

First Quarter 2026

# Labour Market Advance Release



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LABOUR MARKET ADVANCE RELEASE FIRST QUARTER 2026

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## MISSION

To provide timely and reliable national statistical information on the labour market to facilitate informed decision-making within the government and community-at-large.

Statistical activities conducted by the Manpower Research and Statistics Department (MRSD) are governed by the provisions of the Statistics Act 1973 (2020 Revised Edition). The Act guarantees the confidentiality of information collected from individuals and companies. It spells out the legislative authority and responsibility of the Director, Manpower Research and Statistics Department.

Statistics compiled and disseminated by the MRSD adhere to international standards on official statistics set by the International Labour Organisation and International Monetary Fund.

For insights on the labour market, visit us at [stats.mom.gov.sg](https://stats.mom.gov.sg).

For data requests and queries pertaining to our reports, reach out to us at [mom\\_rsd@mom.gov.sg](mailto:mom_rsd@mom.gov.sg).

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**Notations**

- : Nil or Negligible
- P : Preliminary
- Q : Quarter
- M : March
- J : June
- S : September
- D : December

**Abbreviations**

- MDW : Migrant Domestic Workers
- MOM : Ministry of Manpower
- SSIC : Singapore Standard Industrial Classification
- excl : Excluding

## **Highlights**

Advance estimates showed that Singapore's labour market remained resilient in 1Q 2026, with employment expanding for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive quarter since 4Q 2021. While employment growth for both residents and non-residents moderated from the previous quarter, it remained higher than a year ago. Unemployment and retrenchments were broadly stable.

- Total employment grew by 5,000 in 1Q 2026, more than the 2,300 in 1Q 2025 but down from the 17,700 in 4Q 2025. After adjusting for seasonality, employment growth remained higher than a year ago, although it has eased from the previous quarter.
- Resident employment growth was concentrated in *Transportation & Storage* and *Administrative & Support Services*, while non-resident employment growth continued to be driven by *Construction*, but at a slower rate than last quarter.
- Unemployment rates edged up slightly in March 2026 (overall: 2.1%, resident: 2.9%, citizen: 3.1%) but remained broadly stable when compared to December 2025 (overall: 2.0%, resident: 2.9%, citizen: 3.0%).
- In 1Q 2026, retrenchments (3,700 or 1.5 per 1,000 employees) remained low and comparable to the previous quarter (3,690 or 1.5 per 1,000 employees).
- Looking ahead to 2Q 2026, the labour market is expected to remain tight and continue to expand. However, business expectations suggest that firms will remain cautious in their hiring and wage plans amid increased economic uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions. The proportion of firms expecting to hire in the next three months declined from 54.6% in February 2026 to 44.6% in March 2026. At the same time, the share of firms expecting to raise wages in the next three months saw a decline from 39.3% to 25.4% over the same period.
- Although there are early signs of stabilisation in April, expectations remain below pre-crisis levels in February. This suggests a more measured pace of hiring and emerging caution among firms, with potential softening if external conditions weaken.

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The *Labour Market Report First Quarter 2026*, to be released in mid-June 2026, will provide more details, such as resident and non-resident employment breakdowns, sectoral data, number of job vacancies, labour turnover, and re-entry rates among retrenched residents.

For data requests and queries pertaining to the report, please reach out to MOM's Research and Statistics Department at [mom\\_rsd@mom.gov.sg](mailto:mom_rsd@mom.gov.sg).

## Overview

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Advance estimates showed that Singapore's labour market remained resilient in 1Q 2026, with employment expanding for the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive quarter since 4Q 2021. While employment growth moderated from the previous quarter, it remained stronger than a year ago.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment and retrenchments remained broadly stable.

Looking ahead to 2Q 2026, the labour market is expected to remain tight and continue to expand. However, businesses are expected to remain cautious in their hiring and wage plans amid increased economic uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions. From February 2026 to March 2026, the share of firms expecting to hire in the next three months declined, with a smaller proportion of firms planning wage increases as well. This suggests a more measured pace of hiring and emerging caution among firms, with potential softening should external conditions weaken.

