

Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q2:2026

Risenga Maluleke
Statistician-General



stats sa

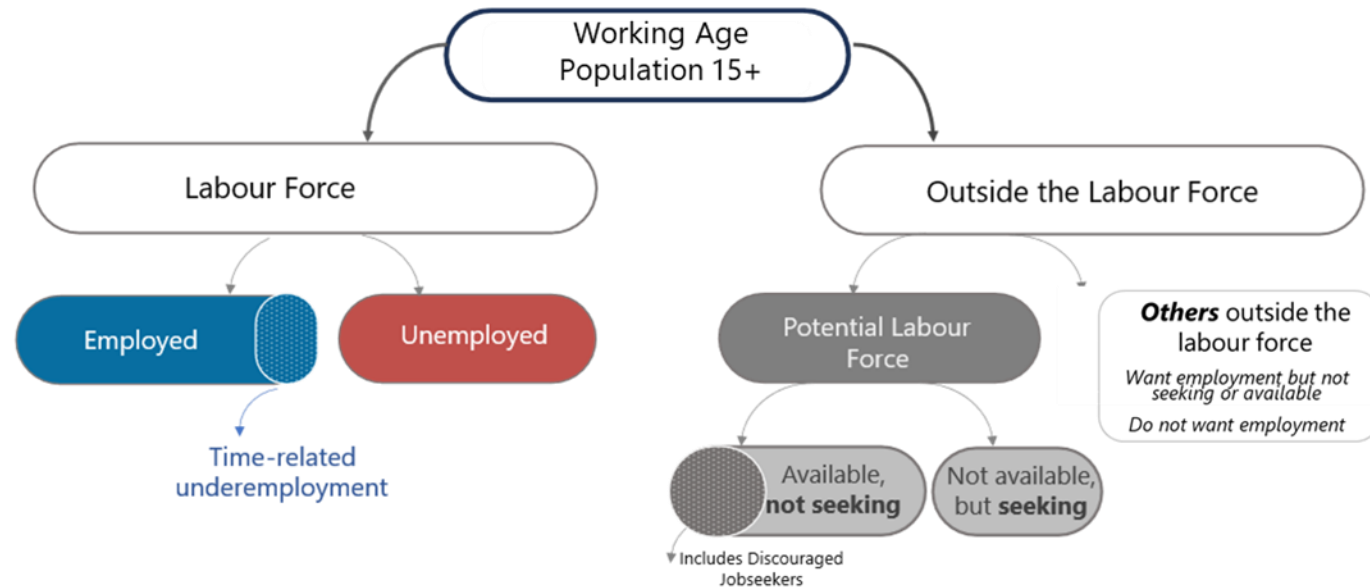
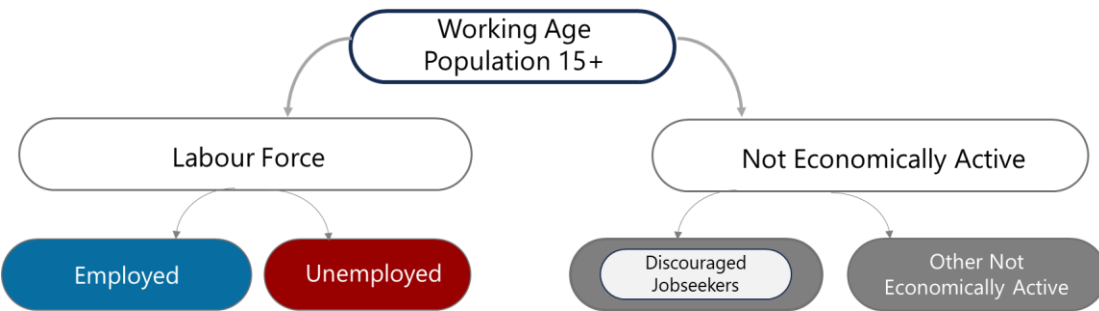
Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



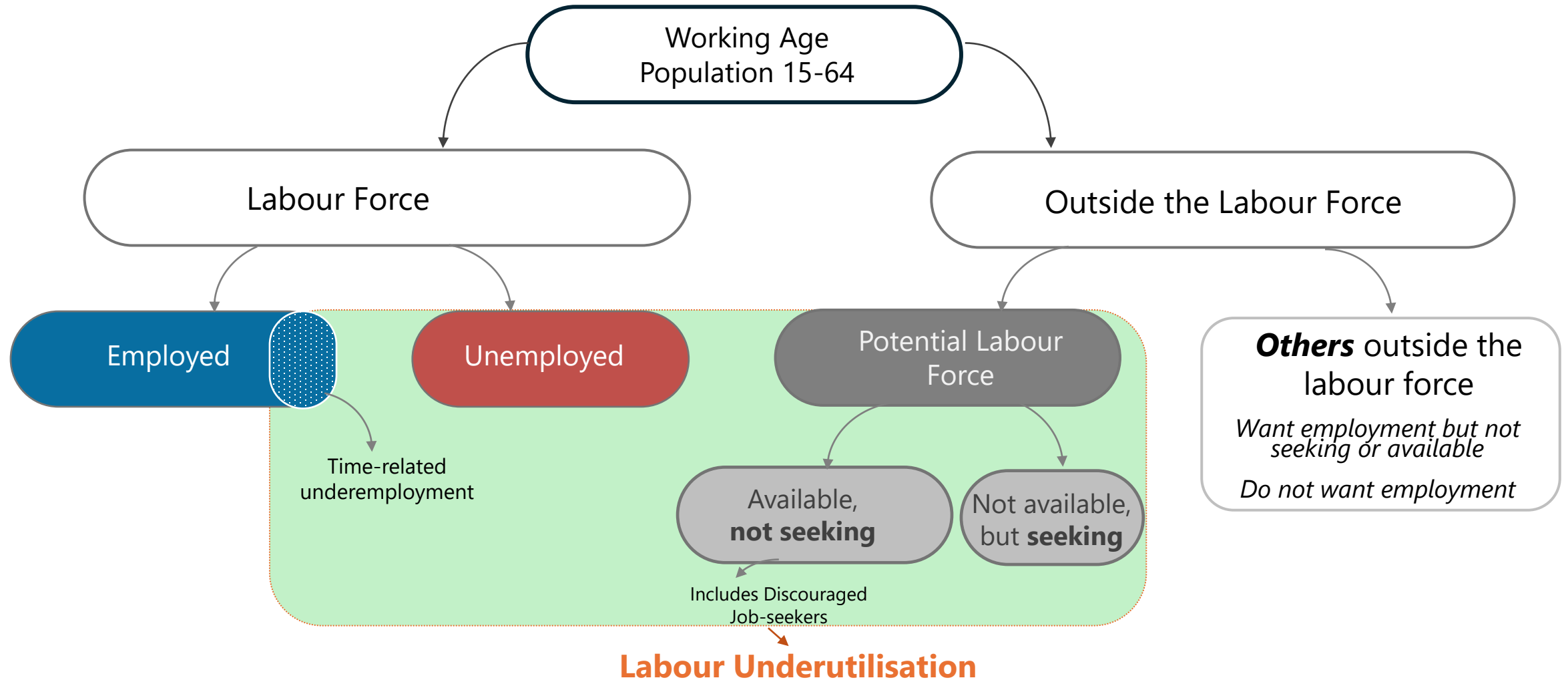
Stats SA adopting more recent ICLS resolutions for reporting

