

LABOUR MARKET PROFILE

Niger

2025

This profile brings insights to the labour market model in Niger and its trends, status, and challenges.



Prepared by Danish Trade Union Development Agency

PREFACE

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) is the development organisation of the Danish trade union movement. DTDA's work aligns with the International Labour Organization's global Decent Work Agenda (DWA), based on its four pillars: creating decent jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue. The overall development objective is to eradicate poverty and support the development of just and democratic societies by promoting the DWA.

The DTDA collaborates with trade union organisations in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. The programmes' immediate objective is to assist the partner organisations in becoming change agents in their own national and regional labour market context, capable of achieving tangible improvements in the national DWA conditions and the labour-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This profile is prepared in collaboration with national partner organisations, providing annual narrative progress reports as part of programme implementation and monitoring. National statistical institutions and international databanks (e.g., ILOSTAT and NATLEX, World Bank Open Data, and other internationally

recognised labour-related global indexes) are also used as sources of data and information.

The profile is regularly updated to reflect the latest developments. Labour Market Profiles for more than 20 countries are available on DTDA's website, ensuring stakeholders have access to the most recent information:

<https://www.dtda.dk/>.

The DTDA supports development programmes in Niger in collaboration with the National Union of Industry Workers of Niger (*Syndicat National des Travailleurs de l'Industrie du Niger*).

The cover photo represents workers in Niger, and it was taken by Mr. Jordi Boixareu.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Niger’s labour market faces persistent challenges in reducing poverty. A rapidly growing youth population, predominantly located in rural areas, places increasing pressure on job creation, which remains limited in the formal sector. Its dependency on agriculture makes them very exposed as one of the most climate-vulnerable countries globally, disrupting employment patterns and undermines many workers’ primary sources of livelihood. To date, a just transition agenda has not gained significant traction within national policy frameworks.

Although Niger has a relatively comprehensive legal framework for protecting workers’ rights, enforcement remains weak. This is reflected in the very high incidence of child labour, limited revenues from income tax and social contributions, and low social protection coverage. At the same time, **the coexistence of low unemployment and high poverty underscores that job quality, rather than job quantity, is one of the country’s main labour market challenges.** These issues are compounded by the widespread informal economy, which constrains overall labour market progress.

Trade unions and employers’ organisations play a central role in social dialogue but have lost political space following the turmoil and reforms after the military coup in July 2023. Unionism has been weakened by declining employment in the public sector but has gained some momentum through organising workers in the informal economy, which has helped sustain trade union density. However, representation through “labour councils” in the private sector and

the enforcement of collective agreements remain underdeveloped at the bipartite enterprise level, largely due to the dominance of informal micro and small enterprises.

Major cities in Niger have not yet emerged as strong employment hubs, but some improvements in the business environment, combined with demographic pressure, are encouraging self-employment and entrepreneurial ventures as viable career paths. The diaspora is becoming increasingly important to the economy through remittances, although the emigration of skilled workers contributes to a “brain drain.” The rising number of internally displaced people is causing disruption, informalisation, and regional imbalances. Nigerien women continue to face obstacles to entering formal employment, while young people are often confined to low-paying, unstable, and subsistence-level work.

Most workers continue to face a mismatch between their skills and employers’ demands, reflecting a disconnect between the education system and the labour market. Employment by education level has shown only minor shifts and remains dominated by workers with less than basic education. Although non-formal establishments dominate the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, private sector involvement has been limited. Weak progress in higher education further hampers the country’s ability to respond to the emerging Fourth Industrial Revolution, with the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry and the gig economy still in their infancy.

Box 1: Niger’s Labour Market Fact Sheet

Workforce	Labour force participation rate	Unemployment rate
10 million	80%	0.4%
Informal workers share of total employment	Working conditions	Migration
98%	The minimum wage was finally updated in 2024 with a real hike (with deducted inflation) increased by 22%.	An upsurge in the inflow of personal remittances and in internally displaced persons from disasters and conflicts.
Employment by education	Vocational training	Social protection
A small shift from workers with less than education group towards basic education. Those at the intermediate and advanced levels basically did not grow and remained underdeveloped.	The proportion of 15-24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education is low, at 1.2%, and about 28% of formal firms offering formal training, which was in line with the sub-Saharan Africa average.	Population covered by at least one social protection scheme reached 21%.
Trade union density	Coverage of collective bargaining	Trade union rights violations
At least 5.6% of the total employment.	The Interprofessional Collective Agreement of 2022 outlines various wage-related aspects in the formal sector, such as overtime pay, severance compensation, and notice periods, covering about 10% of total employment.	Ranking 3 out of 5 (5 is worst) on the Global Rights Index in 2024, facing “regular violations of rights”.

Box 2: Factors that impact the dynamics of the labour market

Security: The protection and stability provided to workers in terms of job availability, income stability, and protection from unfair treatment or dismissal are deeply challenged.

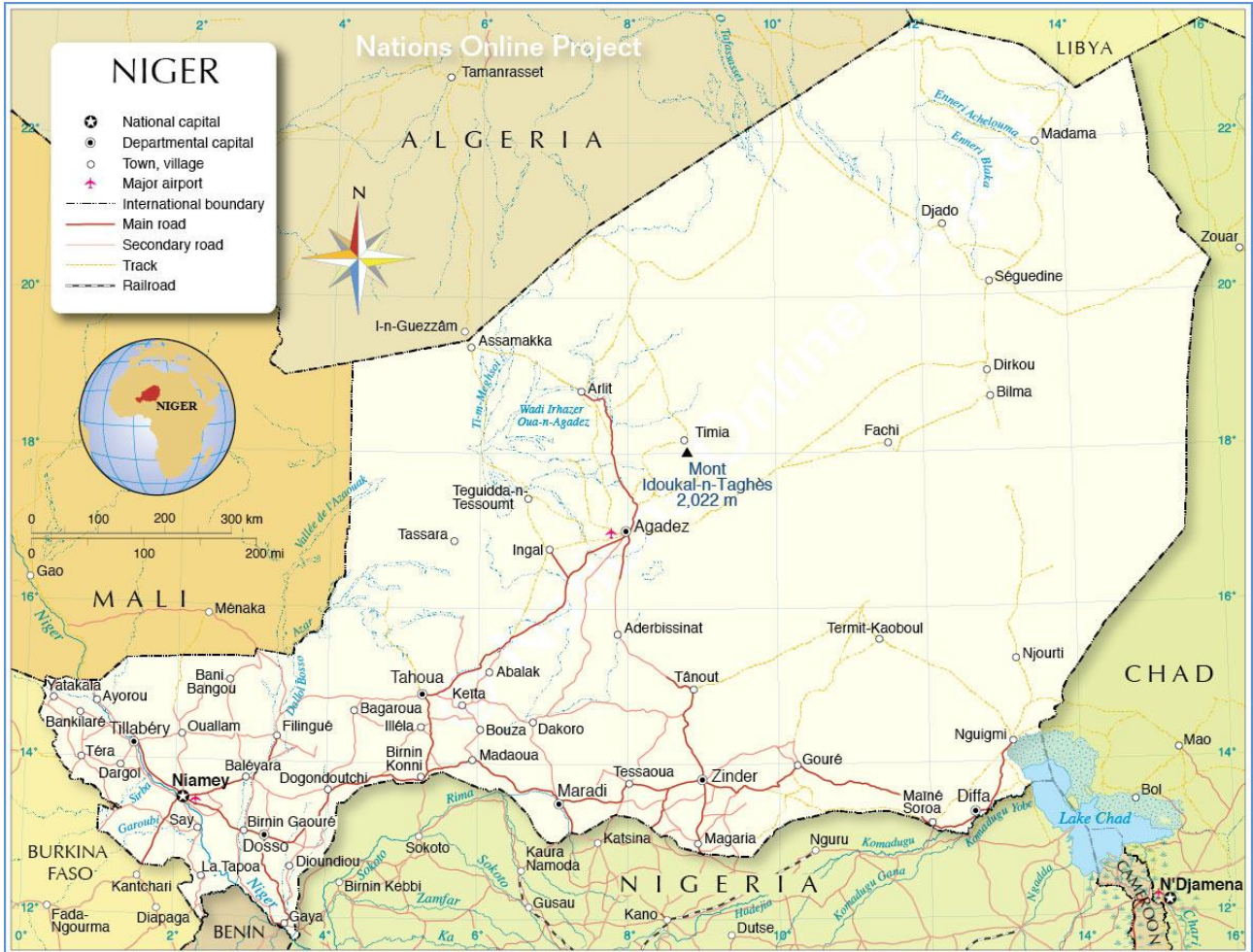
Stability: Weaknesses for the consistency and resilience of employment conditions affect confidence for both workers and employers.

