



Industry Report

2025

youth
@work

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“

You are never
too young to
lead, and never
too old to learn.

- Kofi Annan

”



01



**About
youth@WORK**

youth@WORK is a South African non-profit company (NPC) dedicated to enabling meaningful youth employment at scale. We connect funders, small businesses and young people through structured, compliant and data-driven work placements.

This report introduces expanded analysis across growth patterns, sector diversification, geographic reach, wage investment and operational scalability.

As we move into 2026, the strategic focus is clear:



Mission and Vision

youth@WORK believes young people are not a demographic challenge – they are an economic engine.

Work is a pathway to financial stability, personal development and long-term productivity. Our mission is to create structured opportunities that unlock potential and embed young people into South Africa's economy.

Impact and Recognition

Our commitment to measurable social development has been recognised through awards including the IRMSA Industry Award in the Social Development Category.



More importantly, it contributes to household income stability, employer capacity and long-term economic resilience.

Importance and Contribution

South Africa's youth unemployment crisis is not only a social issue, it is a structural economic risk. youth@WORK addresses this challenge by functioning as a scalable intermediary between young workseekers and the formal economy.

Through structured placements, payroll integration, supervision and data-led oversight, youth@WORK reduces hiring friction for small businesses while expanding access to meaningful work experience for young people. This dual-sided model addresses unemployment and small business capacity constraints simultaneously.

For young people, the impact extends beyond income. Participants gain formal work exposure, skills development, workplace networks and employment references, which are critical enablers of long-term labour market participation. For funders and small businesses, the programme provides a compliant, managed pathway to contribute to workforce development while supporting operational growth.

By converting youth potential into productive participation, youth@WORK strengthens household income stability, supports workforce pipelines and contributes to broader economic resilience. In this way, youth@WORK is strengthening the foundations of South Africa's future workforce and competitiveness.

Co-founders

Erica Kempken

Jacinta Roest-Tshidzumba



Between 2019 and 2025, youth@WORK placed 14,397 young people into structured work opportunities.

After a temporary contraction in 2020 due to COVID-19 disruption, the programme rebounded sharply in 2021 and entered a sustained growth phase.

By 2025:

3,812
youth were active

Growth represented a
563%
increase from 2019

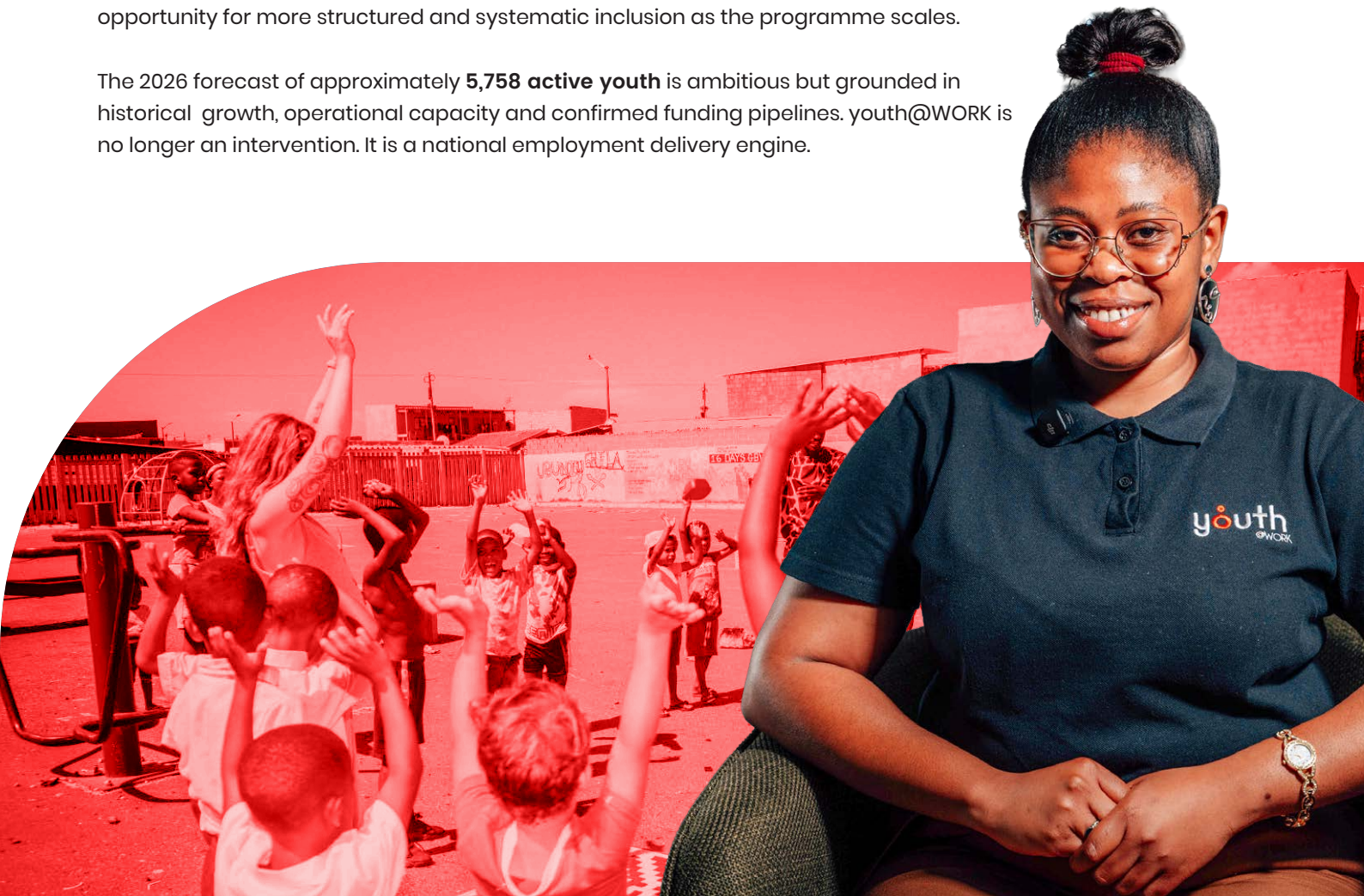
Average
year-on-year growth
across the period was
51%

This growth reflects institutional maturity, strengthened systems, diversified sectors and increasing funder confidence.

Supervisory oversight scaled in parallel. The average youth-to-supervisor ratio across the period was 2.1:1, reinforcing that growth has not compromised quality.

Geographically, youth@WORK achieved national reach across all nine provinces, while strategically concentrating placements in high-absorption economic regions to maximise outcomes and operational efficiency. Participation of youth with disabilities is present but remains largely project-dependent, highlighting an opportunity for more structured and systematic inclusion as the programme scales.

The 2026 forecast of approximately **5,758 active youth** is ambitious but grounded in historical growth, operational capacity and confirmed funding pipelines. youth@WORK is no longer an intervention. It is a national employment delivery engine.



YOUTH@WORK ACHIEVEMENTS

SNAPSHOT OF 2025

SCALE & GROWTH



3,812 active youth supported in 2025



14,000+ youth placed since 2019



563% growth compared to 2019 baseline



51% avg. annual growth rate (2019-2025)

NATIONAL REACH



09 presence in all nine provinces



75% of placements concentrated in high-absorption provinces



977 active small businesses (3x growth since 2019)

SECTOR DIVERSIFICATION



15% Education



14% Automotive



11% ICT



INCLUSION & EQUITY



61% female participation



87% of participants are African youth

QUALITY & RETENTION



95.6% retention rate in 2025 cohorts



01 supervisor for every ~2 youth (2:1 ratio)



High engagement despite rapid cohort scaling

FUNDING & PARTNERSHIPS



71 active funders in 2025



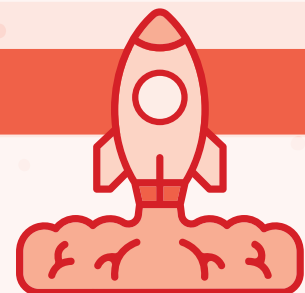
Growing trend toward larger, high-impact cohorts



83% of youth supported through the IP payroll model

PROGRAMME MATURITY

Proven nationwide sustainable employment platform aligned with South Africa's economic priorities.





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Programme Scale and Growth

From 2019–2025:

14,397

cumulative youth supported

Annual average:

1,764

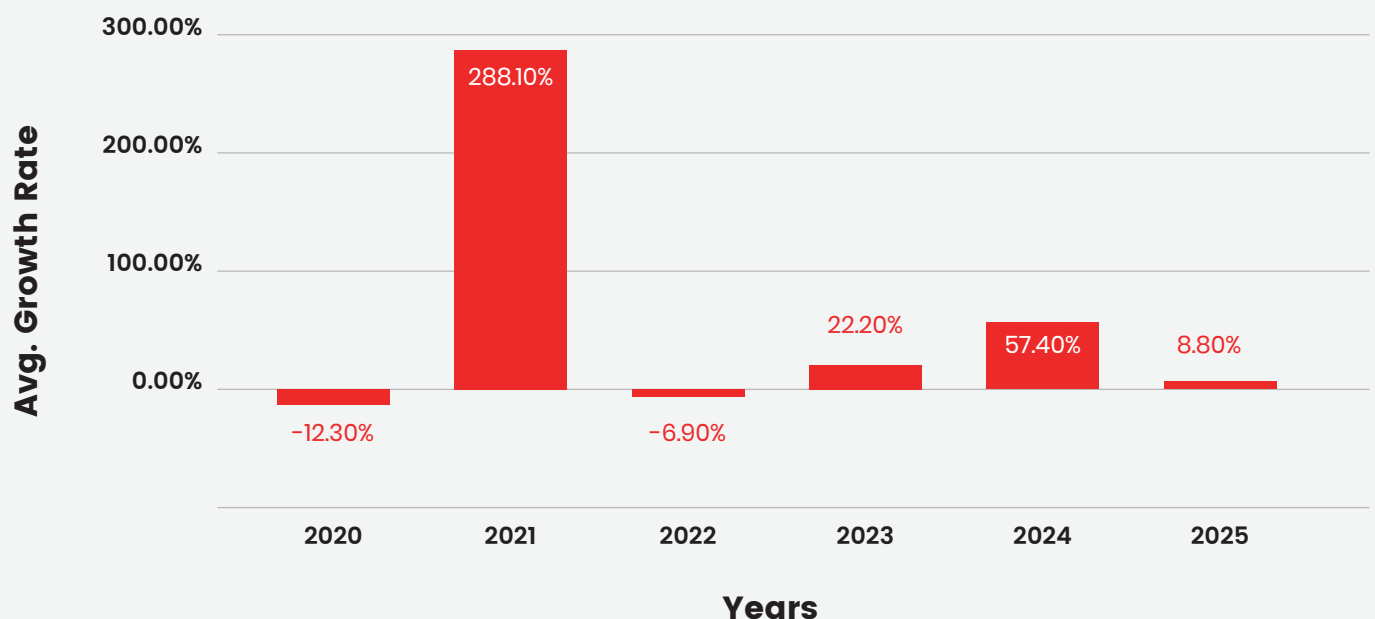
active participants

2020 saw a -12.3% contraction due to pandemic disruption. In 2021, growth accelerated sharply (+288%). This was not merely a rebound, it reflected the transition from a limited intervention model to a scalable employment delivery system capable of mobilising at volume.