◀ Before

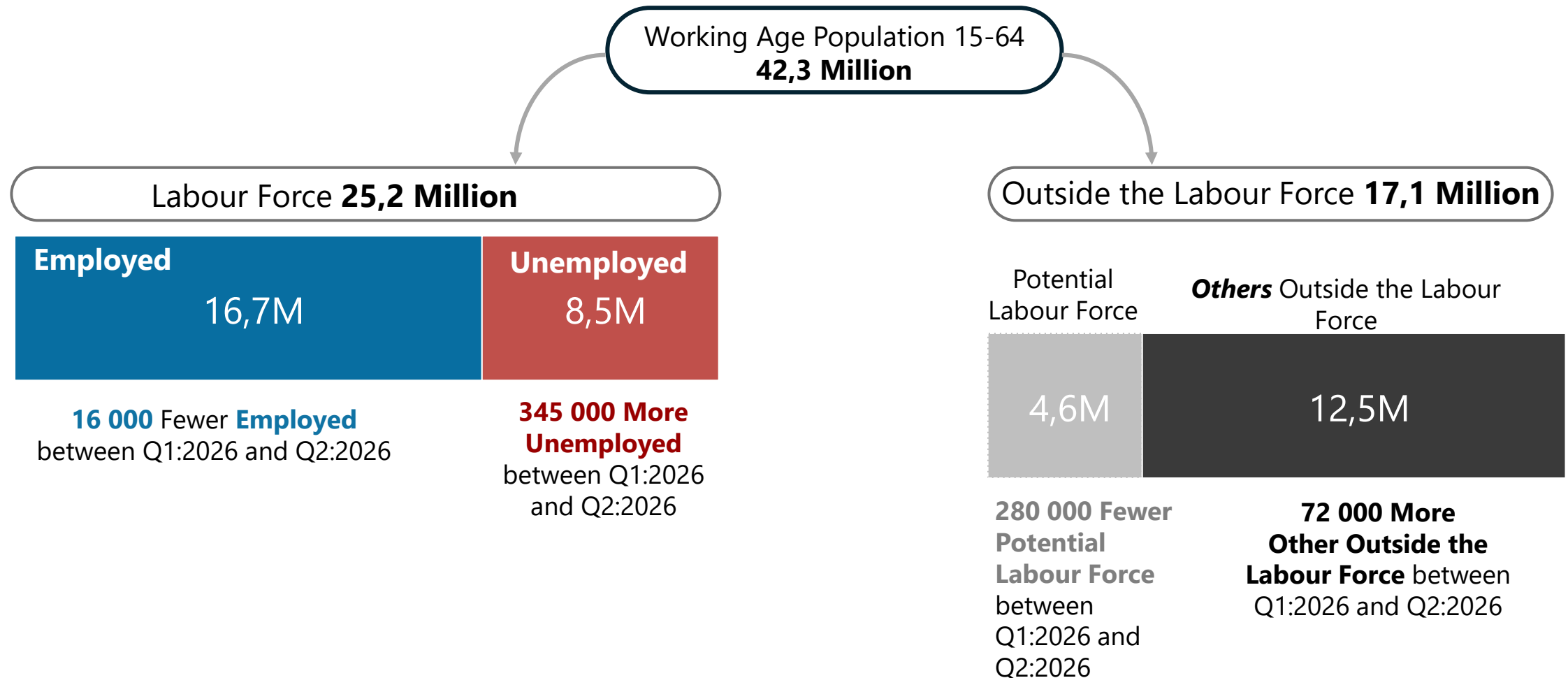
▶ Now



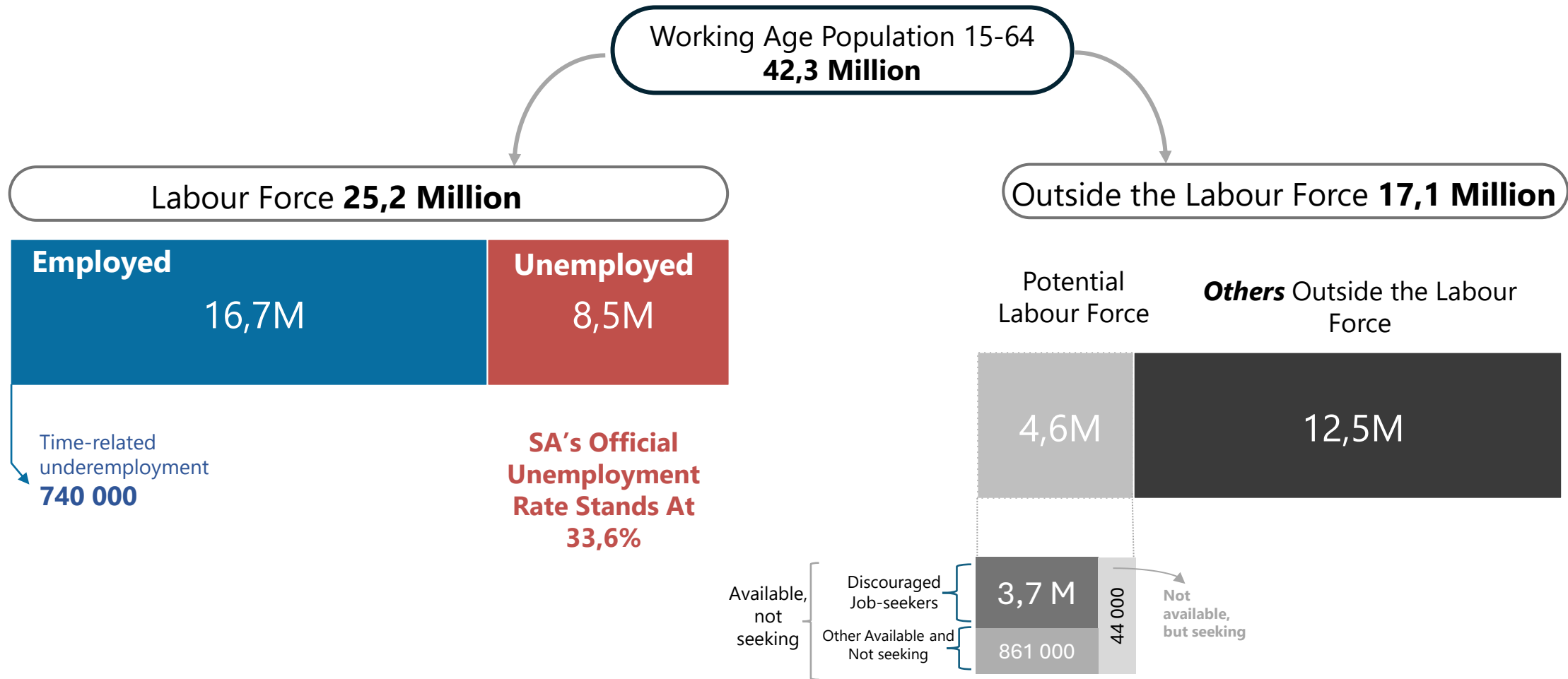
Labour Statistics now report on a greater variety of labour indicators



There were **345 thousand more people unemployed** in Q2:2026 than in Q1:2026.

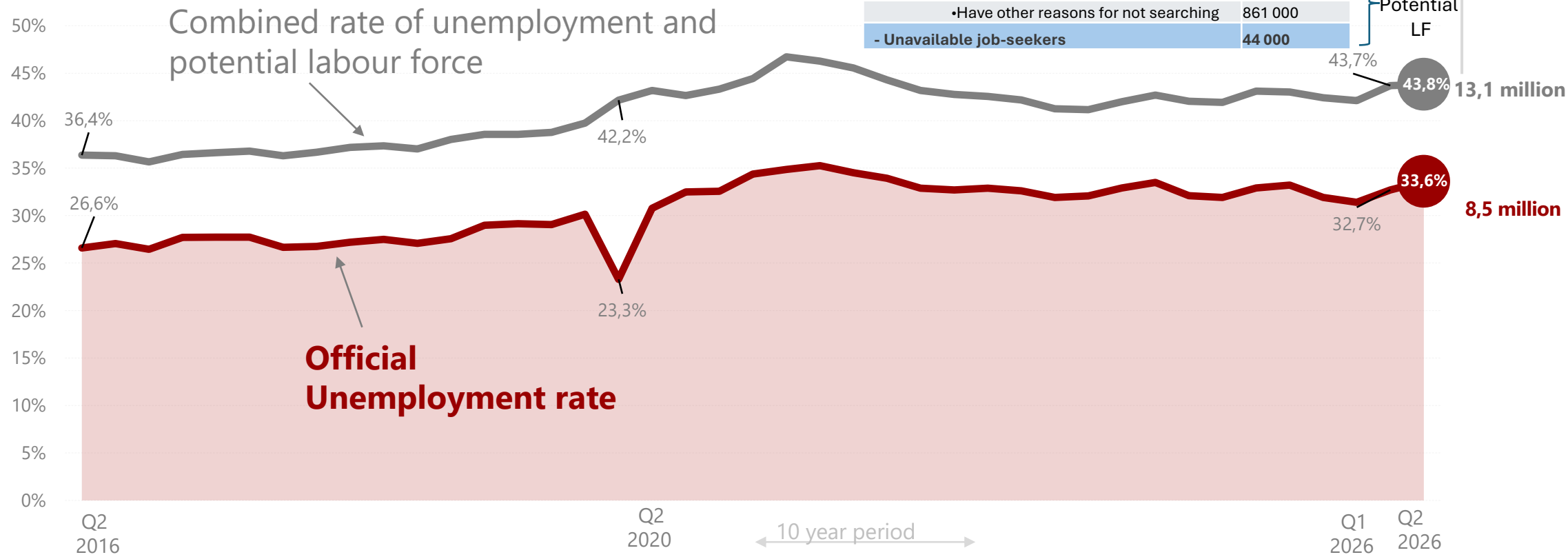


The official **unemployment rate increased** by 0,9 of a percentage point to **33,6%** in Q2:2026 compared to Q1:2026.



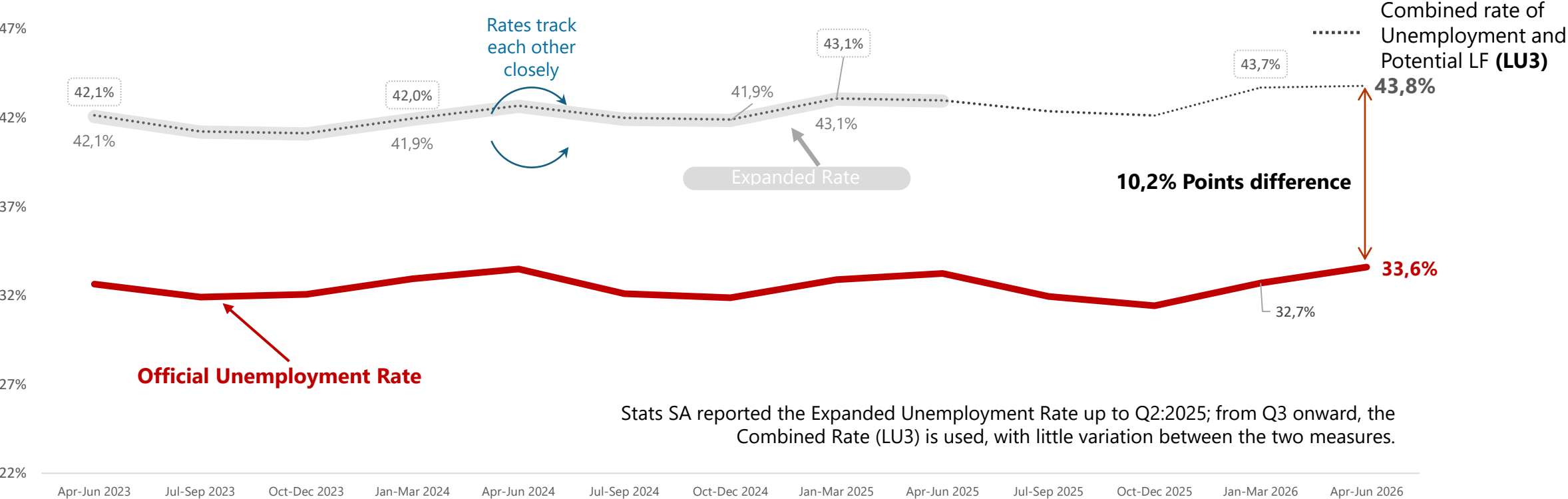
The combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (LU3) **increased by 0,1 of a percentage point to 43,8%** in Q2:2026 compared to Q1:2026.

Official UR vs combined rate of unemployment and potential LF (LU3): Q2:2016-Q2:2026



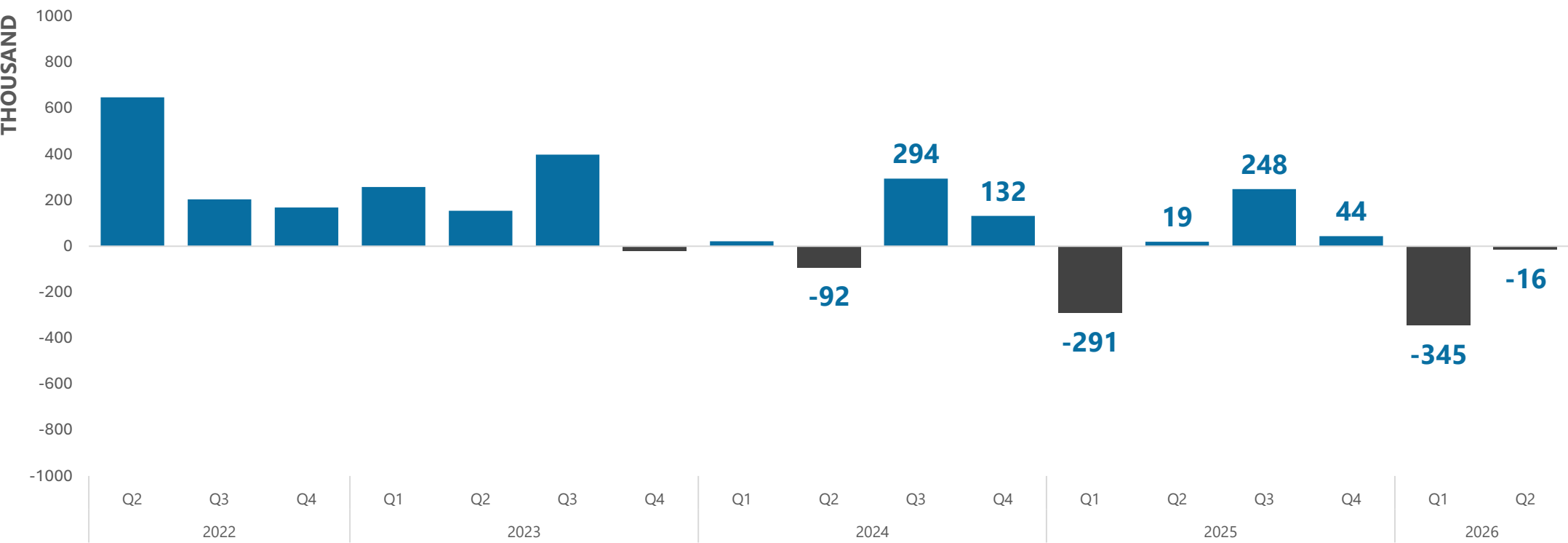
In Q2:2026, there was a 10,2 **percentage points difference** between the official unemployment rate and the combined rate of unemployment and potential LF(LU3).