Trust: Several negative factors undermine the confidence of workers, employers, and other stakeholders in the system’s fairness and reliability. Key concerns include limited job security, inadequate workplace safety, and uncertainty regarding wages and career prospects.

Efficiency: A weak ability to allocate workers to jobs in a way that maximises productivity, formal jobs, and ensures fair wages.

Flexibility: The capacity to adapt quickly and efficiently to changes in the economy and business demands is very underdeveloped.

COUNTRY MAP



Source: National Online Project.

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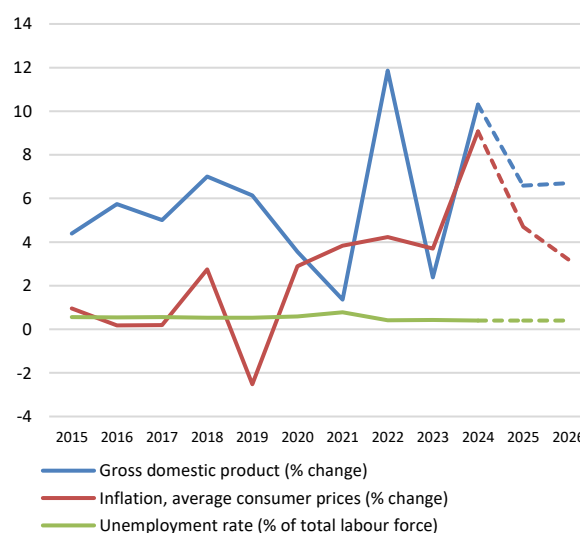
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ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Niger is a large landlocked country, with more than 80% of its land area lying in the Sahara Desert, based on a narrow economy that remains heavily dependent on agriculture. The country encounters a series of factors that hinder its labour market development, such as political instability, regional sanctions, and the suspension of external financing. Niger's political instability is rooted in weak institutions and frequent military interventions, ongoing jihadist violence, shifting alliances from Western powers to new global actors like Russia, and frustration with governance and economic conditions. **Several other matters emerged, like climate vulnerability and food insecurity;** suffering from infrastructure deficits; one of the highest population growth rates globally, placing immense pressure on public services and infrastructure.

Economic growth has been volatile, but there are some optimistic projections for the upcoming years. The service sector is not developing. The small industry sector has even lost pace; employment in manufacturing has plummeted in recent years, influenced by the mentioned political instability and economic structural issues. On the other hand, the agricultural sector experienced a significant hike in its value-added, and it provides the highest job generation. The very low unemployment rate below 1% suggests that Niger's economy generates jobs (Figure 1). However, this figure underestimates that most individuals are engaged in casual or informal activities; many work a few hours per week as a survival strategy. The intermittent nature of subsistence farming, occupied only during planting and harvesting, contributes to what is known as 'disguised' unemployment.

Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and unemployment growth trends in Niger, %, 2015-2026



Source: International Monetary Fund; International Labour Organization.

Consumer price inflation has been on the rise in recent years due to coup-related disruptions, import and fuel shortages, and poor agricultural output, hollowing out workers' income purchasing power (see Figure 1). This situation further caused small businesses to cope with the rising cost of raw materials and transportation. Since most Nigerien workers do not see wage increases that match inflation, it has forced many to take on multiple jobs or rely on remittances from family abroad.

Poverty remains a major challenge in Niger. In 2024, the extreme poverty rate stood at 45%, signalling that the economy is not generating sufficient income or creating productive jobs. Some predictions suggest that it could fall in the near future, driven by the mentioned strong projected growth in the agricultural sector.¹

Although the country implements a progressive personal income tax rate, it accounts for a small coverage of taxpayers due to the widespread informal economy. According to regulations, employees and

employers should contribute to social security. However, due to the relatively small formal sector, the country has a very narrow tax base, meaning few businesses and individuals pay direct taxes like income taxes or social security. Corruption and inefficiencies in the tax administration additionally reduce revenue collection, as well as many companies underreport earnings to avoid taxation. These low tax revenues make the country rely heavily on external aid to fund public spending to implement critical infrastructure projects, education reforms, social protection, and healthcare improvements.

Niger has initiated efforts to develop Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as part of its strategy to diversify the economy, attract foreign investment, and stimulate industrialisation.

The country established a free industrial export zone in 2019, offering tax advantages to companies operating within it. The success of the SEZ faces challenges such as infrastructure deficits, limited institutional capacity, and political instability.²

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Labour legislation is shaping the labour market by defining the rights and responsibilities of employers and workers. It influences wages, working conditions, job security, and employment levels.

Niger's labour-related legal framework is primarily governed by the comprehensive Labour Code of 2012. This code regulates various aspects of employment, including employment contracts, vocational training, ensuring fair wages, facilitating negotiations between employers and employees, and providing mechanisms for resolving conflicts. The code also established institutions supporting

the industrial relations (see more in the Social Dialogue section). The right to freedom of association and strike is regulated by law but does not explicitly protect workers from anti-union discrimination. The right to collective bargaining is recognised by law.

In the aftermath of the military coup in July 2023, Niger's military authorities have enacted several legal orders and measures that have impacted the country's governance, international relations, and human rights situation. Among other things, the military junta suspended the 2010 Constitution and dissolved all state institutions, including the National Assembly and the judiciary. Instead, they established the National Council to Safeguard the Country (CNSP), which functions as the primary governing body.

Despite the current governing framework through CNSP, **the National Commission for Professional Elections (NCPE) oversees elections** (see more in Box 3 below). In February 2025, a national committee comprising approximately 700 delegates, including trade unions and employers' organisations, proposed a five-year transition plan back to civilian rule. **This plan includes dissolving existing political parties, limiting the number of future parties to five, and allowing junta members to participate in upcoming elections.** The junta has accepted the proposal but has faced criticism for excluding existing political parties from the consultation process and potentially consolidating military influence in future governance.

Box 3: National Commission for Professional Elections in Niger

The National Commission for Professional Elections (NCPE) is the official body overseeing electoral processes in the country. This body is responsible for organising and administering trade unions and employers' organisations' leadership elections, monitoring electoral oversight and democratic practice.

Organisations' participation in such processes is central because government support and budgetary allocations are sometimes contingent on demonstrable democratic practices. In the view of trade unions, this accountability mechanism fosters not only stronger internal organisational structures but also enhances their capacity to advocate effectively for workers' rights.

The NCPE is presently operating under a constrained practice and politically charged environment. The institution's oversight of elections is affected by the military junta's dominance and the broader suspension of democratic norms.

Niger is a signatory to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which sets ambitious frameworks on workers' rights, labour mobility, and social protection. However, implementation has been limited, and the practical impact on workers remains uneven across the region. Structural challenges – such as weak institutions, lack of political will, poor enforcement, and the prevalence of the informal economy – continue to undermine progress. For example, the Regional Action Plan (2021–2030) to eliminate child labour and forced labour suffers from weak enforcement, reflected in Niger's persistently high rate of child labour (see ahead). In

practice, Niger's main trade agreement therefore has limited capacity to improve workers' rights or foster labour market development.

Observations on Labour Legislation

Although a broad legal framework protects Niger's labour market, the implementation and enforcement remain weak due to institutional challenges, limited resources, and political instability. Registers suggest that the labour legislation applicable at the national level leads Niger's score on the Labour Rights Index is 67 out of 100 (100 is the best) in 2024, which was in line with the sub-Saharan Africa average (66) (see Appendix Table 5). **The legal framework still faces specific barriers and restrictions for workers to practice their rights** (see Appendix Table 3).³

Reports found that Niger's government application of laws in the public and private sectors varied, **but regulations were primarily enforced in formal sectors.** Authorities generally respected freedom of association, the right to strike, and the right to collective bargaining; for example, market vendors held unobstructed local strikes to protest tax increases and high energy costs.⁴ While the legislation may spell out certain workers' rights, **most workers operate in the informal economy without a guarantee of rights** and are exposed to unfair labour practices.

