

2024

youth
@work

Youth Employment

**Industry
Report**



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About Us

Youth@WORK is a South African non-profit company (NPC), dedicated to empowering youth through meaningful work experiences and educational support.

Mission and Vision

Youth@WORK believes that young people possess the potential to transform society, the economy, and the environment. They view work as a pathway to financial well-being and personal development, aiming to create opportunities that ignite curiosity, purpose, and self-actualization among youth.

Impact and Recognition

Youth@WORK's commitment to social development has been acknowledged through awards such as the IRMSA Industry Award in the Social Development Category. Their programs contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Quality Education (SDG 4), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), and Partnerships for the Goals (SDG 17).

Importance and Contribution

By focusing on youth empowerment through work and education, Youth@WORK addresses critical issues such as unemployment and skills shortages in South Africa. Their initiatives provide young people with the tools and opportunities to achieve economic independence, contribute meaningfully to society, and drive positive change within their communities.

Youth@WORK plays a vital role in shaping South Africa's future by investing in its youth, fostering skills development, and creating pathways to employment and personal growth.

Co-founders

Jacinta Tshidzumba & Erica Kempken

Executive Summary

Youth@WORK has made significant progress in empowering South Africa's youth by creating opportunities for employment, developing skills, and fostering strong partnerships with businesses. This report provides a detailed analysis of achievements, trends, and challenges from 2019 to 2024, highlighting key data-driven insights and laying the groundwork for strategic direction in 2025 and beyond.

Key Achievements



+10.5K

Active youth with average annual growth of **58%**.



61%

Female Participation.



+2680

Host Sites to facilitate skills development and job placements.



+540M

Youth salaries paid out, with an average annual growth of **5%**.



+130

Funders invested.



96%

Average Youth retention rate achieved per cohort.

Challenges

- Limited participation of **youth with disabilities** (~0.6% of total).
- Rural engagement, while steady, requires targeted investment to match urban growth.
- Sector diversification is progressing but remains concentrated in traditional industries like Education and Automotive.

Outlook for 2025

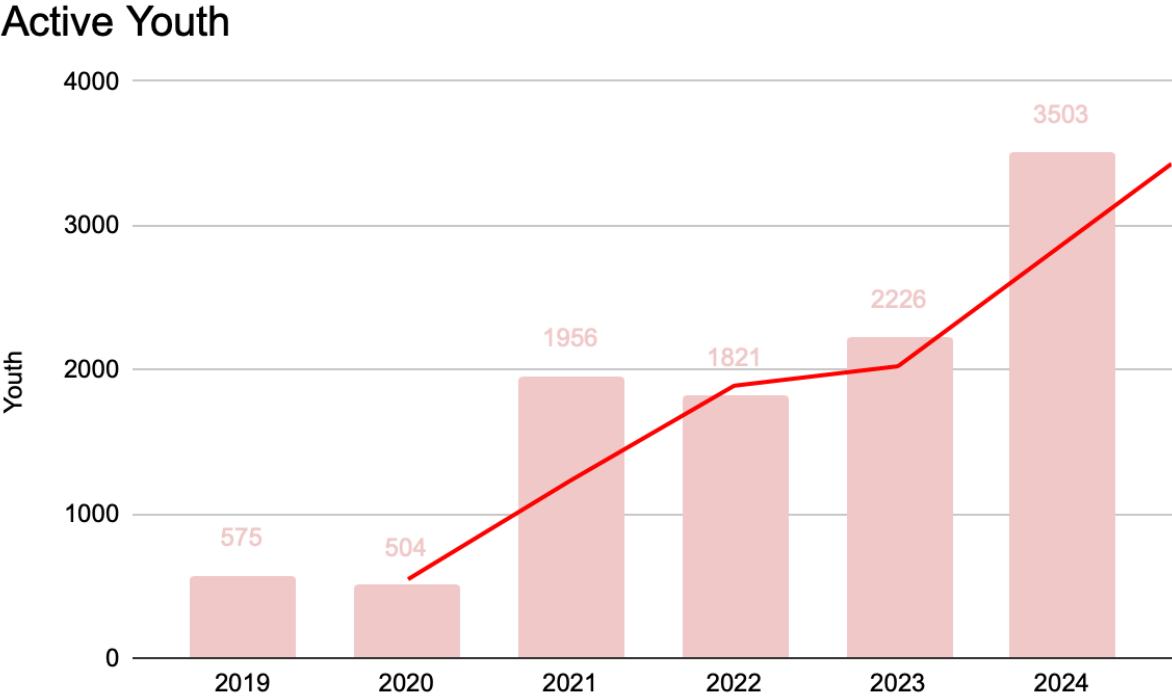
Strategic focus areas include enhanced inclusivity, rural program investment, and increased partnerships in emerging industries. Youth@WORK is well-positioned to expand its impact and further empower South Africa's youth workforce.

1. Youth

Youth@WORK defines youth as individuals aged 18 to 35 who participate in a structured 12-month employment program designed to provide hands-on experience, skill development, and pathways to long-term career opportunities. This program addresses systemic challenges such as unemployment, underrepresentation in the workforce, and skills shortages. Notably, a key area of focus is increasing inclusivity, as current participation of youth with disabilities remains limited at approximately 0.6% of the total cohort. By tackling these gaps, Youth@WORK aims to empower every young person, regardless of background, with the tools and confidence to contribute meaningfully to their communities and South Africa's economy.