Official UR and Expanded UR vs Combined rate of Unemployment and Potential LF (LU3): Q2:2023-Q2:2026



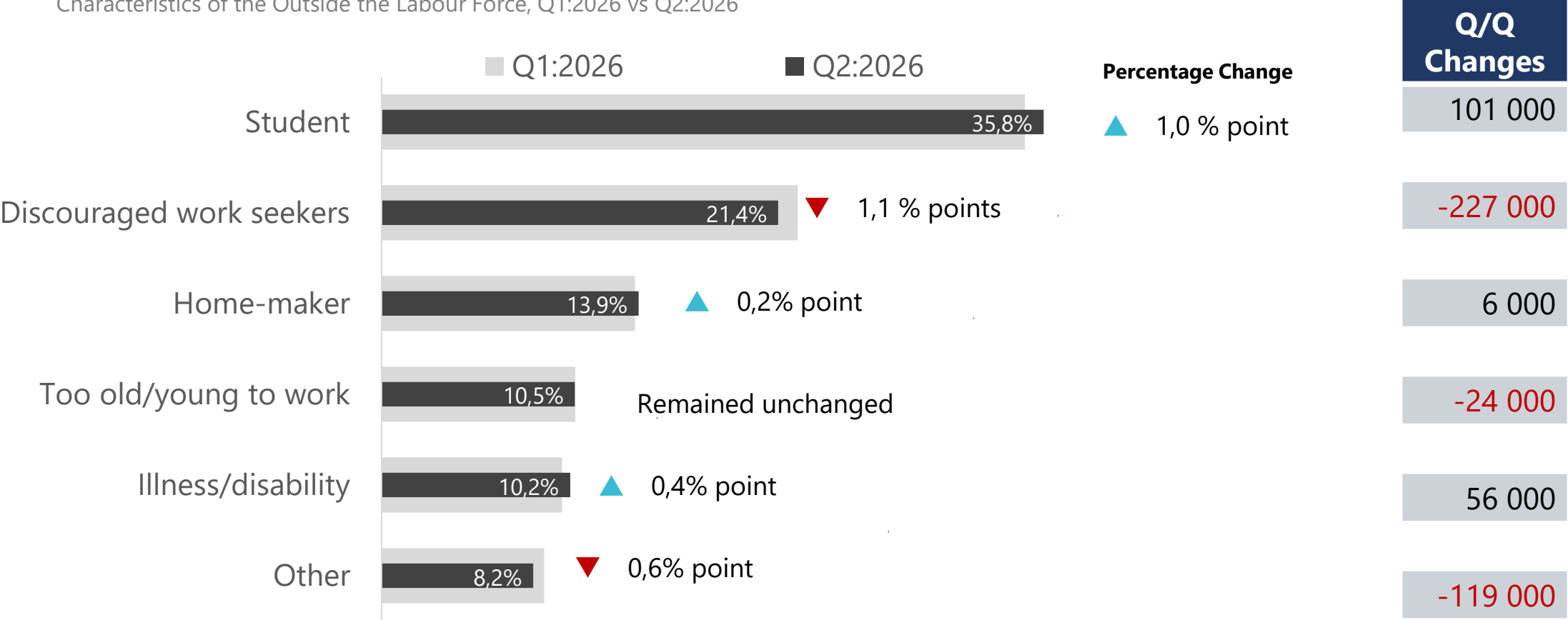
Employment decreased in the second quarter of 2026 by **16 000** to 16,7 million.

Employment changes: Q2:2022-Q2:2026 (Quarter-on-quarter)



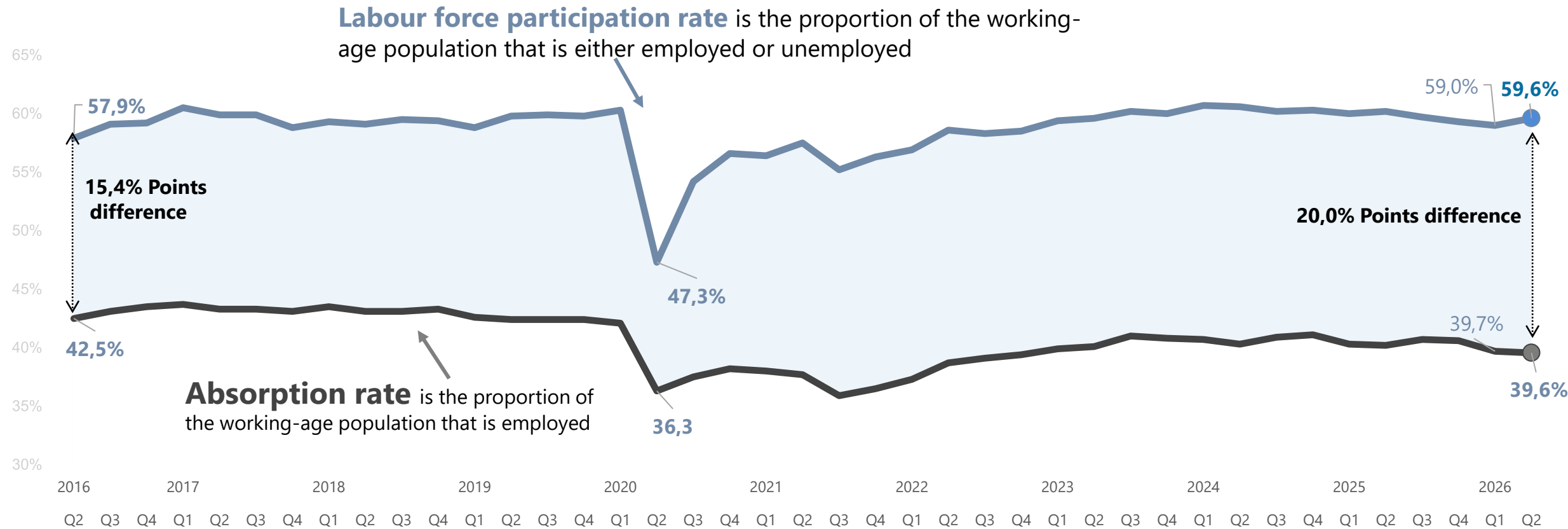
The number of persons **Outside the Labour Force decreased by 208 000** in Q2:2026 compared to Q1:2026.

Characteristics of the Outside the Labour Force, Q1:2026 vs Q2:2026

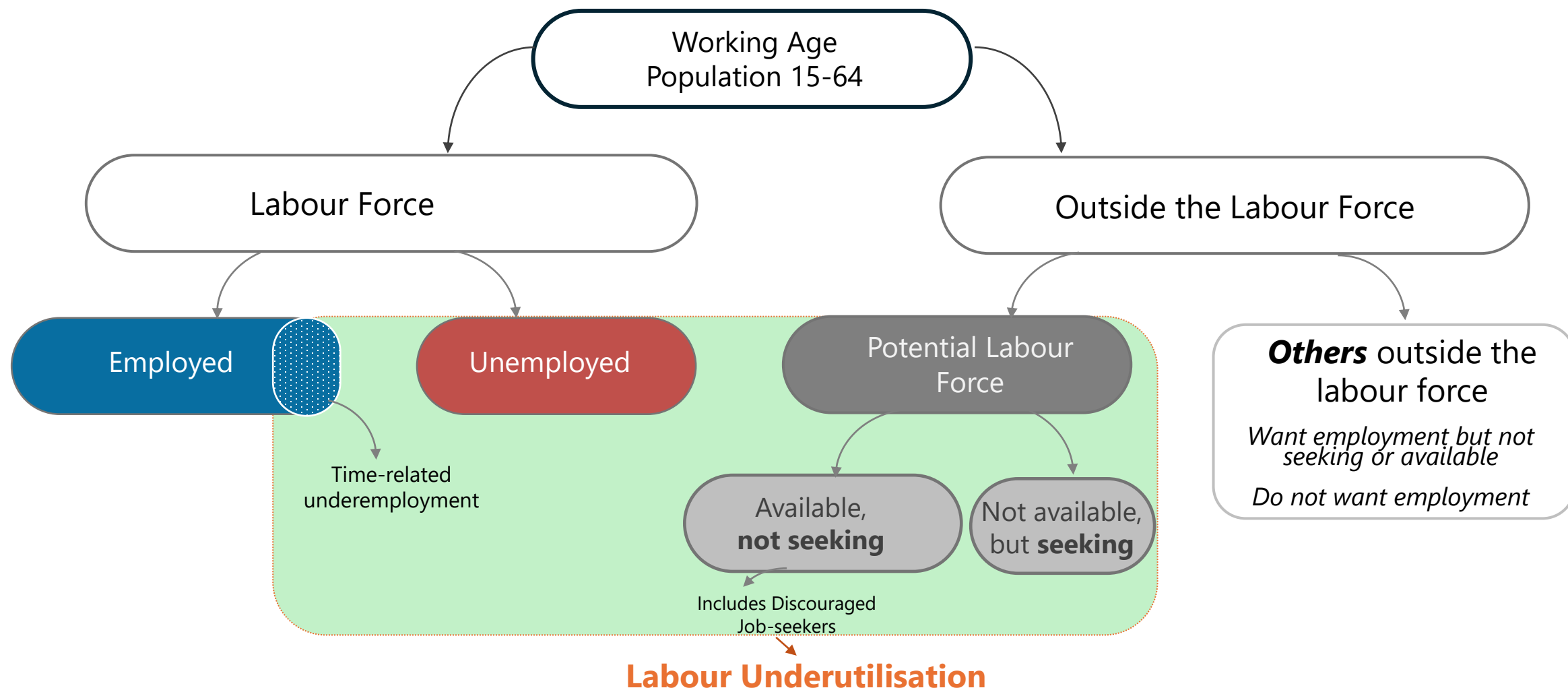


The **Labour force participation rate** increased by 0,6 of a percentage point from 59,0% in Q1:2026 to 59,6% in Q2:2026

Labour force participation and absorption rates Q2:2016-Q2:2026



In addition to Unemployment, the 19th ICLS resolution introduces other measures of Labour Underutilisation



The **Discouraged job-seekers** dominate the **Potential Labour force**, accounting for 80,2% of the potential labour force in Q2:2026.