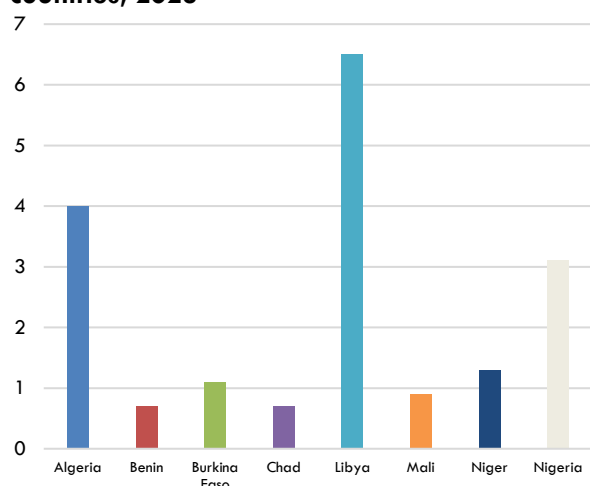
Ratified ILO Conventions

International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions enumerate international principles and rights at work. Appendix Table 4 shows that ten out of ten Fundamental Conventions and three of four Governance Conventions have been ratified, and 28 of 177 Technical Conventions are up-to-date and actively

promoted. **The latest ratified convention is the Maternity Protection Convention (C183) in 2019.**

The Sustainable Development Goals indicator 8.8.2 measures compliance with fundamental labour rights. Based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, **Niger's scoring has been stable in recent years, grasping somewhat at the middle-level compared with the neighbouring countries (see Figure 2).**

Figure 2: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Niger and neighbouring countries, 2023



Note: The value ranges from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB) rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Sources: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

The ILO's independent supervisory system body, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), has many observations and direct requests for conventions. For instance, in 2024, the CEACR had a series of observations and direct requests of the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098) in the aftermath of the 2023 military coup.

SOCIAL PARTNERS AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Social partners are central to promoting the realisation of core labour rights and social justice for workers by protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining. These organisations are usually represented as the government, trade unions, and employers' organisations.

Government

The Ministry of Employment, Labour, and Social Protection (MELSP) is the central authority responsible for labour-related issues in Niger. The ministry formulates policies and enacts employment, social protection, labour law enforcement, and workers' rights programmes. It also supervises other regulatory bodies and works to align national laws with international and regional labour standards, including the Labour Inspection System. The MELSP works alongside several other institutions that involve the labour market:

- **The National Social Security Institute** administers social security programmes for workers.
- **The National Employment Agency** facilitates worker-employer matching by offering job placement, vocational training, and employment counselling services.
- **The National Institute of Vocational Training** provides programmes aimed at vocational training and skills development for young people.
- **Tripartite committees** consisting of representatives from the government, employers, and trade unions.

Generally, the government's enforcement remains difficult due to limited resources and the widespread informal economy.

Trade Unions

Trade unions in Niger play a key role in advocating for workers' rights, improving labour conditions, and negotiating with employers and the government. **The trade union movement is both diverse and active.** They have been relatively strong in the formal sector at 27% of formal workers (employees) at the beginning of the 2010s, but changes in the civil service structure caused many public employees to lose their jobs and affiliation to unions.⁵ It is worth mentioning that just about 1.8% of total employment is in the public sector.⁶

Data from the main trade union centres – the *Confédération Démocratique des Travailleurs du Niger* (CDTN), the *Confédération Nigérienne du Travail* (CNT), and the *Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger* (USTN) – show that the aggregated membership rate grew by 57% from 2012 to 2022, registering almost 240,000 members (see more in Appendix Table 8). **A roughly trade union density in Niger was estimated at least 5.6% of total employment**, including other trade unions. More updated data of the trade union density are scarce in the aftermath of the establishment of the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP), which has significantly reshaped the political and civil society landscape.

Niger's rating on the Global Rights Index in 2025 worsened, falling to 4 out of 5 (5 is the worst). This stance links with the military junta intensified its crackdown on political opposition, while also targeting the trade union movement. The authorities further severely undermined workers' right to independent, genuine representation. For example, in 2024, the junta published a list of so-called "representative" unions eligible to receive government subsidies – a move that violates the Labour Code and

threatens the autonomy of the trade union movement.⁷

The trade union movement in Niger has been grouped in active coalition alliances. The two central alliances are the *Intersyndicale des Travailleurs du Niger* (ITN) and the *Convergence des Travailleurs du Niger* (CTN), which was established in 2015 as an alternative to the dominant ITN. While both ITN and CTN contribute to the broader trade union landscape and public labour discourse, **they are not central participants in the formal tripartite negotiation structures.** The **Unité d'Actions Syndicales du Niger (UAS-Niger)** is another coalition of multiple national trade union centres in Niger, which has been involved in demanding the withdrawal of French troops and supporting the recent coup. This latter coalition's support for the coup leaders has been notable, and it has actively called for Nigeriens to rally behind the previously mentioned CNSP. **This stance has triggered discussions about the independence of trade unions and their role in advocating for workers' rights amidst the country's political transitions.**

The government signed a memorandum of understanding with representatives of 12 trade unions, organising the country's first professional elections of trade union leadership. According to the protocol, representatives of trade unions must obtain at least 5% of all valid votes cast to be eligible for government budget support and sit on social dialogue bodies. Each elected representative will exercise a four-year mandate. **The first election was held in July 2019.** The latest mandate for the representativeness of trade union confederations resulting from those elections ended on September 19, 2023. In consultation with the trade union confederations, the

Ministry of Labour developed an evaluation scale to assess trade union confederations based on four criteria: i) the existence in practice of headquarters, ii) regular meetings of the statutory bodies, iii) the number of affiliated trade unions, and iv) the number of regional branches.⁸

Overall, trade unions face a multifaceted set of challenges, such as authoritarian governance since 2023, shrinking trade unions' political space. State apparatuses have interfered in independent union activities, making it more difficult for unions to mobilise and advocate for workers without fear of reprisal.⁹ With the suspension or control over other democratic institutions, trade unions are often sidelined in formal negotiations with the government and employers.

The precarious employment landscape supplementary complicates unionism in Niger, which is **dominated by the agricultural sector and informal micro- and small enterprises in urban areas.** Other considerations complicate unionism, such as weak digital infrastructure for communication, as well as educational deficiencies or other cultural factors like traditional practices and local power structures hinder unionisation.

Employers' Organisations

Employers' organisations in Niger play an important role as representatives of the business community and key participants in social dialogue. They help coordinate the interests of employers across various sectors, shape economic and labour policies, and counterbalance the influence of trade unions.

The major employers' organisations are the Conseil National du Patronat Nigérien (CNPN) and the Fédération des Organisations Patronales

du Niger (FOP-Niger). These organisations bring together members from various industries, from the formal private sector to larger state-owned enterprises, and represent their collective interests in policy discussions, focusing on consolidating the voices of more established businesses.

These organisations contribute to social dialogue and participate in tripartite or quadripartite platforms designed to negotiate labour-related issues such as minimum wage settings, working conditions, and other aspects of industrial relations. They further have access to transparent democratic processes – similar in principle to the professional elections used by trade unions – and can become eligible for government support.

Some of the main challenges employers' organisations face are a limited membership base. They typically represent larger, more established entities, while informal micro or small enterprises dominate the landscape. This aspect leads to underdeveloped infrastructure and regulatory bottlenecks, which are complicating their advocacy for reforms. Like many other civil society actors in Niger, employers' organisations are struggling for modernisation and capacity building, including access to digital technologies, resources for advocacy and to develop more coordinated strategies to influence policy. The previously mentioned political context further complicates the working environment for employers; for instance, political instability could lead to unpredictable regulatory shifts, which in turn affect business planning and investment.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Across countries and irrespective of the level of development, the role of social dialogue in contributing to economic and social development is acknowledged.

Niger’s Labour Code governs employment relations, including aspects of social dialogue. Central tripartite institutions are set up to facilitate social dialogue among the government, trade unions, and Employers’ organisations (see Box 4). By law, there is a requirement for employees to establish representation through staff delegates in firms with 11 or more employees, which is like a “labour council”. These delegates serve to represent workers’ interests at the enterprise level. **The regulations allow for collective agreements between employers and workers’ representatives.** These staff delegates’ coverage remains narrow, or stated differently, the tradition of participation by trade unions and employers’ organisations remains underdeveloped at the bipartite enterprise level.

Box 4: Social dialogue central tripartite institutions in Niger

The leading tripartite cooperation institutions are summarised below:

- **The National Commission for Social Dialogue (CNDS)** is formed to discuss and negotiate labour-related issues, aiming to foster harmonious industrial relations.
- **Sectoral and Interministerial Technical Committees** address specific sectoral concerns and facilitate dialogue between ministries and social partners. They play a role in implementing policies and resolving sector-specific labour disputes.

Although the tripartite institutions are functioning, they are often irregularly convened and concentrated in formal sectors in urban areas, facing limited resources and political instability. On the positive side, the Interprofessional Collective Agreement operates in specific sectors, indicating ongoing efforts to strengthen labour relations. This progress benefits multiple trade unions that have collaborated to achieve common goals, aiming for constructive social dialogue and negotiations to advance workers’ rights in recent years.

