Manpower

Research Office
Legislative Council Secretariat

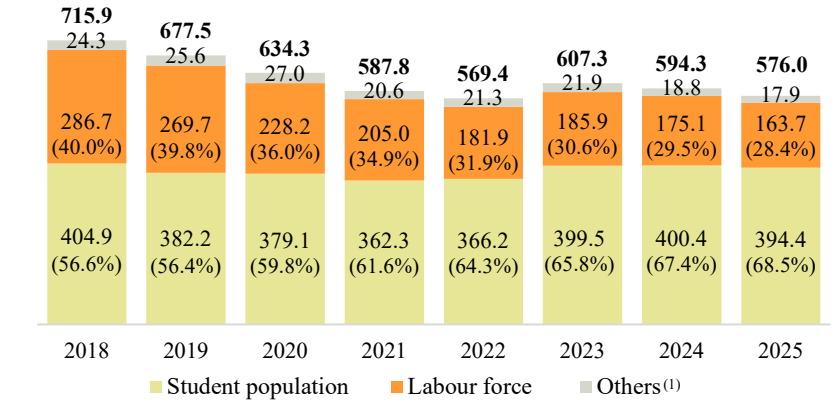
Statistical Highlights

ISSH17/2026

Youth employment in Hong Kong

Figure 1 – Youth population (aged 15 to 24)

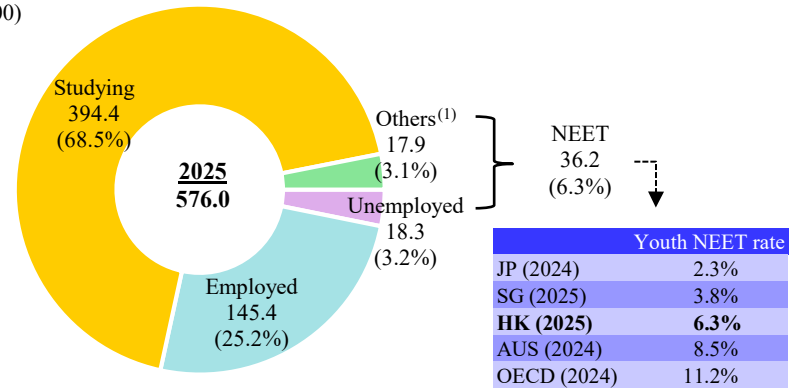
('000)



Note: (1) Including those engaged in household duties and with permanent sickness/disablement.

Figure 2 – Youth population by activity status

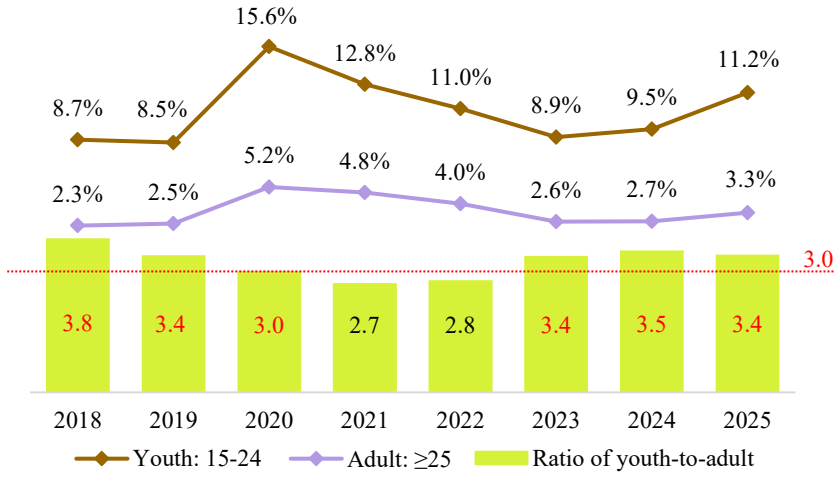
('000)



	Youth NEET rate
JP (2024)	2.3%
SG (2025)	3.8%
HK (2025)	**6.3%**
AUS (2024)	8.5%
OECD (2024)	11.2%

Note: (1) See footnote in Figure 1.

Figure 3 – Youth and adult unemployment rates



Highlights

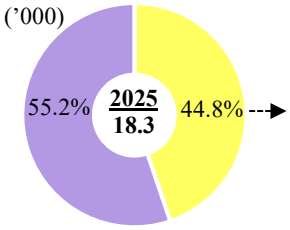
- Amid a three-decade decline in births, Hong Kong's youth population aged 15 to 24 shrank by 19.5% over the past seven years to 576 000 in 2025 (**Figure 1**). Concurrently, the youth labour force contracted by 42.9%, while the student population dipped by only 2.6%. The student share consequently soared by 11.9 percentage points to 68.5%, underpinned by a record-high post-secondary education participation rate at 83.6% in the 2024-2025 academic year – itself a product of the Government's facilitative education policies.

- In 2025, some 36 200 youths were not in employment, education or training ("NEET"), representing 6.3% of the youth population, down from 53 400 (6.7%) in 2015 (**Figure 2**). While some are persons with disabilities or full-time carers, others are unemployed or simply disengaged from work or study. Notably, a 2023-2024 survey by the Employees Retraining Board ("ERB") found that 98% of youth NEETs had no job-seeking plans for the coming years, most commonly citing the absence of financial burden. That said, Hong Kong's youth NEET rate remains below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ("OECD") average, partly reflecting the relatively more favourable local economic conditions in recent years.

