

In fact

Unlock the power of data for social change

Issue III / July - September 2025

‘**In Fact**’ is a quarterly newsletter by ISDM DataShakti. ISDM DataShakti, powered by Capgemini, is a pioneering single-window SDG data platform that makes SDG data easily accessible to social sector professionals like you, so you can focus on creating change on the ground.

A Story in Numbers

An Urgent Call for Digital Literacy

By: Siddharth Dhote

In 2023, almost half of the world’s youth (defined as those in the age group 15-24^[1]) were in school or training. In India, the share of youth (ages 15 to 29 according to the ^[2] [National Youth Policy 2014](#)) in secondary and higher education rose from about one-fourth in the year 2000 to over half in 2024 (Fig. 1). However, rising enrolment does not guarantee quality^[3]. As we marked International Literacy Day on September 8 with the theme 'Promoting literacy in the digital era', we need to see whether this participation translates into digital skills and decent employment.

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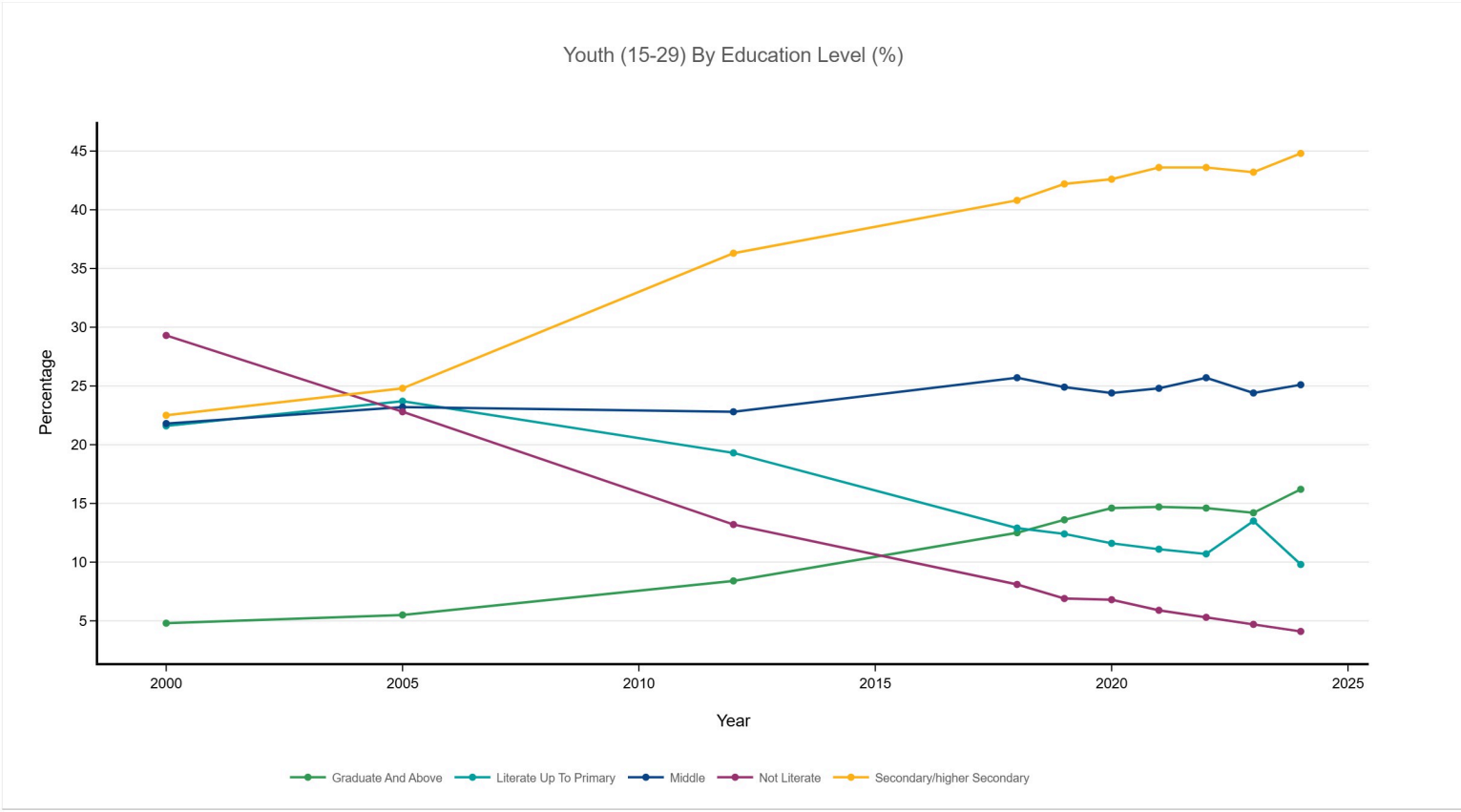


