



August 2024

Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024

Asia and the Pacific

Key points

- ▶ At 13.9 per cent in 2023, the youth unemployment rate for Asia and the Pacific reflects a full recovery from the crisis years and falls below the rate of the pre-crisis years.
- ▶ But trends diverge by subregion with positive signals of declining youth unemployment and rising employment ratios in South Asia, the contrary in East Asia and with the job situation for youth in South-East Asia and the Pacific falling somewhere in the middle. The youth unemployment rate of 14.5 per cent in 2023 in East Asia was a historical high.
- ▶ Young men have had greater success than young women in finding work during the recovery period. While the youth unemployment rate of young women remained still 1 percentage point above the pre-crisis rate in 2023 (at 13.4 per cent), the rate of young men had fallen by 0.7 points.
- ▶ Youth NEET rates declined from 2019 in all Asia-Pacific subregions, but the exceedingly high rate among young women in South Asia (at 42.4 per cent) means, on the aggregate, still one in five (20.4 per cent) youth in the region was in NEET status in 2023.
- ▶ The gender gap in youth NEET rates in South Asia, at 31 percentage points, was higher than in any other subregion of the world.
- ▶ By 2025, the youth unemployment rate in the region is expected to continue its decline to 13.7 per cent. But the region's youth NEET rate is expected to creep up again very slightly to 20.5 per cent (from 20.4 per cent in 2023).
- ▶ The shares of young adults in Asia and the Pacific working in temporary jobs has increased from one in five to one in four since the start of the millennium. Only in the subregion of East Asia was a majority of young adult workers (59 per cent) in a paid job with contract duration greater than one year.
- ▶ By 2021, only the subregion of South Asia still had the agricultural sector as the largest employer of young people (at 35 per cent). In East Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific, the sectoral reallocation of youth employment from agriculture since 2001 was primarily to non-manufacturing industry (mainly construction) and traditional services such as trade, transport, accommodation and food services.

► Introduction

This regional outlook is based on the [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Decent work, brighter futures](#) (hereafter GET Youth 2024).¹ For two decades, the *GET Youth* reports have striven to provide timely and relevant information on how well young people are doing in their ambitions to attain decent work. In so doing the report has investigated the where, why and how of young people's labour market vulnerabilities, and highlighted the policy measures and interventions that aim to support youth job creation and effectively set young people on the pathway to a bright future of work.

As an anniversary edition, the *GET Youth 2024* report looks back on what has been achieved since the dawn of the twenty-first century while also looking ahead to what may lay in store for youth employment in an era characterized by crises and uncertainties.

This Regional Brief accompanies the main report with a more in-depth analysis of the key labour market indicators for youth in the Asia and the Pacific region, based on ILO modelled estimates and available national labour market statistics.

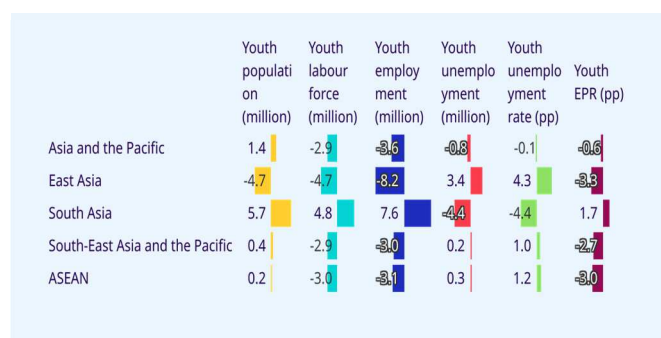
► Regional outlook for youth in the labour market

Recovery of youth employment in the region is complete, but with important exceptions.

At 13.9 per cent in 2023, the youth unemployment rate for Asia and the Pacific reflects a full recovery from the COVID-19 peak of 15.7 per cent in 2020 and a slight improvement compared to the rates of the five years leading up to the crisis (2015–19) (Annex table 1). But the recovery results differ by subregion, reflecting the heterogeneity of the vast region and the diversity of socio-economic and development contexts.

In South Asia, the youth unemployment rate, at 15.1 per cent in 2023, represented not just recovery from the COVID-19 period, but a 15-year-low. South Asia was also the only of the Asian subregions to show an increase in the youth EPR in 2023 over 2019 (figure 1). There is thus a tentative signalling that the challenges of young people to find work in the subregion are gradually easing even though the youth unemployment rate in the subregion is still the region's highest, still too many young women remain excluded from labour force participation and the quality of jobs that are open to youth is still deemed lacking (see section below).