Since 2022, growth has stabilised into predictable expansion, demonstrating the ability to grow from an increasingly high base without proportional instability. Many youth employment initiatives expand in cycles and then plateau. youth@WORK's trajectory indicates compounding growth supported by systems maturity, diversified sectors and expanding host-site capacity.

Scale is no longer dependent on isolated funding spikes or concentrated absorption within one sector. Instead, growth is increasingly distributed and system supported – a more resilient position in a volatile economic environment. Sustained expansion is what converts short-term placements into long-term workforce impact.

Avg. Growth Rate vs. Years



Growth Stability and Resilience

Post-2022 growth has ranged between 8.8% and 57.4%, indicating a shift from reactive expansion to structured, predictable scaling.

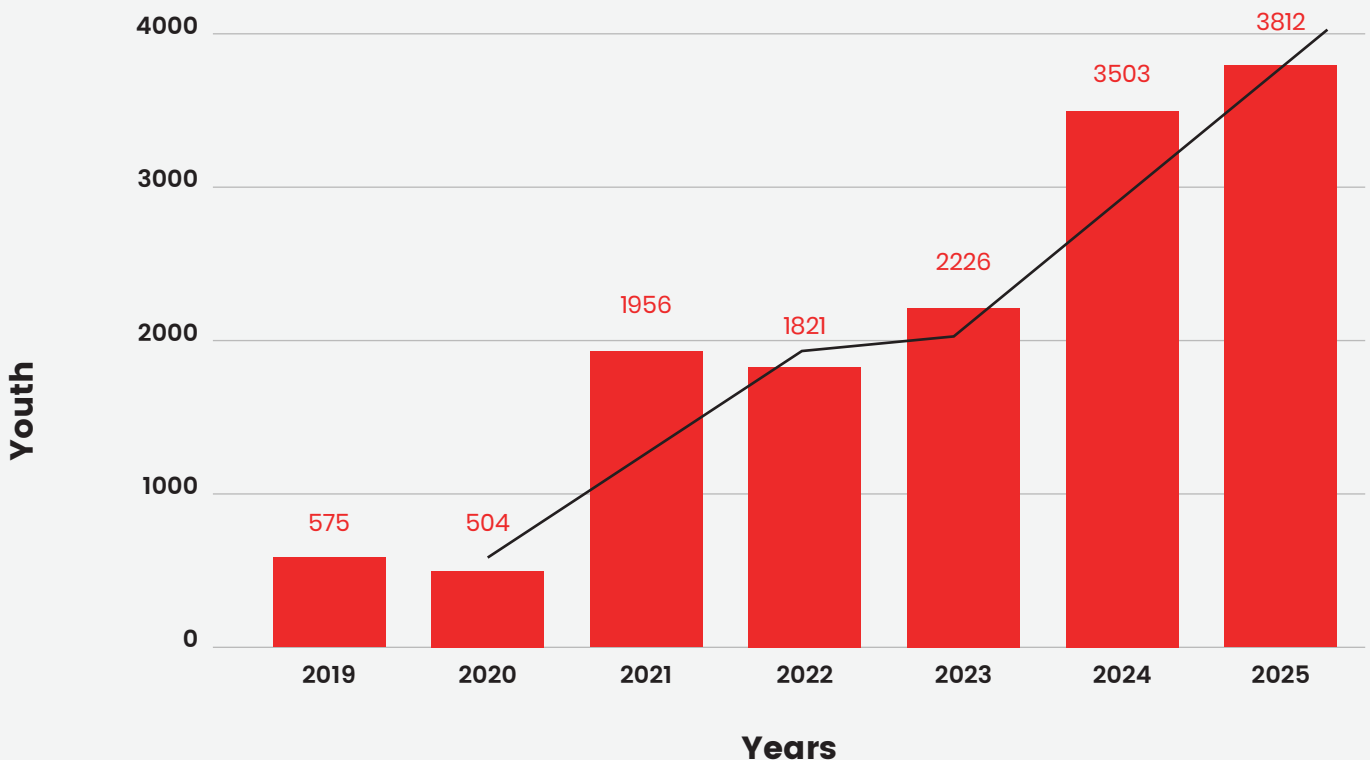
Early volatility reflects extraordinary external disruption during the COVID-19 period rather than internal instability. As conditions normalised, growth patterns stabilised, evidence that programme systems were sound and capable of absorbing scale.

Predictable growth signals institutional maturity. It indicates that planning, cohort management, host-site engagement and supervisory scaling are functioning cohesively.

Predictable growth strengthens credibility.
Credibility strengthens long-term funding viability.

Long-term viability enables multi-year commitments, deeper sector partnerships and more ambitious employment targets supporting sustained workforce integration rather than short-term absorption spikes.

Active Youth



Supervisory Capacity and Quality Assurance

Supervisory capacity expanded in direct proportion to programme growth:

- 320 supervisors in 2019
- 1,211 supervisors in 2025

Across the seven-year period, the youth-to-supervisor ratio averaged 2.14:1.

This ratio is lower than what is typically seen in large-scale youth employment initiatives, where rapid growth often dilutes oversight. youth@WORK has maintained a conservative supervisory structure even as volumes increased.

Supervisors are the primary interface between youth, small businesses and programme systems. They support attendance compliance, workplace integration, issue resolution and performance development. Maintaining strong oversight at scale reinforces delivery credibility, reduces placement risk and improves youth completion and workplace readiness.

Supervisory scaling has acted as a stabilising counterweight to growth, ensuring that support structures deepen rather than thin out.



Youth Earnings and Wage Investment (2019–2025)

Between 2019 and 2025,
youth@WORK facilitated over:

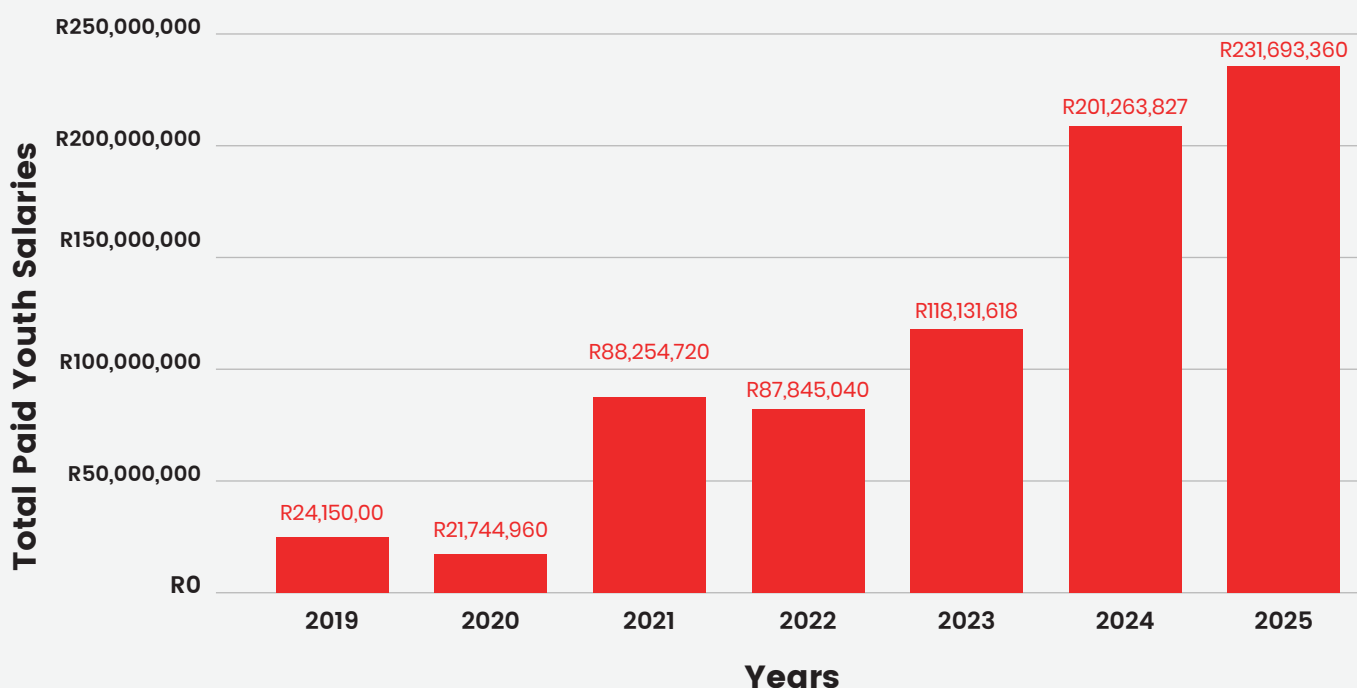
**R773 MILLION IN
YOUTH SALARIES**

Annual wage payouts increased:

**R24.1 MILLION IN 2019
R231.7 MILLION IN 2025**

This is structured economic injection into a demographic most excluded from formal income participation.