## Employment<sup>P,2,3</sup>

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Total employment grew by 5,000 in 1Q 2026, more than the 2,300 in 1Q 2025 but down from the 17,700 in 4Q 2025. After adjusting for seasonality<sup>4</sup>, employment growth remained higher than a year ago, although it has eased from the previous quarter.

The moderation this quarter reflects seasonal effects and a step-down from a high base, rather than a broad-based weakening in the labour market. For instance, construction activity typically slows during the Chinese New Year period.

Employment grew for both residents<sup>5</sup> and non-residents in 1Q 2026. Resident employment growth was concentrated in *Transportation & Storage* and *Administrative & Support Services*, while non-resident employment growth continued to be driven by *Construction*, but at a slower rate than last quarter.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic growth showed a similar moderation. Based on the Ministry of Trade and Industry's advance estimates for 1Q 2026, the Singapore economy grew by 4.6% year-on-year in 1Q 2026, easing from the 5.7% growth recorded in the previous quarter, but broadly comparable to the 4.5% expansion in 1Q 2025.

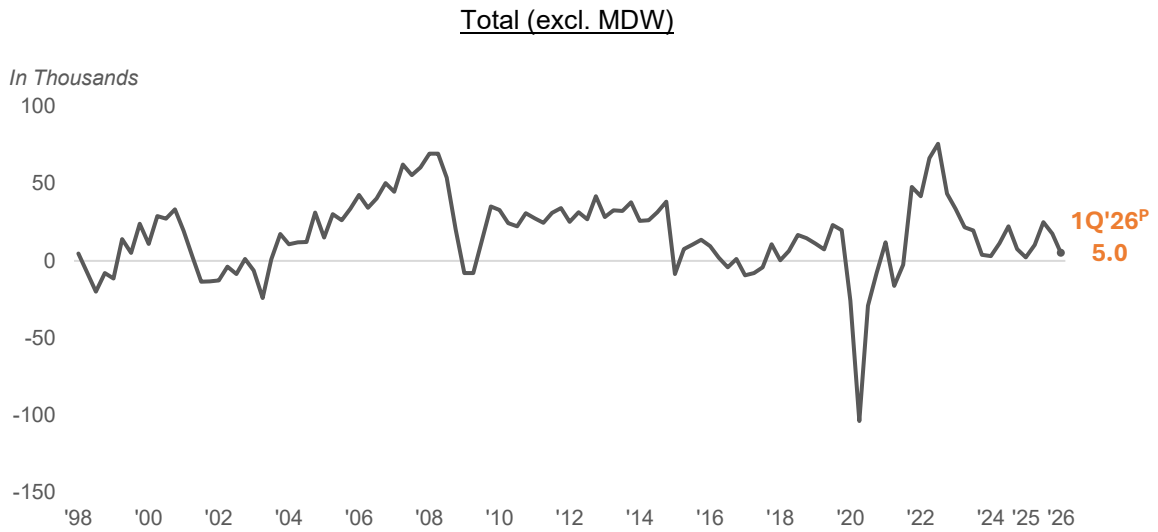
<sup>2</sup> Employment figures cited in this report exclude Migrant Domestic Workers (MDW).

<sup>3</sup> Based on preliminary estimates, 493,700 persons were employed in *Manufacturing*, 569,100 in *Construction*, and 3,036,600 (2,716,200 excl. MDW) in *Services* in March 2026. Employment totalled 4,125,600 (3,805,100 excl. MDW) in March 2026 (total includes other sectors like agriculture, fishing etc.).