► Figure 1. Change in key youth labour market variables and indicators, by Asia-Pacific subregion, 2019–23



Note: pp = percentage points. EPR = employment-to-population ratio.
Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, November 2023 (employment, population, EPR) and May 2024 (unemployment, labour force and YUR).

The jobs situation for youth in East Asia is moving in the inverse direction. The youth unemployment rate in 2023 (at 14.5 per cent) represented a historical high and a near-doubling of the rates seen at the beginning of the century (Annex table 1).² If China is excluded, however, the picture changes significantly. In Japan and the Republic of Korea, labour demand is currently strong, partly due to the circumstances of the rapidly shrinking labour forces and ageing population, which pushes youth unemployment

¹ The term “youth” is typically considered to encompass the age group of 15 to 24 years old, with “adults” considered to be those aged 25 and over. However, when possible, the discussion is expanded to cover the broader age range of 15 to 29 years old. Data are presented by subregion and by country income group level and are disaggregated by sex. ILO regions and

subregions are defined in Appendix A of ILO, [World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2024](#), and country income groupings are defined according to the [World Bank's income classification](#).

² The first date of data availability for ILO modelled estimates is 1991.

down. Both countries are now with rates of youth unemployment that are nearing historical lows.

As reported in [GET Youth 2024](#), the sharp increase in the youth unemployment rate in East Asia between 2019 and 2023 was driven by both the large jump in the number of unemployed youth (+ 3.4 million people) and the shrinking of the youth labour force (– 4.7 million people). Thus, both factors – a rising numerator and shrinking denominator – are behind the rising youth unemployment rate in East Asia.

The only other subregion with more unemployed youth in 2023 compared to 2019 as well as a shrinking youth labour force was South-East Asia and the Pacific.³ The youth unemployment rate in the subregion remained the region's lowest at 9.9 per cent in 2023, but this marked a slight increase (1 percentage point) over the average rate of the pre-crisis period of 2015–19 (Annex table 1 and figure 1).⁴

By 2023, youth employment was also back on track to the pre-COVID period. At 33.2 per cent, the regional youth employment-to-population ratio (EPR) was 1.3 percentage points above the low of 31.9 per cent in 2020 (Annex table 2). The return to the pre-crisis trend of a declining youth EPR is true of all subregions but South Asia. It was the only subregion to see an increase in the youth EPR in the period 2019–23.

Young women have been penalized in their job prospects during the crisis and recovery.

In the region, the unemployment rates of young men consistently exceed rates of young women. However, the male-to-female gap has decreased since the crisis. While the youth unemployment rate of young women remained still 1 percentage point above the pre-crisis rate (2019) in 2023 (at 13.4 per cent), the rate of young men had fallen by 0.7 points, which means that young men have had greater success than young women in finding work during the recovery period (figure 2).⁵

The region has shown some progress at reducing the share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) over time, although the rate remains still “too high” at 20.4 per cent in 2023. All subregions have

made progress towards the commitment of Sustainable Development Goal target 8.6 to reduce youth NEET rates (Annex table 3).

► **Figure 2. Youth unemployment rate by sex, Asia and the Pacific, 2010–23 (percentage)**



Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, May 2024.

Some progress on reducing shares of youth in NEET status in the region, but the exclusion of young women in South Asia remains problematic.

The differences across subregions are wide, with the share of youth in NEET status in South Asia (at 26.4 per cent in 2023) more than double the share in East Asia (at 10.9 per cent) and 1.5 times greater than the share in South-East Asia and the Pacific (at 16.3 per cent). The high NEET rates in South Asia is driven by the exclusion of young women from opportunities of schooling and employment. The NEET rate among young women in the subregion was nearly four times greater than the rate of young men, at 42.4 per cent and 11.5 per cent, respectively, in 2023. At 31 percentage points, this marks the largest gender gap in youth NEET rates across all the world's subregions.

Outlook for 2024 and 2025

According to the IMF, the economic outlook for Asia and the Pacific has brightened in 2024.⁶ This is reflected in the upward revision of their GDP growth forecast to 4.5 per cent with an unchanged forecast of 4.3 per cent growth in 2025. Positive growth in the region is expected to bring

³ Ideally, the Pacific would be presented as a fourth subregion, but this proves data limitations make this difficult. Readers interested to see data on the Pacific are invited to see the ILO, [Pacific Employment and Social Monitor](#), April 2024.

