HIGHLIGHTS

The labour market remained tight in 2023 as indicators related to labour underutilisation continued to improve. While employment rate declined due to the weaker economic environment, Singapore maintained its high ranking (fourth in 2023) compared to countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The gap in income between the 20th percentile (P20) and median (P50) worker has narrowed in the last decade, reflecting the efficacy of collective measures to uplift lower-wage workers. Between 2013 and 2023, real income growth for the P20 worker (2.7% p.a.) continued to outpace that of the median worker (2.0% p.a.).

The share of females in the resident labour force has increased from 44.7% in 2013 to 47.2% in 2023. This reflects the increase in female labour force participation rate (from 58.1% in 2013 to 62.6% in 2023), due to the rising educational profile[1] of females and facilitative workplace practices (e.g. flexible work arrangements) that have helped females stay in the labour force.

The proportion of residents in self-employment continued to decline from 13.3% in 2022 to a new low of 12.2% in 2023. This decline was driven by the drop in the share of employers (from 4.1% to 3.1%) and own account workers (from 9.0% to 8.7%). The share of regular own account workers who faced challenges continued to decline in 2023 (21.4%) from 2022 (31.7%). The share was also significantly below pre-pandemic levels (35.5% in 2019). This decline followed from longer-term collective efforts from the government and tripartite partners to address key issues that own account workers faced, such as concerns regarding healthcare, retirement, payment-related disputes, and loss of income in the event of work injury.[2] As digitally-enabled business models such as online matching platforms continue to gain prevalence, 56.2% of regular primary own account workers utilised online channels to advertise and obtain business.[3]

There was an increase in the share of employees in the workforce in 2023 (87.8%), a continuation of the trend since 2020 (85.3%). This increase could be due to the higher number of job openings, as well as a preference for job stability amid economic uncertainties.

The average weekly usual hours worked among employed residents decreased from 45.3 in 2013 to 41.9 in 2023. The steady decline was largely due to a fall in the average usual hours worked of full-timers (from 48.0 in 2013 to 44.5 in 2023). Singapore's steady decline in usual hours worked is in line with trends observed among developed countries. In general, workers in Singapore work relatively longer hours than in many OECD countries as part-time employment is less prevalent here. However, the difference has narrowed.

[1] The tertiary-educated made up 65.0% of resident females in the labour force in 2023, up from 51.5% in 2013.

[2] Recommendations from the Tripartite Workgroup on Self-Employed Persons have been implemented since March 2018. From 2024 onwards, there will be legislative changes and implementation of the proposed recommendations from the Advisory Committee on Platform Workers.

[3] There is currently no internationally agreed statistical definition on digital platform employment. Singapore is one of the pioneer countries to develop statistical measures on this topic, and is partnering the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to develop internationally agreed statistical definitions on digital platform employment. For more details, see *Report: Development of Labour Market Indicators – From Inception to International Endorsement* available on stats.mom.gov.sg.