Youths in the Labour Market

Overview

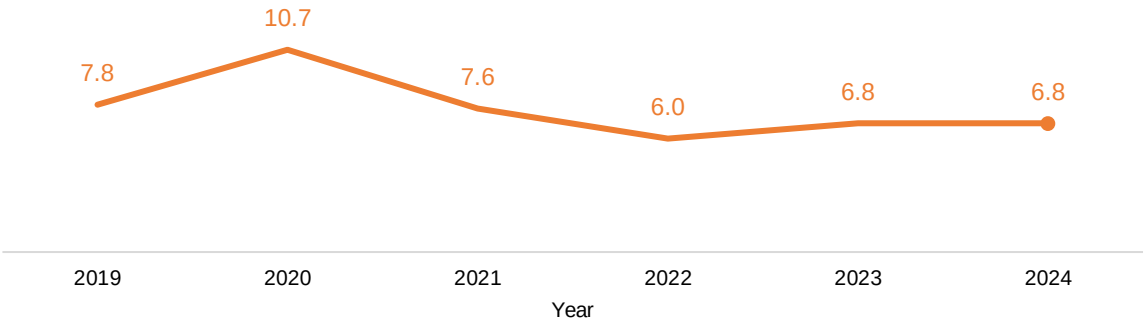
Youths are defined as persons aged 15 to 24, in line with the definition adopted by the International Labour Organisation and many countries.

Youths in Singapore [1] have one of the lowest unemployment rates and long-term unemployment rates among developed countries. This reflects generally favourable labour market conditions and a low incidence of prolonged joblessness compared to youths in other countries. Only a minority of youths are neither working nor participating in education or training. When youths gain employment, they are likely to be in full-time positions. The remaining youths are in part-time employment, typically students who work while attending school or during vacation breaks. As youths progress into their late 20s, the type of jobs they take on tend to evolve, with a growing proportion moving into higher-skilled roles. This shift is reflected by the notable increase in the share of those employed in the Professionals, Managers, Executives and Technicians (PMET) occupations between the 15 to 24 and 25 to 29 age groups.

Unemployment

The youth unemployment rate remained at 6.8% in 2023 and 2024 (Chart 1), which was comparable to pre-pandemic years, with the average for 2014 to 2019 being 6.9%.

Chart 1: Youth Unemployment Rate (Annual Average, %), 2019 - 2024



Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, Ministry of Manpower (MOM)

Notes:

(1) Youth unemployment rate is defined as the percentage of unemployed youths to the youth labour force.

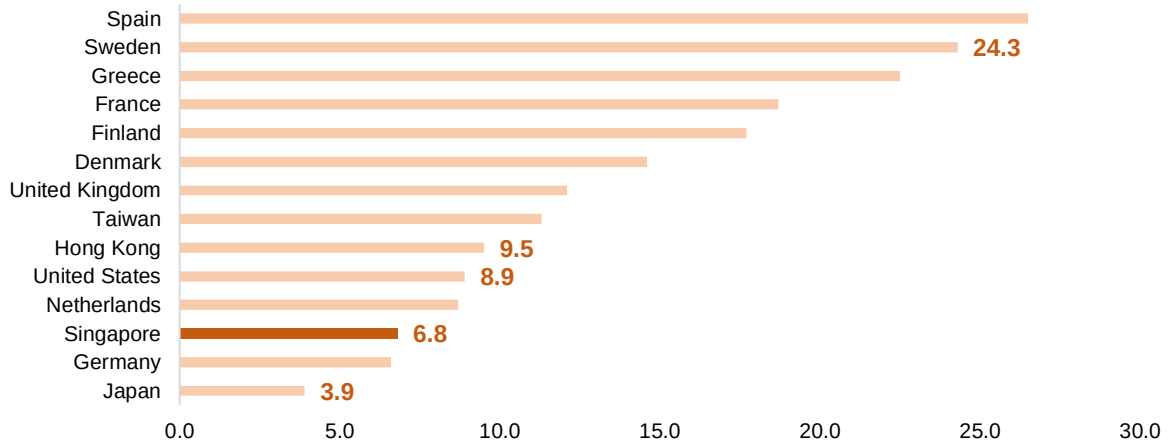
(2) Annual average unemployment figures have been revised to incorporate seasonally adjusted (SA) data where available, in place of non-seasonally adjusted (NSA) data. This revision ensures the figures more accurately reflect the unemployment situation.

[1] Data for Singapore pertains to Singapore residents (i.e., Singapore citizens and permanent residents).