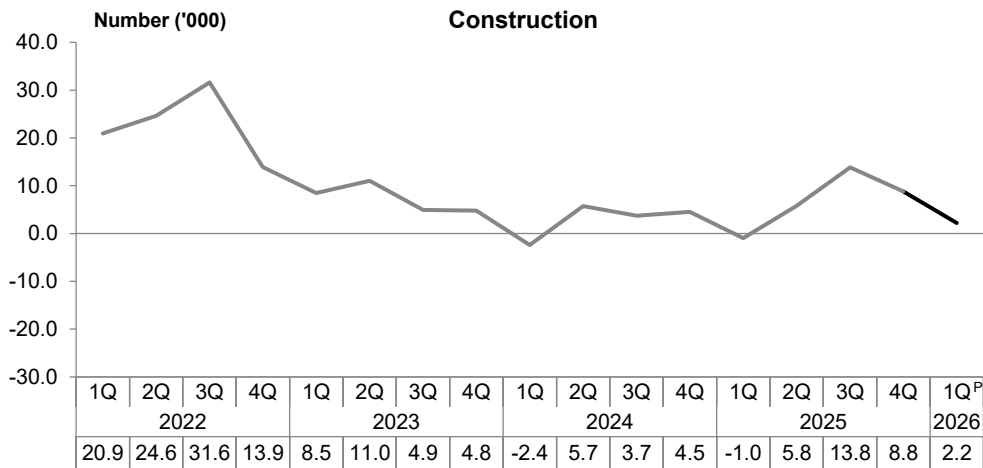
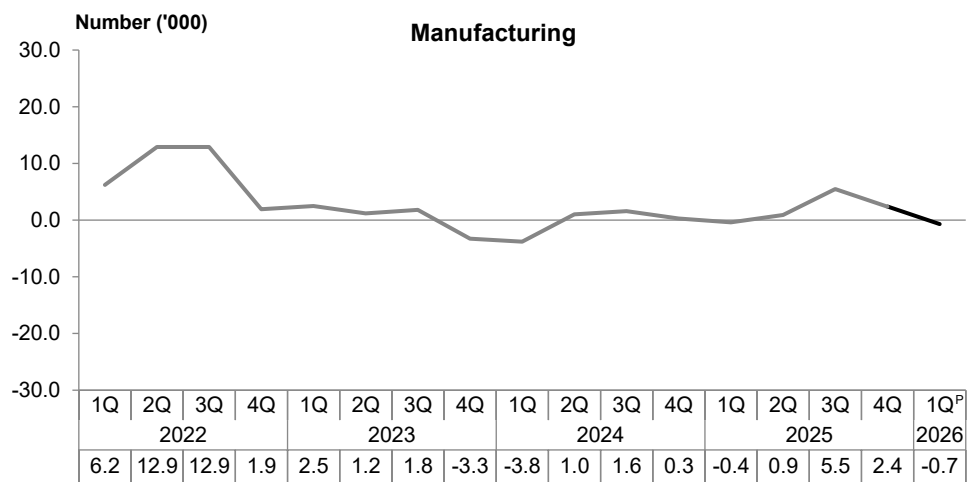
<sup>4</sup> After adjusting for seasonality, employment growth is estimated to be around 9,200 in 1Q 2026, still lower than 4Q 2025 (20,000) but higher than 1Q 2025 (5,000). Figures are seasonally adjusted to remove recurring seasonal influences – such as increased hiring during year-end festivities – that may otherwise obscure the underlying trend and short-term fluctuations in a time series.

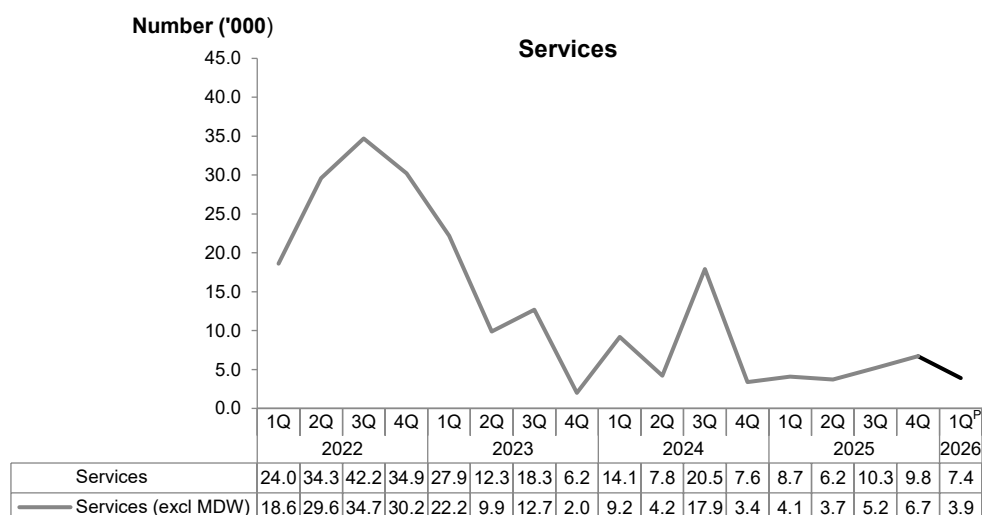
<sup>5</sup> Refers to Singapore citizens and permanent residents.