Fig 1: Percentage of youth by education level

Gaps in digital literacy

The Comprehensive Annual Modular Survey (CAMS) by the National Statistical Office (NSO), finds that fewer than one-third of youth can perform basic internet tasks such as searching, emailing, and online transactions simultaneously^[4]. The CAMS survey also highlights other critical gaps (Fig 2):

- only two-fifth of youth could install and configure software and apps
- only one-third could transfer files and documents between devices
- only one-fifth could set up security measures to protect devices
- only 15% could use arithmetic formulas in Microsoft Excel
- only one-tenth could create presentations, and
- only 1.5% were able to code using any programming language to develop web and mobile-based apps.

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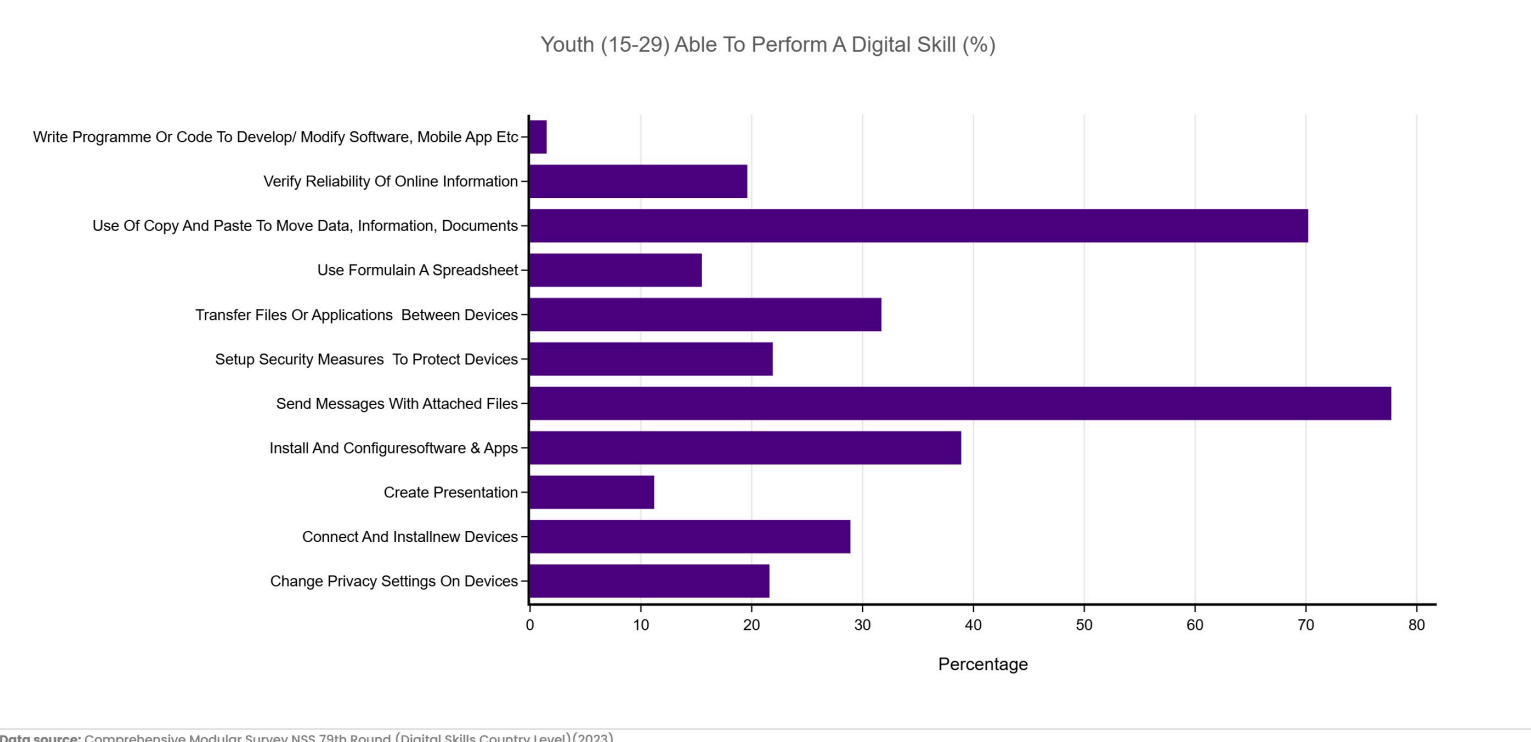


