

Youth Employment in the Philippines: Challenges, Opportunities, & Policy Implications

Ronahlee A. Asuncion, RGC, PhD

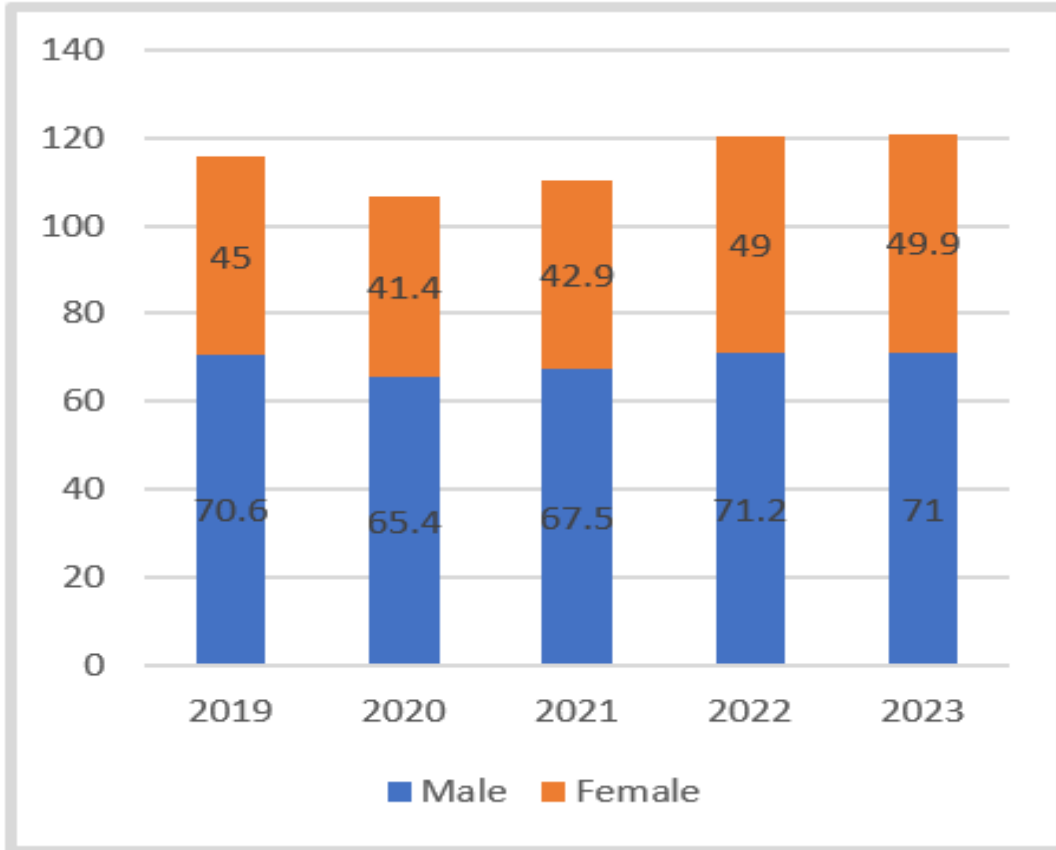
Profile of the Filipino youth

- those who are between 15-30 years old

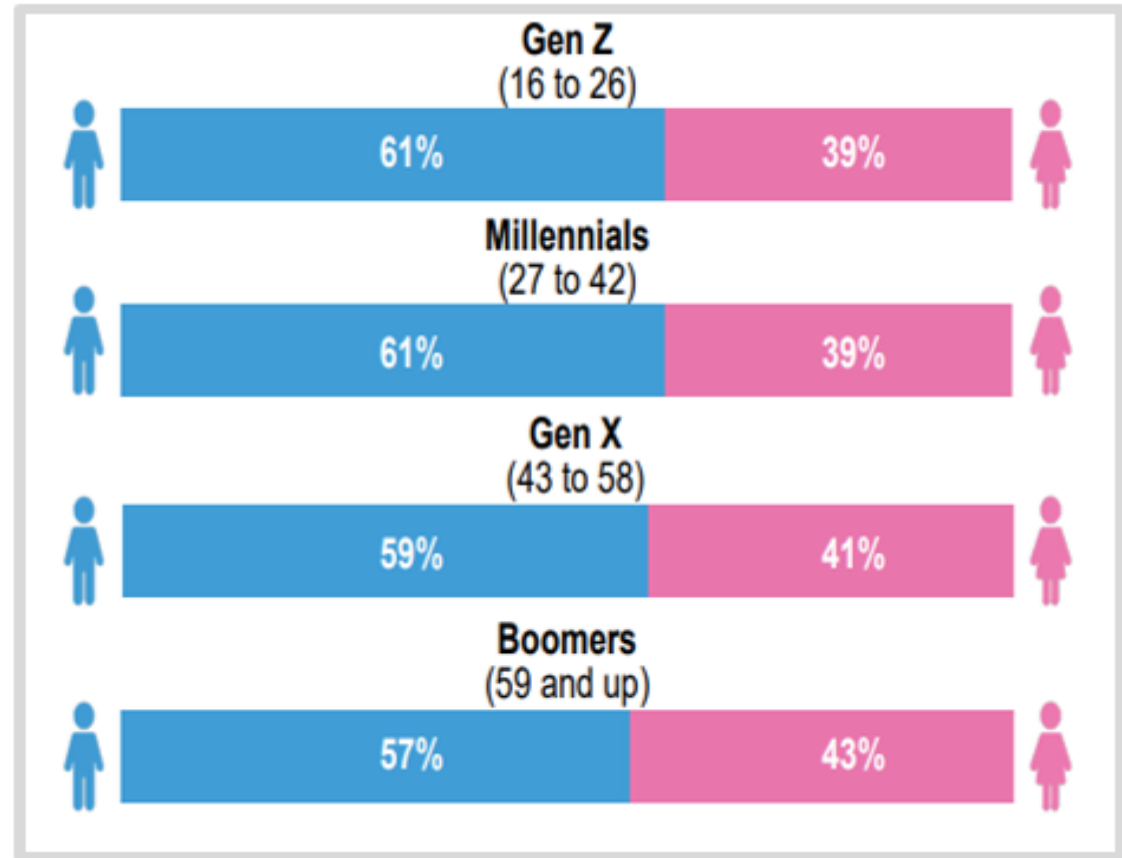
Age group	Male	Female	Total		Male per 100 Female
			Persons	Share (%)	
15-19	5,856,752	5,693,806	11,550,558	9.81	102.862
20-24	5,423,932	5,336,662	10,760,594	9.14	101.635
25-29	5,256,720	5,201,717	10,458,436	8.88	101.057
30-34	4,890,527	4,826,176	9,716,703	8.25	101.333