⁴ The same is true for the narrower subgroup of the ASEAN countries.

⁵ If 2023 rates are compared to the average of the period 2015–19 instead, still the rate of young women was elevated over the pre-crisis period (by 0.8 percentage points) while the male rate was 1.1 percentage point lower.

⁶ Krishna Srinivasan, “[Asia's Growth and Inflation Outlook Improves, Risks Remain](#)”, IMF Blogs, 29 April 2024.

with it a declining youth unemployment rate for the region from 13.9 per cent in 2023 to a projected 13.7 per cent in 2025 (Annex table 1). The declining rates are expected for all subregions. East Asia is expected to see some easing from the record high youth unemployment rate in 2023, falling by 0.2 percentage points to 14.3 per cent in 2025, while rates in South-East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia should continue the declining trends from their earlier crisis peaks.

While the economically active youth can expect some easing in the pressures of finding work in the near future, progress in shrinking youth NEET rates looks less favourable. In both East Asia and South Asia, the projected youth NEET rates in 2025 are again on the rise (Annex table 3). The expected increase to 26.6 per cent is worrisome in South Asia, given its already high level.

Young people worry about their futures.

On the whole, youth employment and unemployment figures for the region look good. However, checking in with young people can reveal a sense of disconnect between the labour market statistics and the perceptions that young people share about their futures. According to various surveys reported in the [GET Youth 2024](#) report:⁷

- A majority of young people aged 15 to 29 were worried about losing their job in all subregions, with the highest share of 77 per cent in South-East Asia and the Pacific, followed by 71 per cent in South Asia and 64 per cent in East Asia.
- More than three in four young person in South Asia were concerned about the possibility of war involving

their country. Shares in East Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific were 60 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively. All subregions showed an increased in the shares of conflict-concerned youth since 2010.

- Nearly 60 per cent of people in the region (not youth specific) felt the economic opportunities in their countries today to be insufficient.
- Only 61 per cent of youth in South Asia felt confident in achieving their future job goals within two years, and women were much less confident than men.

On a more positive note, most young people in the Asia-Pacific region consider their standard of living to be better than their parents. The sentiment of upward social mobility among youth was the highest of all subregions.⁸



Young male trainees in Bangladesh's shipbuilding sector

► A changing landscape of youth employment

In the spirit of the anniversary of the GET Youth publication, the report brings updated evidence to various topics of relevance to the current dialogue on youth employment. To the extent possible, the aim is to highlight how the landscape that connects young people's prospects to labour market outcomes has changed since the beginning of the millennium. This brief summarizes the main points relevant to the region.

Still few decent jobs available to young people; most find temporary paid work or self-employment.

Few young adults in Asia and the Pacific manage to find regular wage-paying jobs covered by labour standards that offer protections on pay and working conditions. Only South Asia among the subregions has shown some progress over the past two decades in increasing the share of young adult workers aged 25 to 29 in a paid job

⁷ The source of the first two bullets is the [World Values Survey](#), Wave 7 (2017–22). The third bullet is based on Gallup International, "75 Years Jubilee Poll", August–October 2022, and the fourth comes from UNICEF,

[Voices of youth: South Asian perspectives on education, skills and employment](#), June 2020.

⁸ [World Values Survey](#), Wave 7 (2017–22).

with a contract tenure of one year or longer (table 1). Nonetheless, it remains the subregion with the highest share of youth in insecure work (with still more than two in three young adult workers in the subregion lacking a secure job). Only in East Asia was a majority of young adult workers (59 per cent) in a more secure form of work.

The incidence of temporary work among young workers has increased over time and is now at 28 per cent in all subregions. Both East Asia and South Asia saw the share jump from 20 per cent in 2000 to 28 per cent in 2023 (table 1).