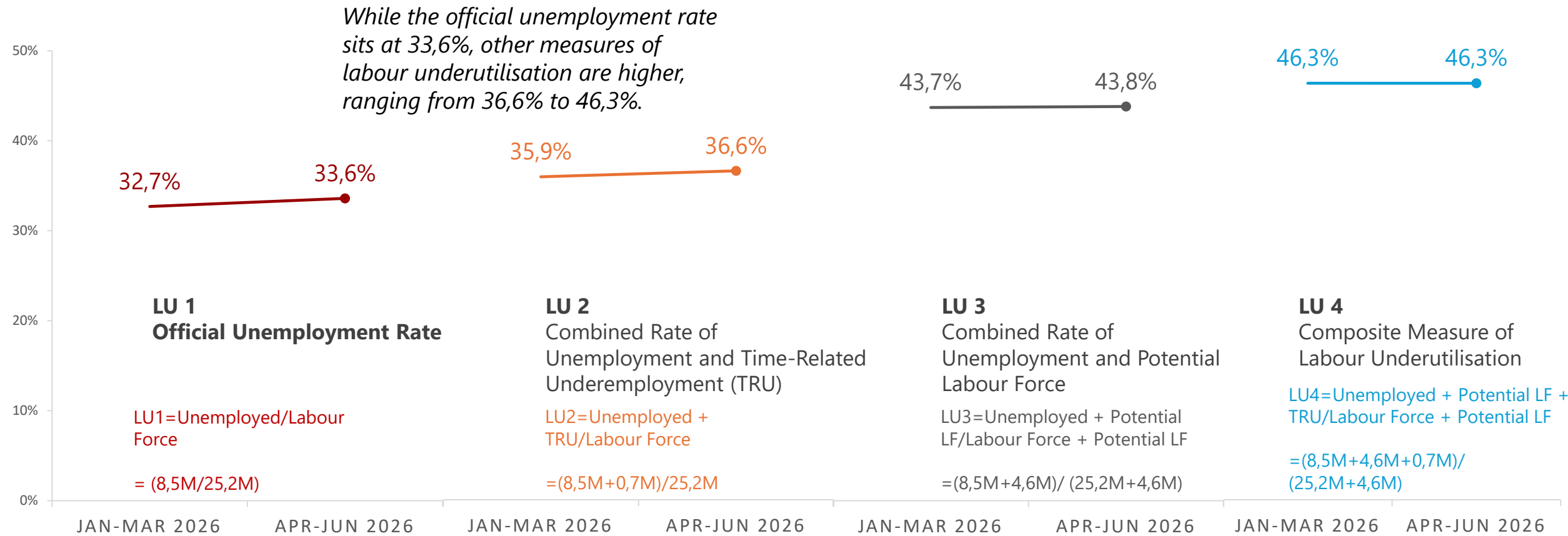
Labour underutilisation indicators (Q2:2026)

Potential Labour Force



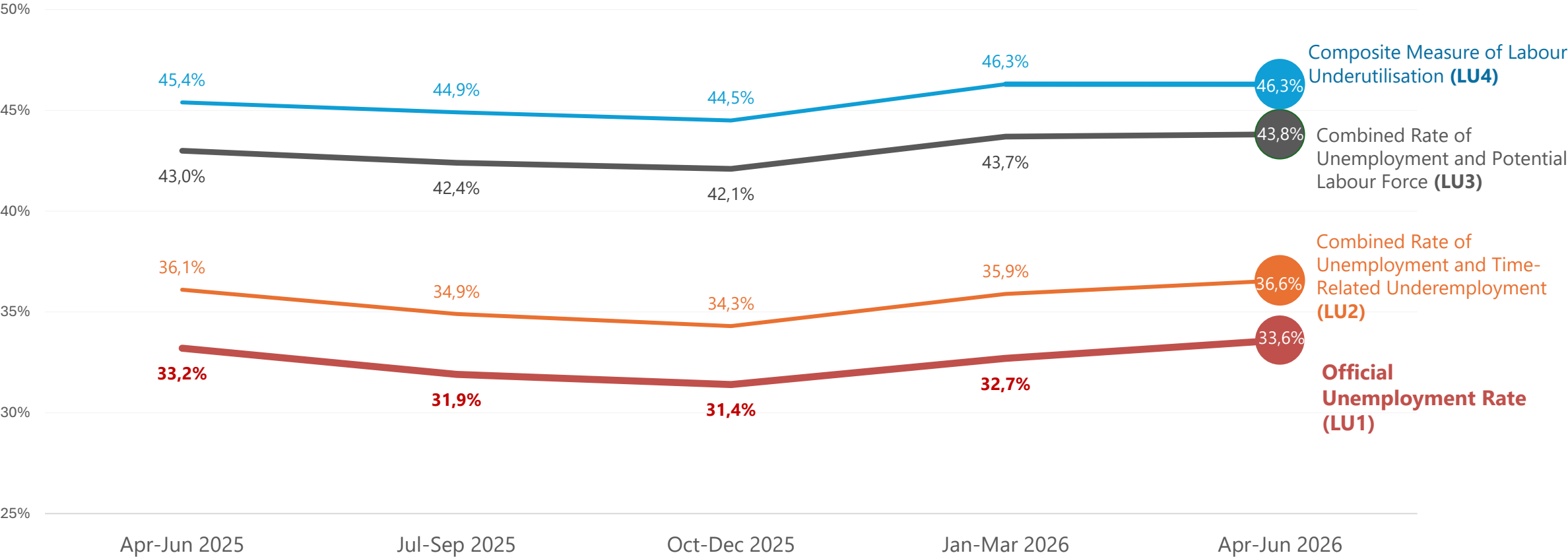
Labour underutilisation reflects the total number of people in the labour force who are not being fully utilised, as well as some who are outside of the labour force who can be considered ‘potential labour supply’.

Labour underutilisation indicators (Q1:2026 vs Q2:2026)



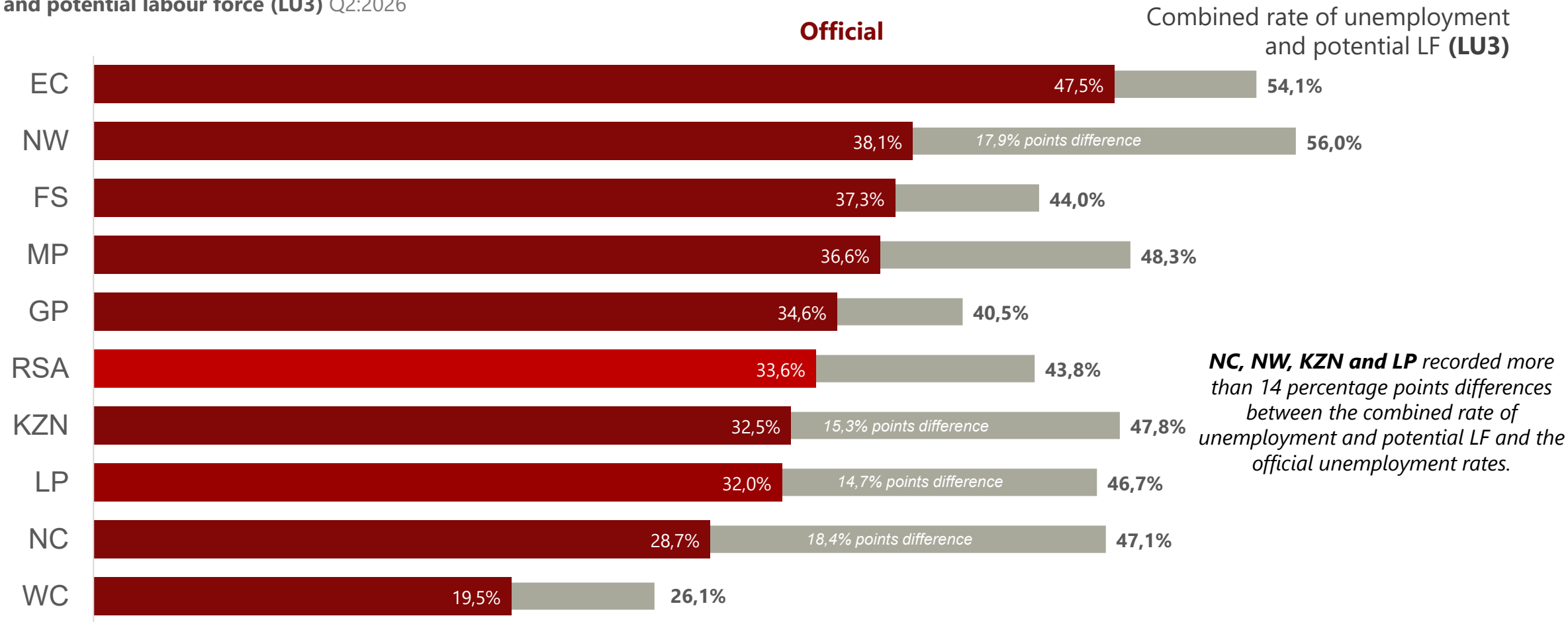
The labour underutilisation rate (i.e. composite measure of labour underutilisation (LU4)) stood at **46,3%** in the second quarter of 2026 compared to 45,4% in the same quarter of 2025.

There is a considerable gap (10,2 percentage points) between LU1 and LU3 indicating that there is a sizeable proportion of people who are not employed, want to work but not taking active steps to look for work or are not available for work.



NW (56,0%) recorded the **highest combined rate of unemployment and potential LF** in Q2:2026, followed by **EC** (54,1%).

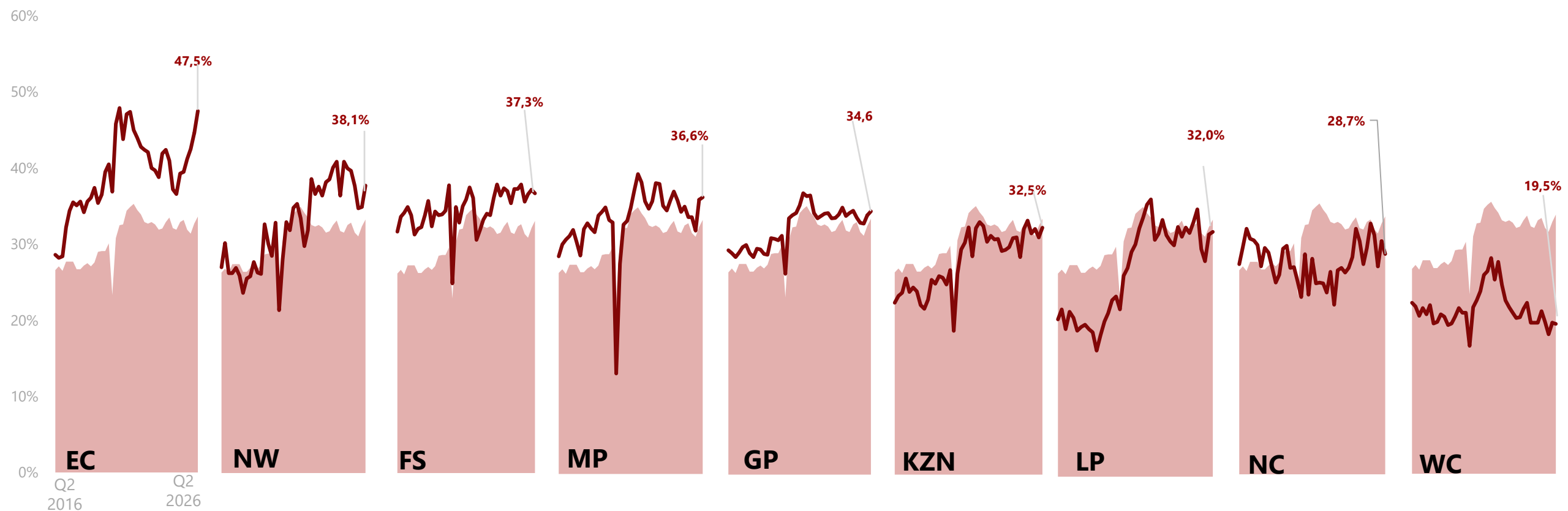
Provincial unemployment rates: **Official Unemployment rate** vs **Combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (LU3)** Q2:2026



Over the past ten years, the unemployment rate in the **WC** has consistently remained below South Africa's national average, while the **EC** has consistently recorded unemployment rates above the national level.