Similar to trends observed in other countries, the unemployment rate among youths aged 15 to 24 was notably higher at 6.8% in 2024, compared to the overall unemployment rate of 2.8%.[2] This disparity reflects the experience of fresh graduates entering the labour market and young workers changing jobs as they explore different career paths. Youths are also likely to move between temporary or part-time positions taken during their studies or study breaks. However, as they accumulate work experience over time, they typically settle into stable, long-term employment.

When compared to other developed economies, Singapore's youth unemployment rate is lower than that of the United States (8.9%), Hong Kong (9.5%) and Sweden (24.3%) (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Youth Unemployment Rate Across Economies (%), 2024



Source: Singapore: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Other economies: The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Stat Database and National Statistical Agencies

Notes:

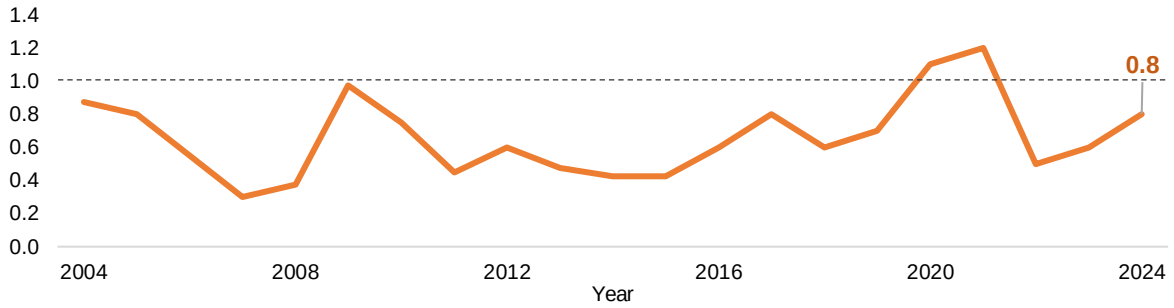
(1) Data for Singapore are based on the annual average for 2024. As far as possible, common definitions are used to facilitate international comparability.

(2) Youths refer to those aged 15 to 24, except for the United Kingdom and Spain, which refer to those aged 16 to 24.

[2] Refers to the annual average Singapore resident unemployment rate. In 2024, the unemployment rates for those aged 25 to 29, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, and 50 and over are 4.6%, 2.1%, 2.2%, and 2.5% respectively. Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM.

Youth unemployment is mostly transitional and short-term. The youth long-term unemployment rate was low, at 0.8% in 2024, and remained below 1.0% in past years (Chart 3). This indicates that prolonged periods of unemployment among youths are not common.

Chart 3: Youth Long-Term Unemployment Rate (Annual Average, %), 2004 - 2024



Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:

(1) Youth long-term unemployment refers to those aged 15 to 24 who have been unemployed for at least 25 weeks.

(2) Data for June 2005 are obtained from the General Household Survey 2005 conducted by the Singapore Department of Statistics.

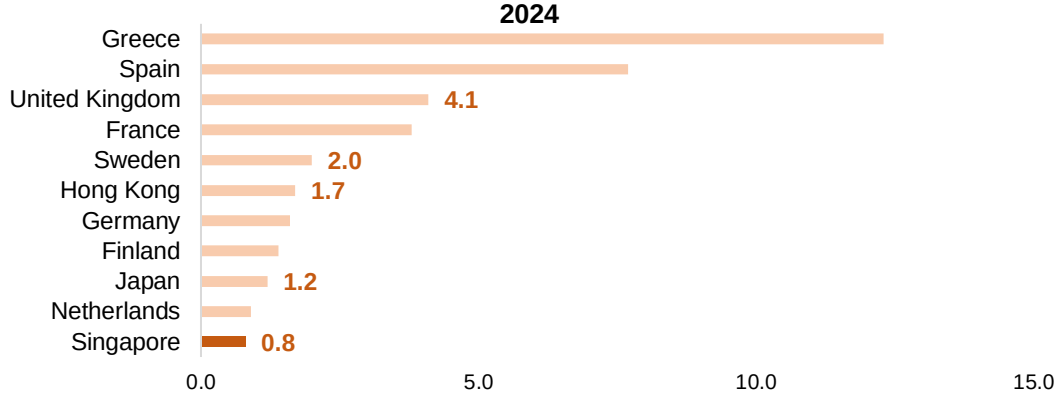
(3) Annual average unemployment figures have been revised to incorporate seasonally adjusted (SA) data where available, in place of non-seasonally adjusted (NSA) data. This revision ensures the figures more accurately reflect the unemployment situation.

In 2024, the long-term unemployment rate among youths (0.8%) is comparable to the overall long-term unemployment rate of 0.8%[3] , suggesting that youths are securing employment at similar rates and are not disproportionately affected by long-term unemployment.