Although Niger took strides in establishing a legal and institutional framework for social dialogue, **it remains dared to extend protections to informal workers and ensuring the practical application of existing laws.** A central issue is that informal micro and small enterprises in the private sector dominate the labour market landscape. The social dialogue system has not yet established a formal Tripartite National Informal Economy Forum to address the needs of informal workers (see more in the Impact of Informal Economy section).

In Niger, collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) typically address various aspects of employment, including wages, working hours, overtime compensation, and severance pay. Multi-employer bargaining is prevalent in the country. **The Interprofessional Collective Agreement (ICA) of 2022 is considered a step toward enhancing labour standards in the country.** This agreement includes provisions related to wages. While it does not establish a new minimum wage, it outlines various wage-related aspects such as overtime pay, severance compensation, and notice periods. Rural workers’ organisations participated in negotiations through the regional chambers of agriculture.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the ICA primarily applies to employees in the formal sector, including public administration and registered

private enterprises. Based on national survey data, **an estimation suggests that the mentioned agreement roughly covers one out of ten (10%) Nigerien workers.** It is worth mentioning that the *Union Générale des Syndicats de l'Economie Informelle du Niger*, representing organised workers from the informal economy, signed three CBAs.

Most workers operate in the informal economy, sidelining the labour regulations and social dialogue mechanisms. **It creates a representation gap in labour representation, undermining collective bargaining and enforcement of labour rights.** Other issues are limited institutional capacity of government bodies with labour oversight due to a lack of funding, staff, and infrastructure. Many workers and employers lack awareness or incentives for their legal rights and obligations, particularly regarding freedom of association, minimum wage standards, and dispute resolution options. Additionally, ongoing regional insecurity and national political turbulence also hamper the functioning of social dialogue institutions and overshadow labour rights as a policy priority.

Industrial relations dispute system

Niger's industrial relations dispute system is structured to address both individual and collective labour conflicts through a combination of formal legal mechanisms and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) processes.

Labour Courts are the primary judicial bodies for resolving employment disputes. They handle individual disputes (e.g., wrongful termination, wage disputes, breach of contract, and workplace harassment) and collective disputes (e.g., interpreting or applying CBAs, strikes, and lockouts). Regarding collective disputes of interest, arbitration panels become

involved when conciliation or mediation attempts through the Labour Inspectorate have been unsuccessful. These panels hear the case and issue a binding decision. Generally, the process of disputes typically initiates with an attempt at conciliation by the Labour Court judge. If conciliation fails, the matter proceeds to a formal hearing.

Niger's Labour Inspectorate is set up to facilitate dispute resolution, mediating in disputes before they escalate to formal proceedings. Collective labour disputes have several consultation steps led by a labour inspector and can ultimately be settled by an arbitration council appointed by the Minister of Labour. **However, the labour inspection system confronts severe limitations that hinder its effectiveness;** for instance, a limited number of labour inspectors cover all workplaces nationwide. They lack funding for transport and modern equipment, and informal businesses operate without registration, making them difficult to inspect. The ratio of labour inspectors to formal workers (employees) was about 1:17,000 in 2023, while if the total employment is included in the equation, it reaches 1:174,000, standing suboptimal. The ILO is concerned if the relation exceeds one inspector per 40,000 workers in less developed countries.¹¹

Overall, the formal industrial relations dispute system faces several difficulties affecting labour market development and enforcing workers' rights. It encounters insufficient staffing and budget constraints, not to mention outdated tools, training, and low enforcement power. The informal economy's dominance further makes labour regulations difficult in practice; informal employers often evade inspections, and labour protections are more complex to implement without formal contracts or workplace records. Improved

coordination between tripartite actors could strengthen the system and formal employment creation.

In Niger, informal mechanisms of ADR play an essential and culturally embedded role in managing labour disputes, especially in areas where formal legal systems are less accessible or trusted. These ADR mechanisms function in several ways: community elders and traditional leaders, religious leaders (Imams and Priests), family or clan mediation, informal worker associations and trade unions (see more in the Informal Economy section), customary arbitration councils, verbal agreements and negotiations. Some advantages of this informal ADR relate to culturally relevant and rooted in local practices, accessible and often free of cost, and faster and more relationship-oriented, preventing escalation to formal disputes. However, limitations remain with no legal enforcement mechanisms, power imbalances may affect fairness (e.g., employer dominance), risk of gender bias or discrimination, and may not comply with labour rights standards or international norms.

STATUS OF WORKING CONDITIONS

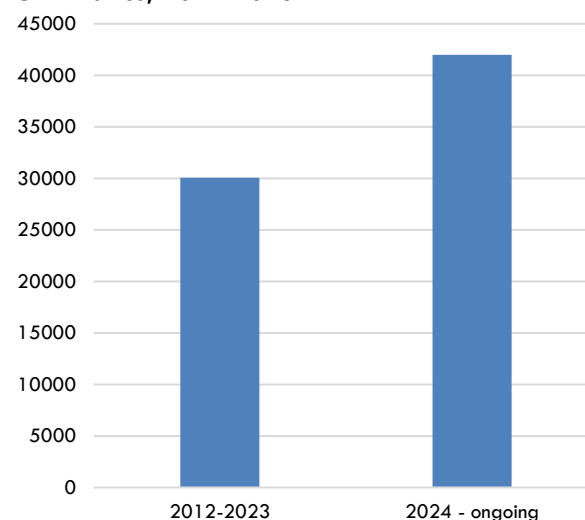
Working conditions directly affect workers' well-being, productivity, and job satisfaction. The state of these conditions has broader implications for the labour market, influencing economic performance, employment patterns, and social stability.

Generally, working conditions in Niger are governed by the Labour Code of 2012, which outlines standards for working hours, rest periods, and overtime compensation in the formal sector. Although regulations do not mandate specific break times during the

workday, collective bargaining agreements may include provisions for breaks. Occupational safety and health standards must also be established, requiring employers to ensure safe working conditions, including personal protective equipment (PPE) free of charge and enforcing its use where necessary, such as helmets, safety glasses, gloves, and safety boots, depending on job hazards. However, most Nigerien workers operate in the informal economy, undermining the application of these regulations.

By law, the minimum wage is only for salaried workers in the formal sector with fixed (contractual) terms of employment in Niger. **The minimum wage adjustment was stalled for a decade, but it was finally changed in 2024, reaching in nominal terms West African CFA francs (XOF) 42,000 (US\$69) (Figure 3).** A real hike (with deducted inflation) even increased by 22%. If economic growth had been included in the equation, it would have ended at a negative level. The lowest legal minimum wage exceeds the calculated poverty income level. **However, most workers operate in the informal economy, sidelining the minimum wage regulations.**

Figure 3: Monthly minimum wage in Niger, WA-CFA francs, 2012-2025



Source: WageIndicator.org.

On a broader view, **the average monthly salary in Niger hovers around XOF 55,000 to 75,000 (US\$90-120) per month, illustrating the low wage scales that are in effect throughout much of the country.** Again, these figures cannot fully capture earnings from informal labour, which could bring the average down due to underreporting or cause fluctuations based on seasonal and market variations.¹²

Niger's weak wage system significantly impacts its labour market in several ways, affecting workers and employers. For instance, most workers operate in the informal economy, earning low income to cover basic living expenses. Even formal employment generates low wages. **It reduces government tax revenue and limiting the social security programmes.** Many skilled workers – especially professionals like teachers, doctors, and engineers – seek better-paying opportunities abroad (see more in the Migration sub-section). Poor wages further lead to low employee morale and high absenteeism, weakening local demand for goods and services, and businesses struggle to expand due to limited consumer spending.

TRENDS THAT AFFECT THE LABOUR MARKET

The workforce is a key player in the labour market's dynamism, linking political, economic, and social development.

Niger's population represents 27 million, of which 60% are under 20 – it is projected to double in the next 20 years.¹³ **The workforce is similarly, rapidly rising, reaching approximately 10 million individuals in 2024.** The labour force participation rate measures the active portion of the working-age population, grabbing 80%. The workforce

main trends in Niger are summarised below and see also Appendix Table 6:

The country's fast growing young population presents opportunities and challenges regarding a demographic dividend. While Niger's demographic trends create a large and energetic potential workforce, they also present a critical employment challenge to generate massive new jobs, which currently far outstripping jobs in the formal sector (see also the Youth sub-section).

Major cities are not yet accelerating as employment hubs. **Almost nine of ten (86%) jobs are in rural areas,** and most lack access to diverse job opportunities in industry, services, finance, and technology.

Around 74% of Niger's workforce is engaged in agriculture. Employment in the industry sector is only rising slowly, reaching 9.3%, and the service sector lost pace in the aftermath of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

Although Niger struggles with the lowest labour productivity among the neighbouring countries, this rate is on the rise because of an upsurge in mining, oil, and services. **The rising ratio of employers to total employment is an initial shift of economic diversification, supportive government policies, improvements in the business environment, and demographic factors encouraging entrepreneurship.** Workers often still face a mismatch between their skills and employers' demands. This disparity hampers economic growth and the country's aspirations to transition to an emerging country. Addressing these challenges requires substantial education and vocational training investments to align workforce capabilities with industry needs (see more in the Education and Training section).