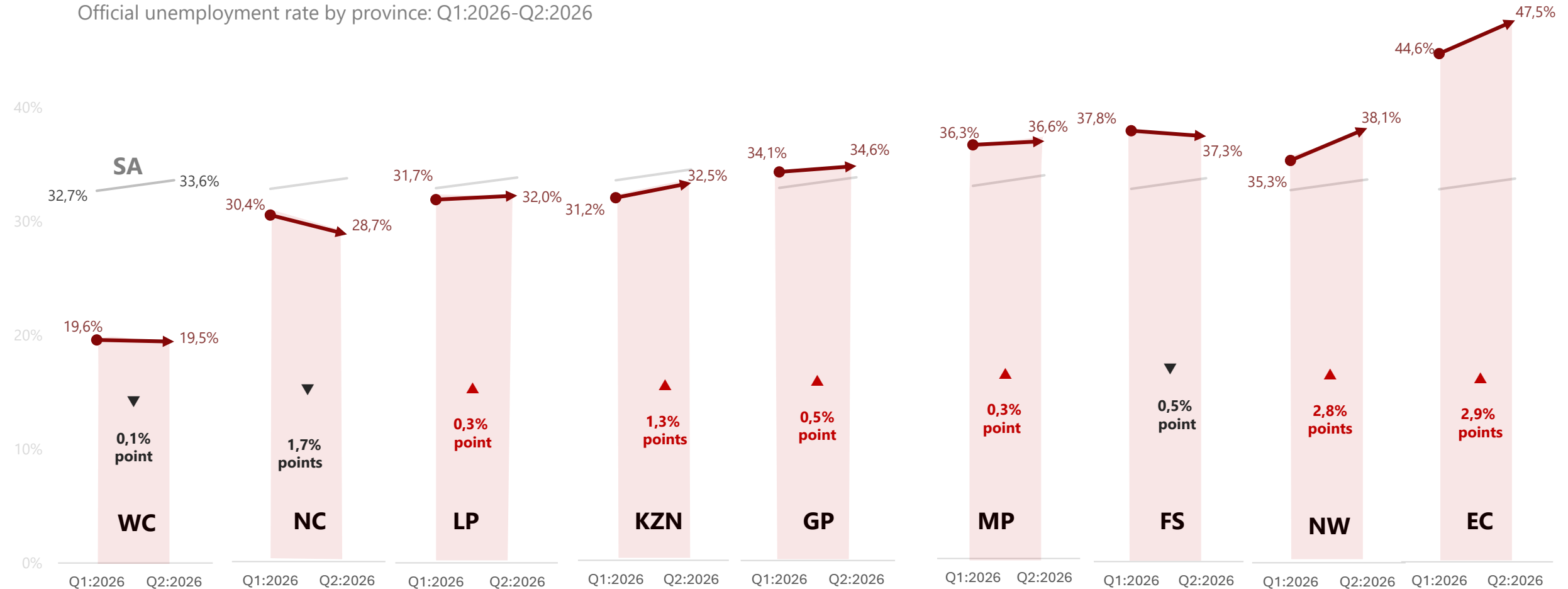
Official Unemployment rate by province, Q2:2016-Q2:2026

SA Unemployment Rate Provincial Unemployment Rate



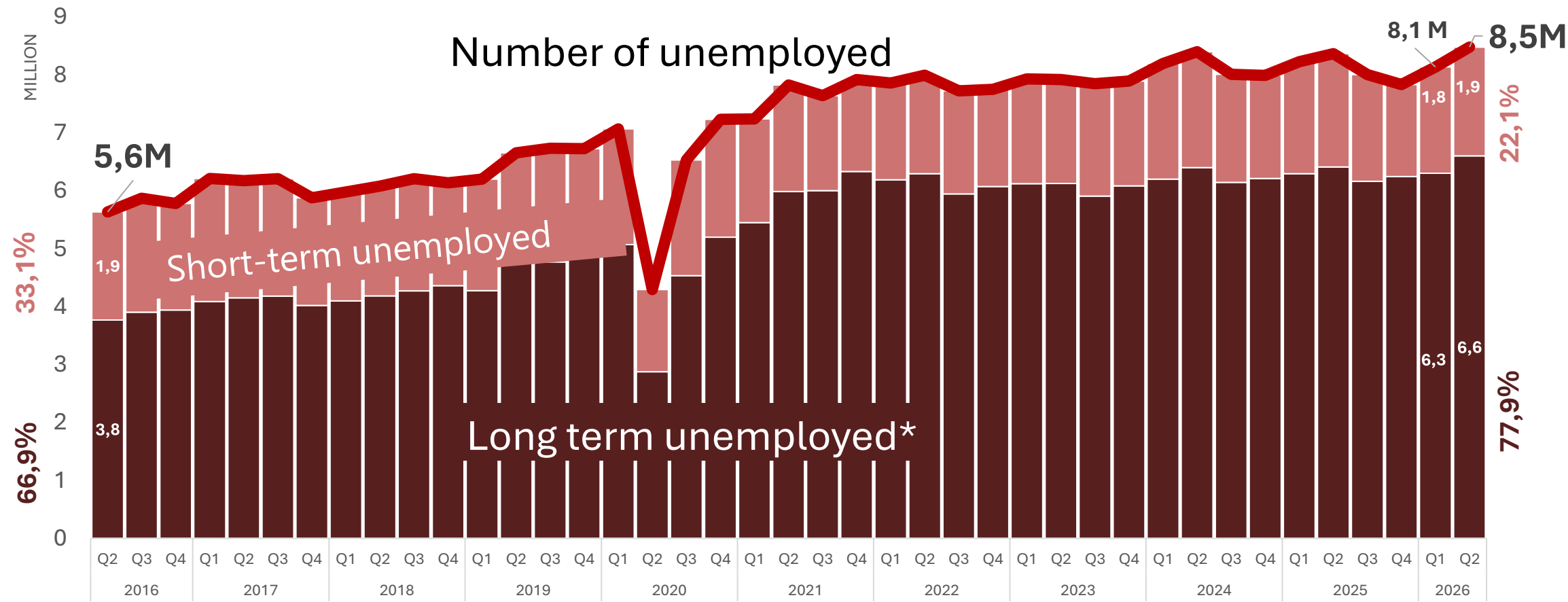
The **official unemployment rate** increased in six provinces between Q1:2026 and Q2:2026, with *the largest increases recorded in EC, NW, and KZN.*

Official unemployment rate by province: Q1:2026-Q2:2026



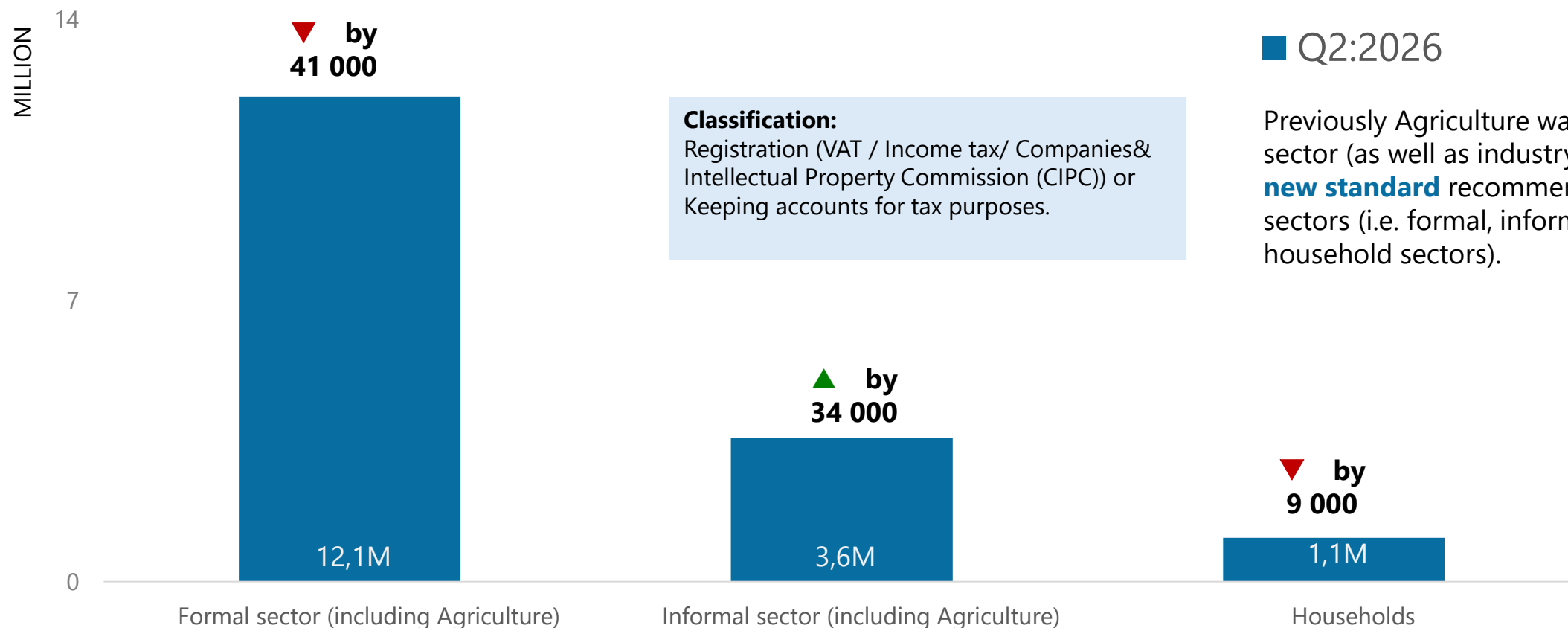
Between Q2:2016 and Q2:2026, the **number of unemployed** people in South Africa **increased from 5,6 million to 8,5 million**, with the proportion of those in long-term unemployment increasing from 66,9% to 77,9% over the same period.