1.1 Growth of Active Youth

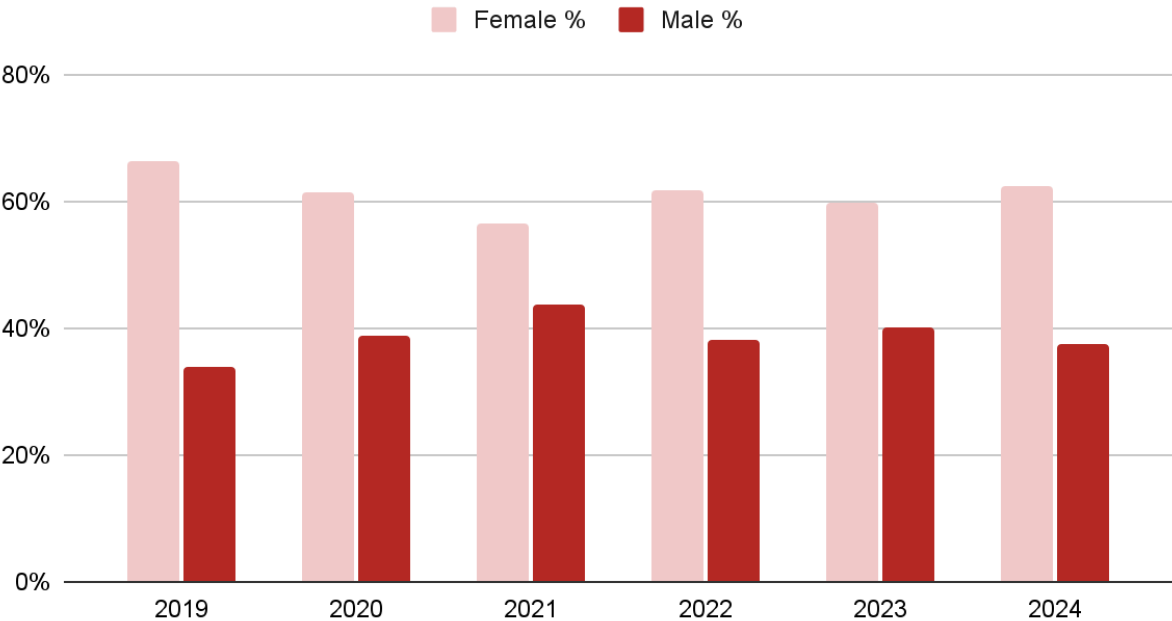
The total number of active youth grew from **575 in 2019** to **3503 in 2024**, reflecting a **58% average annual growth rate**. The program demonstrated strong scalability, particularly during **2021 (288% growth)**, despite the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.



1.2 Gender Representation and Female Empowerment

Gender inclusivity remains a hallmark of Youth@WORK, with a clear focus on empowering young women to secure employment, gain experience, and contribute to their communities.

Youth Gender Representation



- **61% of participants are female**, showcasing the program's leadership in addressing gender gaps.
- Female participation consistently outnumbers males by a ratio of **3:2**.
- The average age of male participants is 25, while female participants average 24 years.

1.3 Race Representation

Empowerment within Youth@WORK is particularly impactful for African youth, who make up the overwhelming majority of participants:

- **African Females:** (53% of all participants), the largest demographic in the program.
- **African Males:** (34% of all participants), demonstrating consistent participation.
- Other racial groups, such as Coloured and Indian participants, contribute smaller but notable shares to the overall youth totals.

Race	Male	Female
African	84%	86%
Coloured	15%	13%
Indian	1%	1%
White	0%	0%

Insight: Youth@WORK's focus on female empowerment, particularly among African youth, is transforming the landscape of South Africa's workforce.

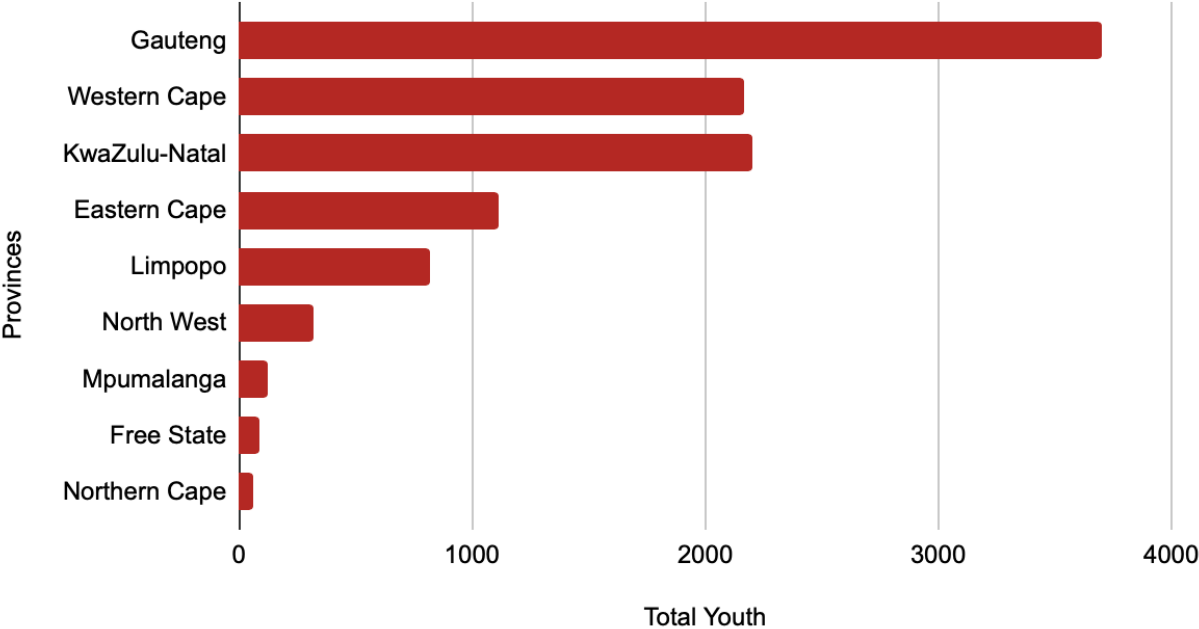
By investing in young women, we unlock potential, fostering leadership, and addressing deep-rooted disparities.

