

# Ghana's Youth Unemployment Rate 2023: Analysis and Key Insights

Explore Ghana's rising youth unemployment rate with key statistics, causes, and solutions. Learn how economic policies and education reforms can tackle the challenge.



## Highlights

- In-depth analysis of the causes and consequences of youth unemployment in Ghana.
- Top 10 key statistics that define the youth unemployment landscape.
- Strategic recommendations for addressing Ghana's youth unemployment crisis.

## Content

### The Current State of Ghana's Youth Unemployment Rate

## Highlights:

In-depth analysis of the causes and consequences of youth unemployment in Ghana.

Top 10 key statistics that define the youth unemployment landscape.

Strategic recommendations for addressing Ghana's youth unemployment crisis.

**Research Methodology:** This article is based on a comprehensive analysis of reports from the Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), International Labour Organization (ILO), and World Bank. Secondary data from government labor market surveys and academic research were utilized to contextualize the youth unemployment rate. This analysis also included policy evaluations from both national and international organizations focusing on employment trends in Ghana.

## Key Statistics and Facts:

1. Ghana's youth unemployment rate (ages 15-35) is **19.7%** as of 2023, almost double the national unemployment average.
2. Youth underemployment affects **34%** of the population in the same age group.
3. Nearly **12%** of university graduates are unable to find employment within their first year after graduation.
4. Ghana's informal sector employs about **70%** of the youth workforce.
5. Gender disparities persist, with **23.2%** of young women unemployed compared to **16.1%** of young men.
6. Urban youth unemployment stands at **25.3%**, compared to **12.4%** in rural areas.
7. Over **1 million** youth in Ghana are classified as "NEET" (Not in Education, Employment, or Training).
8. **47%** of youth are employed in agriculture, yet the sector sees declining productivity and earning potential.
9. Graduate unemployment accounts for **26%** of total youth unemployment in urban areas.
10. The labor force participation rate for Ghanaian youth is **45.2%**, lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa average of **52.5%**.

## Body of Article/Critical Analysis:

Youth unemployment in Ghana has reached critical levels, significantly contributing to economic instability and social unrest. The **19.7%** youth unemployment rate, nearly double that of the general population, highlights the serious structural challenges within the labor market. Despite significant investment in education, there remains a gap between the skills young people acquire and the jobs available in the economy.

The **1 million** youth classified as NEET presents an alarming issue, as these young people are neither contributing to the economy nor enhancing their skills for future employment. The high percentage of youth underemployment, at **34%**, further exacerbates this problem, as many young workers are stuck in low-paying, unstable jobs, particularly in the informal sector.

One of the primary causes of youth unemployment in Ghana is the mismatch between educational attainment and market demand. The country's educational system places a heavy emphasis on academic qualifications, yet vocational and technical skills—which are in high demand in industries like manufacturing, ICT, and agriculture—are often overlooked. This mismatch creates a large pool of unemployed graduates, particularly in urban centers where graduate unemployment makes up **26%** of total youth unemployment.

Additionally, regional disparities persist. Urban youth unemployment is nearly twice as high as in rural areas, driven by the migration of young people from villages to cities in search of better opportunities. In urban areas such as Accra and Kumasi, the youth unemployment rate has spiked to **25.3%**, as the local economies struggle to absorb the growing influx of labor. This migration creates increased competition for limited jobs in the formal sector, leaving many young people without employment or forced into the informal economy, which employs **70%** of the youth workforce.

Gender disparities also contribute significantly to the unemployment landscape. Young women are disproportionately affected, with an unemployment rate of **23.2%**, compared to **16.1%** for young men. Cultural and societal barriers, including limited access to education and training for women, alongside gender discrimination in hiring, hinder their participation in the labor market.

## Current Top 10 Factors Impacting Youth Unemployment in Ghana:

- 1. Educational Mismatch:** Skills taught in schools do not align with market demands, particularly in technology and vocational sectors.
- 2. Economic Growth Slowdown:** Ghana's GDP growth has not been robust enough to generate adequate employment for youth.
- 3. Urbanization Pressures:** Rapid urban migration increases unemployment in cities as job opportunities fail to keep pace with population growth.
- 4. Informal Sector Dominance:** The informal economy's expansion means less stable, less formal job creation for youth.
- 5. Underemployment:** Many youth work in low-wage, part-time, or informal jobs that do not match their qualifications.
- 6. Public Sector Employment Constraints:** The government's hiring freeze and fiscal constraints limit job opportunities in the public sector.
- 7. Technological Advancements:** Automation and digitization are reducing demand for low-skill labor, exacerbating youth unemployment.
- 8. Gender Inequality:** Women face additional hurdles due to societal norms and limited access to quality jobs.
- 9. NEET Population:** The large number of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET) poses a growing challenge.
- 10. Global Economic Conditions:** External economic pressures, such as trade barriers and investment shifts, affect job creation locally.

## Projections and Recommendations:

Without significant policy intervention, youth unemployment in Ghana could rise even further. The country's growing population and the continued influx of young people into urban centers are likely to put additional pressure on the job market. By 2030, the youth population is expected to increase by **20%**, intensifying the need for job creation.

To mitigate this crisis, the government should prioritize technical and vocational education to equip young people with skills suited to high-demand industries. Expanding programs like Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) will be critical in narrowing the skills gap. Additionally, fostering entrepreneurship through initiatives that provide access to credit, business training, and mentorship could help young people create their own employment opportunities.

The informal sector also needs to be formalized, with policies that encourage the registration of small businesses and provide incentives for formal employment contracts. This would help secure social protection for young workers and ensure better working conditions. Moreover, gender-sensitive policies that promote female participation in the labor force, alongside expanding childcare services and implementing equal pay measures, would help reduce the unemployment gender gap.

Finally, Ghana must diversify its economy to reduce reliance on agriculture and raw material exports. Investments in sectors such as technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing will be key to creating sustainable, high-paying jobs for young people.

## Conclusion:

The high youth unemployment rate in Ghana is a multifaceted issue that requires both immediate action and long-term planning. The mismatch between education and labor market needs, combined with regional disparities and gender inequalities, exacerbates the problem. However, with targeted reforms focusing on skills development, entrepreneurship, and economic diversification, Ghana has the potential to turn its growing youth population into an economic asset.

**Notes:** This article draws on the latest data from 2023 and is intended to provide a thorough overview of Ghana's youth unemployment rate, offering critical insights and actionable recommendations.

## Bibliography + References:

1. Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), "Youth Employment Report 2023."
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