Total Paid Youth Salaries vs. Years



Household level: for many youth, this represents a first payslip, first contribution to household costs, first savings account and first credit footprint. Wages typically support multi-generational households and stabilise daily essentials.

Local economic level: youth earnings circulate rapidly through local businesses, transport networks and informal retail creating immediate multiplier effects.

National level: earned wages (not stipends detached from work) expand workforce participation and support labour market absorption. By enabling formal income tied to structured work, youth@WORK contributes to:

- Expanding the tax base
- Increasing formal workforce participation
- Strengthening labour market absorption pathways
- Reducing long-term dependency risk

Annual payouts grew nearly tenfold between 2019 and 2025, evidence of both scale and wage intensity.

Year-on-Year Payout Dynamics

Total salary payouts show greater volatility than individual wage growth, driven primarily by changes in programme scale:

- **A contraction in 2020 (-10%)** aligned with pandemic disruption
- **A sharp rebound in 2021 (+306%)** as placements expanded
- Continued strong growth through 2023–2025, including **70.4% in 2024 and 15.1% in 2025**

This pattern illustrates that while youth income growth is deliberately stabilised, overall wage investment responds dynamically to labour market demand and programme expansion.

Insight: dual impact

- Micro-level stability through predictable and improving youth earnings
- Macro-level scale through rapidly increasing wage investment as youth@WORK expanded

Together, these trends position youth@WORK as a significant contributor to household income stability, local economic circulation and financial inclusion.

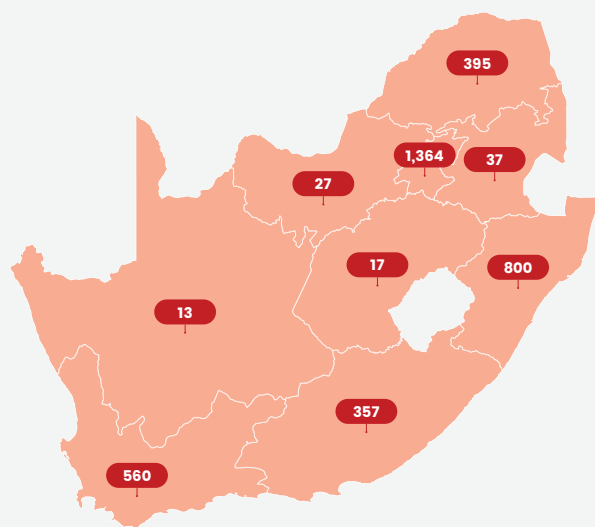


Geographic Reach and Provincial Distribution

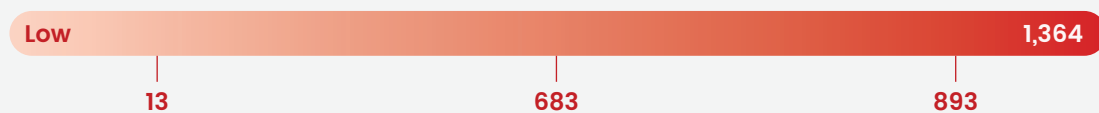
youth@WORK operates across all nine provinces, demonstrating national reach.

However, **75% of placements** are concentrated in three high-absorption regions, a strategic approach aligned with economic opportunity rather than uniform distribution. Gauteng accounts for **36% of placements**.

Provincial Distribution in South Africa (2019 – 2025)



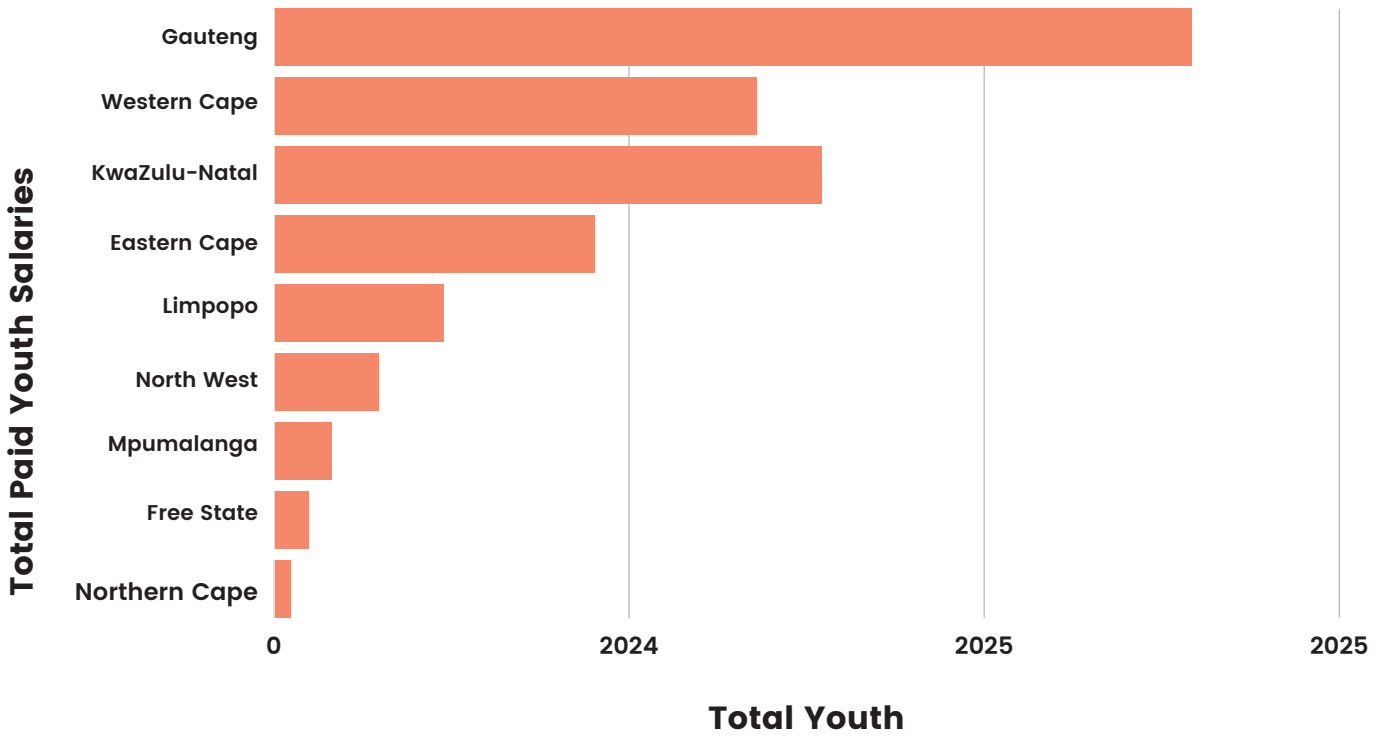
Provinces	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Gauteng	153	164	537	717	865	1,264	1,364
Western Cape	107	235	481	445	342	560	645
KwaZulu-Natal	217	53	583	179	455	715	800
Eastern Cape	16	9	14	133	395	542	713
Limpopo	82	12	181	249	101	197	115
North West	0	2	117	33	27	136	41
Mpumalanga	0	28	35	41	7	13	89
Free State	0	1	8	19	4	51	17
Northern Cape	0	0	0	5	30	25	13



The Eastern Cape emerged as the fastest growing province, representing 12.67% of placements in 2025, significant given the province's unemployment profile. This growth underscores the success of youth@WORK's strategy to expand opportunity in rural and underserved regions and reflects a deliberate focus on equitable distribution and regional development.

Geographic diversification strengthens resilience by reducing over-reliance on a single economic region while supporting workforce development across multiple labour markets.

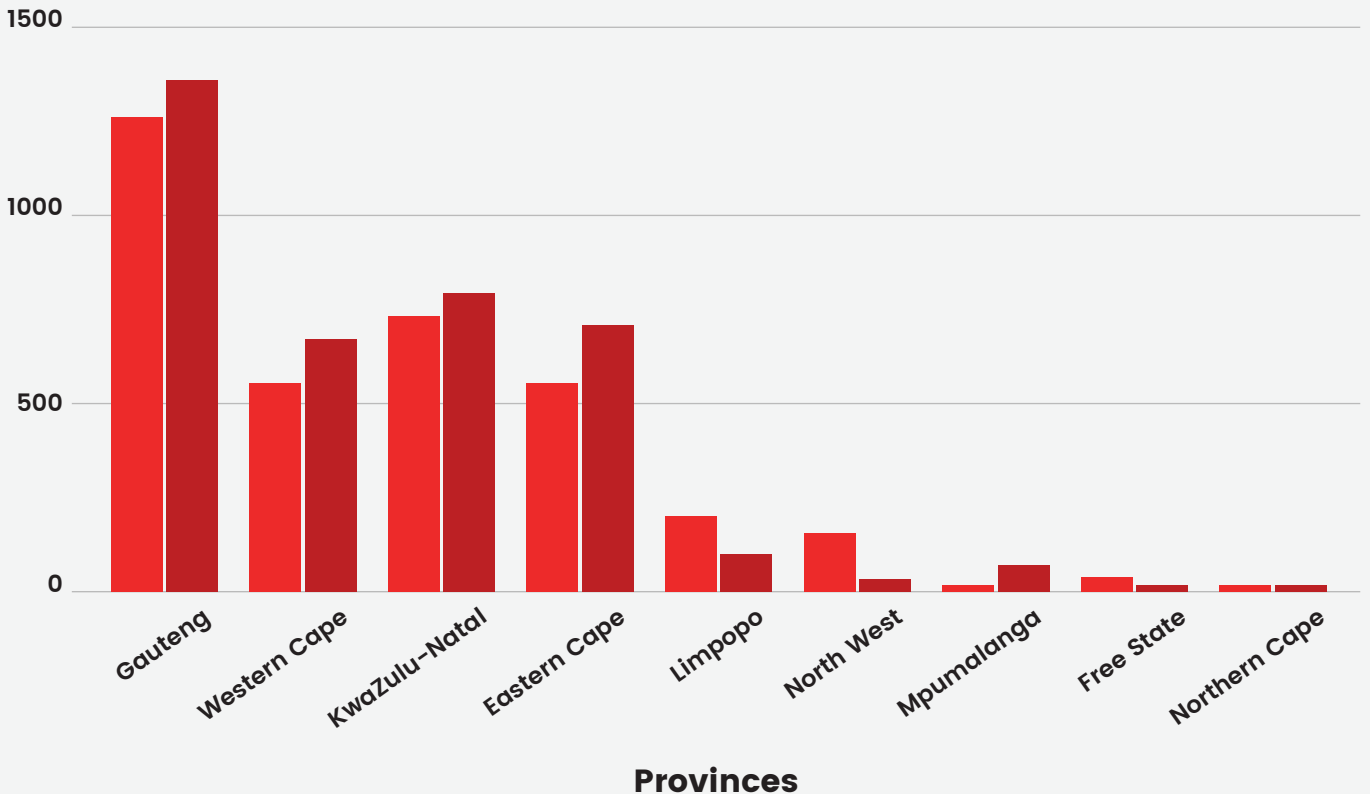
Total Youth vs. Provinces



In 2025, youth placements spanned a broad range of sectors, reinforcing the programme’s evolution from early concentration in education toward a multi-sector employment model aligned with economic recovery, industrialisation and digital transformation priorities.

