

Forum: Health & Youth Commission (HYC)

Issue: Measures to improve work opportunities for young people

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Introduction

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), as of 2025, the youth unemployment rate has risen to 12.4%. In other words, 67 million people aged 15 to 24 years are unable to access jobs. At the same time, the rate of youth who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) has also risen to 20% in 2025 from 19.7 % in 2023, bringing the total to 257 million in 2025.

Some reasons behind this rise are the ever-growing “skill gap” caused by the emergence of Artificial intelligence, outsourcing driven by globalisation, and political instability, including adverse regulatory decisions like tariffs and ongoing military conflicts. The NEET statistic hides a considerable disproportion, as young women are far more numerous because of systemic and/or cultural barriers or because their domestic work is unpaid.

In the last few years, multiple economic shocks have highlighted the disproportionate impact on young and experienced employees. Firstly, data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) show that youth unemployment rates rose by 6 percentage points between the end of 2007 and 2009, reaching approximately 20% across OECD nations. Furthermore, the ILO has stated, “The youth rate increased by 1.0 percentage point compared to 0.5 points for the adult rate over 2008/09” (ILO, 2010, p. 5). Next, the Brookings Institution found that during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, young workers were more likely to be laid off than older workers across almost every industry sector.

Unemployment affects different countries unequally. Countries in the Global North generally have the Skill Gap as a reason behind unemployment rates, whereas Global South countries face youth bulges that are hired informally and unregulatedly. Nevertheless, low employment rates have similar impacts: unstable communities and brain drain.

Definition of Key Terms

NEET

According to the World Bank Group, NEET is the share of youth aged 15 to 24 not in education, employment, or training, expressed as a percentage of the total youth population. The NEET rate is calculated using the following equation: $NEET\ rate = (Youth - Youth\ in\ education - Youth\ in\ employment - Youth\ in\ training) / Total\ youth\ population$

employment – Youth not in employment but in education or training) / Youth x 100

Unemployment

Unemployment is defined by the World Bank Group as the share of the labour force that is without work but available for and seeking employment. This definition may vary from country to country

Youth bulges

Youth bulges are a common phenomenon in many developing countries. It occurs when infant mortality rates are low, but fertility rates remain high. As a result, the population's average age is very low, as most people are children or young people.

Basic Skills

These skills are defined by the International Monetary Fund as “the skills necessary to participate productively in modern economies. Pragmatically, we assume these to be represented by mastering at least the lowest of the six skill levels of the international PISA test—that is, PISA Level 1 skills”(A. Hanushek & WOESSMANN, 2022).

Background Information

Skill Gap

A paper submitted to the LDCs Future Forum, organised by the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OFRLLS), defines the skill gap as the mismatch between the skills needed for employment and those available in the workforce, in both quantity and quality. In other words, there are not enough skilled workers for the available jobs.

There is a “curriculum-labour market mismatch” (Tun, 2026), in which schools teach skills much more slowly than the labour market demands, with digital literacy and creativity in high demand because of new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence. Furthermore, it references that “Poor TVET-Industry Connections” (Tun, 2026) causes a skill gap because over two-thirds of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions lack the right networks to train students properly. “Female exclusion in technical education” is another key point highlighted (Tun, 2026) because women make up only about 15% of TVET and STEM enrolments across the countries studied, whether for cultural or structural reasons. Lastly, these countries do not teach Green Skills through formal TVET programs, even though this sector could greatly benefit them economically and ecologically.