Niger faces significant challenges in developing a robust middle class. Approximately 46% of the population lives below the poverty line, with a large chunk of the non-poor population vulnerable to falling into poverty. The agricultural sector's low productivity and limited income potential hinder the expansion of the middle class. Labour income share of GDP is very low, and progress has stalled, challenging the evolution of the middle class. Ongoing political unrest and weak economic development are also components for stalling middle-class expansion.

Box 5: Global disruptions challenging Niger's labour market

Climate change and the Just Transition agenda

Niger faces **increasing effects of climate changes, which are profoundly impacting the dominating agricultural sector in terms of job losses and the livelihood source for many Nigeriens.** For instance, almost 2.2 million people in Niger ended up as new internally displaced associated with disasters since 2010. It makes farming and income less reliable and pushes workers to migrate or shift to precarious urban work, such as petty trade or domestic labour. **A near-future risk is overcrowded metropolitan areas, increasing pressure on limited decent job opportunities.**

Although Niger has developed several climate change policies and strategies to address its vulnerability to global warming and environmental degradation, **they do not fully consider climate action with job security, ensuring that workers in traditional sectors are supported through skills training, green job creation, and social protection programmes.** Thus, a Just Transition agenda has not yet been prioritised within Niger's policy framework.

Recently, the African trade union movement launched a declaration statement setting out ten demands for the **Just Transition agenda** (see details in Appendix Table 9). Niger's trade union movement has been active in environmental and climate change initiatives.¹⁴

Fourth Industrial Revolution

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is a fundamental technological shift that is projected to create structural ruptures on the labour market globally. **In Niger, the scale of disruptions remains low.** This situation links with limited information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure and internet access hinder widespread digital adoption, especially in rural areas, not to mention resource constraints.

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry and the gig economy are currently in its nascent stages. Social partners in Niger have so far not been prominently active or visibly engaged in shaping the country's approach to the 4IR.

Weak progress at the higher education levels brings a mismatch between education and labour market needs to tackle the 4IR. Many Nigerien graduates lack practical digital and technical skills, including limited access to online learning materials and platforms, which hinder the quality of education and lead to a rising number of youths not in education, employment, or training (NEET rate) in Niger.¹⁵ This setting could further challenge the demand for a digitally skilled workforce. Generally, strong collaboration between educational institutions and 4IR industries still needs to align training with the job market needs.

THEMATIC DIMENSIONS SETTING THE WORKFORCE

Cross-cutting issues notably affect the labour market when intersecting with various economic, social, and environmental dimensions, impacting workers and employers across multiple sectors.

Informal economy

The informal economy plays a dual role in labour markets – providing employment opportunities and creating challenges related to wages, worker protections, and economic stability.

Nigerien informal workers make up over 90% of employment, mirroring that the formal sector is not generating jobs for the fast-growing workforce.¹⁶ Thus, a more modern industrialised economy remains underdeveloped. Most workers rely on micro or small-scale businesses, agriculture, often in subsistence farming, street vending, and informal services to earn a living. High poverty and weak access to social protection make the informal and casual vulnerable working conditions, with no job security, the only option for survival.

The dominance of informal micro- or small enterprises (MSEs) in Niger undermines the tax system. These MSEs mainly operate outside labour regulations, stymieing government revenues and hollowing out the financial capacity for public social services such as education, health, and social protection.

Low education levels in Niger have kept many workers in informality. Although some minor positive shifts in employment by education (see Figure 8 ahead), they remain weak at the intermediate and advanced levels. Many Nigeriens who become better educated

cannot find decent formal jobs, leading to migration exports with a costly “brain drain.”

Major trade union confederations, like USTN and CDTN, are progressing in organising workers from the informal economy in urban centres. They function informally to negotiate solutions for their members. These include local transport unions, market vendor associations, and craft/trade cooperatives. They may use informal negotiation tactics like group bargaining or peer mediation. For example, market vendors’ associations in Niamey and Zinder have partnered with unions to demand better infrastructure and access to credit. Also, motorcycle taxi associations have organised protests and negotiated with local authorities for permits and safer working conditions. One of the largest trade unions is the *Union Générale des Syndicats de l’Economie Informelle du Niger* (UGSEIN), affiliating at least 250,000 members.

At the national policy level, there is increasing recognition of informal workers as stakeholders. This development includes gaining seats in consultative platforms, such as the National Social Dialogue Council and local economic development committees. The main challenges to further entering more formalised structures are that informal workers operate scattered and find it difficult to coordinate across sectors and regions. These groups lack legal identity or contracts, not to mention that many informal workers are often sceptical of state bodies.

The government promotes implementing livelihood programmes and assistance, providing employment opportunities and identifying measures to address the root causes of informality among workers. **The scope of these livelihood assistance programmes has been relatively high in Niger compared with**

the Western Africa average; for instance, vulnerable persons covered by social assistance grasped 16% while regionally at 3% (revisit Table 2).¹⁷

Migration

Migration flows impact Niger's labour market, influencing supply and demand for labour, wages, skills, and social dynamics. Depending on the type of migration and the sectors involved, the impact can be positive or negative.

Niger is a central hub for migration in West Africa, particularly as a transit country for migrants traveling towards North Africa and Europe. This flow is tied to economic hardship, conflict, environmental degradation, and regional instability.

Niger's legal framework for migration is shaped by national laws, including the strict Law No. 2015-36 on the Smuggling of Migrants. The latter law tightened migration controls that criminalised assistance to migrants but criticised for harming local economies and pushing migration underground. In November 2023, Niger's military government repealed the mentioned law, leading to an increase in migrant flows through Niger, particularly towards Libya. Other migration tools promoted in Niger are **the first National Migration Policy (PNM) for the period 2020–2035, along with a five-year Action Plan**. This policy addresses various migration dynamics in Niger, including internal and seasonal labour migration, transit migration to North Africa and Europe, and the return and reintegration of migrants. Regional agreements (especially within ECOWAS) also play a role in the migration, along with international conventions, except not undersigned ILO migration-specific instruments.

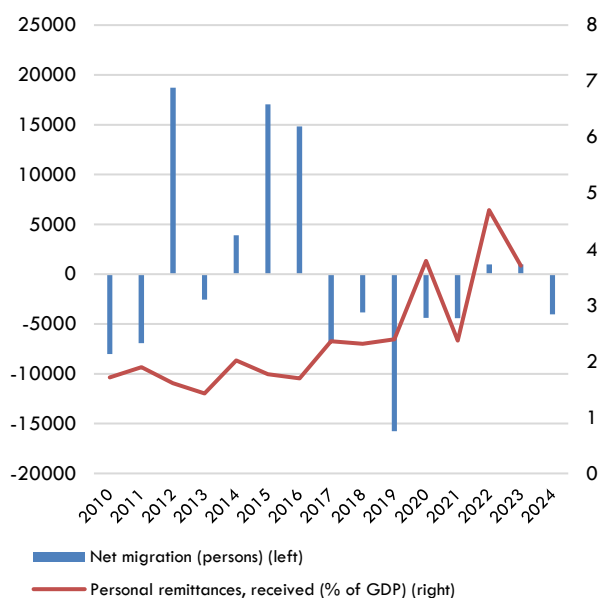
Migration-related issues are increasingly gaining attention among trade unions in Niger. Some trade unions have promoted public campaigns, highlighting the dangers of irregular migration, and criticising restrictive anti-migration policies imposed under external pressure. Some unions operate with migrant communities, especially in transit hubs like Agadez (in northern Niger) or promote decent work opportunities as an alternative to irregular migration. Limited resources and political pressure challenge trade unions' role in migration; for example, the government views migration as a security issue, reducing the influence of unions' social and labour perspectives. Since informality haunts the labour market, unionisation is difficult for migrant workers.

The country's population in urban areas and cities slowly grew, reaching the urbanisation rate of 17% in 2023.¹⁸ Internal migration is more a part of the rural-to-rural movement, especially for seasonal agricultural work, traditional pastoralist routes, and movement due to natural disasters or conflict.

