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Youth Unemployment, Skills and Opportunity: Why TVET College Month Matters Now More Than Ever



South Africa's latest Quarterly Labour Force [Survey](#) (QLFS) for Q2:2025 paints a stark picture: the official unemployment rate has risen to 33.2%, and the youth unemployment rate continues to hover at 46.1%. Nearly half of young South Africans are without work, without an income and, in too many cases, without clear pathways to opportunity. The numbers are not just statistics; they are a mirror reflecting the urgent need for solutions to equip our youth to be active participants in the economy.

Published during TVET College Month, these statistics remind us why investing in skills development remains a national priority. Our TVET institutions are one of the most powerful levers to tackle unemployment. They provide practical, employment-ready skills, connect learners directly to industry, and turn ambition into earning potential. In doing so, they empower young people to step confidently into the workforce and embrace their role as economic contributors.

The 2025 theme for TVET Month **"TVET for ALL: Skills, Opportunity, Change"** could not be timelier. Skills, opportunity and change are exactly what South Africa's youth need in the wake of the QLFS findings. The reality is pressing: **without access to relevant, practical skills, young people will remain on the margins of the labour market. But with TVET colleges actively cultivating industry-aligned competencies, youth unemployment is a challenge that can be met and confronted.**

A Breakdown of the Latest Quarterly Labour Force Survey

Gender disparities:

Unemployment rate for women: 35.9% in Q2:2025. Since Q2:2015, the unemployment rate for women has consistently been higher than that of men. In Q2:2015, it was 27.3%, rising to 35.9% by Q2:2025.

Employment numbers: 7.4 million women were employed in Q2:2025 compared to 9.4 million men.

Sector concentration: Women are more likely to be employed in community and social services (32.8%), trade (20.6%), finance (18.0%), and private households (11.4%). They remain underrepresented in male-dominated sectors such as transport, construction, and mining.



Youth Employment:

Employed youth: Increased by 31,000 to 5.7 million.

Unemployed youth: Increased by 39,000 to 4.9 million.

Graduate unemployment rate: Increased by 0.5 percentage points from 11.7% in Q1:2025 to 12.2% in Q2:2025.

Matric and less: Those with matric and less than matric remain vulnerable, with unemployment rates of 35.2% and 39.4% respectively.

NEET youth: Approximately 3.6 million out of 10.3 million (or 35.2%) young people aged 15–24 years were not in employment, education, or training (NEET).

The Significance of TVET College Month



Established in 2014 by the Department of Higher Education and Training, TVET College Month was created to raise awareness of the vital role TVET institutions play in South Africa's development agenda. It highlights how vocational education can address pressing skills shortages while also reshaping public perceptions of TVETs.

The goal, ultimately, is transformation: **to equip young South Africans with the practical skills, resilience and adaptability required to thrive in an evolving economy.** The call this month is clear. South Africa cannot afford to leave nearly half of its youth behind. Each year, the focus is to showcase what colleges offer, allowing young people to engage directly with skills programmes that connect them to real-world employment.

From Data to Pathways

While the survey presents the data, colleges provide the pathways and key partnerships link skills development to real employment.

Through our partnership with TVET colleges, particularly through the **Installation, Repair and Maintenance (IRM)** Initiative, we have seen first-hand how these institutions provide essential technical training and practical work exposure, preparing young people to enter the workforce and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

[Learn more](#)



This month must remind policymakers, business leaders and communities alike that investing in TVET institutions ensures young people are not left behind in a rapidly changing world of work.