This inclusive approach enhances social cohesion and drives equitable economic participation, paving the way for a more representative and sustainable workforce.

1.4 Provincial Distribution

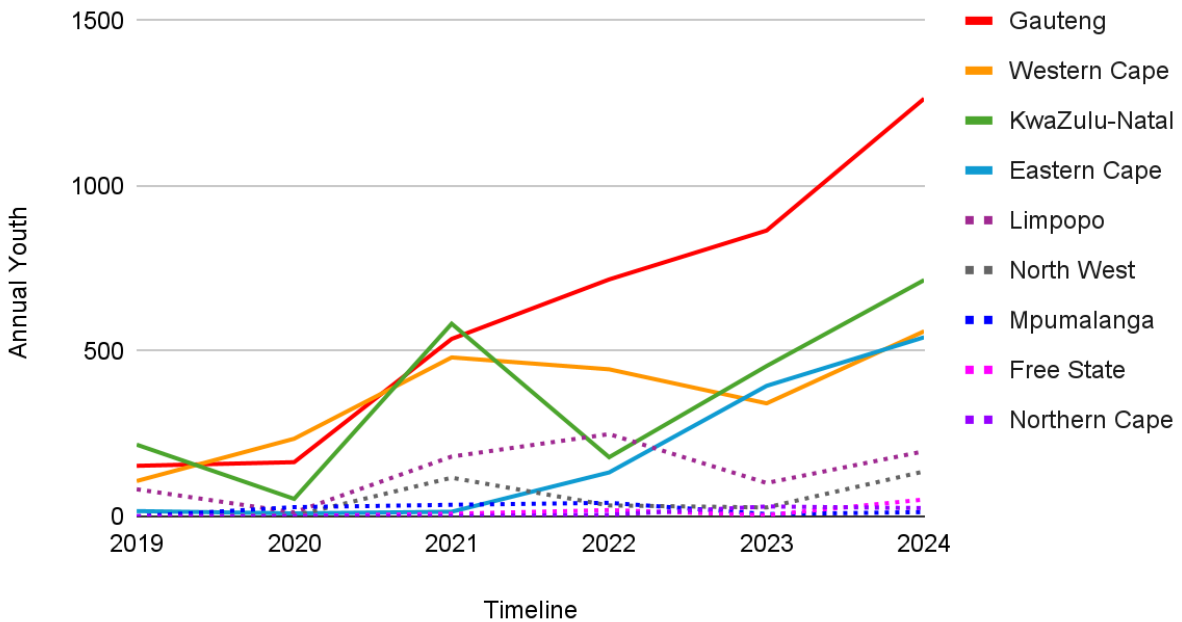
Youth@WORK operates across all nine provinces in South Africa. However, the program's impact is particularly concentrated, with **79% of all participants** based in three key provinces.

Total Youth vs. Provinces



Gauteng continues to demonstrate consistent growth, accounting for 33% of youth placements. Notably, the Eastern Cape has emerged as the fastest-growing province, with placements surging to 15% of the total in 2024.

Provincial Performance

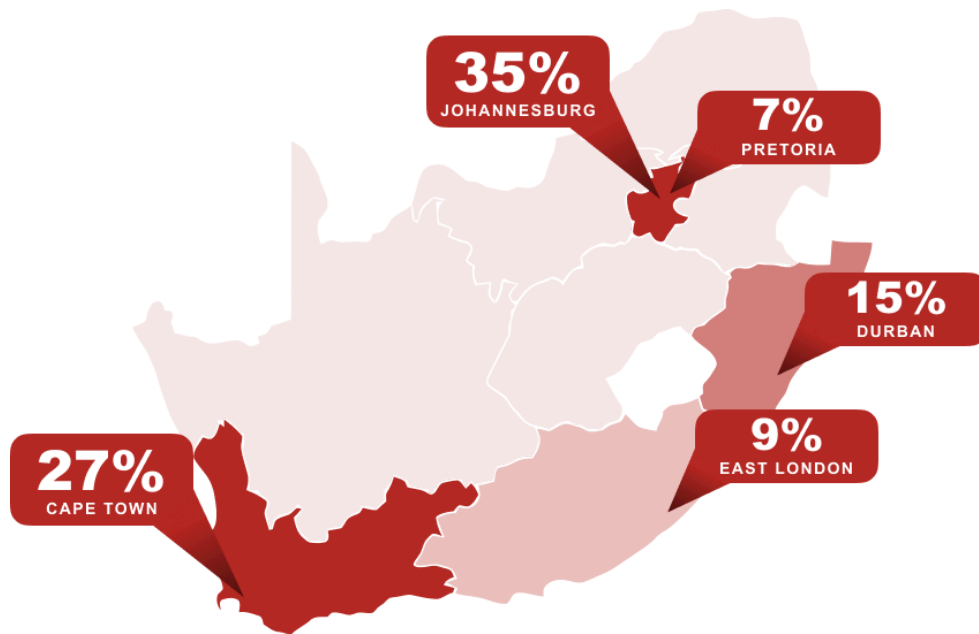


This provincial growth underscores the success of Youth@WORK’s strategies to expand opportunities in rural and underserved regions, reflecting a deliberate focus on equitable distribution and regional development.