Niger's diaspora is gaining more importance in the economy and labour market. Figure 4 shows that the net migration rate remained stable in recent years due to a complex interplay of regional migration agreements, policy changes, environmental factors, security dynamics, and economic considerations. These elements balance to some extent the inflow and outflow of migrants. **Another significant trend is the upsurge in the inflow of personal remittances**. This latter tendency is linked with the expansion of digital remittance channels, improved economic conditions in host countries, increased support during climate-induced disasters, and the role of remittances as a stable financial support mechanism. It further reflects the scope of a human capital flight, also

called the “brain drain,” which is becoming a growing concern in Niger. This concept refers to the emigration of skilled professionals, such as doctors, engineers, academics, and entrepreneurs, in search of better opportunities abroad.

Figure 4: Net migration and personal remittance in Niger, 2010-2024

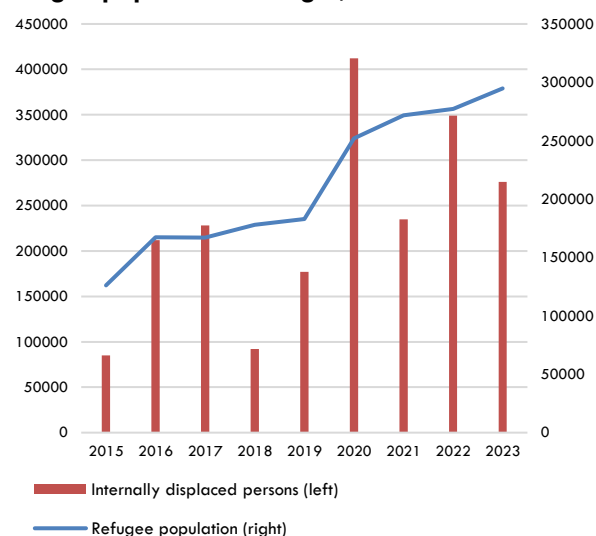


Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) can impact the labour market in various ways, such as straining local job markets and resources. Figure 5 below visualises **Niger’s reality of an upsurge in internally displaced persons (IDPs) from disasters and conflicts**. Generally, IDPs face several challenges when integrating or reintegrating into the labour market. It creates, among others, competition for informal jobs like agriculture, petty trade, and manual labour. Other factors like underemployment, skill mismatch, and strain on public services further pressure the labour market. Most Nigerien IDP workers struggle to make a living and face job insecurity, lower income, poor working conditions, and increased poverty.

Niger furthermore contends with the task of managing a significant population of asylum which has been on the rise (Figure 5). These asylum seekers originate mainly from Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Chad. This group has limited access to employment opportunities, competition and economic pressures with host communities, vulnerabilities to exploitation, and inadequate support systems.

Figure 5: Internally displaced persons and refugee population in Niger, 2015-2023



Note: Internally displaced persons include both from conflict/violence and disasters. Refugees include population by country of asylum and origin. Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Child Labour

Child labour has several adverse effects on the labour market. It provides a source of cheap labour, allowing employers to pay lower wages. This factor is often connected with a lack of decent wages and job opportunities, forcing families to rely on child labour for survival. These child labourers grow into unskilled adults and are more likely to remain in low-paying, unstable jobs.

Niger has undersigned several central international conventions concerning child labour, including ILO Conventions (see Appendix Table 4). Although the Labour Code

sets the minimum legal age for employment at 14 and the minimum age for hazardous work at 18, it has notable limitations in practice; for instance, it does not apply to children working in the informal economy, which is the most common.

Niger does not have a national action plan to combat child labour, but it is in the process of drafting this plan.¹⁹ Reports recorded that the country has demonstrated minimal advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.²⁰

Several trade unions in Niger actively participate in efforts to combat child labour through advocacy, education, and collaboration with governmental and international organisations.

Niger has one of the highest child labour rates worldwide: The child labour rate was estimated at 34% for children aged 5–17, which was eight percentage points higher than the West and Central Africa average of 26%.²¹ **This high child labour rate echoes the scale of how the labour market is not following the laws and regulations.**

Factors stuck with persistent child labour in Niger are linked with **poverty, often with many families rely on children's income for survival, particularly in rural areas where formal employment is scarce.** Livelihoods based on subsistence farming usually require all household members, including children, to contribute. Child labour is further limited access to quality education, cultural and social norms, lack of law enforcement, weak social protection systems, and massive migration and displacement flow due to political instability and the impact of climate change.

Gender

Gender shapes labour market dynamics, affecting employment opportunities, wages, job security, and economic growth. Niger has demonstrated a political commitment to promoting gender equality through policy frameworks and institutional initiatives. However, the country's laws and regulations around the life cycle of a working woman score 38 out of 100 (100 is best) in 2024, significantly lower than the regional average across sub-Saharan Africa at 57. This stance encounters very low ranking on several indicators, such as safety, childcare, and assets (see more details in Appendix Table 7).²²

At the policy level, **Niger's gender equality is formally established, but it remains incompletely implemented.** This situation is due to socio-economic constraints, entrenched cultural practices, and institutional weaknesses, not to mention the outdated framework. On the positive side, **social partners are actively involved in promoting gender equality** through institutional commitments, capacity-building initiatives, and collaborations with international partners.

There is a narrow gender gap on the number of persons in employment in Niger. **But other data signal that the formal employment is male dominated, reflecting in deep-rooted gender inequalities** – Table 1 below shows the status of employed gender gaps in Niger. Some of the main factors are patriarchal norms, and many girls leave school early due to child marriage or domestic responsibilities; among others, three out of four women aged 20–24 years old were married or in a union before age 18.²³ Without formal education or vocational training, women further have fewer opportunities to access wage-paying jobs; for instance, the number of women who are public servants represent 37% of the total amount of

persons employed in the public sector.²⁴ **Women face limited access to childcare, maternity protection, and flexible work policies,** making it harder for women to enter or remain in the workforce. In addition, Nigerien women are underrepresented in sectors like mining, construction, and manufacturing – industries that dominate Niger's formal economy.

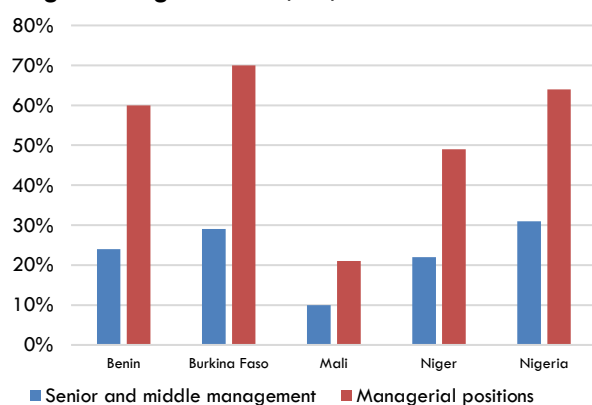
Table 1: Key indicators for employed gender gaps in Niger, 2022

	Men	Women
Employment-to-population ratio	87%	73%
Employment share	49%	51%
Unemployment rate	0.5%	0.3%
Employees rate	15%	4.6%
Self-employed rate	85%	95%
Employers rate	8.2%	2.2%

Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT; The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Data indicate that Nigerien women engaged in formal employment are making some progress. For instance, **they account for a moderate share of managerial positions** (see Figure 6). However, this figure should be interpreted with caution, as it is influenced by statistical limitations, including the prevalence of women in informal enterprises and the relatively small sample size of the formal sector.

Figure 6: Proportion of women in senior, middle and management positions in Niger and neighbouring countries, %, latest data



Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

Youth

Youth is the labour market's future backbone, playing a central role in shaping employment trends, productivity, and economic growth.

Niger's population structure has a 'youth bulge', a term used to describe the increase in the youthful population. In 2022, the youth (aged 15-24 years) accounted for a substantial portion of the working-age population, reaching 3.7 million or 31% of the total working-age population.²⁵ Overall, more than 80% of the population is under 35 years of age, considered one of the youngest populations in the world.²⁶

The country has enacted laws and policies to support its youth, focusing on education, protection, and health. However, effective implementation and addressing existing gaps remain critical to fully realising Niger youth's rights and potential. **In 2023, the country ranked 181st on the Global Youth Development Index out of 183 countries.**²⁷ Despite some somewhat functioning factors, like political and civic participation, it still struggles with most other factors, such as security, well-being, equality, and education.

