decades. It is hard, however, to have an accurate record of ‘urfi marriage in Egypt given the fact that the majority of the contracts are not ratified. What we know from official statistics is that ratified ‘urfi marriage has reached 8800 in 2014. We also know that ‘urfi marriage occurs between young couples who wish to have a full (sexual) relationship without feeling guilty or being involved in a wrong-doing. It is also common in “tourist marriage” whereby male tourists from the gulf countries marry young girls typically from poor households over the summer for pleasure. ‘Urfi marriage has a severe dimension since it often leaves women (often with new-born children) deprived from their rights and unrecognized by the state. In the public domain (media and official discourse), some see ‘urfi marriage as being against Egyptian social norms, whereas others associate it with the lack of rights for the wives and children over time.
Le mariage religieux devrait être interdit s’il n’y a pas de mariage civil.

**Pourcentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Âge</th>
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<th>D’accord</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>18-24 ans</td>
<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>25-34 ans</td>
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<td>48</td>
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**Niveau d’éducation**

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**Statut (non exhaustif)**

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<th>Statut</th>
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<th>D’accord</th>
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<tr>
<td>still student</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>permanent contract</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>51</td>
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7. Perception of the Arab World and Arab Identity

Egypt has several competing discourses when it comes to defining the national identity and its roots – being pharaonic, Islamic, Coptic or Arab, and the associated values and ideologies such as Islamic, Coptic, Nasserite, liberal – diffused through the media, family and education. Egypt shares common history, religious, and customs with other Arab nation-states. However, it has become common sense among social scientists that “identity is not static but dynamic, and it cannot be claimed that because people are said to share a specific history that their identity is unchanging”\(^\text{25}\). Applying this to the notion of Arab nationalism and its manifestations in the case of Egypt, scholars claimed that while a pan-Arab identity emerged as a counter-discourse to the hegemony Ottoman Empire prior to 1952 and was revived during the Nasserite era, another turn took place with the implementation of open-door policies and the revival of Islamic identity. What united the Arab youth during the uprisings is perhaps realizing that their states failed to achieve the promise of social, economic and political changes\(^\text{26}\).

It is thus important to distinguish between Arab identity on the one hand and trusting Arab institutions on the other hand. When it comes to trusting the Arab world, the majority of respondents across all subgroups expressed little trust or none. The majority also claimed that religious extremism is a negative evolution.


\(^\text{26}\) Ibid.
As-tu confiance dans le monde arabe ?

Sexe

Pourcentage

femmes

hommes

3 = Totalement
2
1
0 = Pas du tout

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

As-tu confiance dans le monde arabe ?

Âge

Pourcentage

18-24 ans

25-34 ans

3 = Totalement
2
1
0 = Pas du tout

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0

As-tu confiance dans le monde arabe ?

Niveau d'éducation

Pourcentage

ISCED<4 ou autre

ISCED ≥4

3 = Totalement
2
1
0 = Pas du tout

100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Meanwhile, slightly over half of the respondents across sub-groups claimed that they feel Arab. This reveals that the sense of Arab identity is unrelated to the Arab world and religious extremism. Maintaining a sense of Arab identity, however, did contradict a sense of belonging to the world at large, as the majority of respondents claimed that they feel more part of the world at large.
8. Politics, democracy and commitments

In Egypt, the survey asked only 5 of the 9 questions about trust in various institutions. Out of the 820 of those who answered at least one of the 9 questions about trust in various institutions, only 2% had a propensity to trust in these institutions, 68% had a propensity to distrust, and 30% had mixed feelings.

These findings possibly explain previous studies on why young people seem to be disengaged when it comes to formal political participation\textsuperscript{27}. In his seminal study, Asef Bayat (2010) reveals how under the shadow of authoritarian regimes, religious moral authorities and economic elites, ordinary citizens, the Muslim youth included, participate in meaningful change in their everyday life through means that are not recognized as political such as marching streets, attending public hangouts to make their claims heard\textsuperscript{28}. Thus, restricting the politicization of the Egyptian youth to their interest and involvement in formal politics maybe misleading.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{chart.png}
\caption{Défiance institutionnelle en Egypte (compteur à partir de 5 questions)}
\end{figure}

\begin{itemize}
  \item propension à la confiance
  \item mitigé entre confiance et défiante
  \item propension à la défiante
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item femmes
  \item hommes
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{27} SYPE, p. 23.
Respondents also were in favour of political organizing, manifested in advocating for the power of trade unionism, even if the filmed interviews revealed that they do not trust the current trade unions, possibly due to the spread of corruption and clientelism.