2024 vs 2025 Geographical Distribution

■ 2024 ■ 2025



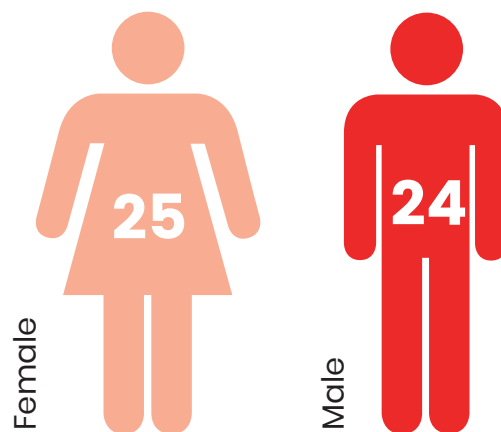
Gender Representation and Female Empowerment

Gender inclusivity is a defining feature of youth@WORK's delivery model.

61% of all participants are female. Female participation consistently exceeds male participation at an approximate ratio of 3:2. This reflects intentional programme design and placement alignment in recognition of the compounded barriers young women face in accessing formal employment.

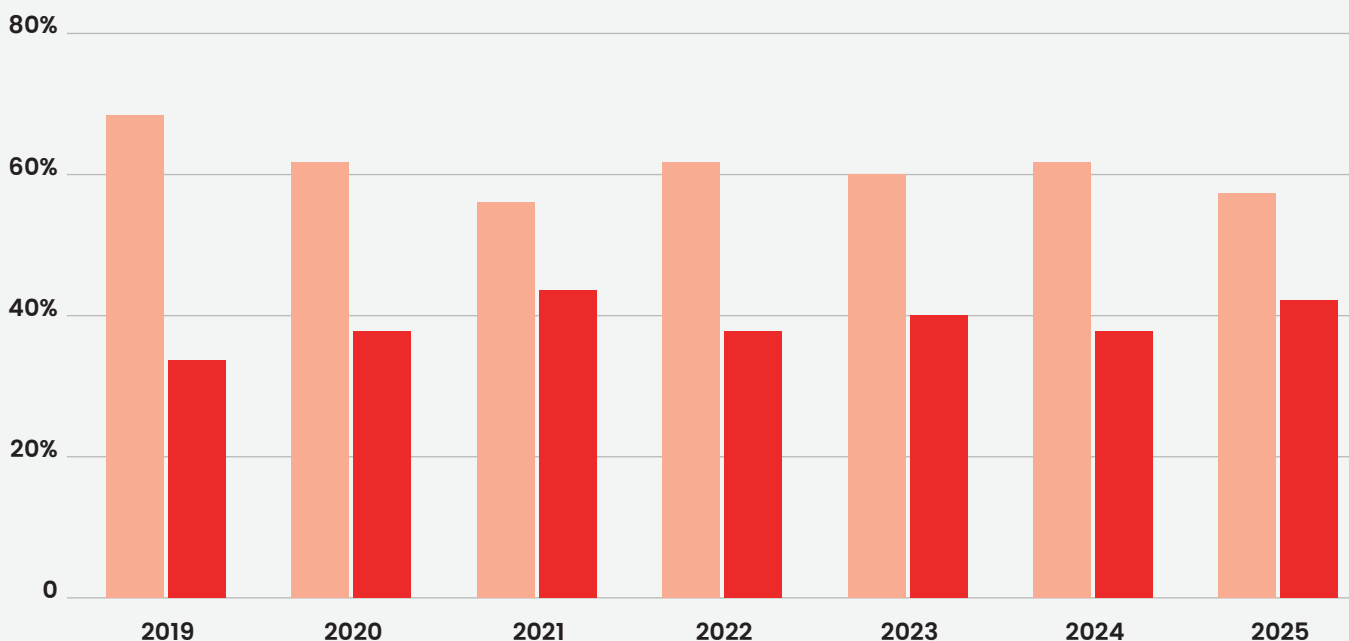
African females represent 53% of all participants - the single largest demographic group in the programme – directly targeting the intersection of race and gender exclusion.

Average age:



Youth Gender Representation

Female Male



youth@WORK also supports female leadership development through the **LeadHERship programme**, reinforcing not only workforce entry but long-term advancement potential.

Race Representation

African youth constitute the majority of participants, reflecting labour market exclusion patterns:

- African females: 53%
- African males: 34%

This means 87% of programme participants are African youth.

Other racial groups participate in smaller proportions. Their participation reflects youth@WORK's open-access model and inclusive design.

Race	Male	Female
African	84%	87%
Coloured	14%	12%
Indian	2%	1%
White	0%	0%



Insight

youth@WORK's focus on female empowerment – particularly among African youth – is transforming workforce participation patterns. While primarily serving African youth in line with national need, the programme remains inclusive across all races.



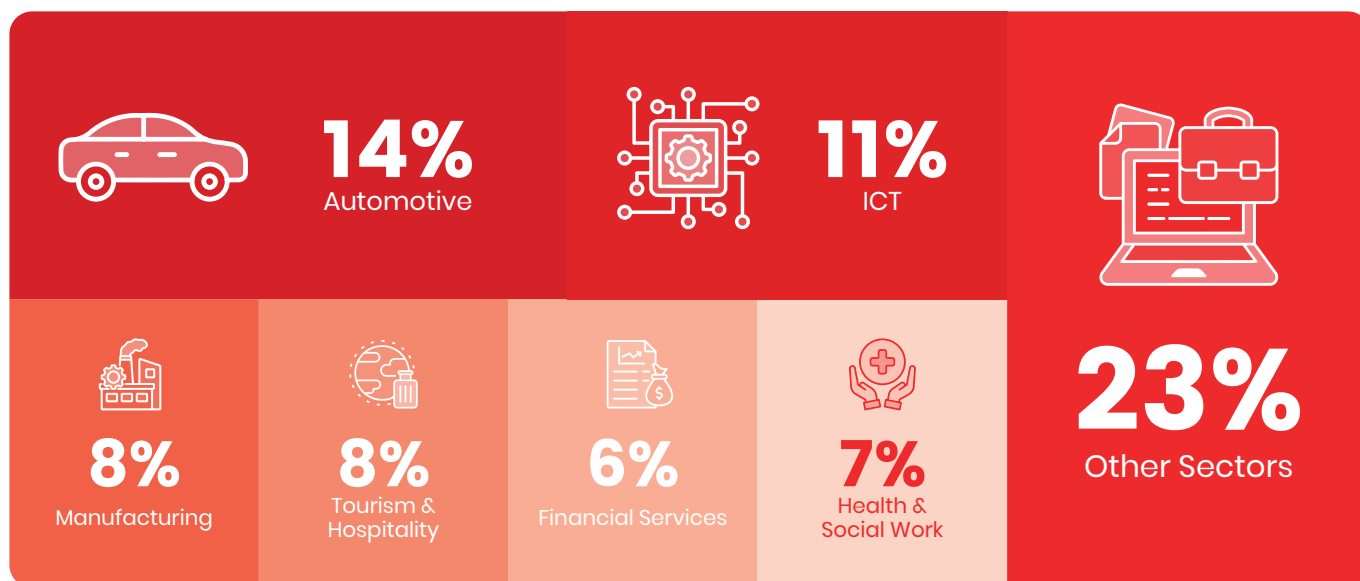
03



Sectoral Diversification (2019–2025)

Education accounted for 95% of youth placements in 2019.

By 2025, Education represented 15% – a structural shift.



Compared to 2024, 2025 shows a material shift toward productive, private-sector and skills-intensive industries, while maintaining participation in social-impact sectors. This indicates a balanced portfolio across social, industrial, service and digital economies, reducing reliance on any single sector.

Sectors	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Education	95%	75%	34%	26%	21%	15%	15%
Automotive	1%	0%	27%	12%	13%	14%	14%
Human, health and social work activities	0%	9%	9%	13%	11%	11%	7%
Information, communication and technology	0%	8%	9%	12%	12%	8%	11%
Financial and insurance activities	0%	1%	2%	4%	10%	11%	6%
Accommodation, food services activities and tourism	1%	2%	1%	4%	7%	11%	8%
Manufacturing	1%	1%	4%	7%	3%	6%	8%
Other service activities	0%	1%	6%	7%	2%	3%	5%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1%	1%	2%	3%	3%	4%	3%
Other	1%	1%	6%	11%	18%	18%	23%

Comparison with 2024: Structural Shift

In 2024, youth placements were heavily concentrated in a limited number of sectors, with significantly lower proportional representation across education, automotive, ICT and manufacturing.

Most sectors accounted for less than 2% each of total placements, reflecting a more fragmented and programme-driven allocation model.