1.5 Urban Vs Rural distribution

248M Invested in youth Salaries within rural areas. Our distribution shows **46% of youth placed in rural areas** and 54% of all youth placed in urban areas.

Rural engagement, while steady, requires targeted investment to match urban growth. **91% of all urban youth** are placed across four major cities.



This distribution not only encourages youth to build careers in economically vibrant areas but also strengthens the transition from rural environments, ensuring they gain access to resources and experiences that drive professional and personal advancement.

1.6 Industry Sectors

Youth@WORK’s program has strategically placed youth in critical industries that address South Africa’s immediate workforce needs while building a foundation for long-term economic development. This alignment not only equips youth with essential skills but also contributes directly to national priorities such as education, digital transformation, healthcare improvement, food security, and industrial growth. The sectors highlighted below represent both the volume of youth placed and the value these roles bring to the nation’s progress.

Over **70% of youth** placed across the following 4 key sectors:

Sector	Youth Placement
Education	44.3%
Automotive	11.1%
Human, health and social work activities	9.0%
Information, communication and technology	8.2%

Key youth roles in each major industry are described below.

1.6.1. Education

- **Teacher Assistants:** Provide essential support to teachers in under-resourced schools. Teacher Assistants help manage classrooms, improve student engagement, and enable better learning outcomes. This directly supports South Africa's National Development Plan (NDP) goal of strengthening basic education and reducing literacy gaps.
- **Impact:** By empowering youth to contribute to the education sector, Youth@WORK addresses teacher shortages, enhances student performance, and builds the foundational skills necessary for economic growth.

1.6.2. Automotive

- **Machine Operators and Technicians:** Technical roles improve production capacity, enhance industrial efficiency, and contribute to South Africa's industrial recovery strategy.
- **Impact:** Building a skilled workforce in manufacturing drives economic growth, creates sustainable jobs, and supports South Africa's efforts to revitalize its industrial base for global competitiveness.

1.6.3. Human Health & Social Work

- **Administrative Support and Care Assistants:** These roles strengthen healthcare systems by providing operational support, enhancing patient care, and ensuring healthcare facilities run efficiently.
- **Impact:** Placing youth in healthcare roles alleviates pressure on overburdened systems, improves service delivery, and contributes to societal well-being and stability.

1.6.4. Information, Communication & Technology (ICT)

- **Software Developers, Web Developers, and IT Support:** Support in-demand digital skills critical to South Africa's growing tech economy and Fourth Industrial Revolution goals. ICT placements empower youth to innovate, solve modern challenges, and bridge the digital divide.
- **Impact:** Closing the ICT skills gap fosters digital inclusion, drives technological advancements for South Africa.

Breakdown of how this has evolved over the years:

Sector	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Education	95%	75%	34%	26%	21%	15%
Automotive	1%	0%	27%	12%	13%	14%
Human, health and social work activities	0%	9%	9%	13%	11%	11%
Information, communication and technology	0%	8%	9%	12%	12%	8%
Financial and insurance activities	0%	1%	2%	4%	10%	11%
Accommodation, food services activities and tourism	1%	2%	1%	4%	7%	11%
Manufacturing	1%	1%	4%	7%	3%	6%
Other service activities	0%	1%	6%	7%	2%	3%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1%	1%	2%	3%	3%	4%
Other	1%	1%	6%	11%	18%	18%

There has been a significant **decline in dominance by the Education** sector (from 95% to 15%), while other sectors such as Automotive, Information Technology, and Financial Services have gradually increased their presence. The shift illustrates a progressive diversification of sector engagement.

Growing sectors in 2024, such as Information, Communication and Technology (ICT), Financial and Insurance Activities, and Automotive, are crucial to future youth as they align with global economic trends and demand for skills in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. These industries provide opportunities for high-paying jobs, innovation, and entrepreneurship, empowering the youth to contribute to the country's economic growth, reduce unemployment, and compete in an increasingly digital and technology-driven global market.