Interestingly, however, and despite the failure of the Egyptian uprising to meet the socioeconomic and political demands of the protestors, the majority of the respondents to *Generation What?* claimed that they would still participate in the Arab-spring style uprisings if it happened tomorrow. Furthermore, the majority spoke about the Arab spring in globally positive terms. This implies that the Arab
youth did not lose faith in the power of the people’s protesting. However, opinions dissent when it comes to belonging to a political organization, as almost 40% of respondents across sub-groups claimed that they are not interested in joining any. Yet, almost half of the respondents across sub-groups perceived voting as a fundamental right that everyone should be entitled to. The filmed interviews reveal that respondents make a difference between the current political climate whereby voting is an illusion of democracy on the one hand, and what democracy was (or would have become in an ideal situation) during the uprisings as a fundamental right and a duty of citizenship on the other hand.
Demain ou dans les prochains mois, participerais-tu à un mouvement de révolte de grande ampleur, comme les "printemps arabes" il y a quelques années ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Âge</th>
<th>Pourcentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24 ans</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 ans</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Niveau d'éducation</th>
<th>Pourcentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISCED&lt;4 ou autre</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCED ≥4</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Colors indicate: Non in red, Oui in blue)
Through the survey’s data, we can notice that the majority of respondents in Egypt still feel the effects of colonialism today. This is not surprising, given that to a large extent western education, values and modes of consumption as well as the widespread of foreign missionary schools and the possession of foreign languages (English and French) are still perceived as an important cultural capital and a key sign of distinction in Egypt. In one of the filmed interviews, one of the respondents describes this as an obvious effect and manifestation of post-colonialism.

30 Interview code OB6A3493.
Ressens-tu aujourd'hui les effets du colonialisme européen ?

**Sexe**
- Femmes:
  - Oui: 67
  - Non: 30
- Hommes:
  - Oui: 62
  - Non: 35

**Âge**
- 18-24 ans:
  - Oui: 62
  - Non: 36
- 25-34 ans:
  - Oui: 67
  - Non: 30

**Niveau d'éducation**
- ISCED<4 ou autre:
  - Oui: 64
  - Non: 33
- ISCED ≥4:
  - Oui: 66
  - Non: 32
Last but not least, when it comes to environmental concerns, it is interesting to see that the majority of respondents prioritized environmental concerns over economic development. Such views are higher among males, those with permanent contracts, older groups (25-34 years old) and those with higher educational credentials. This environmental awareness mirrors other studies which showed that overall, people living in middle-class areas of rural and urban Egypt are concerned about environmental issues and pollution – e.g. air and noise pollution – and are aware of the many factors that result in them.\footnote{Hopkins, Nicholas et al. 2001. People and Pollution: Cultural Constructions and Social Action in Egypt. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.}
En cas de conflit entre le développement économique de ton pays et l'environnement que privilégies-tu ?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statut (non exhaustif)</th>
<th>Le développement économique</th>
<th>L'environnement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>still student</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>permanent contract</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Conclusion

Egypt is characterized by a “youth bulge”. Its youth, however, are in a precarious situation. A slow economy, an unemployment crisis, a gender gap in educational achievement, its limited participation in political life, political turmoil and its limited freedom of expression, the increased consumption of media, exposure to nuanced understandings of morality, unachieved aspirations with no resolution at sight may suggest that the young generation has a negative perception and attitude towards its future. However, the study reveals that the Egyptian youth foresee their future as better than their parents’ lives, consider themselves as the main agents of change, but do not necessarily imagine their future in Egypt with a family life. They counter patriarchal and mainstream views on gender, religion, sexuality and morality, maintained secular views on the intersection between religion, politics and private lives, and believe in political involvement if the political climate promises change; a process that they do not see in the current situation.

Definitions and Representations of the youth

The majority of the Generation What? survey respondents, regardless of other variables, imagined their future will be better than their parents’ lives. When asked about the extent to which they master their destiny, more than half of the respondents noted that they do, interestingly females more than males. This is maybe due to the fact that males in Egypt are increasingly put under financial pressures in order to prove their masculinity. Such pressures are linked to marriage, having a family, supporting their elderly parents, etc.

While the levels of education did not make a difference, those who aged between 25 and 34 noted that they master their destiny more than the younger respondents. Furthermore, those with permanent employment contracts expectedly stated that they master their lives more than those who are still students. One plausible explanation is that those who have financial independency somehow feel more in control of their lives.
Furthermore, the majority of respondents noted that they would be happy to live in a country other than their own. This possibly reflects the amount of economic and social pressures put on the youth. An interesting result however, is that the majority of respondents noted that they would be happy to live without having a family and very few noted that they would be happy to live without sex. Furthermore, the majority noted that being successful in life is linked to being happy on a daily basis, without necessarily having a job or a family. These findings contradict cultural assumptions and stereotypical depiction of the youth as considering marriage and family life their ultimate goal.

