

TO ALL MEDIA/ NEWS EDITORS

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NYDA CALLS FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION FOLLOWING MIXED QLFS OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) has noted the findings of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) released by Statistics South Africa for the fourth quarter of 2025. The report indicates a marginal improvement in the national unemployment rate, with the official rate declining from 31.9% in the third quarter to 31.4% in the fourth quarter, a 0.5 percentage-point decrease. While this modest reduction signals a degree of economic stabilisation, the NYDA emphasises that the pace of job creation remains insufficient to absorb the growing number of young work seekers entering the labour market each year.

Of significant concern to the Agency is the trajectory of youth unemployment, specifically. The survey shows that young people aged 15 to 34 continue to bear the highest unemployment burden. The unemployment rate for this demographic rose from 43.7% in the third quarter to 43.8% in the fourth quarter, a 0.1 percentage-point increase. This uptick, however slight, runs counter to the national trend and underscores the structural nature of the youth unemployment crisis. It points to persistent barriers that prevent young people from translating their qualifications and aspirations into sustainable livelihoods.

The QLFS further illuminates the depth of the challenge facing the nation's youth, particularly those categorised as NEET—not in employment, education, or training. Approximately 3.5 million young people aged 15 to 24 are in this precarious position. This phenomenon is not merely a statistical indicator, it represents a profound loss of human potential and a drag on social and economic development. The high NEET rate is symptomatic of deeper systemic issues, including a misalignment between the skills young job seekers possess and those demanded by a rapidly evolving economy, a lack of accessible opportunities to gain crucial initial work experience, and spatial inequalities that concentrate economic activity in specific regions while leaving others underserved. Provincial disparities in combined unemployment and potential labour force rates confirm that geography remains a significant determinant of a young person's economic prospects, with those in historically underdeveloped regions facing compounded disadvantages.

The NYDA views these statistics not as abstract numbers but as a call to action that demands a coordinated and intensified response. The Agency continues to implement targeted interventions designed to address the root causes of youth unemployment.