**Chart 1** Quarterly Employment Change



By Sector





Source: Administrative Records and Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

P: Preliminary

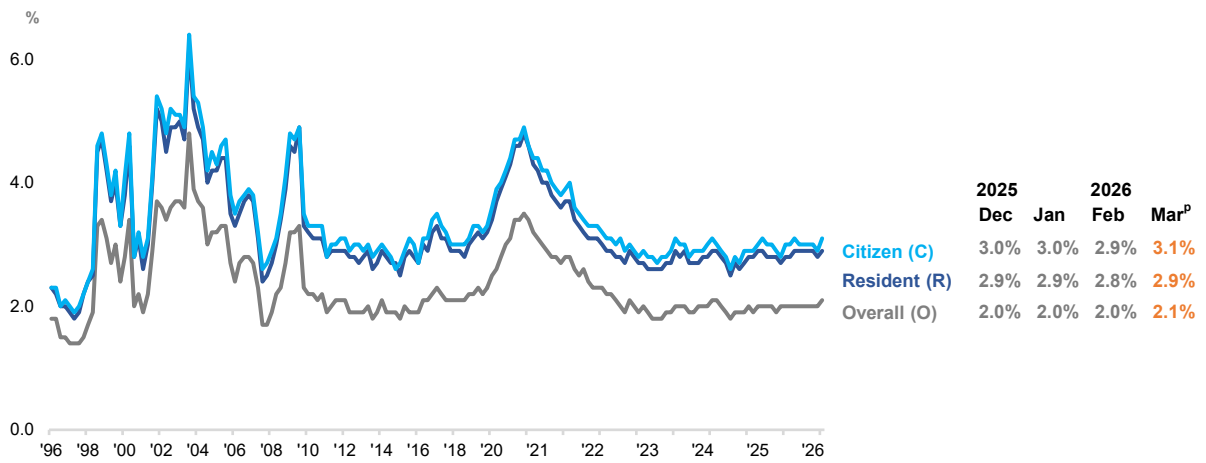
**Notes:**

- (1) Data are primarily from administrative records, with the self-employed component estimated from the Labour Force Survey.
- (2) Data for the three major sectors do not add up to the total as the latter includes *Agriculture, Fishing, Quarrying, Utilities and Sewerage & Waste Management*.
- (3) The industries are classified based on SSIC 2020.
- (4) Employment change refers to the difference between employment level at the end of the reference period and that at the end of the preceding period.

## Unemployment<sup>P</sup>

Monthly unemployment rates edged up in March 2026 (overall: 2.1%, resident: 2.9%, citizen: 3.1%) but remained broadly stable when compared to December 2025 (overall: 2.0%, resident: 2.9%, citizen: 3.0%).