Fig 2: Percentage of youth able to perform a particular digital skill

Employment challenges

In 2024, nearly one-fourth of graduates and one-tenth of those with secondary/higher secondary education were unemployed (UPSS^[5]) (Fig. 3).

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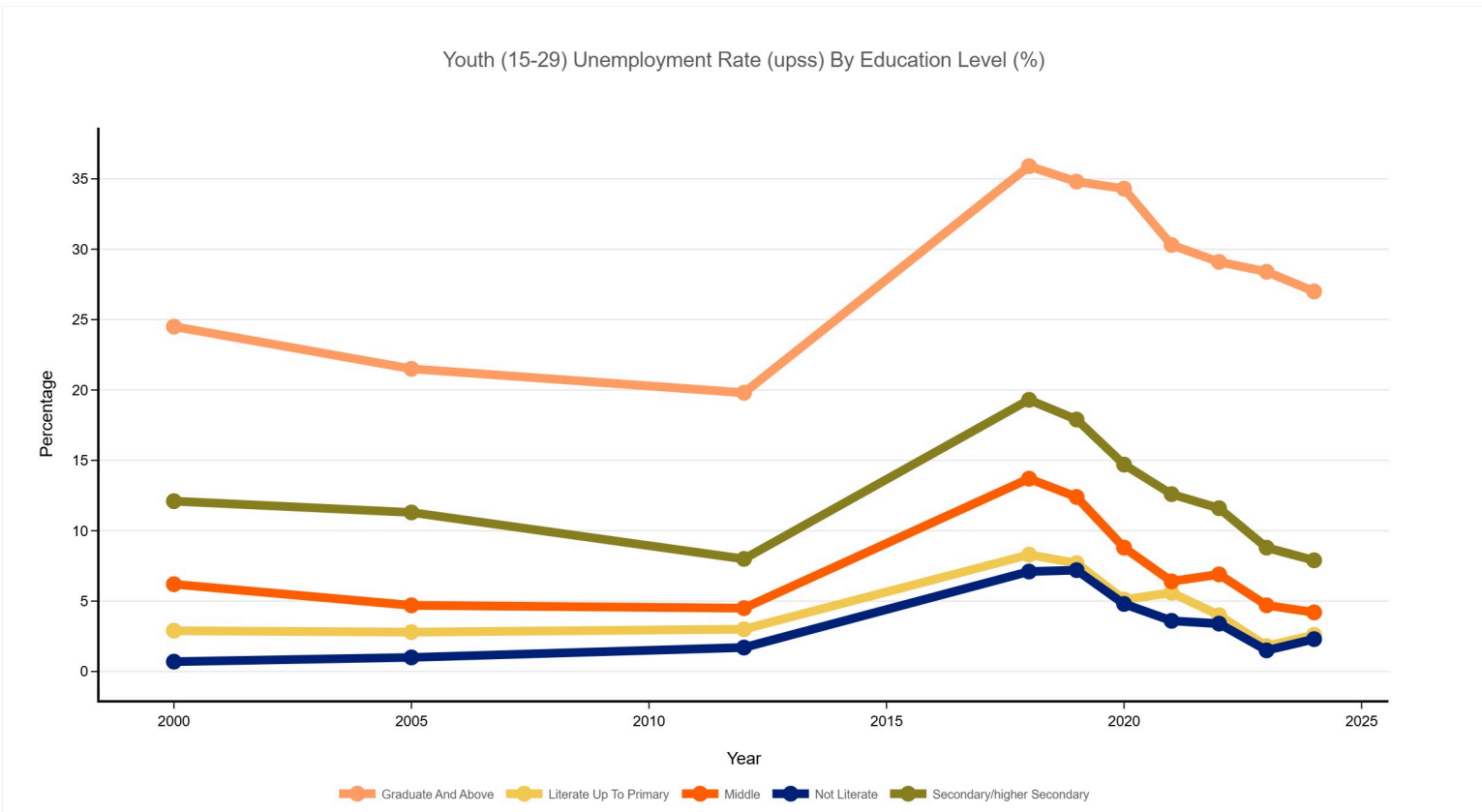
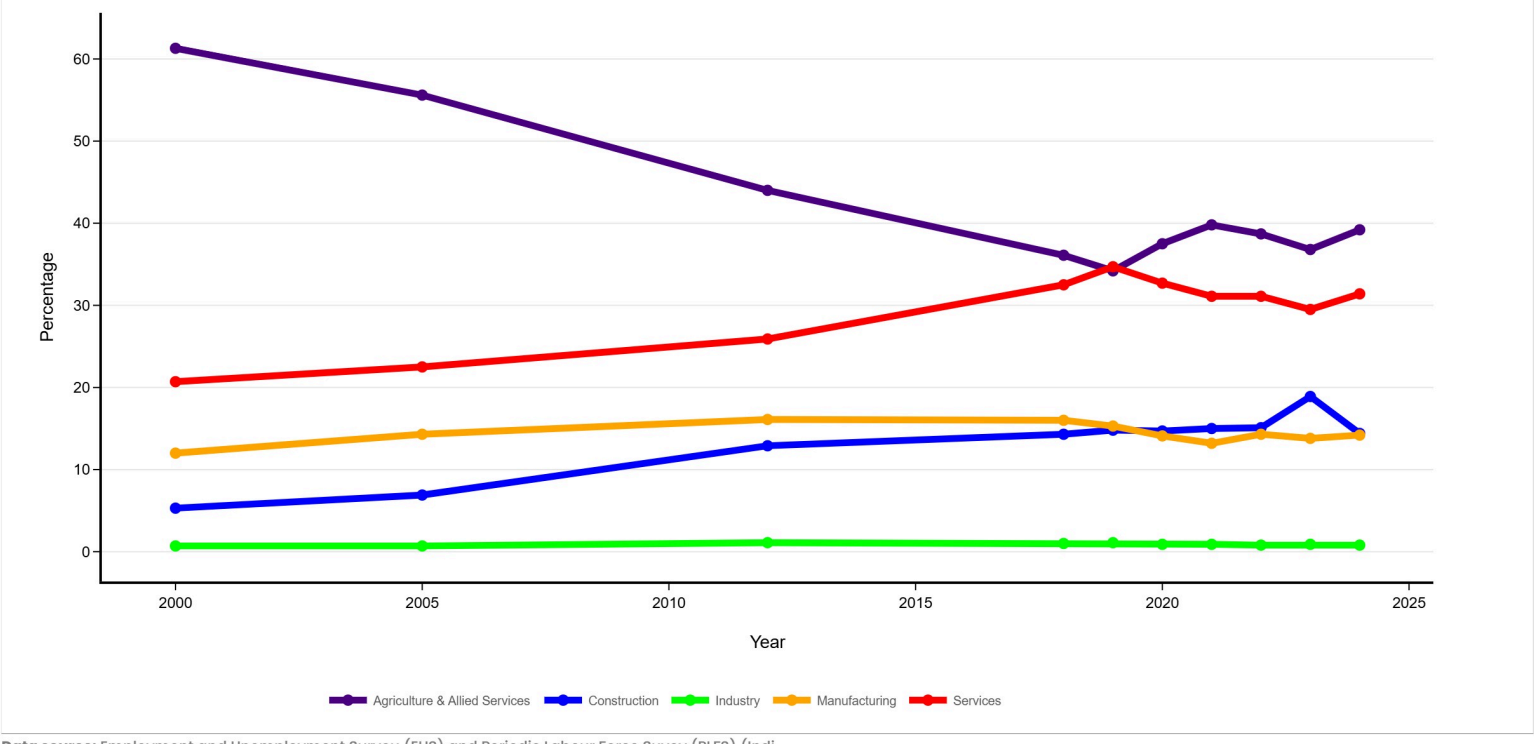


Fig 3: Youth Unemployment Rate (UPSS) by education level (%)

The rapid digital shift risks widening exclusion for those without digital literacy^[6]. India, which has the largest youth population^[7], faces the twin challenge of creating decent jobs and scaling digital skills^[8]. The supply of graduates is also outpacing growth in high-skill jobs, leaving many young people overqualified for the roles they find^[9].

