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MEDIA RELEASE

Embargo: Tuesday 11 November 2025, 11:30

Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) – Q3: 2025

The official unemployment rate was 31,9% in the third quarter of 2025.

According to the QLFS Q3: 2025 results, there was an increase of 248 000 in the number of employed persons to 17,1 million, while there was a decrease of 360 000 in the number of unemployed persons to 8,0 million. This resulted in a decrease of 112 000 (0,4%) in the labour force when comparing Q2: 2025 and Q3: 2025.

During the same period, discouraged jobseekers increased by 36 000 to 3,5 million, other available jobseekers increased by 130 000 to 965 000, and unavailable jobseekers increased by 64 000 to 83 000, resulting in a total net increase of 230 000 to 4,5 million in the potential labour force population (*i.e. persons who were available not seeking or unavailable but seeking*). Other outside the labour force (*previously “Other not economically active population*) increased by 8 000 to 12,4 million. Outside the labour force, which is the total of the potential labour force and other outside the labour force, increased by 239 000 to 16,9 million in Q3 of 2025.

The above changes in employment and unemployment resulted in the official unemployment rate decreasing by 1,3 percentage points from 33,2% in the second quarter of 2025 to 31,9% in the third quarter of 2025.

In addition to the unemployment rate (LU1), other measures of labour underutilisation (LU) have been recommended. The combined rate of unemployment and time-related underemployment (LU2) decreased by 1,2 percentage points to 34,9%; the combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (LU3) decreased by 0,6 of a percentage point to 42,4% in the third quarter compared with the second quarter of 2025.

Lastly, the composite measure of labour underutilisation (LU4) (which combines time-related underemployment, unemployment and potential labour force as a proportion of extended



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labour force) was 44,9% in the third quarter of 2025. These labour underutilisation measures highlight people in different situations and with different degrees of attachment to the labour market.

Total employment increased by 248 000 quarter-on-quarter, with the largest increases recorded in Construction (130 000), Community and social services (116 000) and Trade (108 000). The largest decreases in employment were observed in Manufacturing (62 000), Finance (54 000) and Utilities (30 000).

The definitions of the formal/informal sector and formal/informal employment have undergone significant revisions based on the latest international resolution; as a result, the Q3: 2025 estimates on informality cannot be compared with the previous estimates. Formal, informal and household sectors employed 12 million, 4,0 million and 1,1 million persons, respectively in Q3: 2025.

The number of employed persons increased in eight provinces between Q2: 2025 and Q3: 2025. The largest employment gains were recorded in Western Cape (70 000), KwaZulu-Natal (54 000), Gauteng (51 000), North West (42 000) and Limpopo (40 000). An employment decrease was only recorded in the Eastern Cape (53 000) during the same period.

Issued by Statistics South Africa.

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