2026 Philippine Youth Population

Source: Statistics Times. (in <https://statisticstimes.com>).



Labor force participation rate by gender
 Source: World Bank Group. (In <https://data.worldbank.org>).



2023 Labor Force Weighted Proportions by Sex and Age Group
 Source: Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (in <https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph>)
 Philippine Employment Situation.

- College graduates are the **second highest unemployed next to junior high school** both in January 2023 at 34.8 percent & in January 2024 at 38.3 percent (CPBRD, in <https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph>).
- Compared to adults, the **Filipino youth have a four-fold higher unemployment rate, most likely engaged in agriculture work or in market services for a first time working 15-year old youth while older youth are most likely found in the services sector** (ILO, 2020, in <https://www.ilo.org>).

Globally, youth experience **wage gap, high incidence of temporary work, difficulty in finding secure jobs** particularly those in low-income countries, **moves from one precarious & informal work to another, & an increase in anxiety due to a rise in casualization of jobs** (in <https://www.ilo.org>).

Barriers to Youth Labor Market Integration (Structural)

- mismatch between the skills produced by the education system & those demanded by employers.
- precarious & contractual employment
- high Levels of informal employment
- low productivity & limited industrial diversification
- weak labor market institutions & enforcement
- difficulty transitioning from education to employment
- regional labor market inequality
- gender inequality in employment
- limited support for school-to-industry linkages

Barriers to Youth Labor Market Integration (Socioeconomic)

Indicator	July 2022	July 2023	July 2024
Youth NEET as percentage of youth population	12.9	14.8	13.9
Proportion of youth new entrants to youth labor force	14.6	18.4	15.7
Youth mean hours of work	36.7	39.3	36.1

- poverty & low wages; income inequality
- underemployment
- youth disengagement (NEET)

Table 3. July 2022-2024 Youth Employment Situation

Source: Congressional Policy & Budget Research Department (in <https://cpbrd.congress.gov.ph>)

- lack of access to quality education & training
- vulnerability to economic shocks

	2021 ^f	2022 ^f	2023 ^f (June)	2024 ^p (June)	2025 ^p (June)
Labor force participation rate (%)	63.3	64.7	66.1	66.0	65.7
Employment rate (%)	92.2	94.6	95.5	96.9	96.3
Underemployment rate (%)	15.9	14.2	12.0	12.1	11.4
Unemployment rate (%)	7.8	5.4	4.5	3.1	3.7

^f Final; ^p Partial

Labor Force Survey, 2021-2025.

Source: RAAsuncion, BGC, PhD. Source: Philippine Statistics Authority. (in <https://psa.gov.ph>).