Outsourcing

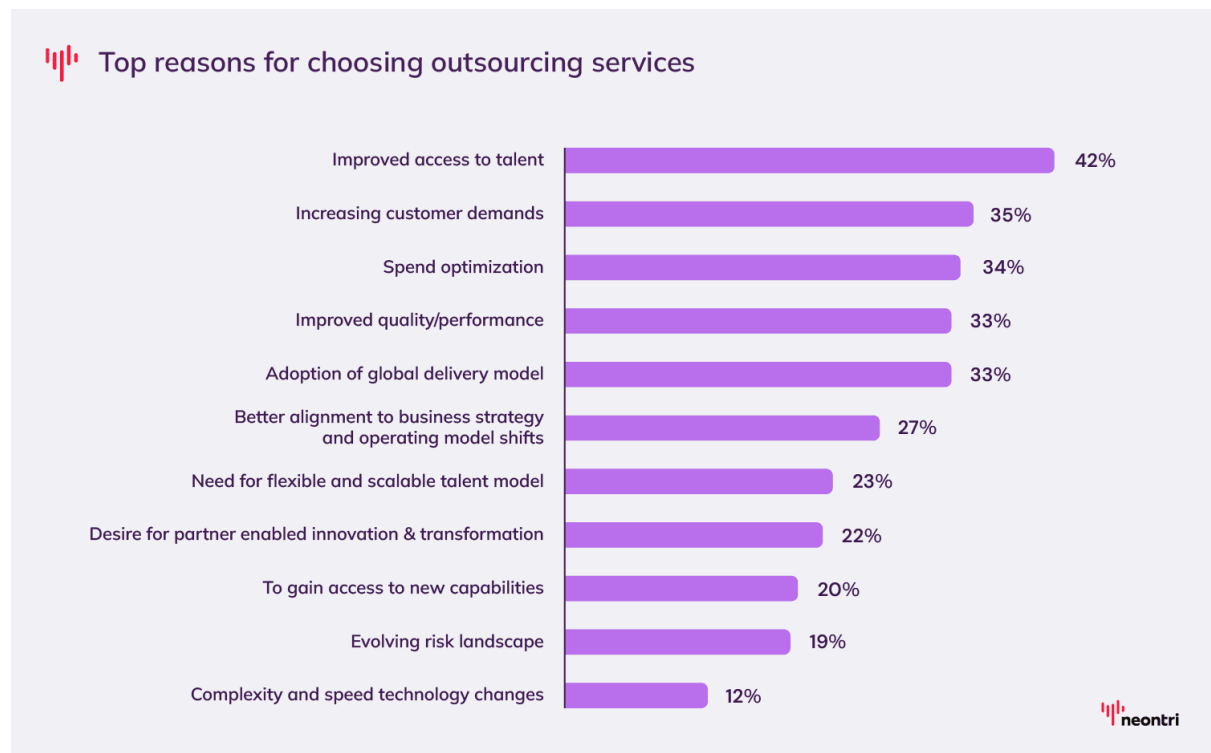


Figure 1: Top reasons for choosing outsourcing services, Neontri.com

As shown in the graph above, the main reason companies choose to outsource is to access talent that is not available in that country. Furthermore, companies also tend to relocate to match demand, which may not be found in the original country.

Past UN treaties/resolutions

Passed in 1995, General Assembly Resolution 50/80: The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) made "employment" a global priority and required member states to track unemployment in order to better mitigate it and its consequences. Furthermore, the 2016 Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth was launched by the ILO and was the first UN effort dedicated to supporting youth employment worldwide. It involved 19 countries working together to share resources and expertise. Lastly, the Green Jobs for Youth Pact was launched in 2022 and is a partnership between the ILO, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United Nations Children's Fund. Its goal is to raise youth employment rates, all the while promoting sustainable development.

Collaborative Solutions for Youth Employment

The YouthForesight knowledge hub is a collaborative platform launched by the ILO's Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and UNICEF's Generation Unlimited (GenU). It is an online website that helps employers, policy-makers, and practitioners promote youth education and employment by providing data and toolkits.

Organisations and Major Countries Involved

Switzerland

Switzerland has implemented the Swiss Vocational Education and Training (VET). It is successful because it helps prevent unemployment by allowing teenagers to choose a vocational track after mandatory schooling. Students spend half the week in a paid apprenticeship at companies and the rest studying theory. They also attend inter-company courses to learn skills their current employer does not teach. Today, about two-thirds of Swiss students follow this route. As a result, Switzerland has Europe's lowest youth unemployment rate at 3.4%, far below the European Union's average of 15%.

South Africa

Youth unemployment in South Africa is among the world's highest. Among 15- to 24-year-olds, unemployment is around 60% in 2026. For those aged 24 to 35, it is lower but still 40%. According to the National Research Foundation, this is linked to the decline in vocational training, as the education system does not equip students with the skills they need to find work. Most students also have no experience when they finish high school. According to a page on the Channelwise website, South Africans with work experience are four times more likely to find a job.

International Labour Organisation

The ILO helps young people find good jobs through a 10-year action plan. They do this by training youth for modern work, supporting young business owners, and pushing governments to create jobs. They also set strict rules to make sure young workers get fair pay, safe working conditions, and reasonable hours.

The ILO has also been conducting a lot of research so that all nations can have a better view of what is being played right now and what our next actions should be.

Possible Solutions

Public infrastructure projects

Launching construction projects such as road repairs or upgrades to public spaces would provide unemployed youths with official paid work. This benefits local economies: with better infrastructure, the region may become more attractive, drawing in more companies or encouraging young people to start their own businesses, which would help lower unemployment rates. Careful planning is needed to ensure worker protection, such as safe work environments and fair wages

Helping small companies

Providing workshops and mentorship for small local shops and entrepreneurs to support their growth and expand their workforce could also improve work opportunities for

youths. Bigger established corporations might not need a larger workforce; however, budding companies are more likely to hire. Furthermore, youths will be able to acquire work-specific skills at these start-ups and leverage them later on while pursuing their careers. However, this approach carries risks, as not all small shops and entrepreneurs are guaranteed to succeed. Actions and careful organisation are needed to ensure that these young people are prepared if they are laid off.

Job-readiness seminars

Offering free, simple training seminars, both online and in person at community centres, to teach basic, useful skills needed for employment. These seminars should be organised by local community centres in partnership with schools, youth organisations, and employment services. The sessions could focus on job-readiness skills. This will help address youth unemployment by giving youths who cannot pursue full-time or part-time jobs due to school, family responsibilities, or other reasons an opportunity to gain useful skills. Providing online classes will also allow these youths to continue learning while balancing their current occupations and responsibilities.

Career Fairs

Hosting career fairs in schools to enable students to engage with local businesses and explore emerging sectors would provide them with a clearer understanding of professional expectations and requirements. This initiative could also improve employment opportunities for youth by exposing them to a range of fields that may otherwise remain unfamiliar or inaccessible. Furthermore, interactions with professionals would help facilitate the transition from academic life to the professional sphere.

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