*Long term unemployment–unemployed for a year or longer



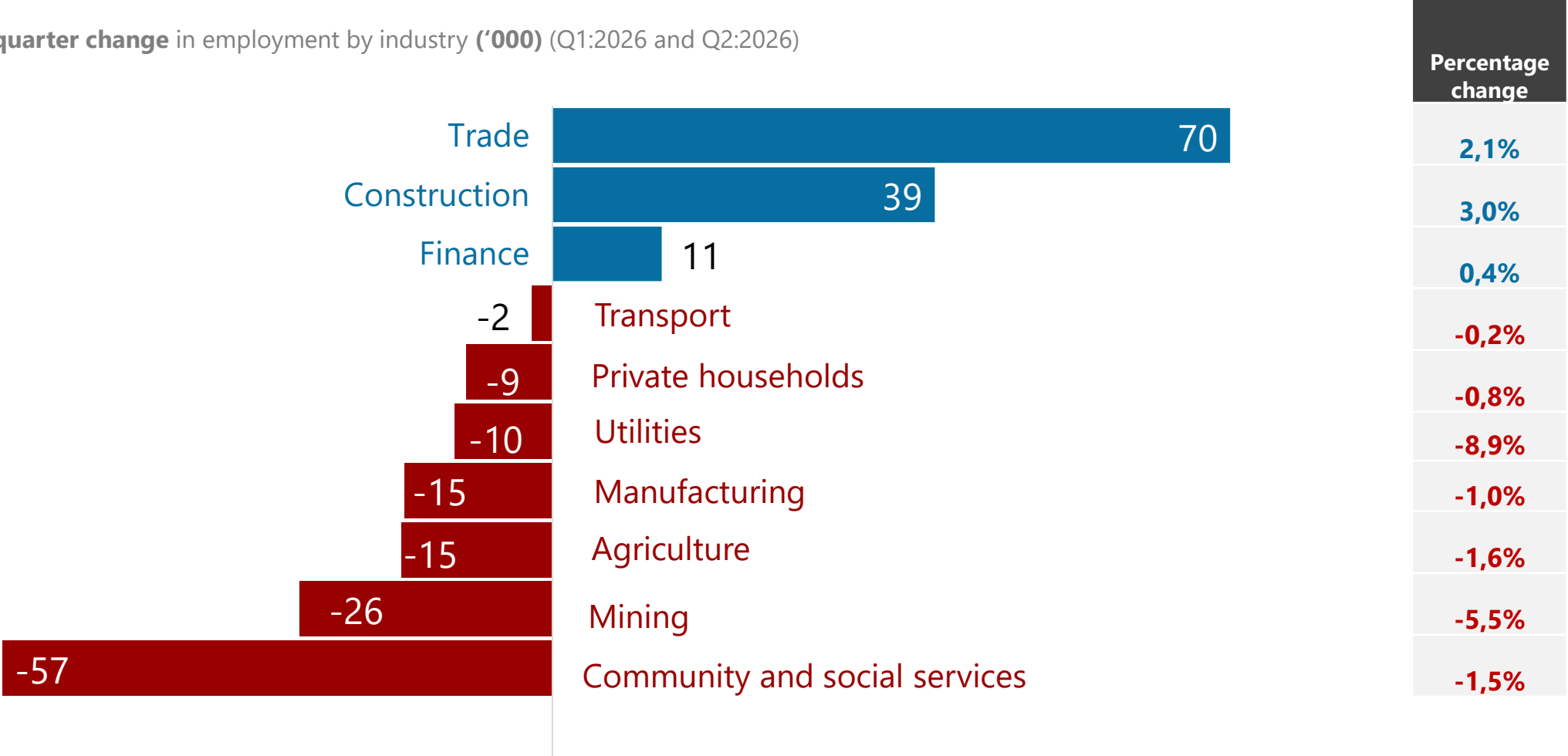
Formal sector employment decreased by **41 thousand jobs** between Q1:2026 and Q2:2026.

Employment by sector, (Quarter-on-quarter), *(New standard)*



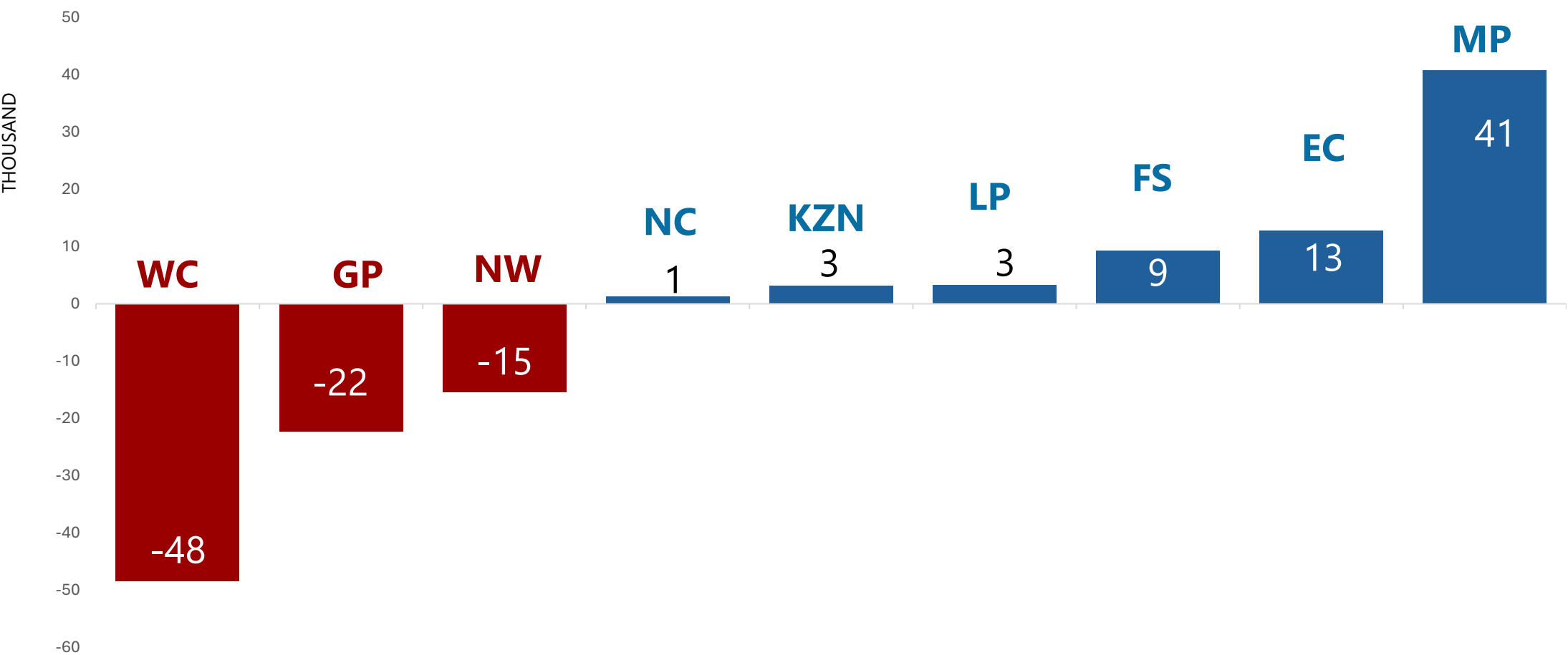
Employment decreases were mainly in the **Community and social services, Mining, Agriculture and Manufacturing industries**. However, **increases in employment** were recorded in the **Trade, Construction and Finance industries**.

Quarter-on-quarter change in employment by industry ('000) (Q1:2026 and Q2:2026)



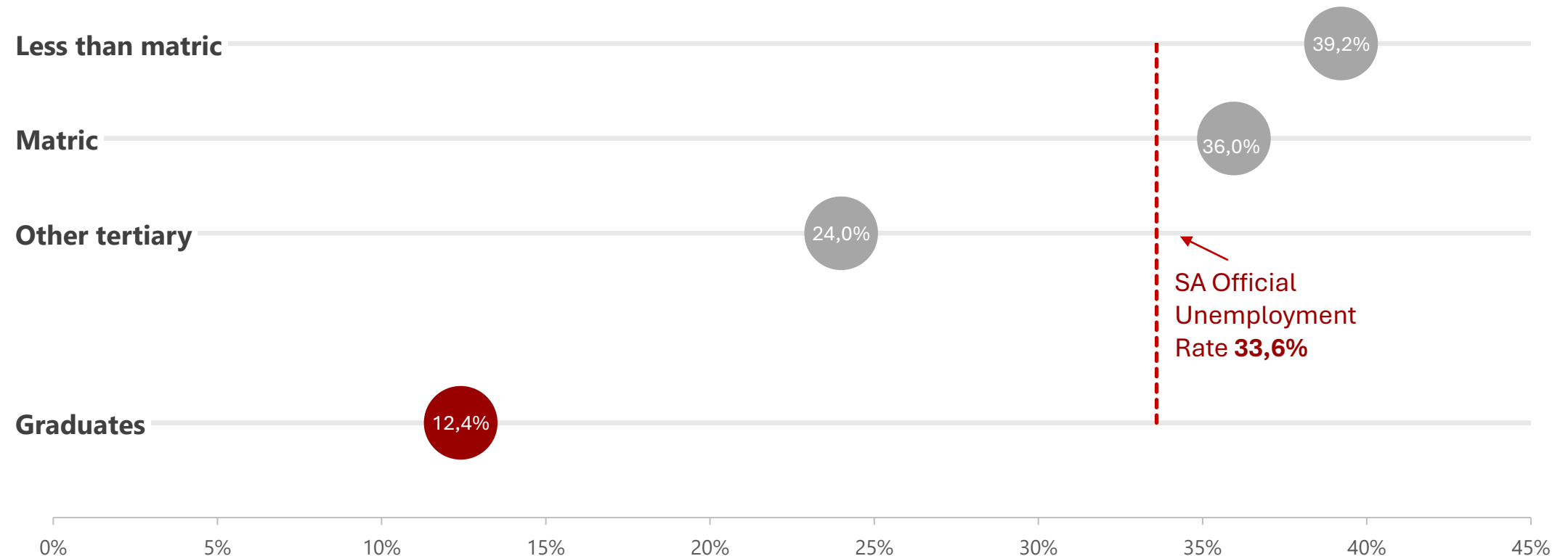
WC, GP and **NW** recorded the decreases in employment in Q2:2026, while **MP, EC and FS** recorded the largest increases in employment.