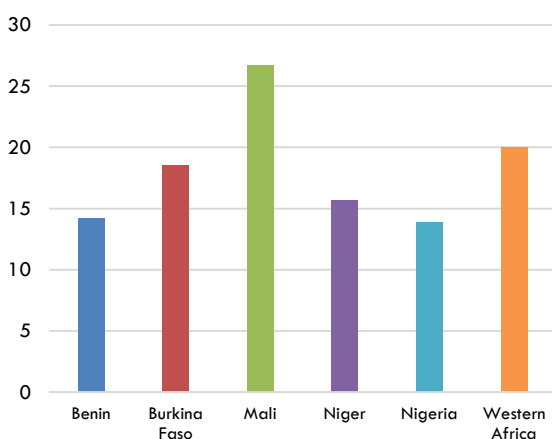
The fast-growing workforce in Niger is supported by almost 100,000 additional new young workers entering the labour market yearly. The youth employment-to-population ratio grew rapidly at the beginning of the 2020s, reaching a very high rate of 71% in 2022. This situation leads to a highly competitive job market for young individuals.²⁸ Some primary reasons for this evolution concern demographic momentum; promoting youth employment programmes, including entrepreneurship support initiatives and agricultural employment schemes; and COVID-19 recovery effects. It is worth mentioning that **increased employment is not necessarily associated with improved job quality.** Much

of the youth employment has been in informality, low-paying, unstable, or subsistence-level work. It furthermore misguides Niger's extremely low youth unemployment rate of 0.4%.

A central challenge for many young Nigerien people is their difficulties with the school-to-work transition, which is caught by a combination of structural, economic, and social issues. As indicated, the formal job market is narrow, while the economy heavily relies on subsistence agriculture. Other influences are the mismatch between education and labour market needs, besides an underdeveloped private sector (see more in the Education and Training section).

The not-in-education, employment, or training (NEET rate) better indicates the extent of barriers facing young people in the labour market than the unemployment rate does. **Niger's NEET rate is 16%, one of the lowest among the neighbouring countries** (see more in Figure 7). The relatively low NEET rate is instead linked with high poverty, economic instability, the impact of climate change, and migration ruptures.

Figure 7: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in Niger and other neighbouring countries, %, 2022



Source: International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND THE LABOUR MARKET

Education and training connection to the labour market refers to the relationship between the education system, vocational training programmes, and the market's needs. It highlights how education and skills development prepare individuals to meet employers' demands, improve employability, and support economic growth.

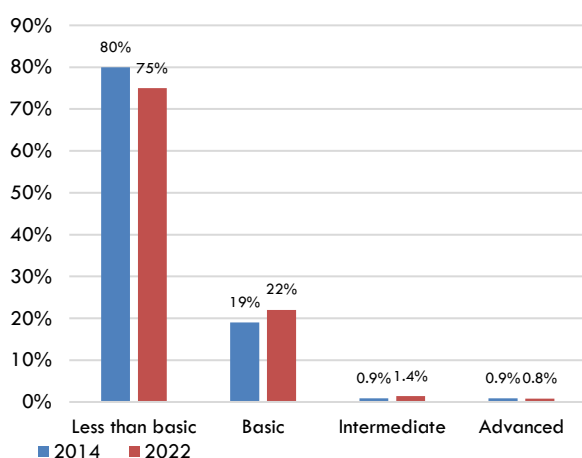
Niger has undertaken reforms in its education sector in recent years, aiming to address longstanding challenges such as limited infrastructure, teacher shortages, gender disparities, and the impact of political instability. As of 2022, Niger allocated approximately 4.1% of GDP to public education expenditure. In terms of the national budget, education spending accounted for 13% of total government expenditure in 2023.²⁹ Enrolment and completion rates for students in Niger has increased slightly. Literacy rate is also improving among younger generations, but it remains one of the world's lowest.³⁰

A series of educational factors are influencing the labour market in Niger, including low literacy and skill levels, limiting their employability and reduces productivity in both formal and informal sectors. Constrained access to secondary and higher education also makes a mismatch between educational attainment and labour market needs, hindering economic diversification. Curricula are often observed as outdated and not aligned with current labour market demands, including an underinvestment in technical and vocational training (see ahead). Other reasons are gender disparities in education, especially girls face significant barriers to completing secondary and higher education, not to mention the rural-

urban division and youth demographic pressure.

Small shifts in employment by education show that some workers with less than basic education moved into the basic education group over the last decade. Employment at the intermediate and advanced levels grew only marginally and remains underdeveloped (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Niger's employment by education, %, 2014-2022



Source: Niger National Survey on Household Living Conditions; International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT.

Niger's trade union movement acting a multifaceted role in shaping the country's education system. Teacher unions, particularly the *Syndicat National des Enseignants du Niger* (SNEN) and the Inter-Union of Education Unions of Niger (IESNI), are central to advocating for educators' rights, influencing policy, and promoting educational reforms. For example, teacher unions have been addressing issues related to employment terms and working conditions; contributing to professional development and gender equity in education; curriculum development, particularly concerning environmental education; engaged in policy discussions and reforms, such as Inclusive Education Policy Forums.³¹

Vocational Training

A legal and policy framework covers Niger's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system. The Ministry of Vocational and Technical Training (MEP-T) manages the system, which receives support from other state agencies. The TVET framework includes formal technical education, non-formal vocational training, and informal apprenticeship programs.

The formal TVET framework is undergoing development, with efforts to strengthen its structure and alignment with national and regional qualifications frameworks. These initiatives are promoted via strengthening curriculum relevance, expanding access to TVET programmes in rural and underserved areas, and enhancing quality assurance. The National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQF) encompasses all state-recognised vocational qualifications and aligns with the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) to harmonise qualifications and enhance the mobility of skilled workers across African countries.³²

Non-formal establishments dominate Niger's TVET system, primarily providing apprenticeships focused on practical training in growth sectors such as agriculture, crafts, and environmental activities. **Data indicate that 28% of firms in Niger offered formal training, a share consistent with the sub-Saharan Africa average.**³³ However, these firms constitute only a small fraction of the overall labour market, which is overwhelmingly dominated by informal micro and small enterprises.

Few structured programmes exist to support informal workers or aspiring entrepreneurs. As most Nigeriens work in agriculture or

informal trade, their lack of business and vocational skills limits their economic mobility. On the positive side, initiatives such as the Recognition of Prior Learning (VAE) system are promoted in a developmental phase, which formally acknowledges skills and competencies acquired through informal and non-formal learning pathways.

The involvement of private sector actors in TVET has been limited, mainly offering trainees work-experience programmes within businesses in specific sectors, like construction, postal services, hydraulic engineering, and machine operations. **Nevertheless, trade unions and employers' organisations are emerging as essential stakeholders in the TVET landscape.** Recent TVET policy reforms involve the creation of steering committees at various levels, involving central stakeholders – including trade unions and employers – in designing, implementing, and evaluating TVET programmes. These reforms are currently awaiting formal adoption by the government.

Although there has been some upsurge in enrolment in TVET, the latest data available shows the proportion of 15-24-year-olds enrolled in vocational education was 1.2% in 2023.³⁴ This situation has far-reaching impacts on the social and economic development. For instance, without vocational training, many young Nigerien lack the practical and technical skills needed for available jobs. It leads to mismatches between job seekers and labour market needs, and many end up in informal, unstable, or low-paying jobs, and economic mobility. Supplementary influences of the low proportion in TVET restrict the development of diversification beyond subsistence agriculture and extractives, such as emerging industries like renewable energy, agribusiness, and information and communications technology. It

further brings social exclusion and marginalisation, especially to girls and those in rural areas, who lack access to formal education and vocational pathways. Since Niger has one of the youngest populations in the world, it is worrisome if this demographic stance is not equipped with skills and opportunities, i.e., the “youth bulge” becomes a liability rather than a driver of growth.

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE LABOUR MARKET

In Niger, the social protection system seeks to reduce poverty, promote resilience against shocks (like food insecurity and climate change), and improve access to basic services. The right to social protection for all Nigerien was inscribed in the 2010 constitution, undersigned several international conventions on social protection (revisit Appendix Table 4), and set up a regulatory framework for social security. The government launched the National Social Protection Policy (PNPS) in 2011 to improve coordination and scale up programmes. **An updated PNPS and its action plan are being revised, including strengthening shock responsiveness and climate resilience.** Digital transformation via expanding mobile payments and biometric identification is also a promising tool to improve efficiency and transparency for the social protection sector.

The social insurance system mainly covers formal sector workers. Since the informal workforce covers over 90% of employment, most Nigerien workers lack access to social security benefits. These circumstances are visualised by the fact that the country has one of the world's highest poverty rates, and it is only falling on the margin. On the other hand, coverage of social safety net programmes has remarkably boosted during the last decade,

but still with significant leakage in the richest quintile. The population covered by social protection services is pictured in Table 2, illustrating **an underdeveloped linkage between services and the labour market.**

Table 2: Proportion of population covered by social protection services in Niger, %, latest data

Indicator	Value
Population covered by at least one social protection benefit	21%
Persons above retirement age receiving a pension	5.8%
Unemployed receiving unemployment benefits	0%
Employed covered in the event of work injury	6.9%
Children/households receiving child/family cash benefits	4.2%
Poor persons covered by social protection systems	40%
Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	16%

Source: International Labour Organisation, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)*.