► **Table 1. Average share of young adult employment (aged 25 to 29) in insecure categories of work, by subregion, 2000 and 2023 or nearest years (percentage)**

Subregion	Year	Self-employed workers	Temporary paid workers	Sum (insecure work)
East Asia (3)	2000	12.2	19.8	32.0
	2023	12.7	28.2	40.8
South Asia (5)	2000	56.7	20.3	77.0
	2023	42.1	28.4	70.6
South-East Asia and the Pacific (8)	2000	40.7	22.4	63.1
	2023	30.1	27.6	57.7

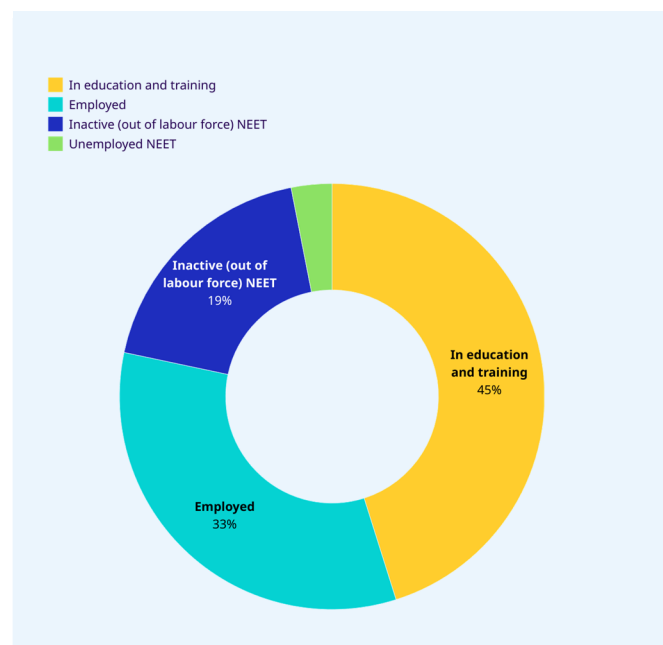
Note: Calculations are simple averages of existing country-level data in 2000 (in the range of 2000 to 2010) and 2023 (between 2015 and 2023, excluding 2020). The number between parentheses indicates the number of countries covered in the regional average. East Asia excludes China, referring only to Japan, Mongolia and the Republic of Korea. The equivalent results for young women are found in annex figure A2 of the main report. Source: Calculations based on annual data in ILOSTAT, YouthSTATS database.

More young people are able to attend school or training.

In 2023, 45 per cent of the youth population aged 15 to 24 in Asia and the Pacific were in education or training, 33 per cent were employed and 22 per cent were NEET (19 per cent as inactive NEET and 3 per cent as unemployed NEET) (figure 3).⁹ Comparing to the situation at the start of the millennium, the region has made significant gains in increasing the shares of young people that are able to participate in education or undertake training. In 2000, the share of youth in education or training was about 30 per cent (thus jumping by 15 percentage points through 2023). With fewer in school, larger shares of young people

were employed (48 per cent) or in NEET status (around 25 per cent) in the early 2000s.¹⁰

► **Figure 3. Distribution of youth population in Asia and the Pacific by main activity, 2023 (percentage)**



Source: Calculations based on annual data in ILOSTAT, YouthSTATS database and ILO modelled estimates, November 2023.

The agricultural sector still employs the largest share of employed youth in South Asia, while the services sectors host most young workers in East Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific.

Over the past two decades, significant shifts have taken place in terms of the sectoral distribution of youth employment, highlighting the structural transformations that have taken place in Asia and the Pacific. In 2001, agriculture accounted for the largest share of youth employment in all subregions. By 2021, this was the case only in South Asia, where still 35 per cent of youth employment was in agriculture in 2021. In East Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific, the sector housing the largest number of young workers in 2021 was the combined services grouping of trade, transport, accommodation and food services (at 25 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively).

⁹ The regional youth NEET rate associated to figure 3 differs slightly from the regional average discussed in the previous section because the calculations were based on the previous round of the ILO's modelled estimates (dated August 2024 in the latest model run).

¹⁰ Data for 2000 are rough estimates in the absence of ILO modelled estimates on NEET rates for the year (starting from 2005 only) and on educational participation.

Figure 4 highlights the dramatic shifts away from agricultural employment to primarily non-manufacturing industries, including construction and to service sectors, especially trade, transport, accommodation and food services. Among the sectors that added young workers over the two-decade period, for the region as a whole, 28 per cent of net youth employment growth went to the modern sectors (Communications, financial and professional services) where a tertiary-educated youth might expect to find work. The bulk of job creation for youth in the region over the past two decades (since 2001) remained in traditional sectors. Non-manufacturing industries like construction accounted for 47 per cent of the net job growth over the period and trade, transport, accommodation and food service activities, 15 per cent. Care services absorbed the final 10 per cent of net job growth.