Quarter-on-quarter change in employment by province (Q1:2026 and Q2:2026)

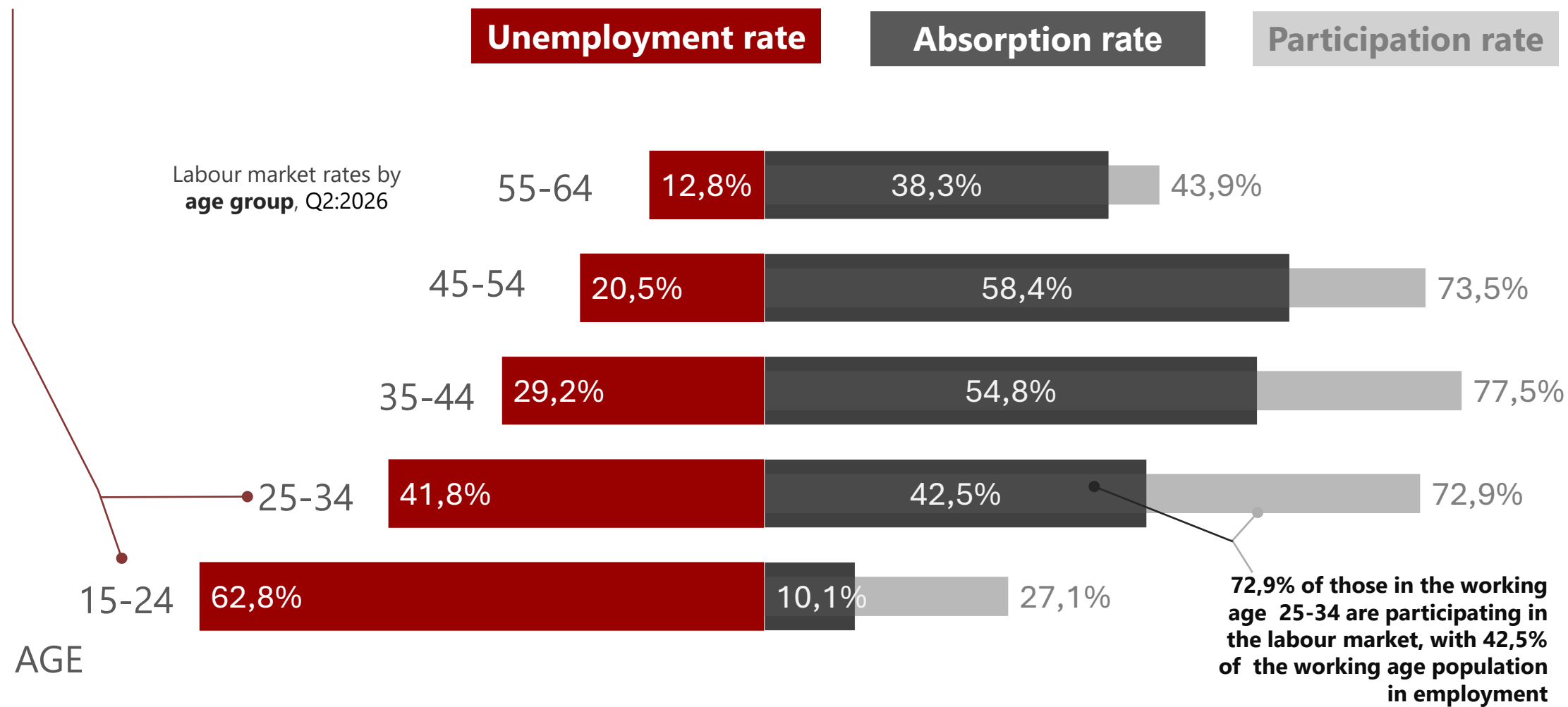


The Graduate unemployment rate increased by 0,2 of a percentage point from 12,2% in Q1:2026 to **12,4%** in Q2:2026. Those with **matric** and **less than matric** remain vulnerable with unemployment rates of 36,0% and 39,2%, respectively.

Official Unemployment rate by level of education, Q2:2026

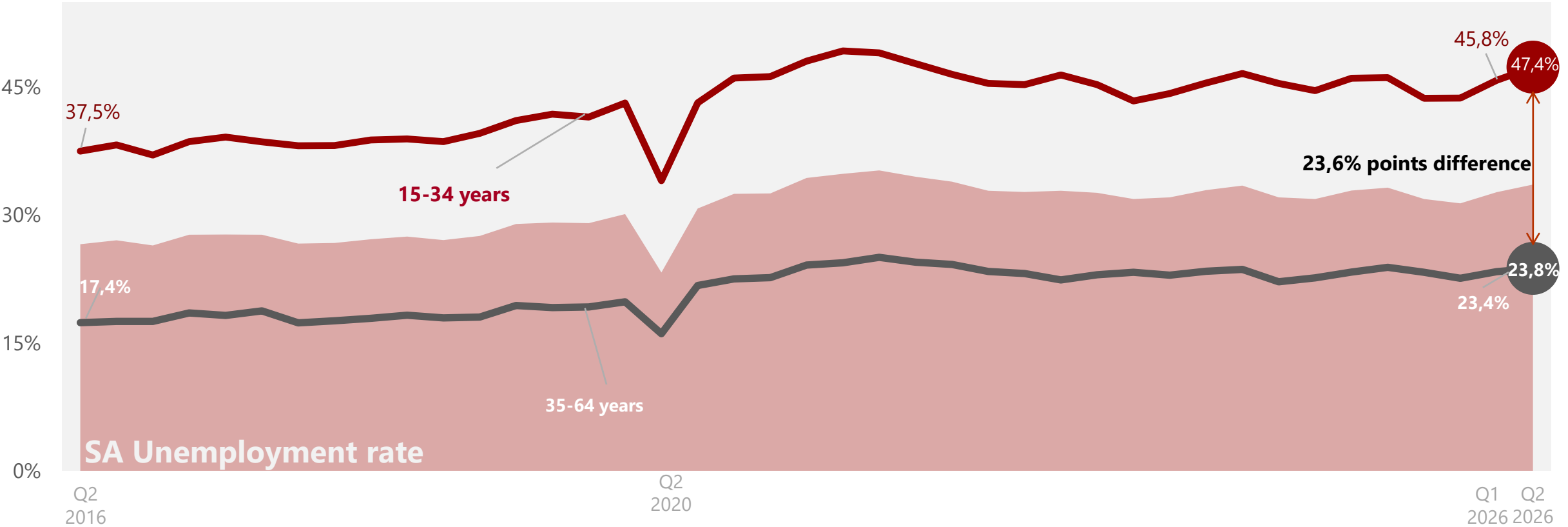


Youth aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years continue to have the highest unemployment rates at **62,8%** and **41,8%** respectively.

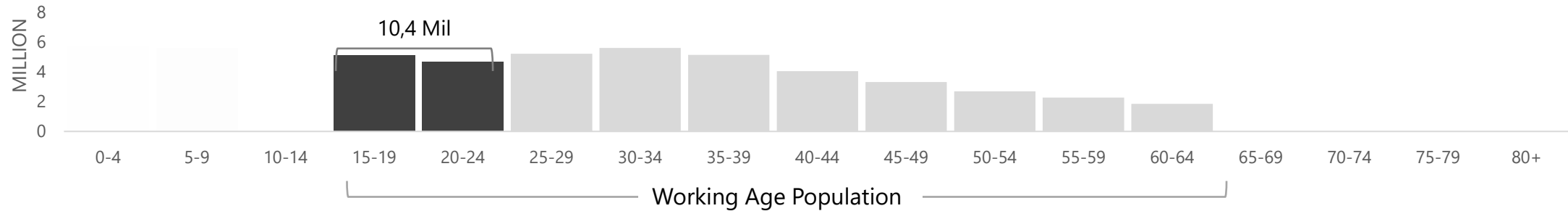


Youth aged **15-34 years** are more vulnerable to unemployment than older age groups, with their unemployment rate increasing by **9,9 percentage points** between Q2:2016 and Q2:2026.

Official Unemployment rates by age group, **Q2:2016-Q2:2026**



Approximately **3,8 million out of 10,4 million (or 36,4%)** young people aged 15-24 years were not in employment, education or training (NEET).



Number of NEET for ages 15-24
Q2:2026

**3,8 Million
NEET**

6,6 Million

**Employed or in
Education or Training**

Due to rounding numbers may not add up

The overall NEET rate (15 – 24 years) increased by 1,2 percentage points between Q2:2025 and Q2:2026.

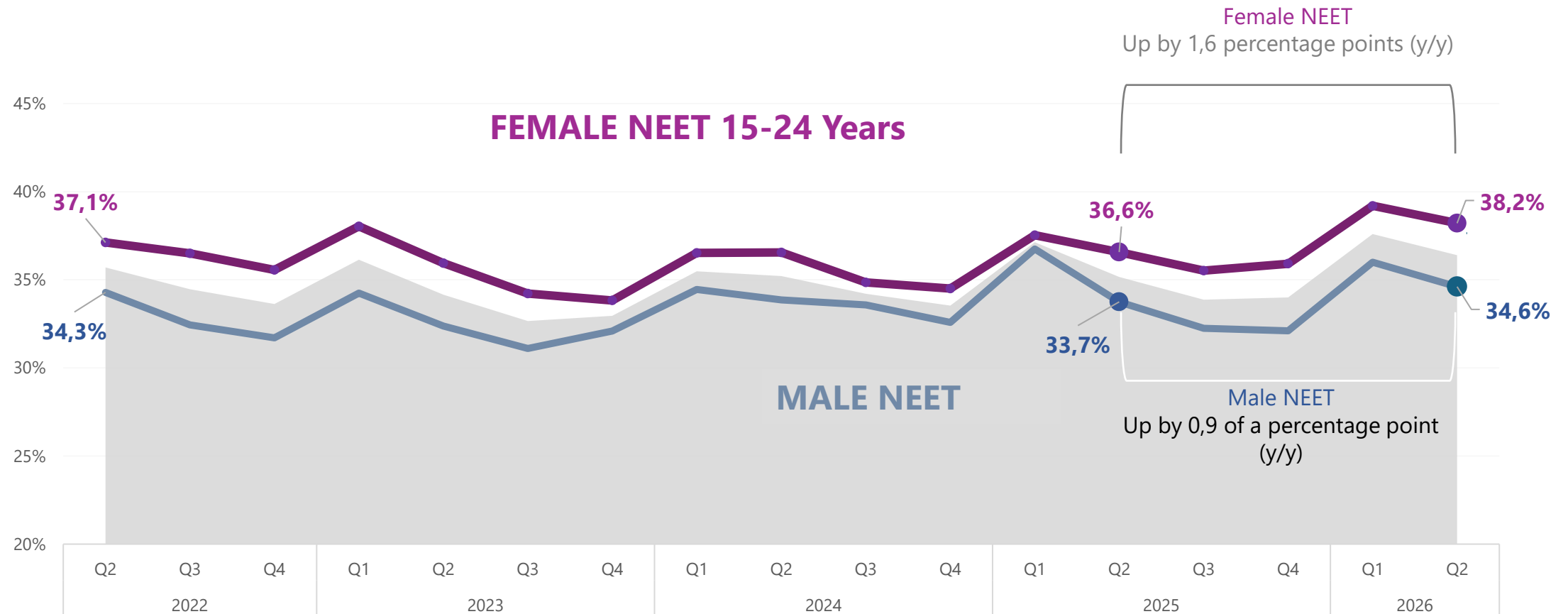
Q2:2022-Q2:2026 NEET rate for ages 15-24 & 15-34 year old