**Chart 2** Unemployment Rates (Seasonally Adjusted)



Source: Labour Force Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

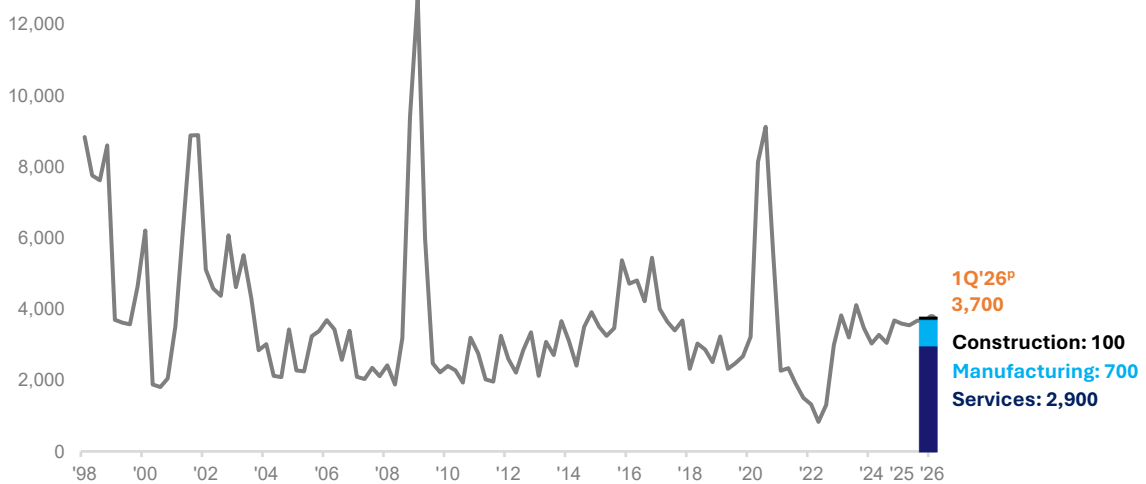
P: Preliminary

## Retrenchments<sup>P</sup>

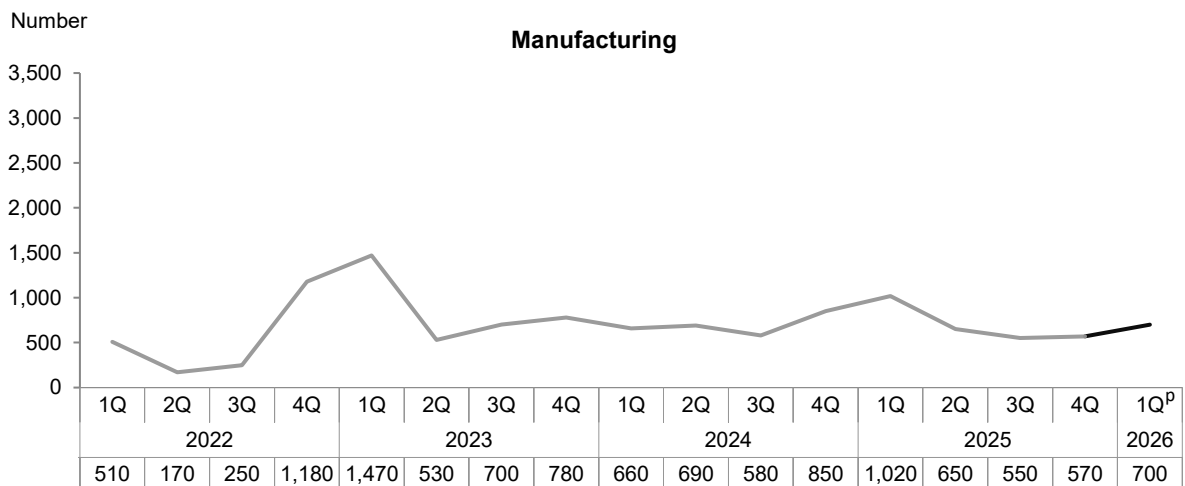
In 1Q 2026, retrenchments (3,700) remained low and comparable to the previous quarter (3,690). At 1.5 retrenched per 1,000 employees, the incidence of retrenchment was unchanged from last quarter. The majority of retrenchments in 1Q 2026 were due to business reorganisation or restructuring.