Social assistance expenditures in Niger remain among the lowest in the world, with a concentration on food and in-kind assistance, not to mention financial hurdles because of limited domestic funding via tax collection. It is also affected by most employers dominating informal micro and small enterprises, evading social security contributions, leaving workers unprotected. Instead, finances for social protection are reliant on external assistance. Recent studies found, though, that social insurance expenses more than doubled between 2008 and 2017, reflecting increased payroll, safety nets tripled, while general subsidies (particularly petrol) have declined by 78%.³⁵ Another blindsided factor is that many workers are unaware of their social protection rights or lack incentives to enter the formal social protection system.

The trade union movement is formally represented in tripartite structures that discuss labour and social policies, including the National Social Protection Council. They further participate in consultations on pension reforms, wage policy, and healthcare access, advocating for increased funding for social protection, better pension coverage, and universal health insurance. Although their role remains constrained by limited outreach, resources, and influence, several unions, particularly USTN and CDTN, have started organising informal workers and pushing for their inclusion in contributory schemes or subsidised health coverage.

Niger's demographic landscape is characterised by a predominantly young population, with a relatively small proportion of elderly individuals. **Projections suggest that the proportion of individuals aged 65 and over is expected to remain stable and low at about 2.6% of the population to 2050.**³⁶ The pension system provides financial support to individuals during retirement. Only about 6% of persons above retirement age receive a pension, especially in urban areas. **Those receiving a pension in the private sector often receive a low allowance, even below the poverty line.** Other deficiencies of Niger's social insurance system include the fact that if workers become unemployed, they have no chance of receiving unemployment benefits (revisit Table 2). **These factors signal that Niger's labour market delivers a weak and dysfunctional formal social insurance system.**

Informal social protection plays a central role in supporting vulnerable populations, particularly in rural areas and among informal workers. These groups rely more on community-based, kinship, and religious networks as safety nets. However, these

components are fragile, unequal, and insufficient for long-term resilience or large-scale shocks. Exclusion and discrimination (e.g., women, orphans, or marginalised ethnic groups), as well as urbanisation and migration further weaken traditional family and village

ties, negatively influencing the approach. It is worth mentioning that the PNPS recognised the value of informal mechanisms and calls for greater integration and support, without replacing them.

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 3: Legal reservations in Niger concerning the rights to organise, collective bargaining, and strikes

Right to organise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Labour Code provides that workers over 16 years of age may join trade unions, while it excludes workers between 14 years of age and sixteen years old to join or establish unions. • There is no legal provision permitting the following categories of workers to join and form unions: judges, senior lecturers in universities and similar institutions, staff of administrations, services and public establishments of the State that are industrial or commercial in nature, staff of customs, water and forestry services, and staff of the National School of Administration and Legal Service Training, local authorities and the parliamentary administration. • According to the Labour Code, members responsible for the administration or leadership of a trade union must, inter alia, be in possession of their civic rights, which excludes persons convicted of crimes or offences, persons who have failed to comply with a summons to appear in court and persons deprived of legal capacity.
Right to collective bargaining
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are no specific legal provisions guaranteeing the right to collective bargaining to public servants. • The criteria applied to determine representativeness are unclear.
Right to strike
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 9 of Ordinance No. 96-009 of 21 March 1996 regulating the exercise of the right to strike of state employees and local authority employees prevents public servants from striking. • According to the Labour Code, in the event of disagreement at the outcome of the conciliation phase of a collective labour dispute, if the workers intend to pursue the dispute, they are required to give the employers notice of any strike action and to inform the labour inspector accordingly. In the absence of an agreed arbitration procedure, the labour minister may decide to submit the dispute to an arbitration board established for this purpose composed of members appointed by the minister. If no party has expressed opposition after two days following notification of the arbitration award, the latter shall be enforced.

Source: International Trade Union Confederation, *Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, Niger: Legal*, April 2025.

Table 4: Status of ratified ILO Conventions in Niger

Subject and/or right	Convention	Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948	1961
	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	1962
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	1961
	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1962
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973	1978
	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2000
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	1966
	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	1962
Occupational safety and health	C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981	2009
	C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006	2009
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	1979
	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	Not ratified
Employment policy Tripartism	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	2018
	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	2018
Technical Conventions (Up to date)		
Working time	C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921	1961
Wages	C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949	1961
Social security	C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952	1966
Wages	C131 - Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970	1980
Industrial relations	C135 - Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971	1972
Vocational guidance and training	C142 - Human Resources Development Convention, 1975	1993
Occupational safety and health	C148 - Working Environment (Air Pollution, Noise and Vibration) Convention, 1977	1993
Labour administration	C150 - Labour Administration Convention, 1978	2015
Industrial relations	C154 - Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981	1985
Equality of opportunity and treatment	C156 - Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981	1985
Occupational safety and health	C161 - Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985	2015
Employment policy and promotion	C181 - Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997	2009
Maternity protection	C183 - Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)	2019

Source: International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Niger, April 2025.

Table 5: Scores for Labour Rights Index's legislative performance indicators for Niger, 2024

Fair wages	Decent Working Hours	Employment Security	Family Responsibilities	Maternity at Work	Safe Work	Social Security	Fair Treatment	Child & Forced Labour	Freedom of Association	Index score
80	80	80	25	80	100	60	60	75	25	67

Note: Overall scores are calculated by taking the average of each indicator, with 100 representing the highest possible score.

Source: WageIndicator.org & Centre for Labour Research, Labour Rights Index 2024: Niger.

Table 6: Niger's key workforce data, 2022

Indicator	Value
Working Age Population	11,732,700
Labour force participation rate	80%
Unemployment rate	0.4%
Employed share	
Urban	14%
Rural	86%
Employed by sector share	
Public	1.8%
Private	98%
Employed by aggregated sector share	
Agriculture	74%
Industry	9.3%
Service	17%

Source: Niger National Survey on Household Living Conditions 2022.

Table 7: Niger – Legal framework scores for women, business and the law, 2024

Safety	Mobility	Workplace	Pay	Marriage	Parenthood	Childcare	Entrepreneurship	Assets	Pension
0	75	25	50	25	75	0	25	0	100

Source: The World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2024.

Table 8: Central trade union centres' membership rate and growth in Niger, 2012-2022

Trade union centres	2012	2022	Growth, 2012-2022
Confédération Démocratique des Travailleurs du Niger (CDTN)	34985	53280	52%
Confédération Nigérienne du Travail (CNT)	75000	102250	36%
Union des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Niger (USTN)	43000	84104	96%
Total	152,985	239,634	57%

Source: International Trade Union Confederation, List of Affiliated Organisations.

Table 9: The main demands of the African trade unions in the declaration statement calling for the Just Transition agenda, 2023

Main demands in the declaration statement calling for the Just Transition agenda
1. Decent work and quality jobs: Trade unions insist on the creation of quality jobs as part of climate change policies. They demand that these jobs uphold labour rights and prioritise decent working conditions for all. This includes investments in skills development and training for workers to adapt to emerging green industries.
2. Social protection: Workers adversely affected by climate change must benefit from social protection measures, including income support, access to health care, education, and training to facilitate their professional reorientation. Trade unions are committed to protecting the most vulnerable workers and communities from the potential impacts of climate policies.
3 Worker Participation: Workers must be involved in the development and implementation of climate-related policies and projects, as they have valuable insights into the realities of their industries and communities.
4. Community Engagement: Local communities and stakeholders must be involved in decision-making on climate initiatives. Priority should be given to investment in sustainable infrastructure, green technologies and community resilience.
5 Gender equity: Trade unions demand that gender considerations be integrated into climate policies, recognising that women are often the most affected by the effects of climate change. They call for the empowerment of women through training, leadership and gender-sensitive policies.
6. Investment in green jobs: Trade unions call for substantial investment in green technologies, renewable energy and sustainable agriculture. They believe this investment will boost economic growth, create jobs and help preserve the environment.
7. Labour rights and just transition plans: Trade unions demand that labour rights be enforced and upheld in the context of climate policies, including the right to organise and the right to collective bargaining. Comprehensive just transition plans must be developed to outline pathways for affected workers and communities through the transition period.
8. Reskilling and Upskilling: Trade unions call for reskilling and upskilling programmes to equip workers with the skills needed for the transition to green industries by adapting to the needs of the labour market.
9. Support for impacted industries: The industries most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change policies should be given targeted support and resources to help them transform their operations while safeguarding jobs.
10. Transparency and accountability: Trade unions call for transparency in the allocation of resources and the distribution of benefits resulting from climate initiatives. They also call for accountability mechanisms to be put in place to hold stakeholders accountable for meeting their just transition commitments.

Source: ITUC-Africa, Africa Climate Summit: African trade unions call for a just transition.

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