

Box 5.2

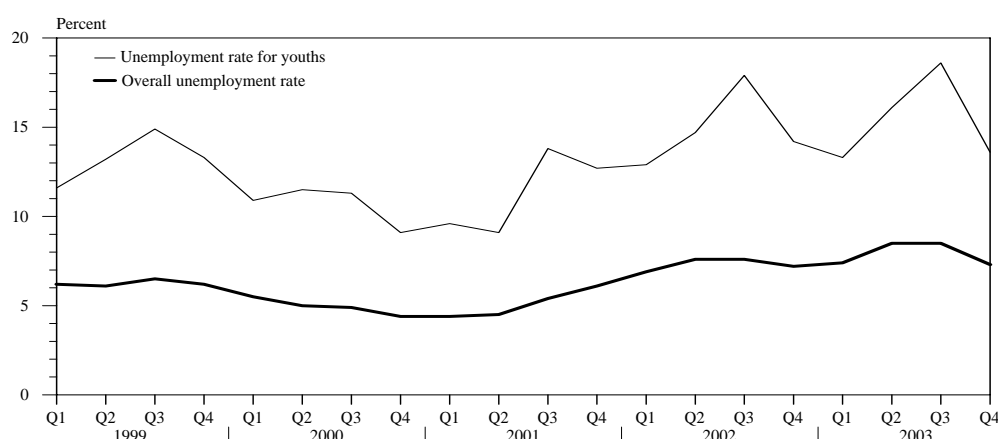
Youth unemployment

The unemployment rate for youths has been consistently higher than that for the entire labour force. For the period 1999-2003, the unemployment rate for youths (defined to cover persons aged 15-24) averaged at 13.0%, distinctly exceeding the overall unemployment rate at 6.3%. Within this particular age group, the unemployment rate for persons aged 15-19, averaged at 26.9%, was much higher than that for persons aged 20-24, averaged at 9.8%.

Lack of practical or working experience was seen as a major factor leading to a higher unemployment rate for youths. For those at the younger age of 15-19, lower educational attainment was also a pertinent factor. As some of the youths might pursue education and seek part-time or temporary employment at the same time, this would impose greater constraint on their job seeking especially in a slack labour market.

Between 1999 and 2003, the unemployment rate for youths went up appreciably, from 13.3% to 15.0%. This was attributable entirely to a reduction in youth employment by 13.5% over the period, more than offsetting a contraction in the respective labour force by 11.6% upon an increase in the school attendance rate. For 2003 as a whole, the number of unemployed youths averaged at 58 700, equivalent to 21.1% of the total unemployment.

Unemployment rate for youths, 1999-2003



Note : All figures depicted in this diagram are not seasonally adjusted.

Analysed by sex, youth unemployment was more marked for males than for females. In 2003, the unemployment rate for the former group averaged at 18.6%, much higher than that for the latter group at 11.4%.

Analysed by educational attainment, the unemployment rate for youths with lower secondary education and below averaged at 21.3% in 2003, way above that for youths with upper secondary education and above, at 13.7%, as well as that for youths with tertiary education, at 10.4%.

In 2003, about a quarter of the unemployed youths comprised first-time job seekers. For those unemployed youths with a previous job, more than half were previously engaged as service workers and shop sales workers and as workers in elementary occupations, mostly in the distributive and catering trades and in community, social and personal services. Only about 10% of them were formerly engaged in higher-skill jobs, including managers and administrators, professionals and associate professionals.

The median duration of unemployment for the unemployed youths in 2003 was 77 days, shorter than that of 88 days for all the unemployed persons.