► **Figure 4. Change in sectoral share of youth employment between 2001 and 2021 (percentage points)**



Source: ILO modelled sectoral estimates, November 2022 (unpublished).

Asia and the Pacific as a region still has the highest share of young workers in the manufacturing sector (from 17.7 per cent in South-East Asia and the Pacific to 19.9 per cent in East Asia). The share of youth gaining work in manufacturing since 2001 increased in South Asia and South-East Asia and the Pacific and held steady in East Asia. Still, recent reports indicate that some young people now shun manufacturing jobs in factories in East Asia.¹¹ Shortages of manufacturing workers in the subregion thus threaten to future growth prospects for the sector. In

contrast, increasing investment in manufacturing in South Asia and South-East Asia continues to bring new job opportunities to young people, potentially benefitting young women in South Asia in particular.¹²

Growth in the types of skilled jobs expected by young adults is not keeping pace with the supply of jobseekers; increasing incidences of educational mismatches follow.

Consequences of the sectoral composition of job growth in the region and the increasing levels of educational attainment among youth are an increase in educational mismatches¹³ and rising rates of graduate unemployment. The main report (section 2.5) investigates the question of whether higher education improves the chances of youth to access jobs, and answers with a clear “yes”. The evidence shows that the tertiary-educated young adult aged 25 to 29 has a much lower chance to fall into the status of NEET compared to those with lower levels of education. Likewise, the report shows that in high-income countries and upper-middle-income countries, having a tertiary education also decreases the chance that a young adult falls in a situation of labour underutilization, that is, either being unemployed or in time-related underemployment. However, the same correlation does not hold for the higher-educated young adult in a lower-middle- and low-income country (LMLIC), which are the income groupings covering the majority of young people in Asia and the Pacific.¹⁴

These results reflect in part the limited capacity of economies in LMLICs to create high-skilled jobs at a pace sufficient to meet the growing supply of tertiary graduates. For young adults in the developing economies of Asia and the Pacific, the benefits of attaining a tertiary education emerge in the resulting quality of employment (lower incidences of both informal work and low-paid work), rather than in the quantity of employment. The outcome is a situation in which two thirds of young adult workers in LMLICs hold qualifications that do not match well to the jobs that they do.

¹¹ Clement Tan, “China’s Youth Unemployment Hits a Record High, Deepening Its Economic Scars”, *CNBC*, 29 May 2023.

¹² Peter S. Goodman, “Women in India Face a Jobs Crisis. Are Factories the Solution?”, *The New York Times*, 3 July 2024.

¹³ A “mismatched” individual is one who is either overeducated (with highest level of education above the ISCO educational requirements for

their occupation) or undereducated (with highest level of education below the ISCO educational requirements for their occupation).

¹⁴ The analysis in the GET Youth 2024 is not available by subregion, but only by income level grouping.

► Moving ahead

Young people in Asia and the Pacific struggle against a persistent inadequacy of decent work creation. Opportunities for work are plentiful in sectors requiring an acquisition of skills below the tertiary level, in construction, retail and accommodations, for instance. Yet such jobs rarely bring with them the benefits of long-term tenure and labour protections that can help a young people to feel sufficiently secure in their adulthood transitions.

Job opportunities in the manufacturing sector are also plentiful for the young people who wish to take them. In some countries, young people are turning away from manufacturing, while in others – in Viet Nam and some South Asian countries, for instance, for example – the growing manufacturing sector is opening doors for young people, young women especially, to earn an income outside the home. For the increasing number of university graduates, however, seeking work in the modern sector, competition is steep for a limited number of jobs with resulting graduate youth unemployment continuing as a prime challenge.

Demographic challenges also exist for the region. The youth labour force is expected to shrink by 33 million between 2023 and 2025 (main report, figure 2.22). South-East Asia and the Pacific and South Asia will see the youth labour force shrink by 9 million and 2 million, respectively. To a certain extent, this has been offset in part by increased labour force participation of women and older people, with the question remaining as to the ultimate impact on potential output growth.¹⁵

Despite some positive signals about growth and jobs recovery, young people today show signs of growing levels of anxiety about their future. Surveys highlighted in this report indicate that many young people today feel stressed about job loss and job stability, the state of the economy, increasing violence and conflicts, not to mention the many other known stressors like climate change and technological progress that are not directly

addressed here. Whether borne out by reality or not, young people's perceptions about the future play a significant role in their personal well-being and motivation levels and in shaping their decisions about future educational, labour market and civic engagement.