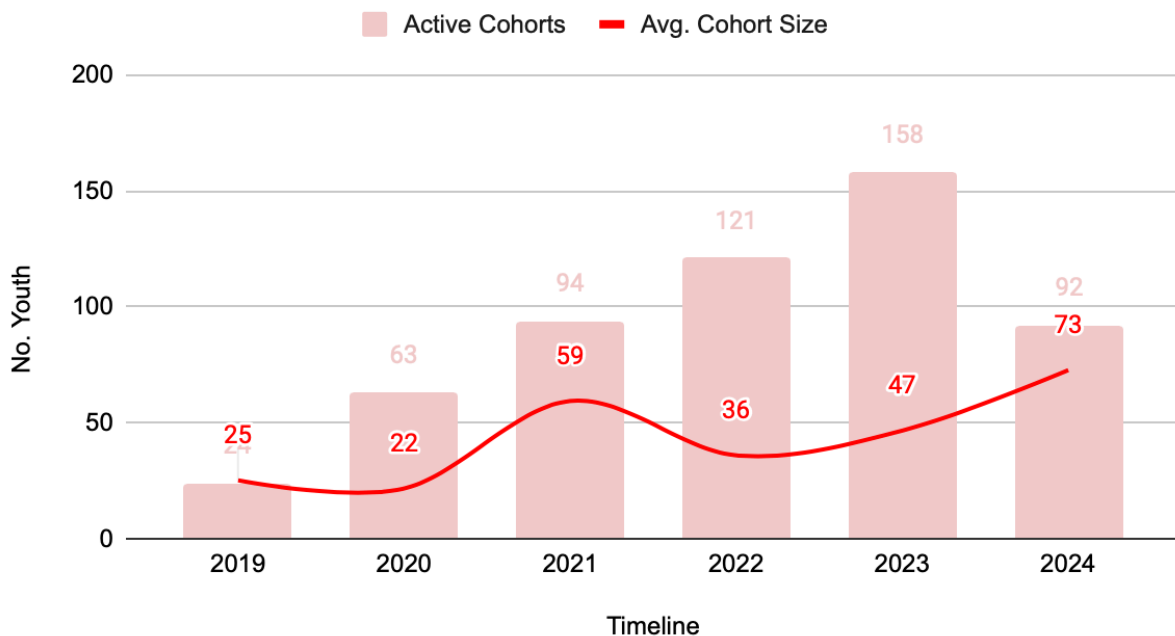
2. Cohorts

Youth@WORK implements a cohort-based model in order to manage youth across their 12-month program. The data reveals critical insights into the program's structure and scalability over the years.

Between 2019 and 2024, the number of active cohorts grew significantly, showcasing the program's expanding reach:

- **2019:** 25 cohorts
- **2024:** 92 cohorts

Active Cohorts and Avg. Cohort Size



The consistent growth in cohorts indicates the increasing demand for the program and its capacity to accommodate more youth participants each year. The peak in 2023, with 158 active cohorts, highlights a significant expansion, followed by an adjusted stabilization in 2024.

The average cohort size also evolved during this period, demonstrating adaptability and efficiency in resource allocation:

- **2021** saw a spike in cohort size (59 participants), which reflects the program's ability to scale during high-demand years.
- **2024** achieved a balance with an average cohort size of 73, reflecting improved management and engagement strategies.

Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Avg. Cohort Retention Rate	99.1%	97.4%	93.8%	96.0%	90.4%	96.5%

96%

The **average cohort retention rate** has remained high over the period.

This reflects the program's commitment to sustained youth development and support.

The strong retention rates and consistent growth in cohort numbers underscore Youth@WORK's ability to provide a structured, supportive environment for participants. By maintaining engagement and scaling effectively, the program ensures that youth not only enter but thrive within the workforce, building skills and networks essential for their long-term success.

This highlights Youth@WORK's adaptability in meeting fluctuating demands while maintaining quality program outcomes.

3. Host Sites & Supervisors

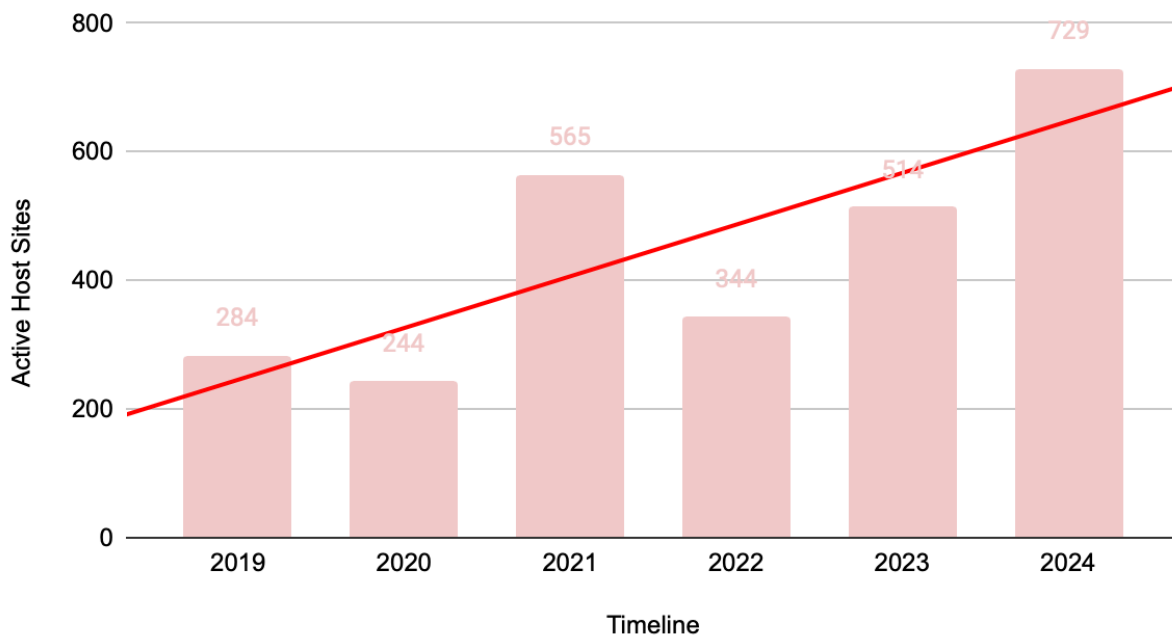
Host sites and supervisor support form the backbone of Youth@WORK's efforts, enabling scalable and impactful youth engagement.