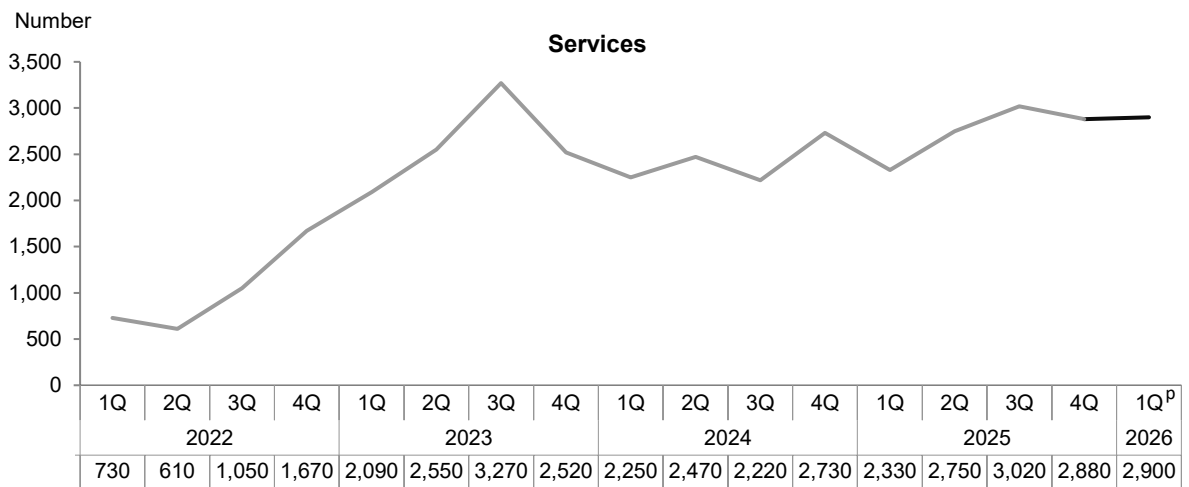
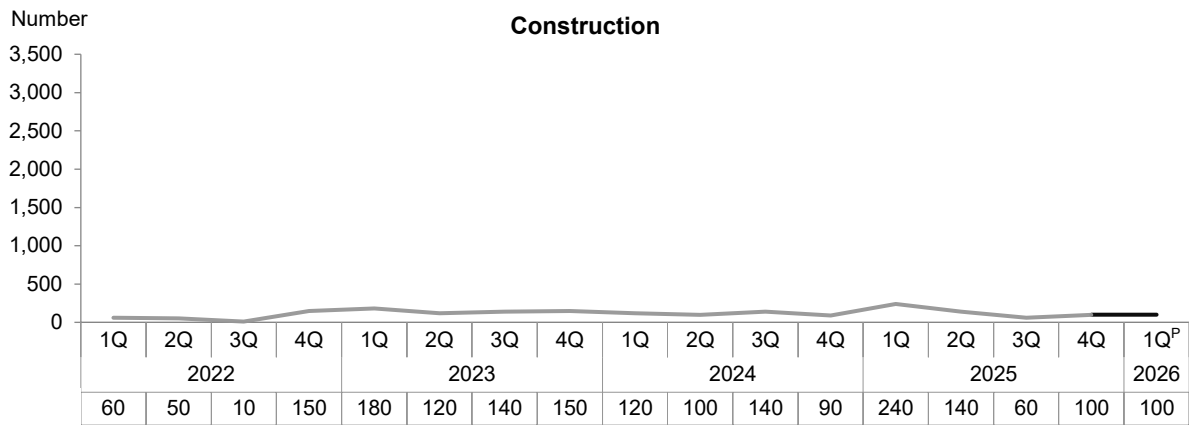
**Chart 3** Quarterly Retrenchments

### Overall



### By Sector





Source: Labour Market Survey, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

<sup>P</sup>: Preliminary

**Notes:**

- (1) Before 2006, data pertain to private sector establishments (each with at least 25 employees). From 2006 onwards, it also includes the public sector.
- (2) The industries are classified based on SSIC 2020.
- (3) Data for the three major sectors may not add up to the total as the latter includes *Agriculture, Fishing, Quarrying, Utilities and Sewerage & Waste Management*.

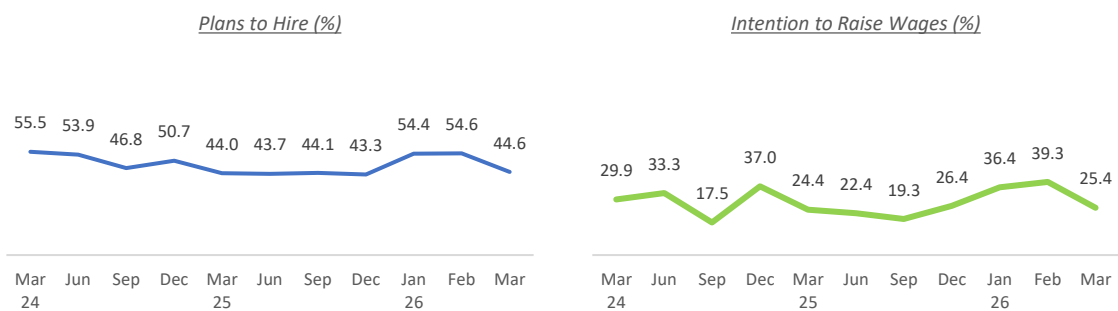
Looking ahead to 2Q 2026, the labour market is expected to remain tight and continue to expand.<sup>6</sup> However, businesses are expected to remain cautious in their hiring and wage plans amid increased economic uncertainty due to geopolitical tensions.