To help ease youth anxieties, institutions will need to guide young people through the complexities of the school-to-work and youth-to-adulthood transitions. Helping young people to keep their hopes alive must become a shared mission involving all segments of society.

Bringing decent work to all young people and setting them on pathways to bright futures requires scaled-up action of multiple fronts and a long-term “real” commitment on the part of policymakers to work with social partners and young people themselves on the integrated approach to youth employment. Without repeating the policy implications of the main report, the following are a few priority areas of action that are especially relevant to supporting youth employment in Asia and the Pacific:

- While continuing to boost educational access and attainment for all young persons, more (and better) actions are required to boost job creation through gender-responsive macroeconomic and sectoral policies.
- Accelerate the implementation of labour and social protection, and in turn, boost the transition to formal employment and the transformation of jobs to decent work.
- In all action areas, keep youth in the driver's seat of policymaking, and promote and strengthen the institutions of youth-inclusive social dialogue.
- Tackle global inequalities through improved international cooperation, public-private partnerships and financing for development.

¹⁵ For more insight on the influence of demographics on the region's labour market, see ILO, [Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2024: Promoting decent work and social justice to manage ageing societies](#), 2024.

► Subregional summaries

East Asia

- The youth unemployment rate in 2023 (at 14.5 per cent) represented a historical high and a near-doubling of the rates seen at the beginning of the century. The rate is expected to fall slightly to 14.3 per cent in 2025 (with the projected improvement showing for young women but not young men).
- If China is excluded, however, the picture changes significantly. In Japan and the Republic of Korea, youth unemployment rates are nearing historical lows, reflecting the circumstances of labour shortages in certain sectors and the pressures of population ageing.
- The sharp increase in the youth unemployment rate in East Asia between 2019 and 2023 – a jump of 4.3 percentage points – was driven by both the large increase in the number of unemployed youth (+ 3.4 million people) and the shrinking of the youth labour force (– 4.7 million people). Thus, both factors – a rising numerator and shrinking denominator – are behind the rising youth unemployment rate.
- The youth EPR by 2023 had returned to its pre-crisis declining trend, driven by the shrinking youth population and more young people able to remain in school. Overall, 41 per cent of young people were working. The gender gap is low, with 39 per cent of young women in employment and 42 per cent of young men.
- The share of youth in NEET status was low by global comparison, at 10.9 per cent in 2023 (12.1 per cent for young women and 9.9 per cent for young men) and has remained more or less unchanged from the pre-crisis period of 2015–19.
- East Asia is the only one of the Asian subregions to have a slight majority of young adult workers aged 15 to 24 (59 per cent) in a secure form of work, meaning in paid employment with a contract duration of at least one year. But the share has decreased over time. The share was significantly higher at 68 per cent in 2000. From the start of the millennium, shares of young people in self-employment has remained unchanged but the share of young adults in temporary paid work has increased significantly (from 20 per cent to 28 per cent).
- The agriculture sector lost its position of dominance for youth employment between 2001 and 2021, shrinking by 24 percentage points (to 22 per cent of employed youth). The only sectors that saw an increase in numbers of young workers between 2001 and 2021 were non-manufacturing industries (including construction and mining) and communications, financial and professional services. The latter accounted for the largest share of youth employment in 2021 at 75 per cent.

South Asia

- Youth unemployment rate reached a 15-year low in 2023, at 15.1 per cent. It is expected to continue its decline to rest at 14.9 per cent in 2025.
- For young women, the youth unemployment rate is expected to increase by 0.4 percentage points to 16.7 per cent in 2025 (over 16.3 per cent in 2023), while the rate for young males is expected to decline further to 14.4 per cent in 2025.
- Youth employment-to-population ratio in 2023, at 27.3 per cent, was 1.7 percentage points higher than in the pre-crisis year of 2019. Still, this marks the lowest youth EPR of the region and was above only the Arab States and North Africa as world subregions.
- The low youth EPR is due to the exclusion of young women from employment. Only 14 per cent of young women were working in 2023 compared to 39 per cent of young men.