3.1 Host Site Partnerships

Youth@WORK has steadily expanded its host site partnerships, reaching a total of **729 active sites in 2024**, representing an annual growth rate of **6%**. Each host site now accommodates an average of **5 youth**, reflecting improved placement capacity and the program's ability to scale effectively.

- The number of host sites has more than doubled since 2019, when there were only 284 active sites, indicating a strong and sustained expansion.
- The largest leap occurred between 2021 and 2022, showcasing the program's commitment to addressing increasing demand for youth placements.
- Host sites play a critical role in bridging the gap between education and employment by offering hands-on experience and fostering essential skills among participants.

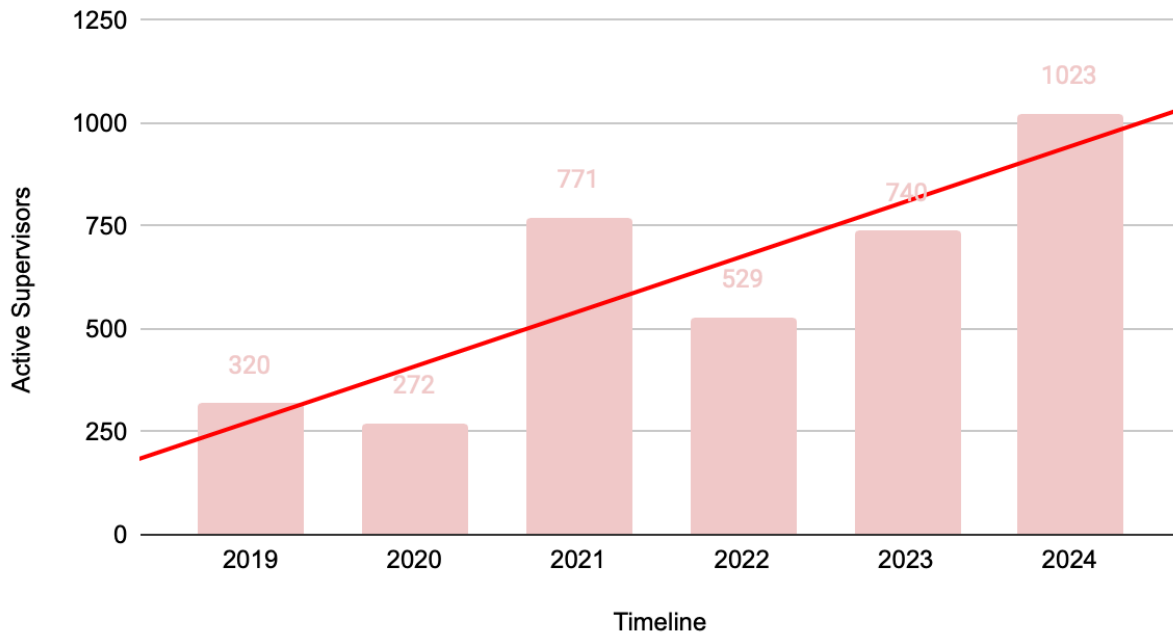
Active Host Sites



3.2 Supervisors

Supervisors are integral to the success of Youth@WORK’s program, serving as mentors and managers for youth participants. By 2024, there were **1,023 active supervisors**, marking a significant increase from **320 in 2019**.

Active Supervisors



- The ratio of youth per supervisor has risen steadily from **1:1 in 2019** to **4:1 in 2024**, reflecting enhanced efficiencies in supervision and mentoring processes.
- The increase in youth per supervisor showcases the program’s ability to scale while maintaining quality support structures.
- Supervisors ensure participants gain the skills and experience needed to succeed, while also fostering accountability and professional growth.

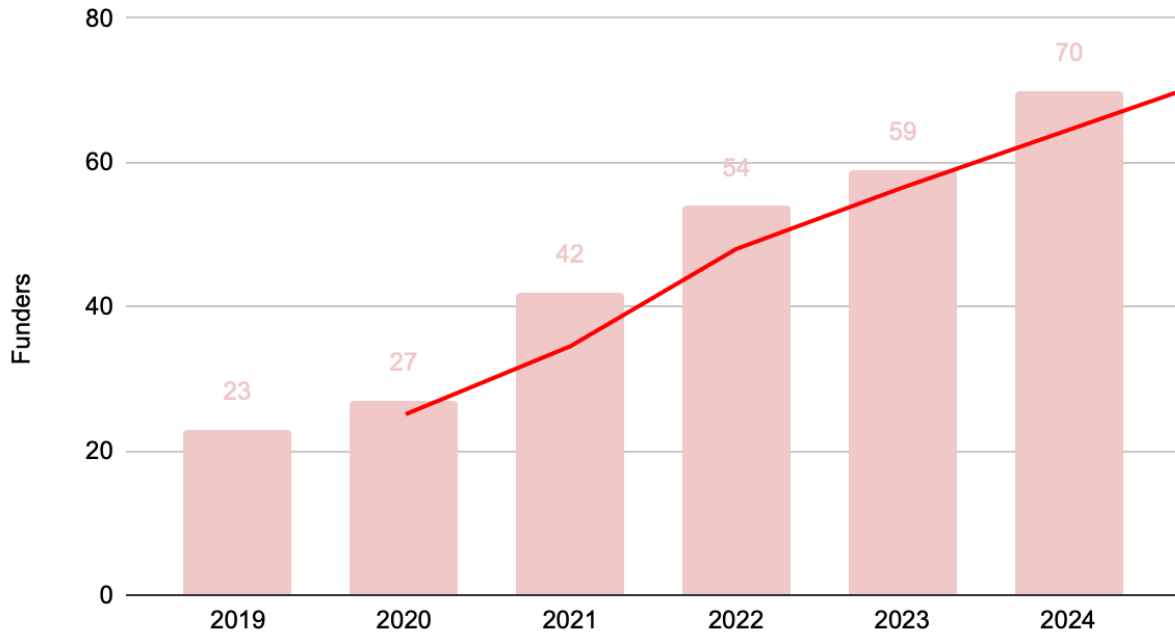
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Avg. Number of Youth Per Supervisor	1	1	3	2	3	4