By contrast, 2025 marks a clear structural shift:



Automotive + Manufacturing

now exceed 21%, aligning with industrial recovery and skills priorities



Education

rose to 15%, reflecting renewed investment in learning support roles



ICT

grew to over 10%, addressing digital skills shortages



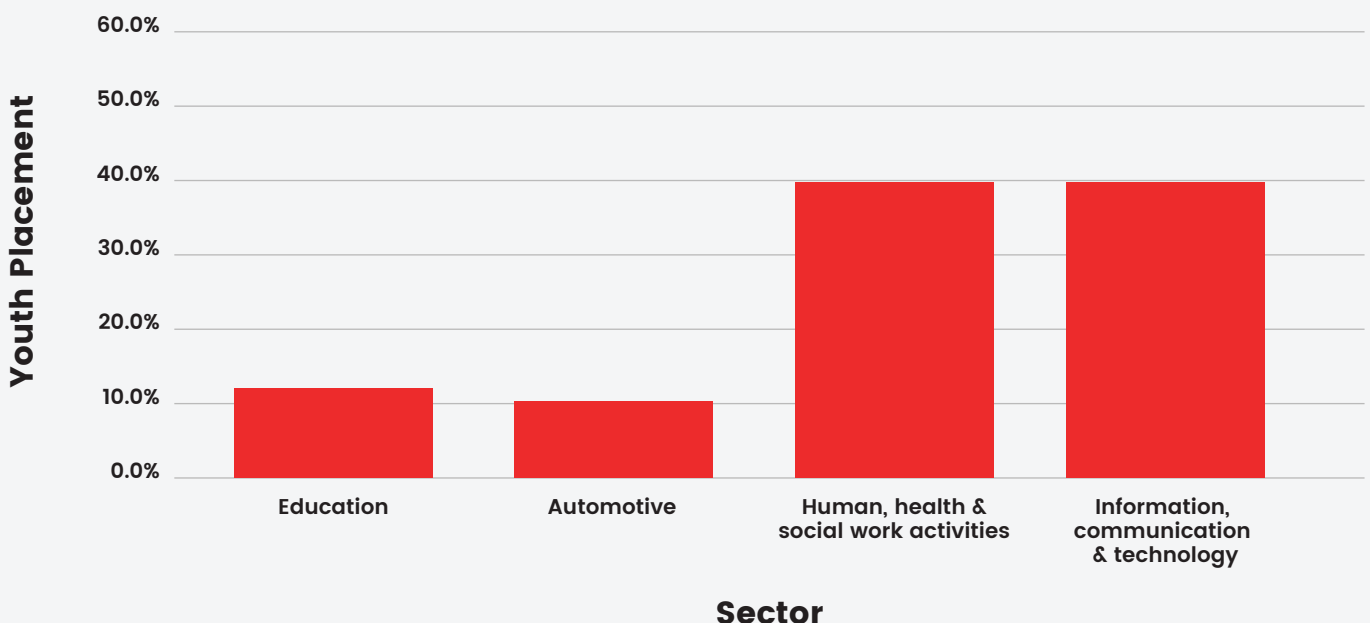
Tourism + Hospitality

expanded materially, reflecting post-pandemic recovery

Strategic Sectoral Insights

- Diversification reduces sector-specific risk
- Industrial alignment supports national industrialisation strategies
- Digital transition positions youth for future-facing industries
- Social impact continuity remains through Education and Health

2109 – 2025 Youth Placement vs. Sector





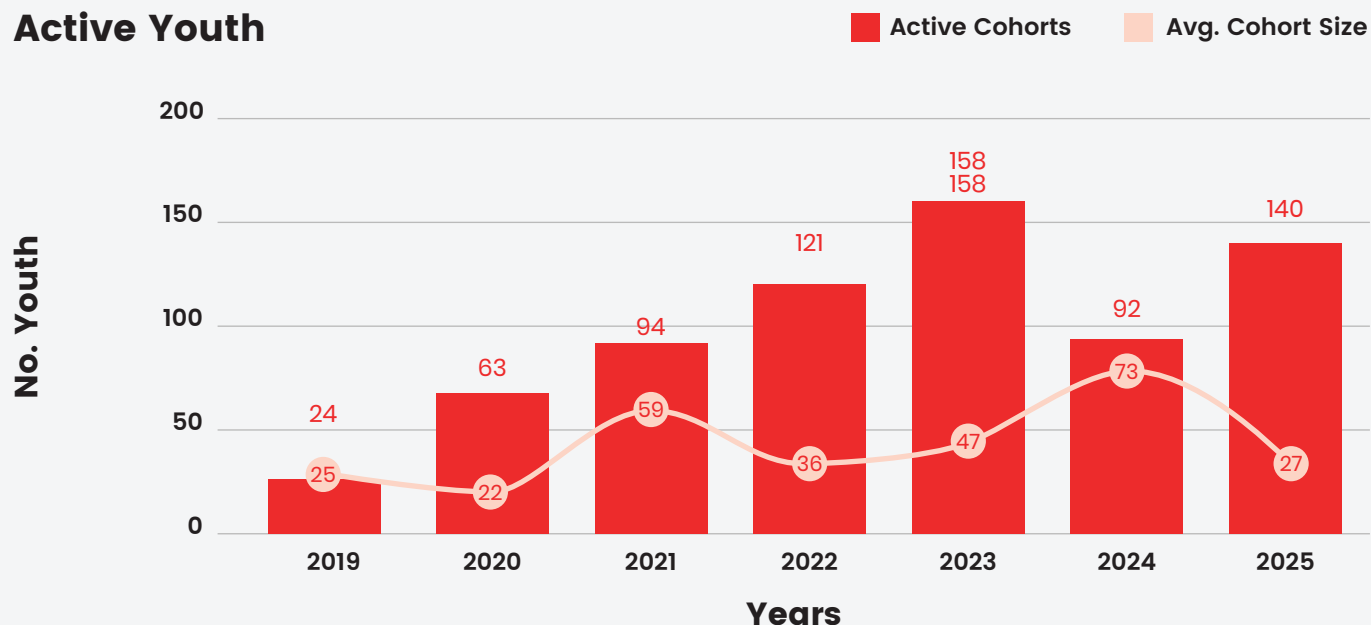
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Cohort Model, Retention and Funding Structure

youth@WORK implements a cohort-based model to manage youth across a 12-month programme cycle. Between 2019 and 2025, active cohorts grew from 25 (2019) to 140 (2025), reflecting demand and scalable delivery.

2024 was significant for cohort size and timing of starts, with onboarding concentrated in specific months. Despite this, stability was maintained.

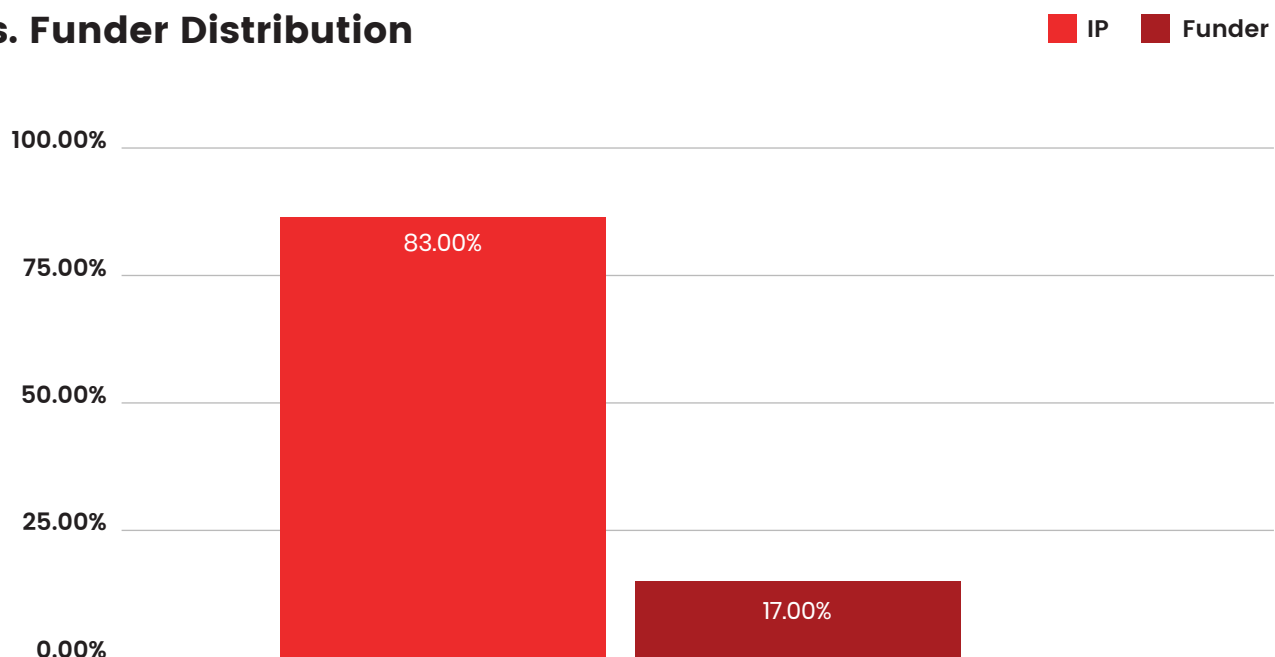
Active Youth



IP Payroll Model: the overwhelming majority of youth active in 2025 cohorts were supported through the IP payroll model. This indicates that 2025's scale was driven primarily through centralised payroll delivery, with funder paid cohorts playing a complementary but materially smaller role.

Centralised payroll supports compliance, streamlining, reduced fragmentation and scalable oversight.

IP vs. Funder Distribution



Retention is a core integrity indicator.

- **95.6% retention in 2025**
- **7-year average retention above 95%**

This is notable given the scale of the 2025 intake, concentrated start months and the presence of multiple funder-paid cohorts (historically lower utilisation).

2024 saw a temporary drop in retention to 92% due to rapid onboarding and new host sites. By 2025, retention stabilised at 95.6%, reinforcing resilience and operational discipline.