- The share of youth in NEET status, at 26.4 per cent in 2023, was a slight improvement over that of the pre-crisis period but is still the highest in the region by far and the third highest among all the world's subregions. The high NEET rates in South Asia is driven by the exclusion of young women from opportunities of schooling and employment. The female youth NEET rate was nearly four times greater than the male rate (at 42.4 per cent and 11.9 per cent, respectively).
- In South Asia, still few young adults aged 15 to 24 (29 per cent) are in a secure form of work, meaning in paid employment with a contract duration of at least one year, although this represents a slight improvement from two decades ago. From the start of the millennium to 2023, the share of young adults in self-employment declined from 57 per cent to 42 per cent while the share in temporary paid work increased from 20 per cent to 28 per cent.
- The largest share of youth employment was still in agriculture in 2021 (at 35 per cent), down from 56 per cent in 2001. The sectoral reallocation of youth employment over the period was primarily to non-manufacturing industry (mainly construction) followed by communications, financial and professional services and traditional services such as trade, transport, accommodation and food services.

South-East Asia and the Pacific

- The youth unemployment rate in the subregion remained the region's lowest at 9.9 per cent in 2023, but this marked a slight increase (1 percentage point) over the average rate in the pre-crisis period of 2015–19. The rate is expected to continue its decline to reach 9.7 per cent in 2025, falling for both young men and young women.
- The youth EPR by 2023 had returned to its pre-crisis declining trend, driven by the shrinking youth population and more young people able to remain in school. Overall, 40 per cent of young people were working. The gender gap remains a concern, with 34 per cent of young women in employment compared to 45 per cent of young men.
- The share of youth in NEET status, at 16.3 per cent in 2023, falls below the global average and below the pre-crisis period of 2015–19. The female NEET rate of 19.6 per cent in 2023 was 1.5 times higher than the male rate of 13 per cent.
- In South-East Asia and the Pacific, still few young adults aged 15 to 24 (42 per cent) are in a secure form of work, meaning in paid employment with a contract duration of at least one year, although this represents a slight improvement from two decades ago. From the start of the millennium to 2023, the share of young adults in self-employment declined from 41 per cent to 30 per cent while the share in temporary paid work increased from 22 per cent to 28 per cent.
- The agriculture sector lost its position of dominance for youth employment between 2001 and 2021, shrinking by 23 percentage points (to 24 per cent of employed youth), with the reallocation going primarily to traditional services such as trade, transport, accommodation and food services (50 per cent), followed by communications, financial and professional services (19 per cent) and slight gains in non-manufacturing industries like construction and care services.

► Annex: Additional tables

► Table 1. Youth unemployment rate by sex, Asia-Pacific region and subregions, select periods and 2019–25 (percentage)

Region/subregion/country income group	2000–04 (average)	2015–19 (average)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total									
Asia and the Pacific	10.7	14.3	14.0	15.7	14.6	14.2	13.9	13.7	13.7
East Asia	8.6	10.0	10.2	12.0	11.7	13.8	14.5	14.3	14.3
South Asia	12.7	20.0	19.5	21.0	18.6	16.4	15.1	14.9	14.9
South-East Asia and the Pacific	11.5	9.8	8.9	10.2	10.6	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.7
ASEAN	11.6	9.7	8.8	10.1	10.6	10.0	10.0	9.8	9.7
World	12.6	14.2	13.8	15.6	14.4	13.3	13.0	12.8	12.8
Women									
Asia and the Pacific	9.8	12.6	12.4	14.3	13.2	13.6	13.4	13.2	13.2
East Asia	7.6	9.0	9.2	10.8	10.5	12.3	13.0	12.6	12.5
South Asia	13.3	20.3	20.2	22.5	19.6	18.4	16.3	16.6	16.7
South-East Asia and the Pacific	11.9	9.8	8.9	10.4	10.1	9.9	9.9	9.8	9.7
ASEAN	12.0	9.8	8.9	10.3	10.2	10.1	10.1	9.9	9.8
World	12.5	13.6	13.4	15.5	14.3	13.4	12.9	12.9	12.8
Men									
Asia and the Pacific	11.2	15.2	14.9	16.4	15.3	14.5	14.2	13.9	14.0
East Asia	9.6	10.8	11.0	13.0	12.7	14.9	15.7	15.6	15.7
South Asia	12.5	19.9	19.3	20.5	18.3	15.8	14.7	14.4	14.4
South-East Asia and the Pacific	11.3	9.7	8.9	10.1	10.9	9.9	9.9	9.7	9.7
ASEAN	11.3	9.6	8.8	9.9	10.9	10.0	10.0	9.8	9.7

Note: 2024 and 2025 are projections.

Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, May 2024.