This data underscores Youth@WORK’s success in building a robust supervisory framework that supports both scalability and **personalized mentorship**, contributing significantly to its high cohort retention rates.

4. Funders

Funders are key stakeholders in Youth@WORK's mission, serving as program investors who enable the scalability and sustainability of youth placements. To date, there have been over **130 active funders**, demonstrating broad support and confidence in the program's impact.

Active Funders



From 2019 to 2024, the number of active funders increased from **23 to 70**, marking a substantial rise, reflecting the growing recognition of Youth@WORK's effectiveness.

This growth trajectory reflects the alignment of Youth@WORK's goals with national workforce priorities and the increasing interest from diverse industries.

4.1 Funder Sector Focus

Interestingly, while youth placements align with immediate workforce needs, funder investments reveal a forward-looking approach, emphasizing longer-term growth sectors:

Funder	Share
Information, communication and technology	22%
Manufacturing	19%
Financial and insurance activities	18%
Green energy and solar	4%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	7%
Construction	6%
Legal services	4%
Mining and quarrying	3%
Education	4%
Other	14%

Comparative Insights show us that:

- **Youth Placements vs. Funder Focus:** While **Education** remains the largest youth placement sector (29%), funders strategically prioritize future-oriented industries such as **ICT (22%)** and **Manufacturing (19%)**.
- **ICT Sector:** Significant funder investment in ICT aligns with global trends in digital transformation, ensuring youth are equipped with critical skills for a tech-driven economy.
- **Green Energy:** Though youth placements in this sector are currently limited, funder support highlights a focus on sustainability and innovation goals.
- **Agriculture and Manufacturing:** These sectors provide vital opportunities for job creation, rural development, and economic resilience, reflecting funders' long-term vision.

By aligning youth placements with immediate workforce needs and funder investments with emerging and growth-focused sectors, Youth@WORK ensures a dual impact:

1. **Short-Term Gains:** Addressing unemployment and fostering workforce readiness.
2. **Long-Term Sustainability:** Preparing youth for future industries and supporting economic resilience.

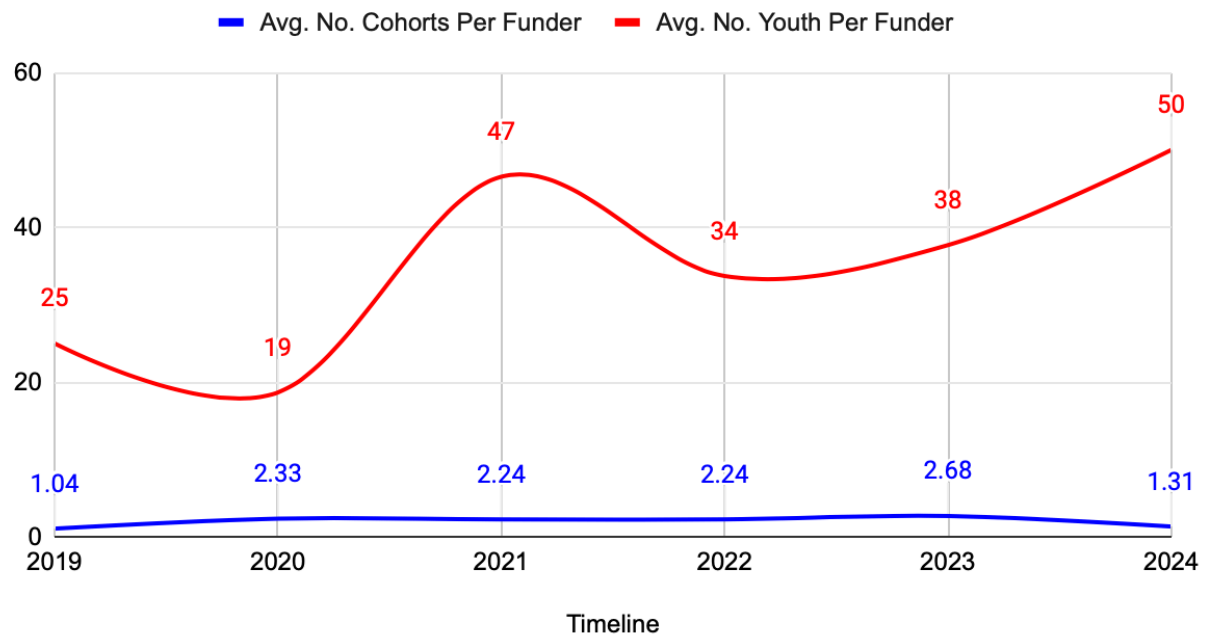
This strategic approach reinforces Youth@WORK's role in driving South Africa's progress by bridging workforce gaps, fostering innovation, and promoting sustainable development.