- Consistent with global patterns, local youth unemployment rates have persistently exceeded those of adults aged 25 or above. The ratio of the youth-to-adult unemployment rate is a standard benchmark: the International Labour Organization ("ILO") considers ratios above 3 indicative of "a particular hardship faced by young people in their job search compared to adults". In Hong Kong, this ratio has reached 3 or above in six of the past eight years (**Figure 3**), climbing from 2.7 in 2021 to 3.4 in 2025.

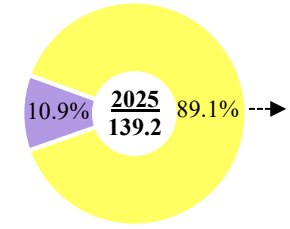
Youth employment in Hong Kong (cont'd)

Figure 4a – Youth unemployment in selected industries



Previous job by industry	Unemployment rate
Construction	7.5%
Accommodation & food services	7.4%
Retail	7.2%
Information & communications	6.9%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	6.1%
Transportation & storage	6.0%

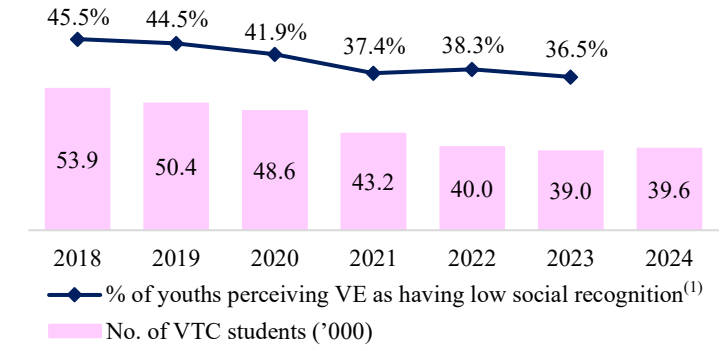
Figure 4b – Overall unemployment in selected industries



Previous job by industry	Unemployment rate
Construction	6.5%
Accommodation & food services	5.8%
Retail	4.8%
Information & communications	4.2%
Arts, entertainment & recreation	2.5%
Transportation & storage	3.0%

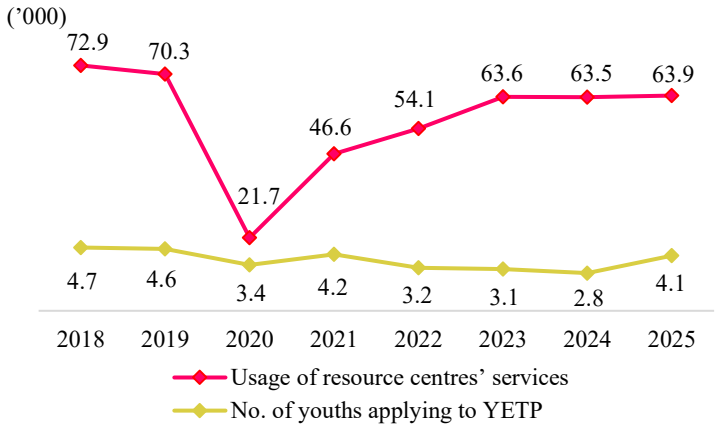
First-time job-seekers and re-entrants into the labour force who were unemployed
Unemployed with a previous job

Figure 5 – VTC students and social perception of VE



Note: (1) The 2024 survey results have yet to be released.

Figure 6 – Uptake of youth employment support services



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Highlights

- A higher youth unemployment rate is largely attributable to the preponderance of first-time job seekers, who lack work experience. They accounted for over half (55.2%) of unemployed youths in 2025 (**Figure 4a**), compared with just 10.9% of all unemployed (**Figure 4b**).
- The rise of artificial intelligence ("AI") is further reshaping youth employment worldwide, as many entry-level roles (e.g. coding, clerical work and customer support) are increasingly automated to reduce costs. In Hong Kong, the youth unemployment rate in the AI-exposed information and communications ("IC") sector stood at 6.9% in 2025, 1.6 times the sector's overall rate of 4.2%, with a similar pattern observed in retail and customer service sectors.
- Data from an online job platform shared by Hong Kong's eight publicly funded universities shows vacancy postings at a five-year low, down 51.5% since 2021. IC and customer service postings fell more sharply still, by 76.7% and 58.8% respectively. In response, the latest Policy Address and Budget earmarked HK$2 billion for school-based AI education, and announced plans to upgrade ERB to "Upskill Hong Kong", to better equip the local workforce. The Government is also conducting an analysis on the impact of AI on the labour market and the findings will be released in the fourth quarter this year.
- To smooth the school-to-work transition, ILO recommends an integrated approach, with vocational education ("VE") and employment support services widely regarded as effective. The city's largest VE provider, the Vocational Training Council ("VTC"), offers courses and apprenticeships that yield a graduate employment rate of 90%. Yet a longitudinal survey by a leading youth organization found that 36.5% of respondents in 2023 still perceived VE as carrying low social recognition, down from 45.5% in 2018 (**Figure 5**), indicating that a significant stigma persists. This, coupled with more tertiary education places, may help explain a 26.5% decline in VTC enrollment between 2018 and 2024.
- On the employment support front, the Labour Department has (a) consolidated services under the Youth Employment and Training Programme ("YETP") since 2009, targeting those with sub-degree qualifications or below; and (b) operated two dedicated youth employment resource centres. Yet, participation in YETP and usage of the resource centres have fallen by 40.4% and 12.9% respectively during 2018-2024 (**Figure 6**). To broaden reach, the YETP age ceiling was raised from 24 to 29 in 2025, triggering a 46.4% surge in applications that year.

Data sources: Latest figures from the Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and the Labour Department.

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