**Social integration and entry into adult life**

The *Generation What?* respondents had a sense of responsibility concerning a successful integration to adult life. The majority of employed respondents feel fulfilled in their current jobs and that their current jobs are in line with their qualifications — a result that the youth from poor backgrounds may not share. Meanwhile, they claimed that in periods of high unemployment, jobs should be reserved to the youth. Interestingly enough, there was no preference to male employment over their female counterparts. This reflects a sense of entitlement among the youth and possibly a realization that both males and females are equally entitled to employment at times of hardships, hence, troubling the perception of the males as being predominantly the main heads of households in previous studies.

**Perception of society**

The majority of the *Generation What?* respondents consider that the Egyptian society is a long way from gender equality.

The majority of respondents claim that there is no freedom in the country. The issue of freedom in the streets of Egypt was partly reflected in the question concerning the sexual harassment of women in the streets. Indeed, the streets in Egypt are known for being a space where men often subject women to it. For example, a 2009 study reveals that 83% of Egyptian women and 98% of foreign women have been the victims of sexual harassment. The situation worsened during the uprisings, where cases of rape and sexual assault were well-documented. It is perhaps promising to
see that respondents of the Generation What? respondents disapprove street harassments in the streets, and that over 90 % across all sub-groups feel shocked by guys who whistle to girls in the streets.

**Morals, private life (marriage, family), love and sexuality**

Young people in Egypt have liberal views on some moral related issues. Overall, only a minority of respondents across gender, age, level of education, employment status found online dating and seeing women wearing tight clothes in the streets shocking. Furthermore, the majority of respondents across all sub-groups claimed that sex before marriage should be allowed in Egypt. The females were more numerous to answer this than males, and those aged between 25 and 34 and with higher educational credentials were also more in favor of sex being allowed before marriage. The majority of respondents across all sub-groups are against polygamy, which is defined as the legalized practice of marriage to more than one wife (up to four) simultaneously, provided they are treated equally.

**Religion**

Building on the previous section, respondents of Generation What? maintained secular views on the intersection between religion, politics and private lives. The majority of respondents did not want to see religious leaders intervene in political life. However, when it comes to the relation between ‘urfi marriage (a customary marriage contract that requires witnesses but does not need to be officially registered with state authorities) and religious marriage, views were divided between those in favour of institutionalizing ‘urfi marriage and those who were against it. The results echo the controversy surrounding ‘urfi marriage in Egypt.
**Perception of the Arab world and Arab identity**

When it comes to trusting the Arab world, the majority of respondents across all subgroups expressed little or no trust in it. The majority also claimed that religious extremism is a negative evolution. Meanwhile, slightly over half of the respondents across sub-groups claimed that they felt Arab. This reveals that the sense of Arab identity is unrelated to the Arab world and to religious extremism. Maintaining a sense of Arab identity, however, did contradict a sense of belonging to the world at large, as the majority of respondents claimed that they feel more part of the world at large.

**Politics, democracy and commitments**

Out of the 820 of those who answered at least one of the 9 questions about trust in various institutions, only 2% had a propensity to trust, 68% had a propensity to distrust, and 30% have mixed feelings. These findings possibly explain previous studies on why young people seem to be disengaged when it comes to political militancy. Respondents also were in favor of political activism, manifested in advocating for the power of trade unionism, despite the fact that the filmed interviews revealed that they do not trust the current trade unions. This is possibly due to the spread of corruption and clientelism.

Despite the failure of the Egyptian uprising to meet the socioeconomic and political demands of the protestors, the majority of the Generation What? respondents interestingly claimed that they would still participate in an Arab Spring-style uprising if it happened tomorrow. Furthermore, the majority viewed that the Arab Spring was globally viewed in positive terms. This implies that the Arab youth did not lose faith in the power of protests by the people. However, when it comes to belonging to a political organization, views were varied, as almost 40% of respondents across sub-groups claimed that they would not be interested in joining any. Yet, almost half of the respondents across sub-groups perceived voting as a fundamental right that
everyone should be entitled to. In the filmed interviews, however, respondents differentiated the current political climate whereby voting is an illusion of democracy on the one hand, and what democracy was during the uprisings (or would have ideally become) as a fundamental right and a duty of citizenship.

Last but not least, when it comes to environmental concerns, it is interesting to see that the majority of respondents prioritized environmental concerns over economic development. Such views are higher among males, those with permanent employment contracts, older groups (from 25 to 34) and those with higher educational credentials.