4.2 Relationship Insight

The relationship between funders and cohorts has evolved significantly, revealing key trends in engagement and resource allocation:

- **Doubling Youth Per Funder:** The number of youth supported per funder has grown from **25 in 2019** to **50 in 2024**, highlighting funders' increasing commitment to scaling impact.
- **Cohort Per Funder Trends:** While the average number of cohorts per funder peaked at **2.68 in 2023**, it has decreased to **1.31 in 2024**, reflecting a shift towards fewer but more concentrated funding efforts.

Avg. No. Cohorts Per Funder and Avg. No. Youth Per Funder



This indicates that:

- **Funder Growth:** The year-on-year funder growth rate of **16%** demonstrates sustained confidence in Youth@WORK's model and the ability to attract new investors.
- **Shift in Strategy:** The decrease in cohorts per funder by **103%** in 2024 may indicate funders are opting to deepen their investment in fewer cohorts, prioritizing quality over quantity and fostering more substantial individual cohort outcomes.
- **Scalable Impact:** The doubling of youth per funder reflects improved resource efficiency and highlights the program's ability to deliver more impact per funder contribution.

The strategic alignment between funder contributions and program scalability, ensures that fewer, well-supported cohorts receive the attention needed to maximize outcomes.

5. 2025 and Beyond

Based on historical data and growth trends, the following focus areas have been identified:

1. **Enhance Inclusivity**

Youth@WORK will develop targeted programs to increase participation for underrepresented groups, including youth with disabilities. Currently, only **0.6%** of participants have disabilities, highlighting a significant opportunity to bridge this gap.

2. **Expand Rural Focus**

Rural placements represent **42%** of total participation in 2024. In 2025, the goal is to expand partnerships in rural areas to bridge geographic disparities, ensuring equitable access to employment opportunities across all provinces.

3. **Sectoral Diversification**

With sectors like **Green Energy (4%)** and **ICT (22%)** gaining traction, the program will strengthen opportunities in emerging industries. These areas are aligned with sustainability goals and the digital transformation shaping the future economy.

4. **Monitor Retention Rates**

Maintaining high cohort retention rates (currently **96%** average) remains a key priority. Youth@WORK will focus on providing mentorship, ongoing support, and tailored interventions to keep engagement high.

5. **Digital Skills Development**

Aligning with the shift toward a digital economy, Youth@WORK will invest in ICT training and upskilling, ensuring participants are equipped for future workforce demands. This is crucial as **ICT placements have grown to 12% by 2024**.

5.1 Key Predictions for 2025

- **Active Youth Participation:** Forecast to grow by **57%** to reach **5,537 participants**, driven by expanded host sites and increased funder investment.
- **Funders:** Expected to rise to **81**, with a continued focus on future-oriented sectors like ICT, Manufacturing, and Financial Services.
- **Host Sites:** Anticipated to reach **800 active sites**, ensuring broader placement capacity across urban and rural areas.

6. Conclusion

Youth@WORK is more than a program; it is a movement rooted in the belief that young people have the power to transform society, the economy, and the environment. By aligning its mission to foster financial independence and personal development with tangible initiatives, Youth@WORK is creating pathways for youth to unlock their potential and drive meaningful change in their communities.

The organization's unwavering commitment to addressing unemployment, bridging skills gaps, and fostering inclusivity has already made a profound impact, empowering over 10,000 youth and creating partnerships with hundreds of host sites and funders. Yet, the vision goes beyond numbers—it is about shaping a future where every young person has the opportunity to thrive, contribute, and lead.

As Youth@WORK continues to scale its efforts into 2025 and beyond, there is a growing need for collaborative action. Businesses, funders, and community leaders are invited to join this transformative journey. By supporting Youth@WORK, you become part of a collective effort to invest in South Africa's greatest asset: its youth. Together, we can build an inclusive, skilled, and resilient workforce that drives innovation, social cohesion, and sustainable growth.

**Join us today—empower youth, transform lives,
and shape South Africa's future.**

Tech & Reporting

Delivering this report with precision and deep insight was made possible through the dedication of key individuals and advanced technology developed by Youth@WORK.

Key Contributors to the report data include but not limited to:

- Vanecce Abrahams
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For any questions on data accuracy and reporting please contact: yawit@sayouthatwork.com

CORE LMS

Youth@WORK developed the **CORE LMS**, a robust solution designed to manage and streamline all stakeholder processes effectively. This platform enables:

- Youth Management
- Funder, Partner, and Supervisor Management
- Cohort Creation and Management
- Insightful Reporting

To support the broader industry, Youth@WORK has made the CORE LMS available for use by any organization.

For inquiries: yawit@sayouthatwork.com

UPLOADER

Youth@WORK leverages **UPLOADER.africa**, a cutting-edge AI-powered tool designed to process and analyze documents efficiently. This platform enabled the scanning and processing of youth-related documents and data used in this report.

Website: [UPLOADER.africa](https://uploader.africa)

Youth@WORK's commitment to innovation ensures continuous delivery of impactful insights and solutions to drive change across South Africa.