The trend shows in sectoral patterns: about two-fifths of youth work in agriculture. Non-farm employment rose until 2019, then reversed in 2020, with construction and agriculture absorbing more youth as last-resort employers^[10] (Fig. 4).

Youth (15-29) Employed In Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction, Industry, & Services (upss) (%)



Data source: Employment and Unemployment Surveu (EUS) and Periodic Labour Force Suvey (PLFS) (Indi a Level by Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction, Industry, and Services)(2000,2005,2012,2018,2019,202 0,2021,2022,2023,2024)

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Fig 4: Youth Employment by industry (UPSS)

A path forward

Beyond these employment challenges, the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents another concern. The effect of AI on employment will depend on the degree to which AI complements—rather than replaces—human skills^[11].

We need to improve education quality, expand skill training, and create employment pathways. Internet use and basic tool mastery are now essential^[12]. AI-readiness calls for stronger capabilities in critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, emotional intelligence, and digital literacy. Building and maintaining data-centre and cloud infrastructure will also require targeted skills^[11].

Education systems will have to be revamped by integrating AI and data science modules in the curriculum, to ensure that youth is future-ready^[13]. Workers will need to develop skills to work effectively with AI, such as data analysis, problem-solving, and critical thinking^[13]. Youth participation can be promoted in these skill development programs with placement assistance^[13].

With the right measures, India can turn its youth dividend into broad-based economic and social gains.

How You Can Do This With ISDM DataShakti

Steps to generate **Figure 1 Youth (15-29) By Education Level (%)**:

1. Select ‘Advanced Search’. In Advanced Search, select ‘SDG-wise’. From the SDG dropdown, select ‘SDG 8’. From the Indicators dropdown list, select ‘Youth (15-29) By Education Level (%)’. From ‘Granularity’ dropdown, select ‘Country’. Click ‘Search’. The ‘Review you Query’ tab opens up. Now, perform the following:
 - Confirm the indicators on the ‘Indicators’ window. Select ‘Next Step’ at the bottom right corner.
 - Confirm the timeframe by clicking the checkbox next to the indicator, and selecting ‘Next Step’ at the bottom right corner
 - In the Geography window, click the ‘Proceed without confirmation’ button on the top right corner.
2. A line chart should be automatically created. If it isn’t, select the line chart option by clicking on the ‘Select Chart Type’ tab on the left side of the window.
3. Once you select the line chart, click on the ‘+Add’ button next to the x-axis label on the left of your screen. it will give you the option to add the year. Similarly click ‘+Add’ button next to the y-axis label and add the indicator ‘Youth (15-29) By Education Level (%)’
4. Finally, next to the ‘Categorize’ option, click on the ‘+Add’ button. From the options displayed, select ‘Education Level’ to see lines of different colours.

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[1] ILO. (2024). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024 Decent work, brighter futures*. International Labour Organization

[2] Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports. (2014). *National Youth Policy 2014*. Government of India.

[3] IHD, & ILO. (2024). *India Employment Report 2024 Youth employment, education and skills*. International Labour Organization

[4] Sharma, S. (2024, October 16). Only 26.8% of Indian youth in the academic age group have internet browsing skills: Can this impact quality education? *The Times of India*

[5] UPSS stands for usual status that considers both usual principal (the persons who either worked or were seeking/available for work for a relatively long part of the 365 days preceding the date of survey) and subsidiary activity (those persons among the remaining population who had worked at least for 30 days during the reference period of 365 days preceding the date of survey) together.

[6] UNESCO. (2025, May 28). *International Literacy Day*

[7] Sharma, A. N. (2022). Youth Employment and Unemployment in India: Issues and Challenges. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 65(2), 237–267.

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[11] Tamayo, S. G., & Petrelli, A. (2025). *Work Transformed: The Promise and Peril of Artificial Intelligence*. International Labour Organization.

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[13] Mehta, B. S., & Awasthi, I. C. (2024). India’s Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 59(3).

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