



Youth Employment Policy Summary

SINGAPORE



International
Labour
Organization

Background Figures:

Total population: 5.7 million (2016)¹

Youth population (% total):
0.79 million (2014);
14.4%²

GDP (USD\$): 292.7 billion (2015)³

GDP growth: 2.0 per cent (2015)³

Urban-rural breakdown:
100.0 / 0.0 per cent (2015)⁴

Net migration rate (per 1000):
15.0 (2010-2015)⁴

Employment by sector:
1.1 agriculture; 21.8 industry; 77.1 services (2009)⁵

% earning less than \$2/day:
N/A⁵

Source:
1. Worldometers
2. ILOSTAT;
3. World Bank
4. UNESCAP
5. KILM



Source: Infoplease.com

Labour Market Situation of Young People

Singapore's economic growth rate has slowed down since the crisis, reaching 2.0 per cent in 2015, and may challenge the Government's efforts to attain a low youth unemployment rate. The relatively low labour force participation rate (LFPR) of young people can be accounted for by the tendency of young people to stay in education longer. Tertiary enrolment has increased, explaining the drop of the youth LFPR of 55 per cent in 1991 to 36 per cent in 2013 ([Ye, 2013](#)).

In general, there has been a declining youth unemployment rate since 2005, which stood at 14.7 per cent, compared to the 10.3 per cent in 2013. Young people are approximately five times as likely to be unemployed than adults. Young women consistently face a higher youth unemployment rate than their male counterparts, although this has also declined since 2005. The youth unemployment rate for women as 11.3 compared to 9.4 for young men in 2013.

For young graduates, their unemployment rate remains low; yet there is increasing acknowledgment that as the number of degree holders are increasing, some are underemployed and not working in the same field as their degree ([Jing Yng, 2015](#)).

Table 1: Youth Employment Indicators

Indicator	%
Labour Force Participation Rate, ages 15-64 (2013) ¹	73.7
Youth Labour Force Participation Rate, ages 15-24 (2013) ¹	39.0
Youth Unemployment Rate (2013) ¹	7.0
Youth Unemployment Rate in South Eastern Asia and Pacific Subregion (2016) ²	13.0
Enrolment in secondary education ³	N/A
Enrolment in tertiary education ³	N/A

Source: 1. KILM; 2. ILO 2016, WESO; 3. UNESCAP

Youth Employment Policy Approach

Singapore's approach to youth employment has been to focus on ability-based education, matching supply and demand, and making social benefits dependent on employment rather than unemployment. Through its ability-based education system, students are grouped based on their academic performance and are tailored to according to their academic or vocational abilities. A system of close collaboration between the ministries of education, manpower and trade enables a closer matching between labour demand and supply. Furthermore, without automatic unemployment benefits, Singapore instead has focused on employment benefits, which makes young people keen to find a job even if not their ideal one ([Ye, 2013](#)). The Government has also implemented legal regulations governing the work of young people, including young seafarers. Another target group, particularly found in the [Development Framework for Youth Workers](#), has been youth-at-risk which include those who were drug offenders, affected by family violence or were cyberaddicts.

Policy and Legal Measures

Education and Training: Singapore's **vocational education system** has been well regarded and given credit for keeping the country's unemployment rate relatively low compared to its neighbouring countries. Its approach has been to channel secondary school graduates into three paths: Institute of Technical Education, ITE (25 per cent), Polytechnics (40 per cent) or Junior Colleges (30 per cent). The latter two can lead to university and a more academic education. The ITE route enables those who are less academically inclined to receive relevant and necessary skills for the labour market, particularly in industry ([Ye, 2013](#)). The [Skills Future](#) programme provides opportunities for continuous education and training to keep pace with technological advances and global competitiveness.

Labour Law and Legislation: The [Merchant Shipping Act](#) regulates the recruitment of young seafarers. Those under the age of 16 cannot be employed on a ship and those below the age of 18 cannot be a ship's cook. Contravening these regulations counts as an offence and a fine of up to \$5,000 can be given. In addition, all seafarers must have a medical fitness certificate. The inspection of ships is done by the Director of Marines, a surveyor of ships or another recognised organisation. In terms of repatriation, if a young seafarer has served at least 4 months, the cost of his repatriation should not be at his own expense.

The minimum age of work is 15 years of age. No young person, defined as one who has completed their 15th year of age and has not yet reached 16, can work in an industrial undertaking. The Minister of Manpower is in charge of making any regulations regarding employment in industrial and non-industrial undertakings ([Employment Act](#)).

Young seafarers, defined as those above the age of 16 and less than 18, may not work more than 8 hours per day or 40 hours per week, and they must have at least one hour for their main meal. After every two hours of continuous

Documents containing youth employment policy provisions:

- Development Framework for Youth Workers
- Employment Act 1968
- Merchant Shipping (Maritime Labour Convention) Act 2014

For more information on the policy documents and their provisions, please visit the [YouthPOL webpage](#).

work, the young person should also have a 15 minute rest period. If the shipmaster believes the young person should work different and longer hours, he must make a log and explain the reason. In addition, a young seafarer is not permitted to work at night, unless for training reasons and permitted by the Director of Marines. Night work is between the hours of 8pm and 6am. Violations of this are punishable by a fine of not exceeding \$10,000 ([Merchant Shipping Act](#)).

Did you know?

**Singapore has ratified
27 ILO Conventions,
including 6
Fundamental and 2
Priority Conventions:**

Fundamental Conventions:

- Forced Labour Convention (No. 29)
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98)
- Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105)
- Minimum Age Convention (No. 138)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182)

Priority Conventions:

- Labour Inspection Convention (No. 81)
- Tripartite Consultation Convention (No. 144).

Labour Market Policies: The [Development Framework for Youth Workers](#) provides an outline of the skills and knowledge that youth workers need when dealing with at-risk youth and youth offenders. The *Framework* offers seven domains including case management, counselling, **career coaching**, social media in relationship management, outreach, family work and school social work. Regarding career coaching in particular, youth workers provide assistance in job placement, resume writing and skills assessment, along with soft skills development.

Regarding **minimum wages**, the [Employment Act](#) states that if the Ministry of Manpower finds that children or young persons are not receiving a salary that is fit to the nature of their work, the Minister can prescribe the minimum wage by an Order. A breach in the minimum wage is punishable by a fine not exceeding \$5,000 and/or up to six months of imprisonment.

Structure of Governance and Main Actors

The **Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY)** encourages youth leadership and supports youth initiatives and community development. The **Ministry of Social and Family Development** focuses on policies for the vulnerable, social services, children and youth. Some of its officers are seconded to the **Central Youth Guidance Office** which focuses on at-risk youth. The **Ministry of Education** includes ten statutory boards which also cover the polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education. Finally, the **Ministry of Manpower** focuses on labour and employment issues, and works closely with industry and education providers to ensure that a strong match between labour supply and demand.

References:

- ILO, 2014. Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM), 8th Edition.
- ILO, 2015. *Global Employment Trends for Youth*.
- ILO, 2015, ILOSTAT Database.
- ILO YouthPOL eAnalysis 2015, contains information with analysis of policy documents.
- ILO, 2016. *World Employment Social Outlook: Trends for Youth 2016*.
- Jing Yng, Ng, 2015. "As graduate numbers grow, a hard truth: Not all degrees are equal," *Channelnewsasia*, 23 May 2015.
- UNESCAP, 2014, Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific
- World Bank, 2015. World Development Indicators



Source: www.coinjournal.net