**MEDIA RELEASE 12 February 2019**

 **Quarterly Labour Force Survey - QLFS Q4:2018**

The results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the fourth quarter of 2018 released by Statistics South Africa today, reveal that unemployment rate decreased by 0,4 of a percentage point to 27,1%. The South African working-age population increased by 149 000 or 0,4% in the fourth quarter of 2018 compared to the third quarter of 2018. The number of employed persons increased by 149 000 to 16,5 million and the number of unemployed persons decreased by 70 000 to 6,1 million in Q4: 2018. The absorption rate increased to 43,3% in the same period.

During the fourth quarter of 2018, the informal sector recorded employment losses of 15 000, while the Formal sector, Private households and Agriculture recorded gains in employment. The number of discouraged work-seekers increased by 108 000 while the number of other not economically active persons decreased by 38 000, resulting in an increase of 70 000 (up by 0,5%) in the number of people not in the labour force between the third and fourth quarters of 2018.

The number of employed persons declined in four of the ten industries in Q4: 2018 compared to Q3: 2018. However, these declines were offset by employment gains in Finance and other business services (109 000), Private households (65 000), Manufacturing (48 000), Mining (31 000), Trade (14 000) and Agriculture (7 000) industries, which resulted in a net increase of 149 000 in the fourth quarter of 2018. The industries that recorded declines in employment were Community and Social services (51 000), Transport (30 000), Utilities (22 000), and Construction (21 000). Employment gains were recorded in five of the nine provinces in the fourth quarter of 2018. The largest employment increases were recorded in Gauteng (86 000), Free State (33 000) and Western Cape (26 000) while Eastern Cape (15 000) and North West (6 000) recorded the largest employment losses.

While the official unemployment rate decreased by 0,4 of a percentage point at the national level in Q4: 2018 compared to Q3: 2018, the rate increased in two of the nine provinces, namely KwaZulu-Natal (up by 2,6 percentage points), and Eastern Cape (up by 0,5 of a percentage point). The unemployment rate decreased in seven provinces. Year-on-year, the official unemployment rate increased by 0,4 of a percentage point. The largest increase was recorded in Mpumalanga (3,1 percentage points), followed by North West (2,7 percentage points), while the largest decrease was recorded in Limpopo (3,1 percentage points), followed by Northern Cape (2,1 percentage points) and Western Cape (0,2 of a percentage point).

Compared to Q3: 2018, the expanded unemployment rate decreased by 0,3 of a percentage point in Q4: 2018 to 37,0%. The largest increases were recorded in Eastern Cape (0,8 of a percentage point) and Limpopo (0,7 of a percentage point).

Compared to Q4:2017, the expanded unemployment rate increased by 0,7 of a percentage point in Q4: 2018 to 37,0%. The largest increase was recorded in North West (up by 2,3 percentage points), followed by Limpopo and Eastern Cape (up by 2,0 percentage points each), while the largest decrease was recorded in Northern Cape with1,9 percentage points.

Between Q4: 2017 and Q4: 2018, the percentage of young persons aged 15–24 years who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) increased by 1,4 percentage points to 31,1%. The NEET rate was higher for females compared to that of their male counterparts in both time periods. Compared to Q4: 2017, the percentage of youth aged 15–34 years who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) increased by 0,5 of a percentage point from 38,4% to 38,9% in Q4: 2018 - also four in every ten young females were not in employment, education, or training.

***Issued by Statistics South Africa***

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