Barriers to Youth Labor Market Integration (Institutional)

- weak enforcement of labor laws
- limited effectiveness of public employment services
- limited coverage of social protection systems
- institutionalized labor migration policies/dependence on external labor employment
- limited labor market data integration
- fragmentation of labor market governance
- weak school-to-work transition mechanisms
- low union density & limited collective representation
- policy inconsistency & political turnover
- limited youth participation in labor governance

Providing Opportunities, Ensuring Protection & Welfare of the Youth (Legal context)

- Labor Code of the Philippines or Presidential Decree No. 442
 - sets the standards for the **minimum labor standards** (ex. wages, hours of work, overtime pay), rules on employment status (regular, probationary, fixed-term), termination & due process requirements, & provisions regulating the employment of minors among others (in <https://lawphil.net>).
 - Article 139 of the Code stipulates that **no one below fifteen years old shall be employed except when they work directly under the supervision of their parents or guardians; those employed between 15-18 years old shall not work beyond eight hours per day, with limits on the number of hours of work per day, normally between ten o'clock in the evening & six o'clock in the morning the following day; below 18 years of age are definitely prohibited from engaging in hazardous jobs.**

Providing Opportunities, Ensuring Protection & Welfare of the Youth (*Education, training & employability*)

- **RA 7796 An Act Creating the Technical Education & Skills Development Authority (TESDA)**, Providing for Its Powers, Structure & for Other Purposes mandates the agency to primarily **provide technical & vocational education & training (TVET)**, **issue national skills certification**, etc.
- The Tulong sa Trabaho Act or **RA No. 11230**, An Act Instituting a **Philippine Labor Force Competencies Competitiveness Program & Free Access to Technical-Vocational Education & Training (TVET)**, & Appropriating Funds Therefor helps **strengthen the readiness of the workforce & address skills mismatch**
- **Special Program for Employment of Students (SPES; RA No. 10917)**: students between 13-30 years old who come from low-income families can work during summer or holiday breaks

- **Youth Employment Program (YEP):** DOLE holds job fairs & hiring events, job matching services, profiling & placement assistance, work readiness seminars such as resume & interview preparations, & life & career guidance.
- **JobStart program:** targets those who fall under NEET; opens employment opportunities for the youth & bridge the gap between school & employment.
- For unemployed & underemployed youth, the **DOLE Integrated Livelihood Program (DILP) or Kabuhayan Program:** provides livelihood assistance & start-up support through livelihood training, micro-entrepreneurship programs, access to funding & business coaching; supports self-employment & business generation to unemployed & underemployed youth.

- **Sessions on work values & life skills development:** DOLE together with partner agencies
- **Government Internship Program (GIP):** targeted to those who are between 18-30 years old, at least a high school or a Tech-Voc graduate provides an opportunity to those who are poor & indigent the chance to showcase their abilities & skills in the public sector; aims to attract & recruit “the best & the brightest” individuals to work for the government
- **RA No 10931** otherwise known as the **Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education:** provides free tuition & other school fees in state universities & colleges, local universities & colleges & state-run technical-vocational institutions; funds are also allotted for the tertiary education subsidy & student loan program.

Providing Opportunities, Ensuring Protection & Welfare of the Youth (*Youth participation in governance*)

- **RA No. 8044; institutionalized youth participation at the national level;** National Youth Commission (NYC) created to ensure youth representation in policy-making, promotes youth leadership & civic engagement programs, mandates the formulation of a National Youth Development Plan. The NYC acts as the primary policy-coordinating body for youth development.
- **RA No. 10742 or the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Reform Act of 2015** establishes youth councils in every barangay nationwide, requires SK officials to be between 18-24 years old, mandates training before assumption of office, allocates 10% of barangay general fund for youth programs as well as institutionalized the Local Youth Development Plan.

- **Local Government Code of 1991 or RA 7160** embeds youth representation in local legislative & planning processes. It provides the legal basis for SK integration in barangay governance, mandates sectoral participation in local development councils, & encourages participatory local governance structures.
- The **Volunteer Act of 2007 or RA No. 9418**: promotes volunteerism as a strategy for national development; encourages youth civic engagement & supports volunteer programs in public institutions.
- As a member of the United Nations (UN) & the ILO, **the country aligns its youth governance efforts with the UN Youth Strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals, & has ratified ILO Convention No. 138 on minimum wage, & ILO Convention No. 182 on worst forms of child labor.**

Implications

- **Institutionalization of youth participation:** youth are susceptible to tokenistic participation which can significantly affect their influence & role in decision-making & policy-making in all levels of government.
- **Labor market structuring & youth transitions:** short-term employment programs may unintentionally normalize precarious work arrangements particularly if these are not tied to sustainable career pathways; it also runs the risk of becoming a source of cheap labor & exploitation rather than genuine training grounds.
- **Socioeconomic equity & inclusion:** disparity in the implementation of youth policies across regions may result to uneven outcomes between rural or urban communities.
- **Democratic deepening & political stability.** can reduce political alienation & disengagement but can also lead to frustration & distrust when expectations are unmet & economic opportunities remain scarce.

Implications

- **Institutional coordination & governance complexity:** duplication in government programs & fragmented monitoring
- **Industrial relations & future workforce norms:** youth programs can strengthen future compliance culture & labor-management relations if decent work principles, transparency & accountability are consistently promoted & practiced; otherwise, insecure work arrangements run the danger of normalizing precariousness & weakening of collective voice traditions.
- **Demographic dividend & national development.** youth policy outcomes are directly linked to national competitiveness & long-term economic sustainability.

The central challenge then lies not in the absence of ample programs & policies but in the depth, quality, & sustainability of implementation as well as its ability to transform its demographic strength into inclusive growth & democratic resilience.