Furthermore, Singapore's youth long-term unemployment rate ranks among the lowest compared to other developed economies, such as the United Kingdom (4.1%) and Sweden (2.0%), as well as Asian economies like Japan (1.2%) and Hong Kong (1.7%) (Chart 4).

[3] Refers to the long-term unemployment rate among Singapore residents. The long-term unemployment rate of youths is comparable to that of other age groups in Singapore. In 2024, the long-term unemployment rates for those aged 30 to 39, 40 to 49, and 50 and over are 0.6%, 0.7%, and 0.9% respectively. Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM.

Chart 4: Youth Long-Term Unemployment Rates Across Economies (%), 2024



Sources: Singapore - Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM.
Other economies – The OECD Stat Database and National Statistical Agencies

Notes:

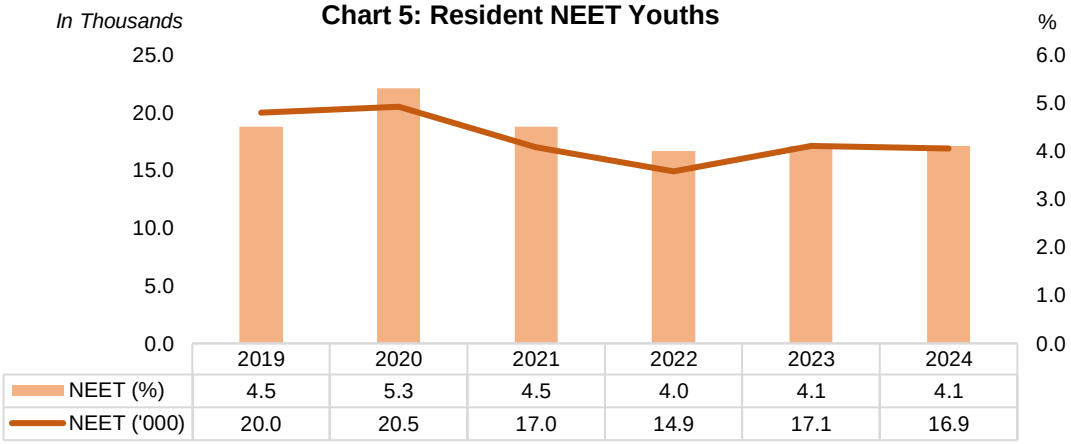
(1) For Singapore, long-term unemployed persons refer to those unemployed for at least 25 weeks (approximately 6 months or more). In other economies, long-term unemployed persons refer to those who have been unemployed for at least 6 months.

(2) Data for Singapore are based on the annual average for 2024. As far as possible, common definitions are used to facilitate international comparability.

Youths Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)[4]

The NEET rate is the proportion of the youth population who are not in employment, education, or training. It was 4.1% in 2024, unchanged from 2023 (Chart 5). A lower NEET rate indicates that a larger share of the youth population is actively engaged in the labour market, formal education or structured training programmes, which would contribute to their skill development and future employability.

Chart 5: Resident NEET Youths



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
NEET (%)	4.5	5.3	4.5	4.0	4.1	4.1
NEET ('000)	20.0	20.5	17.0	14.9	17.1	16.9

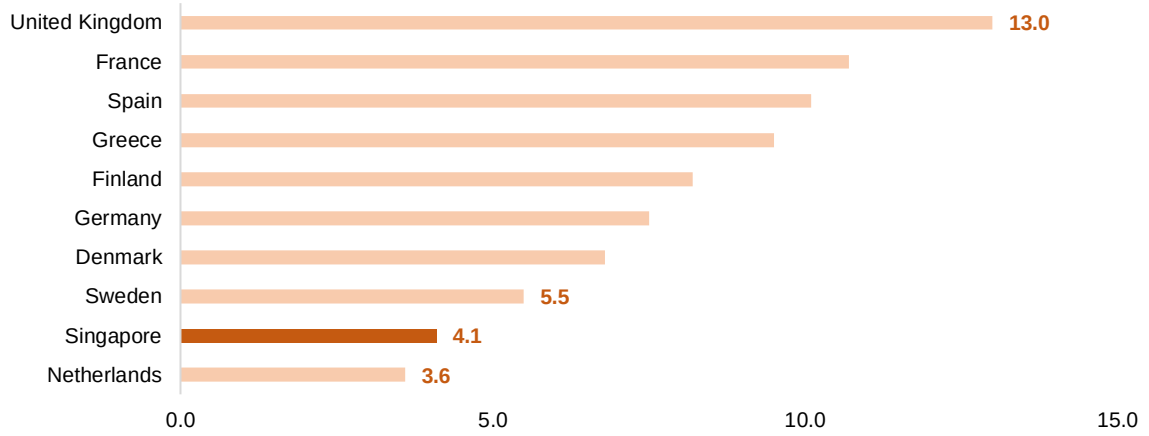
Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Note: Annual figures are based on the average of figures obtained quarterly.