► Table 2. Youth employment -to-population ratio by sex, Asia-Pacific region and subregions, select periods and 2019–25 (percentage)

Region/subregion/country income group	2000–04 (average)	2015–19 (average)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total									
Asia and the Pacific	46.6	34.7	33.8	31.9	32.5	32.8	33.2	32.7	32.7
East Asia	57.6	45.2	44.2	40.9	42.5	41.3	40.9	40.7	40.6
South Asia	37.5	26.3	25.6	24.8	25.6	26.6	27.3	26.4	26.5
South-East Asia and the Pacific	47.4	42.5	42.4	39.9	38.2	38.9	39.7	39.8	39.8
ASEAN	47.0	42.1	42.0	39.4	37.5	38.2	39.0	39.2	39.2
World	44.1	35.8	35.2	33.2	34.1	34.7	35.0	34.6	34.6
Women									
Asia and the Pacific	37.3	26.0	25.1	23.2	23.6	23.7	24.6	24.1	24.1
East Asia	57.9	43.5	42.4	39.0	40.7	39.7	39.4	39.3	39.1
South Asia	19.1	13.2	12.6	11.9	12.2	12.7	14.2	13.4	13.4
South-East Asia and the Pacific	41.6	36.1	36.6	34.1	33.1	33.6	34.3	34.4	34.3
ASEAN	40.9	35.4	35.8	33.3	32.1	32.5	33.3	33.4	33.4
World	36.3	28.8	28.3	26.3	27.1	27.6	28.2	27.9	27.9
Men									
Asia and the Pacific	55.4	42.7	41.8	39.8	40.6	41.1	41.0	40.6	40.6
East Asia	57.2	46.7	45.8	42.5	44.1	42.7	42.2	42.0	41.9
South Asia	54.7	38.5	37.6	36.7	38.0	39.4	39.3	38.5	38.6
South-East Asia and the Pacific	53.1	48.6	48.0	45.3	43.1	44.0	44.8	45.0	45.0
ASEAN	52.9	48.5	47.9	45.2	42.7	43.6	44.4	44.7	44.7

Note: 2024 and 2025 are projections.

Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, November 2023.

► Table 3. Youth NEET rate by sex, Asia-Pacific region and subregions, select periods and 2019–25 (percentage)

Region/subregion	2005–09 (average)	2015–19 (average)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Total									
Asia and the Pacific	23.7	22.1	21.9	23.8	22.3	21.3	20.4	20.4	20.5
East Asia	15.8	11.2	10.4	11.7	10.5	10.6	10.9	10.9	11.0
South Asia	30.7	29.3	29.4	31.6	29.6	28.0	26.4	26.5	26.6
South-East Asia and the Pacific	21.4	18.2	17.4	18.7	18.2	16.6	16.3	16.3	16.3
ASEAN	21.5	18.3	17.4	18.8	18.3	16.7	16.3	16.3	16.3
World	22.4	21.4	21.4	23.2	21.8	20.9	20.4	20.4	20.4
Women									
Asia and the Pacific	36.0	33.1	32.5	33.7	32.5	31.7	30.3	30.4	30.5
East Asia	19.1	13.3	12.1	13.2	11.9	11.9	12.1	12.1	12.1
South Asia	52.1	47.0	46.2	47.4	46.1	45.0	42.4	42.6	42.7
South-East Asia and the Pacific	27.5	23.2	21.9	22.6	21.4	20.0	19.6	19.7	19.7
ASEAN	27.9	23.5	22.1	22.8	21.6	20.1	19.7	19.8	19.9
World	32.3	30.1	29.8	31.1	29.8	29.1	28.1	28.2	28.2
Men									
Asia and the Pacific	12.3	12.0	12.2	14.8	13.0	11.7	11.3	11.3	11.4
East Asia	12.9	9.4	8.9	10.4	9.3	9.6	9.9	9.9	10.1
South Asia	10.7	12.9	13.7	17.0	14.2	12.2	11.5	11.5	11.5
South-East Asia and the Pacific	15.4	13.4	13.1	15.1	15.2	13.4	13.0	13.0	13.1
ASEAN	15.4	13.3	13.0	15.0	15.1	13.3	12.9	12.9	12.9
World	13.1	13.3	13.6	15.8	14.3	13.3	13.1	13.1	13.1

Note: 2024 and 2025 are projections. Global and regional estimates for NEET rates are available from 2005.

Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, August 2024.

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