Years	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Avg. Cohort Retention Rate	99.1%	97.4%	93.8%	96%	90.4%	96.5%	95.6%



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

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

Average Cohorts per Funder and Average Youth per Funder (2019–2025)

Two indicators were analysed:

- Average cohorts per funder
- Average youth per funder - high-volume commitments

Average cohorts per funder ranged between ~1.0 and 2.7:

- 1.04 (2019)
- Peak 2.68 (2023)
- Drop 1.31 (2024)
- Recovery 1.97 (2025)

This reflects a shift toward fewer, larger cohorts per funder and engagement depth rather than breadth.

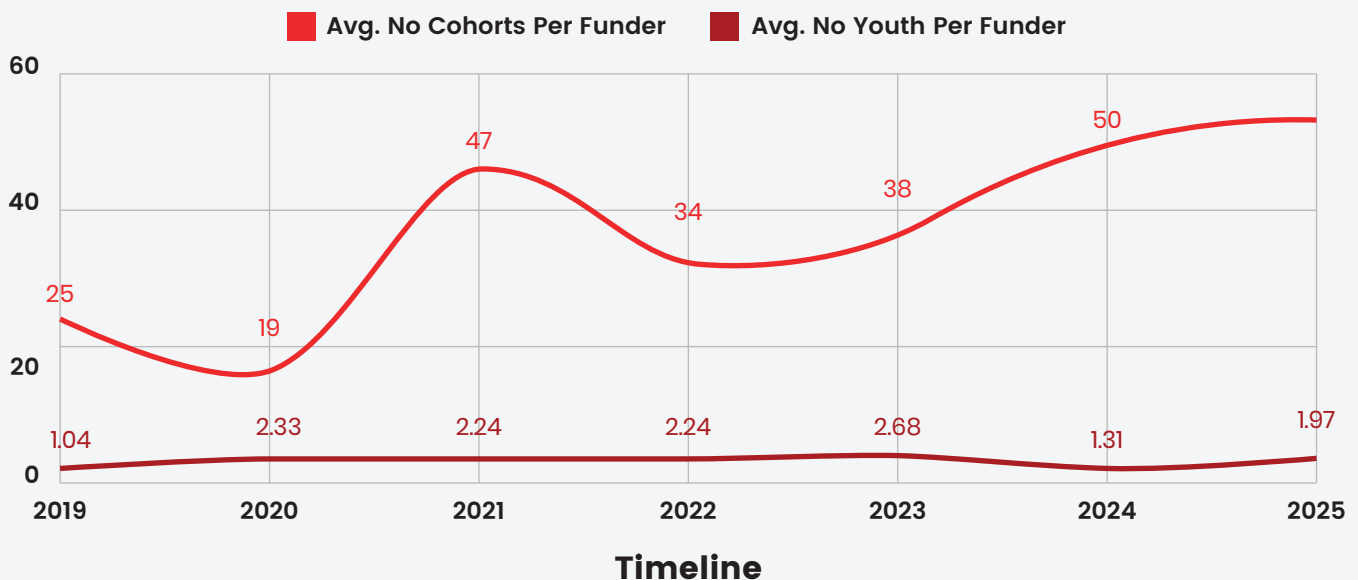
Combined interpretation

- Growth is driven by larger cohort sizes, not more cohorts per funder
- Funders are consolidating into fewer, higher-impact cohorts
- youth@WORK can absorb higher volumes per funder without proportional administrative expansion

Implications

- Depth-over-breadth funding improves predictability and reduces transaction costs
- Larger cohorts simplify oversight and strengthen scale efficiency
- This supports long-term agreements and strategic partnerships
- Growing youth per funder supports multi-year, high-volume commitments

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



Between 2019 and 2025, the number of active small businesses supporting youth@WORK **more than tripled**, reflecting strong post-pandemic recovery and sustained employer engagement. The expansion of the small business network underpins the programme's ability to scale youth placements while maintaining resilience and



05  

Small Businesses and Supervisors



Small Business Partnerships

Small businesses and supervisory support form the backbone of youth@WORK's delivery model.

The number of active small businesses **increased from 284 in 2019 to 977 in 2025**, representing more than a three-fold expansion over the period. Despite short-term volatility, the underlying trend is one of consistent and accelerating growth, as reflected in the sustained upward trajectory across the timeframe.

While 2020 shows a contraction to 244 small businesses, this aligns with the broader economic disruption experienced during the COVID-19 period. The recovery in 2021 was both rapid and substantial, with small businesses increasing to 565, indicating strong re-engagement from employers and hosting partners once operating conditions stabilised.

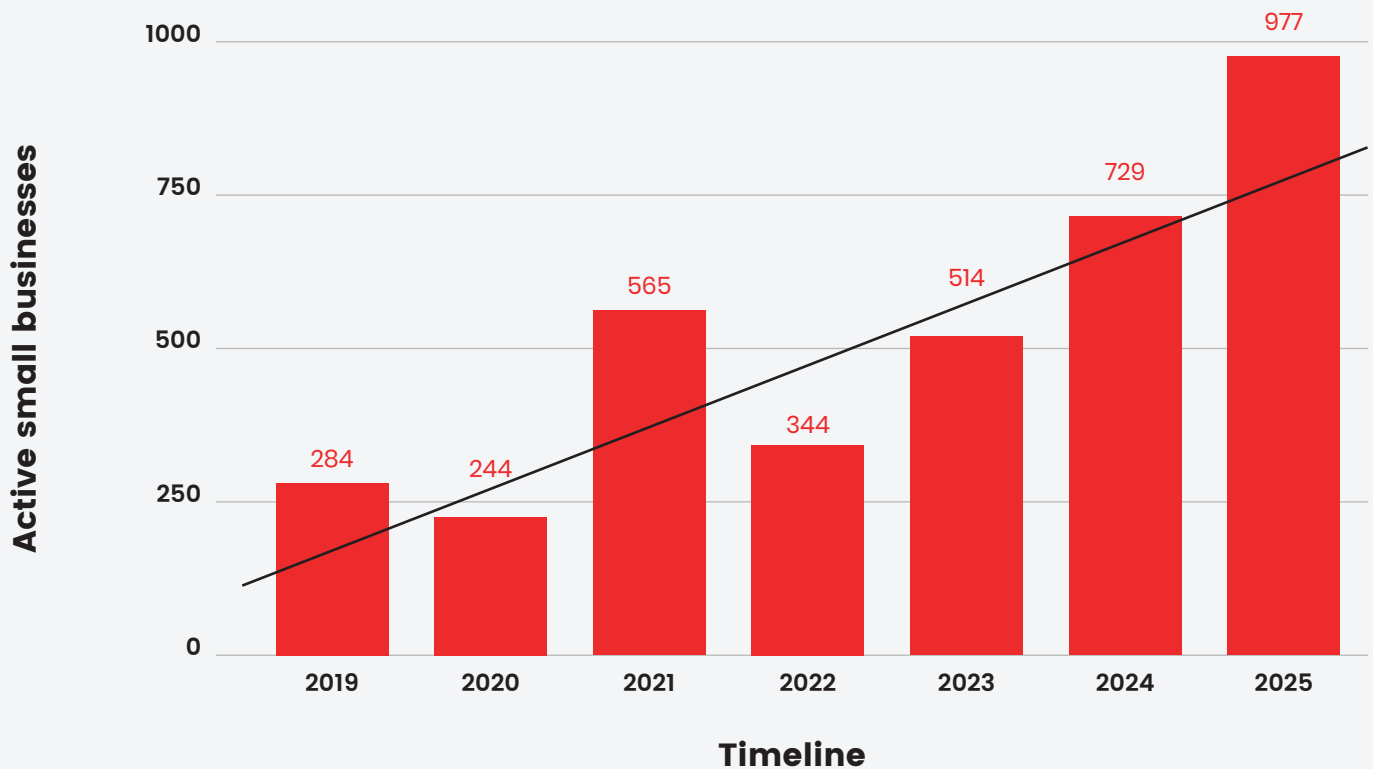
Post-Pandemic Expansion and Consolidation

Following a temporary dip in 2022 (344 small businesses), the programme entered a sustained expansion phase:

- **2023: 514 small businesses**
- **2024: 729 small businesses**
- **2025: 977 small businesses**

This pattern suggests that youth@WORK has moved beyond recovery into structural expansion, with host-site growth becoming increasingly embedded rather than episodic.

Active Small Businesses



Insight

The sustained increase in active small businesses indicates that programme growth is not driven solely by a small number of large employers, but by a broadening base of participating small businesses.

This diversification strengthens resilience and reduces dependency on individual host sites, while expanding geographic and sectoral reach.

The data also signals growing employer confidence in the programme's ability to place, support and manage youth effectively at scale. Host sites are returning and expanding participation, rather than cycling in and out, a key indicator of delivery credibility.