[4] NEET refers to youths aged 15 to 24 who are neither in employment nor in education and training. It refers to those who are unemployed or outside the labour force, due to reasons other than education or training.

The NEET rate in Singapore is lower compared to other countries such as Sweden (5.5%) and the United Kingdom (13.0%) (Chart 6).

Chart 6: Youth NEET Rates Across Economies (%), 2024

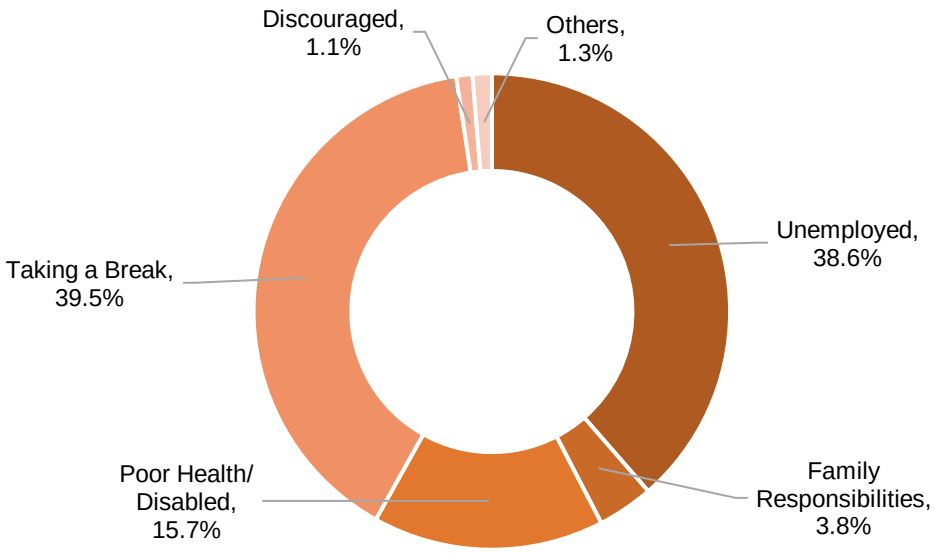


Sources: Singapore - Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM.
Other economies – The EuroStat Database and National Statistical Agencies

Note: Data for Singapore are based on annual average for 2024. As far as possible, common definitions are used to facilitate international comparability.

The NEET status of youths is mostly transitional and short-term. In 2024, the two largest groups of NEET youths were taking a break (39.5%) or unemployed (38.6%), which includes those in between jobs (Chart 7).

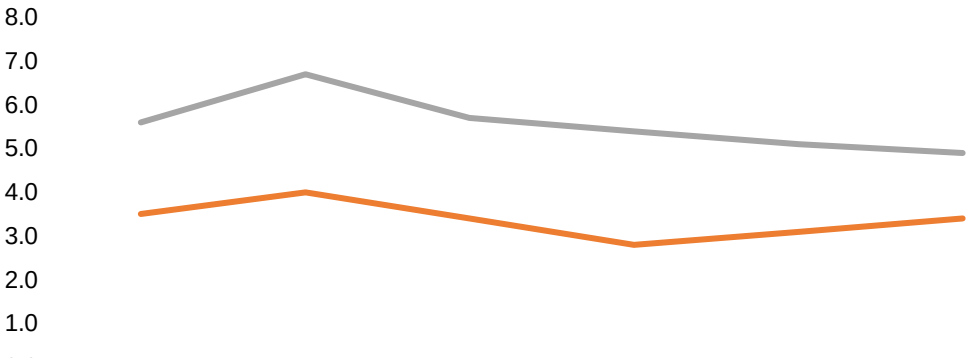
Chart 7: Distribution of NEET Youths Aged 15 to 24 (Annual Average, %), 2024



Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

The NEET rate for females is generally higher than that for males (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Youth NEET Rate by Sex (Annual Average, %), 2019 - 2024



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Male	3.5	4.0	3.4	2.8	3.1	3.4
Female	5.6	6.7	5.7	5.4	5.1	4.9

Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

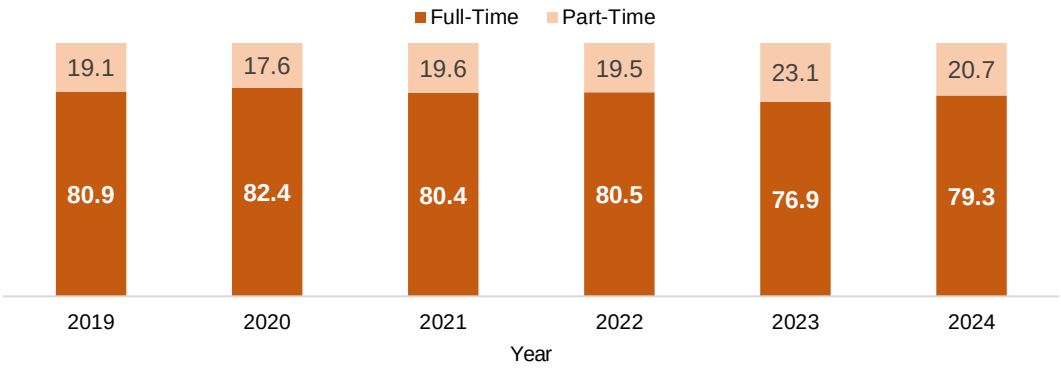
Note: Annual figures are based on the average of figures obtained quarterly.

Employment

The employment rate for youths tend to be lower[5] than those of the general population, as individuals aged 15 to 24 are still pursuing tertiary education[6] and typically have not formally entered the job market. Some may take on short-term roles before continuing with higher education or explore different opportunities to identify a job that aligns with their interests and goals.

When youths gain employment, they are likely to be in full-time positions. In 2024, those in full-time employment made up 79.3% of all employed youths (Chart 9).

Chart 9: Proportion of Resident Youths by Nature of Employment (%), 2019 - 2024



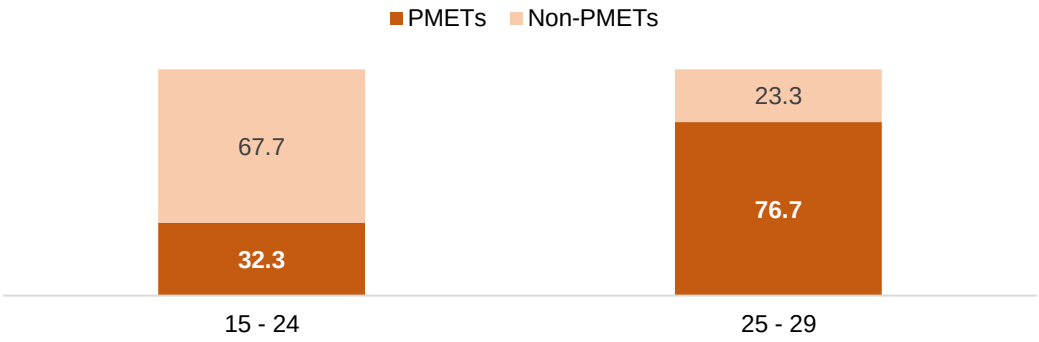
Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Note: Data pertains to employed residents aged 15 to 24 and are for the period of June of the respective years.

As youths could be in interim jobs while schooling, they are likely to work in entry-level positions with lower barriers to entry, thus suitable for gaining initial work experience. These roles offer practical exposure that helps youths to hone soft skills such as communication and customer service. As they progress into their late 20s, the type of jobs they are more inclined to take up tend to change significantly. Most would have completed their formal education and transitioned into higher-skilled roles, particularly in PMET occupations that demand greater expertise. In 2024, 32.3% of employed youths aged 15 to 24 held PMET positions, compared to a significantly higher share of 76.7% among those aged 25 to 29 (Chart 10). This shift across age groups reflects the career progression supported by improved qualifications and accumulated work experience.

[5] In 2024, the employment rate of youths aged 15 to 24 was 31.2%, while their labour force participation rate was 33.7%. Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM.
[6] Tertiary education includes education at universities, polytechnics and other post-secondary educational institutions.

Chart 10: Proportion of Resident Youths and Residents Aged 25 to 29 by Broad Occupational Groups, 2024 (%)



Source: Comprehensive Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:

(1) Data are for June 2024.

(2) Data are classified based on the Singapore Standard Occupational Classification 2020.

Conclusion

To support youth employability, Singapore has implemented various initiatives. These include enhanced internships and work-study programmes which help youths develop future-ready skills through structured on-the-job training and exposure to industry-relevant experience. Additional support, such as mentorship programmes and career guidance, further smoothen the transition from education to employment, ensuring that youths are better prepared to meet the evolving demands of the workforce.