MOM's business expectation polls showed that the proportion of firms expecting to hire in the next three months declined from 54.6% in February 2026 to 44.6% in March 2026.

At the same time, the proportion of firms planning wage increases in the next three months saw a decline from 39.3% to 25.4% over the same period.

Although there are early signs of stabilisation in April, expectations remain below pre-crisis levels in February. This suggests a more measured pace of hiring and emerging caution among firms, with potential softening if external conditions weaken.

**Chart 4** Hiring and Wage Expectations for the Next Three Months



Source: Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

**Note:**

Data reflect the proportion of companies that indicated 'yes' or 'maybe' to having plans to hire or to raising wages in the next three months.

<sup>6</sup> In December 2025, the number of job vacancies was 77,700. In the same period, the job vacancy to unemployed persons ratio was 1.58.

## Explanatory Notes

### Employment

#### Source

Primarily from administrative records. The self-employed component is estimated from the Labour Force Survey.

#### Coverage

Employment data comprise all persons in employment i.e. employees and the self-employed. However, it excludes men who are serving their 2-year full-time national service liability in the Singapore Armed Forces, Police and Civil Defence Forces.

Data on the number of resident employees are compiled from the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board's administrative records of active contributors, defined as resident employees who have at least one CPF contribution paid for him/her. A resident employee is a Singapore citizen or Permanent Resident who is employed by an employer under a contract of service or other agreement entered into in Singapore. Every resident employee and his/her employer are required to make monthly contributions to the CPF. The CPF is a compulsory savings scheme that provides workers financial security in old age and helps meet the needs of healthcare, home-ownership, family protection and asset enhancement.

Data on non-residents working in Singapore are compiled from administrative records of non-residents on valid work passes issued by the Ministry of Manpower. Non-residents can work in Singapore only if they have valid work passes issued by the Ministry of Manpower.

The number of self-employed residents is estimated from the Labour Force Survey. The self-employed comprises persons aged 15 years and over who are own account workers, employers or contributing family workers.

#### Concepts and Definitions

**Employment change** refers to the change in the number of persons who are in employment, derived by taking the difference in the employment level (i.e. number of employed persons) at the end of the reference period compared with the end of the preceding period. A positive change refers to the additional number of persons who are in employment, while a negative change refers to the decline in number of persons in employment.

#### Uses and Limitations

Analysis of employment change over time helps in understanding the impact of cyclical and structural changes in the economy on the demand for workers. In particular, the breakdown of employment by industry helps identify sectors where employment is growing or falling.

Conceptually, the change in employment over the reference period is the difference between people entering and exiting employment during the period. Users should not mistake an increase in employment as gross job creation i.e. the increase in employment in expanding establishments only.

## Unemployment

### Source

Labour Force Survey

### Coverage

The survey covers private households in Singapore. It excludes workers living in construction worksites, dormitories and workers' quarters at the workplace and persons commuting from abroad to work in Singapore. Estimates of the total labour force are derived by combining data on residents obtained from the survey with non-resident employment data compiled from administrative records.<sup>1</sup>

### Concepts and Definitions

**Unemployed persons** refer to persons aged 15 years and over who did not work but were actively looking and available for work during the reference period. They include persons who were not working but were taking steps to start their own business or taking up a new job after the reference period.

**Unemployment rate** is defined as the percentage of unemployed persons to the labour force (i.e. employed and unemployed persons) aged 15 years and over.