Implications for Industry and Funders

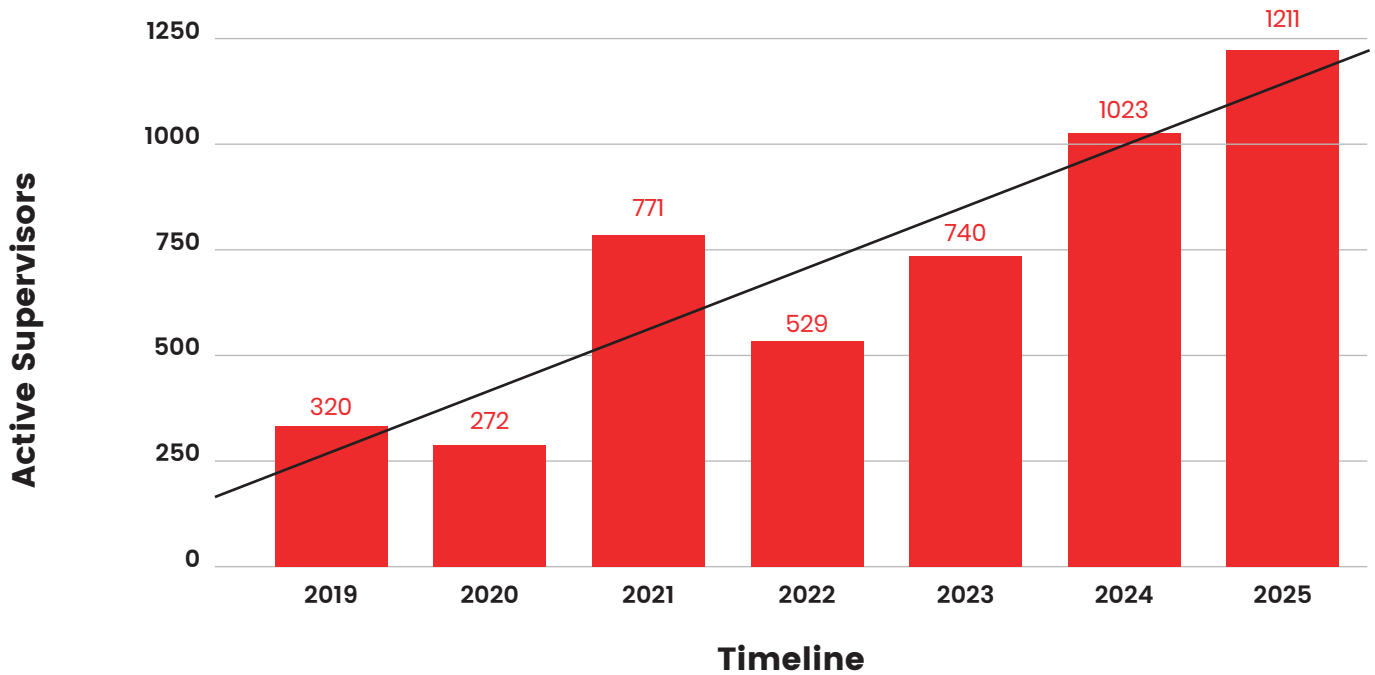
- The rapid growth in host sites demonstrates a deepening demand-side pipeline – a critical constraint in youth employment programmes.
- A larger and more diversified host-site network improves placement flexibility and reduces systemic risk.
- The expansion supports higher youth intake without over-reliance on any single sector or employer.
- This trend positions youth@WORK as a platform level intermediary in the labour market, rather than a narrow placement initiative.

Supervisors

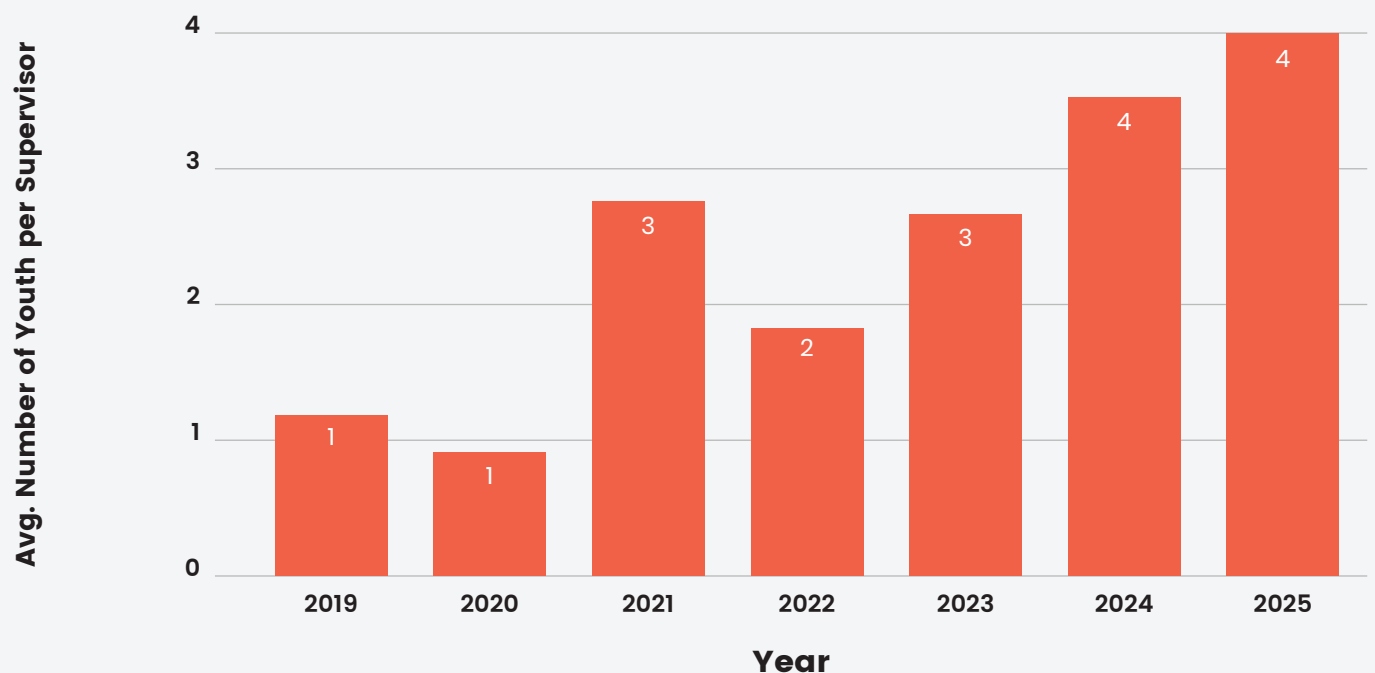
By 2025 there were 1,211 active supervisors, up from 320 in 2019. The youth-to-supervisor ratio shifted from 1:1 in 2024, reflecting increased responsibility at scale while remaining within structured oversight thresholds.

Supervisors support attendance, integration, early issue resolution, accountability, skills development and professional conduct. Supervisory depth strengthens retention, reduces placement risk and safeguards quality as the programme scales.

Active Supervisors



Avg. Number of Youth Per Supervisor vs. Year





06

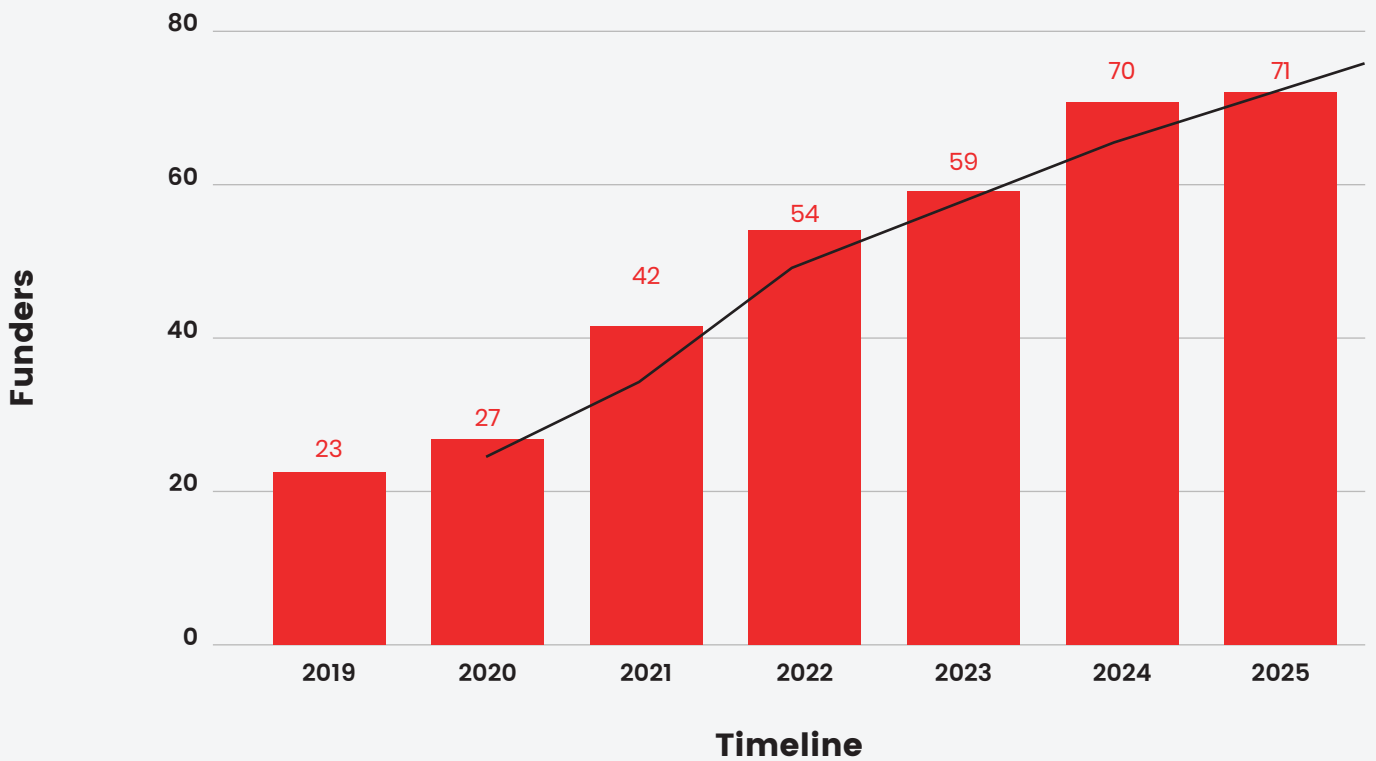


Funders

To date, youth@WORK has engaged **over 130 active funders**. Active funders increased from **23 (2019) to 71 (2025)**, signalling growing recognition of effectiveness and governance maturity.

Growth reflects alignment with national workforce priorities and increasing engagement from diverse industries. Participation trends suggest deeper and more strategic engagement over time.

Active Funders



Funder Sector Focus

While youth placements align closely with immediate workforce needs, funder investment patterns reveal a deliberate forward-looking strategy. Funders are not only responding to current labour absorption demand, they are actively shaping longer-term growth sectors.

Key areas of strategic emphasis include:

ICT SECTOR

Investment in ICT aligns with global digital transformation trends and South Africa's technology transition priorities. This ensures youth are equipped with critical technical and digital skills required for participation in a tech-driven economy.

GREEN ENERGY

Although youth placements in this sector are currently limited, funder support highlights a strategic focus on sustainability, energy transition and innovation. This positions youth@WORK to align with future energy infrastructure and climate-aligned industries.

TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

As a significant contributor to South Africa's GDP, tourism offers strong labour absorption potential. Funder investment in this sector supports sustainable employment creation, enhances service delivery standards, and strengthens the country's global tourism competitiveness.

FUTURE-FACING JOBS

Emerging career pathways such as drone pilots and bee-keepers represent innovative, adaptive employment models. Drone technology is transforming industries including agriculture, logistics and surveillance, while sustainable bee-keeping supports biodiversity and the global food supply chain. Although currently limited in volume, investment in these roles ensures long-term employment viability and economic adaptability.

This alignment reflects strategic foresight rather than reactive funding.

By aligning youth placements with immediate workforce needs and directing funder investment toward emerging and growth-focused sectors, youth@WORK delivers a dual impact:

SHORT-TERM GAINS

Addressing unemployment, increasing workforce readiness and enabling immediate income participation.

LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

Preparing youth for future industries, strengthening sectoral pipelines and supporting broader economic resilience.

This balance reinforces youth@WORK's relevance across both current labour market pressures and long-term structural economic transition.

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

Relationship Insight

The relationship between funders and cohorts has evolved significantly over the reporting period, revealing important shifts in engagement patterns and resource allocation.

Two core dynamics illustrate this evolution:

1. Cohort per Funder Trends

The average number of cohorts per funder peaked at **2.68 in 2023**, before decreasing to **1.31 in 2024**, and stabilising thereafter. This shift reflects a move toward fewer but more concentrated funding commitments.

This change does not indicate contraction. It indicates consolidation. Rather than distributing support across multiple smaller cohorts, funders are increasingly concentrating their investment into larger, higher-impact structures. This suggests growing confidence in youth@WORK's ability to absorb scale efficiently and deliver measurable outcomes within defined governance systems.

The movement from multiple dispersed cohorts to fewer consolidated cohorts signals maturation in the funder delivery relationship.





2. Cohort Size and Resource Deployment

Working with funder-specific requirements often necessitates increased resource deployment by youth@WORK within a particular location, sector or industry.

Larger cohorts enable youth@WORK to:

- Develop subject matter expertise within targeted industries
- Build deeper sector focus
- Strengthen local employer relationships
- Enhance community engagement
- Improve operational predictability

In concentrated cohorts, resources are not spread thinly across fragmented engagements. Instead, delivery teams can embed more meaningfully within host-site environments, strengthen oversight and align placements more precisely with workforce pipelines.

This structure improves programme efficiency while reinforcing quality.

Strategic Meaning

Taken together, these trends reveal a structural shift in funding architecture.

- Engagement is becoming deeper rather than broader.
- Scale is increasingly achieved through larger cohort mobilisation rather than proliferation of small engagements.
- Funders are scaling within a proven model rather than experimenting across multiple small interventions.

This evolution reflects increased trust in youth@WORK's governance maturity, operational discipline and outcome reliability.

It positions youth@WORK not simply as a placement implementer, but as a structured employment intermediary capable of managing concentrated, high-volume delivery responsibly and predictably.



07



2026 Forecast Credibility

Forecast in Context

1,764

ACTIVE YOUTH

Historical annual average
(2019–2025)

3,812

ACTIVE YOUTH

2025 actual

4,000

ACTIVE YOUTH

2026 forecast

51%

APPROXIMATELY

Implied year-on-year
growth

At face value, the 2026 forecast represents a substantial increase in active youth participation. However, when contextualised within historical performance and observed growth dynamics, the projection aligns closely with established trends rather than representing an outlier.

The forecast reflects continuation of an established growth trajectory, not an abrupt acceleration.

Alignment with Historical Growth Patterns

The forecasted growth rate mirrors the programme's long-term average year-on-year expansion and is consistent with post-COVID scaling behaviour.

Crucially, recent growth has been achieved from an already elevated base. Scaling from a low starting point is fundamentally different from scaling at maturity. The fact that youth@WORK expanded to 3,812 active youth in 2025 – and continued to demonstrate absorption capacity – indicates that expansion has not plateaued as scale increased.

This is a critical signal of institutional maturity.

Additionally, supervisory expansion, host-site growth and administrative scaling over recent years demonstrate that growth is no longer constrained by internal capacity. The systems that supported 3,800+ active youth in 2025 provide a credible and proven operational foundation for further expansion.

Growth is therefore being projected on strengthened infrastructure, not on untested assumptions.



LEADERSHIP

youth
@work

yes
with intention
counts

YCC
Youth Career
Collection

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Operational and Funding Considerations

The credibility of the 2026 projection is further strengthened when anchored to tangible pipeline indicators:

- Confirmed or renewed funding commitments
- Advanced pipeline cohorts
- Existing delivery partnerships

Under these conditions, the forecast reflects planned expansion – not aspirational modelling.

It represents structured mobilisation based on demonstrated conversion rates, absorption capacity and operational readiness.

Insight

The 2026 forecast is ambitious but defensible. It is grounded in:

- Historical performance consistency
- Operational maturity
- Demonstrated scaling capability
- Strengthened supervisory and administrative systems

With appropriate pipeline confirmation and funder continuity, youth@WORK is well positioned to meet, and potentially exceed, the 2026 projection.

More importantly, this trajectory reinforces youth@WORK's status as scalable employment infrastructure, capable of sustained expansion, rather than a time-bound intervention dependent on episodic funding cycles.


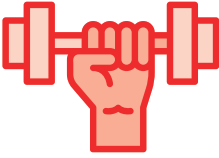
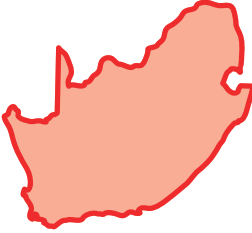








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Key Takeaways

 <p>14,397 YOUTH placed since 2019</p>	 <p>STRONG SUPERVISORY scaling safeguards quality and compliance</p>	 <p>NATIONAL REACH with strategic concentration in high-absorption regions</p>	
 <p>SUSTAINED GROWTH after COVID contraction</p>	 <p>R 773 mil wage facilitation (2019-2025)</p>		 <p>Positioned to exceed 5,700 active youth in 2026 under structured expansion</p>
 <p>DIVERSIFIED SECTOR portfolio aligned to industrialisation and digital transition</p>			

Strategic Positioning Statement

youth@WORK has matured into nationally relevant employment infrastructure, capable of mobilising participation at scale while maintaining governance integrity, supervisory discipline and sectoral diversification. Its trajectory supports long-term investment partnerships and integration into broader labour-market and economic development strategies.





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Conclusion

The 2025 reporting year marks a defining inflection point in the evolution of youth@WORK.

What began as a targeted intervention has matured into nationally relevant employment infrastructure capable of mobilising youth participation at scale while maintaining governance integrity, quality assurance and measurable economic impact.

Key Highlights:

- **14,397 young people** placed into structured work opportunities since 2019
- **3,812 active youth** supported in 2025 alone
- **563% growth** since inception
- **R773 million** in facilitated youth wages (2019–2025)
- **95.6% retention** rate in 2025
- **977 active** small businesses
- **1,211 supervisors** safeguarding delivery quality
- **71 active funders** in 2025
- **National reach** across all nine provinces
- **Diversified placements** across education, automotive, manufacturing, ICT, tourism, financial services and health

This growth has not been opportunistic. It reflects deliberate investment in delivery architecture: structured cohorts, centralised payroll systems, supervisory scaling, host-site expansion and data-led governance.

Critically, 2025 was defined by diversification rather than dependency. The decline in education dominance and the rise of productive, skills-intensive sectors signal a structurally stronger and more resilient portfolio aligned with South Africa's industrialisation and digital transition priorities.

Operational performance reinforces this maturity. A 95.6% retention rate confirms that youth are not only placed, they remain engaged and supported. Supervisory and small business capacity expanded in parallel with intake, ensuring that scale did not compromise oversight or compliance. Demand-side growth to 977 small businesses demonstrates deepening employer confidence, one of the most significant structural constraints in youth employment systems.



From a funding perspective, engagement with 71 active funders, alongside increasing average youth per funder, reflects consolidation into fewer, larger and higher-impact partnerships. This signals trust in governance maturity, delivery reliability and outcome credibility.

Looking forward, the 2026 forecast of approximately 5,758 active youth represents an implied year-on-year growth of 51%. Based on historical growth performance, demonstrated scaling capacity and maturing funding architecture, this projection is ambitious but defensible.

The question is no longer whether youth@WORK can scale. The data confirms that it can.

The strategic imperative now is sustaining scale with discipline — deepening sector alignment, strengthening inclusion (including more systematic integration of youth with disabilities), expanding employer ecosystems, and converting placements into durable workforce pathways.

For investors, funders and policy partners, youth@WORK represents structured, scalable employment infrastructure, not a cyclical intervention. It is positioned to support multi-year funding partnerships and integration into broader labour-market strategies.

youth@WORK's journey demonstrates what becomes possible when governance, partnership and economic intent converge.

The next phase is about compounding that impact, expanding opportunity, strengthening economic participation and ensuring that South Africa's youth are not only placed into work, but positioned to contribute meaningfully to long-term national growth.





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**Tech and
Reporting**



The precision and depth of this report are enabled by youth@WORK's integrated data systems and disciplined reporting architecture.

All programme data is managed through youth@WORK's proprietary CoRE LMS (Centralised Operational Reporting Engine) built for structured oversight, stakeholder coordination and real-time visibility.

For questions relating to data accuracy, reporting methodology or verification: yawit@sayouthatwork.com

CORE LMS enables:

- Youth lifecycle management
- Funder, partner and supervisor management
- Cohort creation and tracking
- Real-time reporting and dashboards
- Attendance monitoring and compliance oversight

CoRE LMS is available for use by other organisations.
For system-related inquiries:
yawit@sayouthatwork.com

AI-enabled processing

youth@WORK leverages UPLOADER.africa, an AI-powered tool used for scanning, validation and analysis of youth-related documentation and reporting inputs.

Website: UPLOADER.africa

youth@WORK's investment in proprietary systems and AI-enabled tools supports institutional maturity, strengthens funder confidence, improves predictability, and protects data integrity as the programme scales.

