

Over 1.3m Youth Unemployed - GSS Report

BY Ebenezer K. Amponsah

MORE THAN 1.3 million youth aged 15 to 24 years, representing 21.5 percent, and about 1.95 million people aged 15 to 35 years, also representing 19.5 percent, were not in education, employment, or training (NEET) in the first quarter of 2025, reflecting persistent labour market pressures.

The Quarterly Labour Force Survey covering quarter 1 to 3 of the labour force statistics for 2025 released by the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) provides a nationally representative assessment of labour market participation.

The survey captures critical information on employment, unemployment, labour force participation, job quality, skills utilisation, and work

arrangements across the country, covering nearly 14,000 households in all 16 regions, spanning both urban and rural areas.

It stated, "In Q3, approximately 1,343,113 persons aged 15-24 years (21.5%) and 1,953,297 persons aged 15-35 years (19.5%) were not in education, employment, or training (NEET)."

According to the Ghana Statistical Service, the unemployment rate averaged 12.8 percent during the first three quarters of 2025, rising slightly to 13.0 percent in the third quarter.

Youth unemployment continued to exceed the national average, with the highest rates of 32.4 percent recorded among persons aged 15-24 years. In addition, about 21.5 percent of young

people in this age group were not in employment, education, or training.

The report further indicated that the female unemployment rate consistently remained higher than the male unemployment rate, with an average gap of 3.7 percentage points in each quarter.

"Across the three quarters, the unemployment rate averaged 15.1 percent in urban areas, which is 5.5 percentage points higher than the rural average of 9.6 percent," the report added.

That, it explained, represents a significant loss of productive potential and underscores the urgency for targeted youth employment and skills intervention.

In terms of employment, the report also stated that female employment consistently exceeded male employment in all three quarters, with over 7.2 million females employed compared with about 6 million males.

The report also indicated that employment levels were consistently higher in urban areas than in rural areas, with the biggest gap recorded in the second quarter, when urban employment exceeded rural employment by about 1.49 million people.

"In the third quarter of

2025, more than 15 million people participated in the labour force, with approximately 87 percent employed. Employment increased by over 330,000 persons between Quarter 1 and Quarter 3 of 2025, reflecting continued absorption of labour.

"Female employment consistently exceeded male employment throughout the period. Urban areas recorded higher employment levels than rural areas, while Greater Accra and Ashanti regions accounted for the largest shares of employed persons," parts of the report stated.

Touching on some sectors of the economy, the report noted that the Service sector remained the largest employer, engaging 6 million people, followed by Agriculture with 5 million and Industry with 2.5 million.

It, however, mentioned that given the current structure of employment, the country still faces challenges in its efforts to sustain the jobs and increase productivity, adding that urban unemployment remained higher than rural unemployment, while females continued to experience higher unemployment rates than males.

On skills utilisation and work arrangements, the

report noted that while over half of employed people reported that their skills and qualifications were fully utilised, about one in five people reported that their skills were underutilised, particularly women and rural workers.

"Skills mismatch remains evident, with over-skilling more common among men and urban workers, and underqualification more pronounced in rural areas. Night work remains rare, involving fewer than two percent of workers," it stressed.

GSS also mentioned that 46.5 percent of employed persons who were not engaged in shift work in the third quarter however expressed interest in shift-based work.

The interest, it stated, was particularly strong among men, representing 53.6 percent, and rural workers, 51.7 percent, while 14 percent would consider it depending on conditions.

Based on the outcomes of the survey, the GSS recommended government to tackle youth unemployment urgently through apprenticeships, school-to-work transition programmes, digital and technical skills training, and reintegration pathways for not in education, employ-

ment, or training populations, while emphasising on the need to improve job quality to reduce vulnerable employment.

"Job quality must improve, particularly by reducing vulnerable employment through formalisation, enterprise development, access to finance, and labour protections, especially in Agriculture and rural areas. Skills development must align with labour market demand, requiring stronger coordination between government, training institutions, and employers, and continuous monitoring of skills utilisation," it added.

The report further stressed that shift-based and flexible work arrangements must be supported responsibly, with clear standards to protect workers' safety, health, and income security as the government advances its 24-Hour Economy agenda.

"Overall, the labour market in the first three quarters of 2025 reflects progress with purpose but also exposes pressure points. While employment is growing, many workers remain in insecure jobs, a large number of young people are excluded, and skills are not always fully utilised," it noted.

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