**Long-term unemployed persons** refer to persons aged 15 years and over who have been unemployed for 25 weeks or more.

**Long-term unemployment rate** is defined as the percentage of long-term unemployed persons to the labour force.

### Uses and Limitations

The unemployment rate is probably the best-known measure of the labour market. It measures unutilised labour supply and is useful in the study of the economic cycle as it is closely related to economic fluctuations.

Unemployment can have frictional, cyclical and structural elements. As it takes time for job seekers and employers to find a match, there is always a certain level of frictional unemployment due to people changing jobs and from new entrants looking for work for the first time. Unemployment can also be structural e.g. arising from a mismatch between the job seekers and the job openings available. With structural unemployment, even if job vacancies and job seekers coexist in the labour market, they may not be matched over a long period of time. Finally, unemployment can be cyclical. This occurs when there is a general decline in demand for manpower as aggregate demand for goods and services falls in the event of a cyclical downturn. Unlike structural and frictional unemployment where the problem is in matching job openings with job seekers, cyclical unemployment occurs when there are not enough jobs to go around.

Unemployment can vary due to changes in demand or supply of manpower. It can decline if more people succeed in securing employment or when the unemployed persons stop looking for a job and leave the labour force either temporarily (e.g. to take up training) or permanently (e.g. to retire). Conversely, unemployment may rise due to increase in labour supply from new entrants or re-entrants to the labour market. It will also rise if more people quit their jobs to look for alternative employment or if there is an increase in layoffs.

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<sup>1</sup> Population figures for each quarter will be finalised in the next quarter. Unemployment data are therefore subject to the latest available population estimates.

Unemployment rates by specific groups, defined e.g. by age and educational attainment are useful in identifying groups of workers most vulnerable to unemployment.

### **Release Schedule**

From July 2020, top-line unemployment rates for overall, residents and citizens for the month will be released on a monthly basis by the first week of the month after next. This availability of top-line unemployment rates on a monthly basis will enable us to detect shifts in the unemployment situation in a more timely manner. The information will be made available on the Ministry of Manpower's statistical portal <https://stats.mom.gov.sg>.

Additional breakdown on unemployment by profile e.g. age, education, will continue to be made available in the Labour Market Reports released at the end of every quarter. This is because variations in the profile of the unemployed are unlikely in the short term.

### **Data Quality**

To ensure data quality, the Department analyses each survey response to identify and resolve inconsistencies that may suggest an inaccurate response. A response rate of at least 85% is achieved for the monthly labour force survey so as to ensure the sample retains its representativeness.

### **Seasonal Adjustment**

The unemployment time series are influenced by seasonality – periodic fluctuations due to recurring calendar-related events such as holidays, and the beginning and end of school terms. Seasonal adjustment removes the influences of these fluctuations and allows users to derive a more meaningful analysis of the trends in a data series, especially for those with strong seasonal patterns.

The seasonally adjusted figures are derived using X-12 ARIMA program which removes seasonal influences in the data series. To ensure a more accurate reflection of seasonally adjusted figures, concurrent seasonal adjustment is also being done and the latest information available will be incorporated.

### **Revisions**

In order to present timely data at the highest frequency, the monthly unemployment figures are subjected to revisions when the latest population figure becomes available or when the seasonal factors are updated with the latest data.

# OTHER RELEASES



## UPCOMING ...

Report on Wage Practices 2025	25-29 May 2026*
Labour Market Report First Quarter 2026	11-17 Jun 2026*
Labour Market Advance Release Second Quarter 2026	30-31 Jul 2026*
Labour Market Report Second Quarter 2026	9-15 Sep 2026*

## PAST ...

Labour Market Advance Release First Quarter 2026	30 Apr 2026
Overqualification in Singapore 2025	14 Apr 2026
Youths In The Labour Market 2025	26 Mar 2026
Labour Market Report Fourth Quarter 2025	20 Mar 2026
Job Vacancies 2025	20 Mar 2026
Labour Force In Singapore 2025	29 Jan 2026
Labour Market Advance Release Fourth Quarter 2025	29 Jan 2026
Labour Market Report Third Quarter 2025	11 Dec 2025
Labour Force In Singapore Advance Release 2025	28 Nov 2025

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*\*The actual date of release will be indicated at least a week before the scheduled publication date.*