Due to rounding numbers may not add up

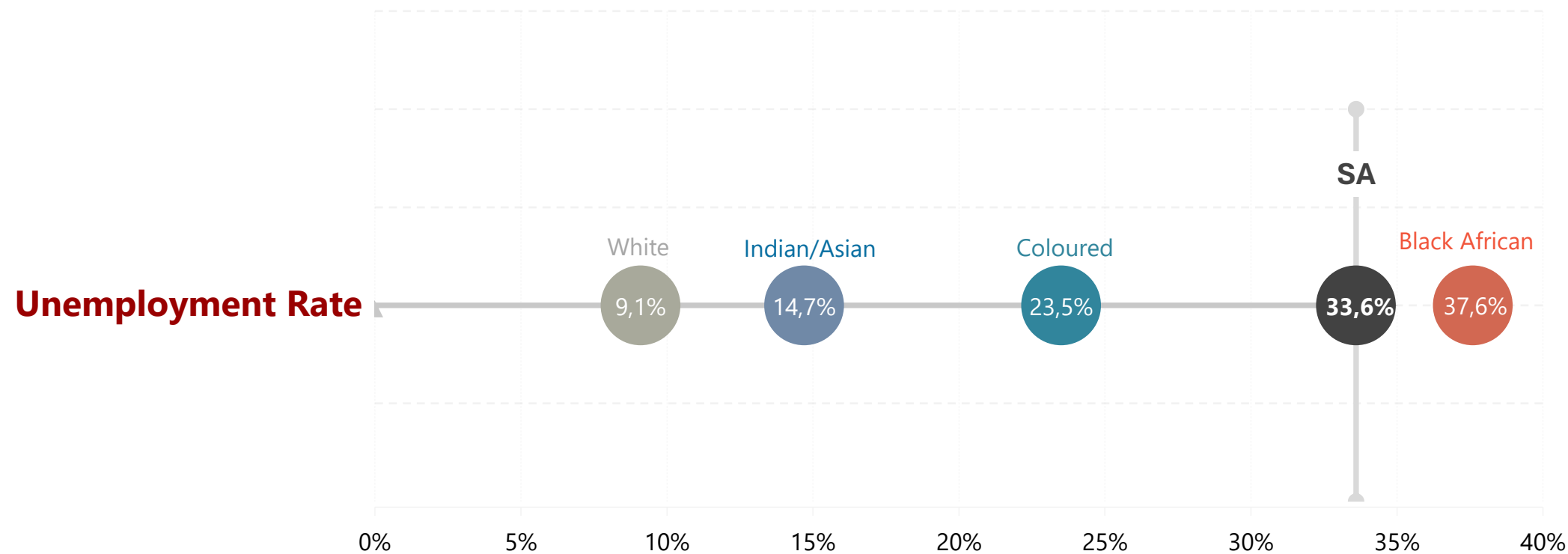
38,2% of young females aged 15-24 years were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Q2: 2026. This is a 1,6 percentage points increase compared to Q2: 2025.

NEET (15-24 years) by sex, Q2:2022-Q2:2026



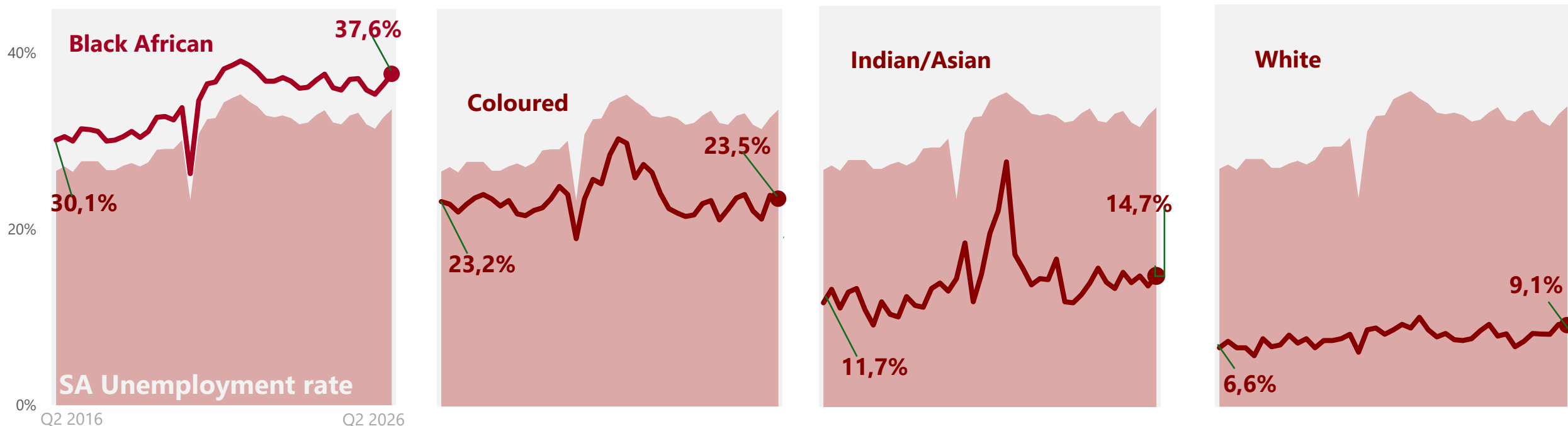
The unemployment rate among the **Black African (37,6%)** population group remains higher than the national average and other population groups.

OFFICIAL unemployment rate by population group, Q2:2026



The Black African unemployment rate has consistently been higher than the national average and other population groups over the past 10-year period.

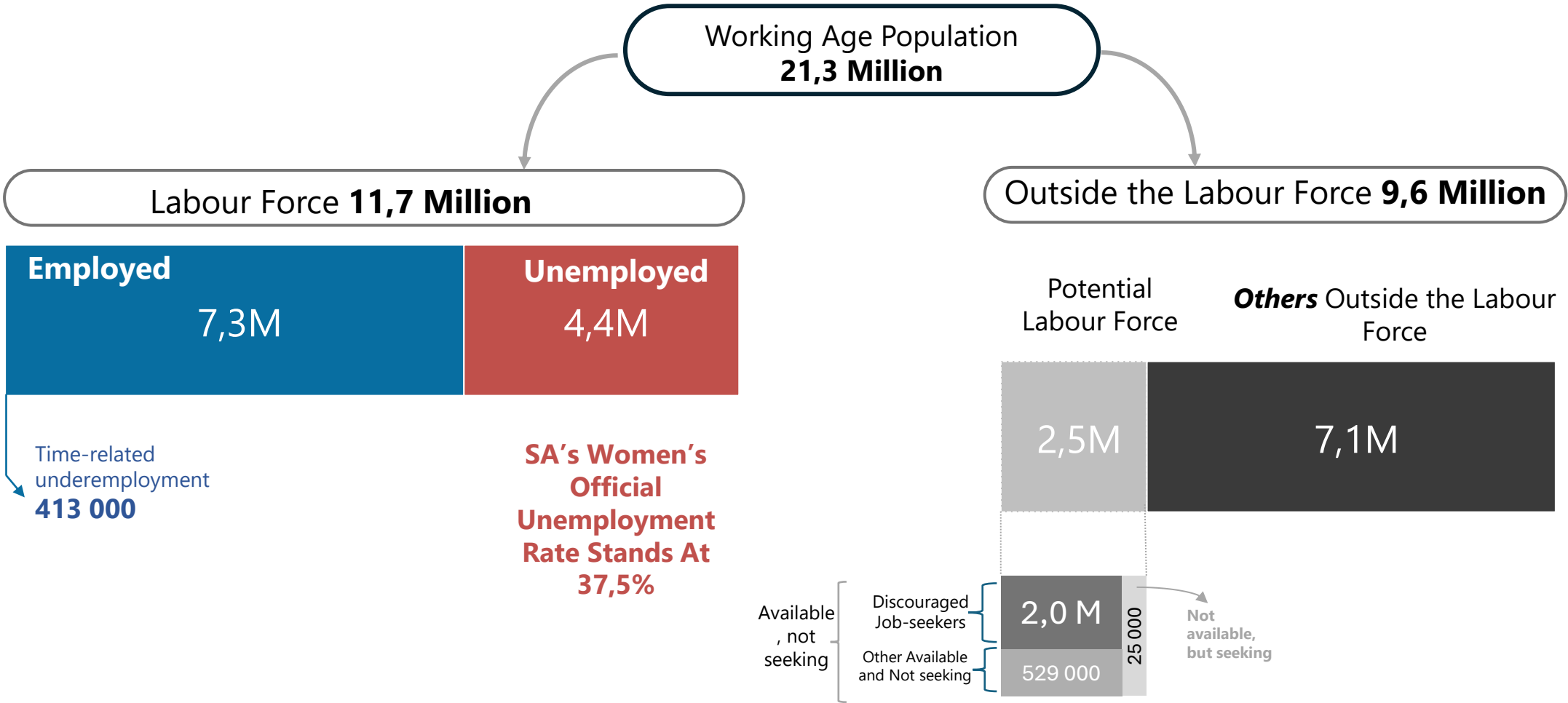
Official Unemployment rates by population group, Q2:2016-Q2:2026



Women in South Africa

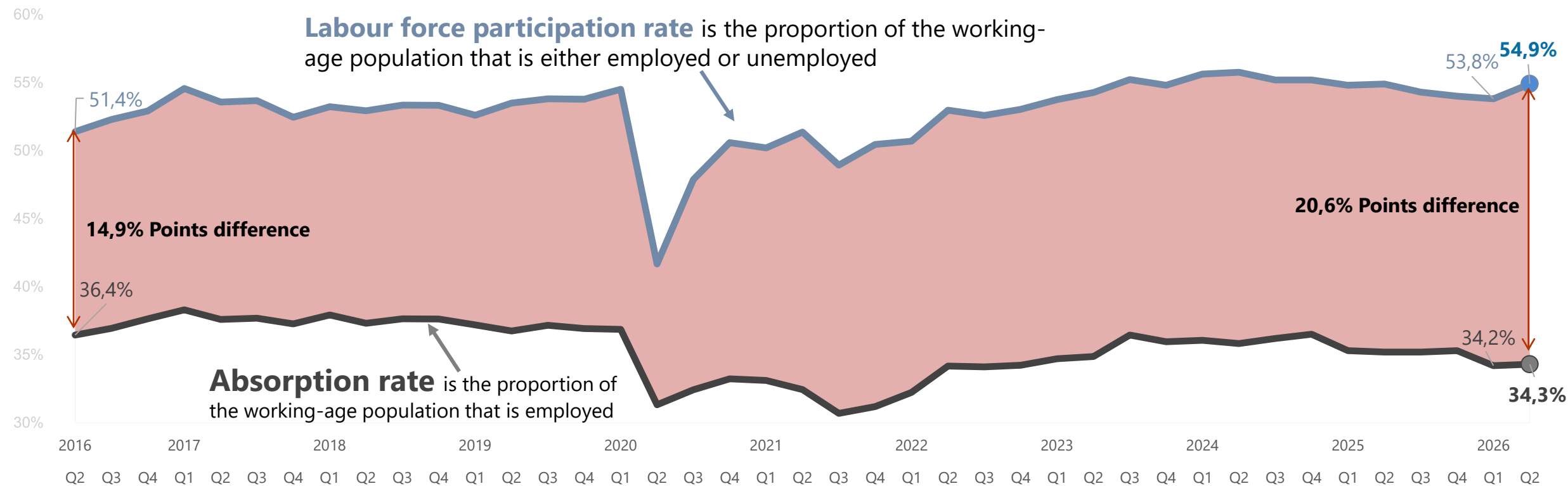


The **official unemployment rate** among South African **women** aged 15-64 stands at **37,5%** in Q2:2026.



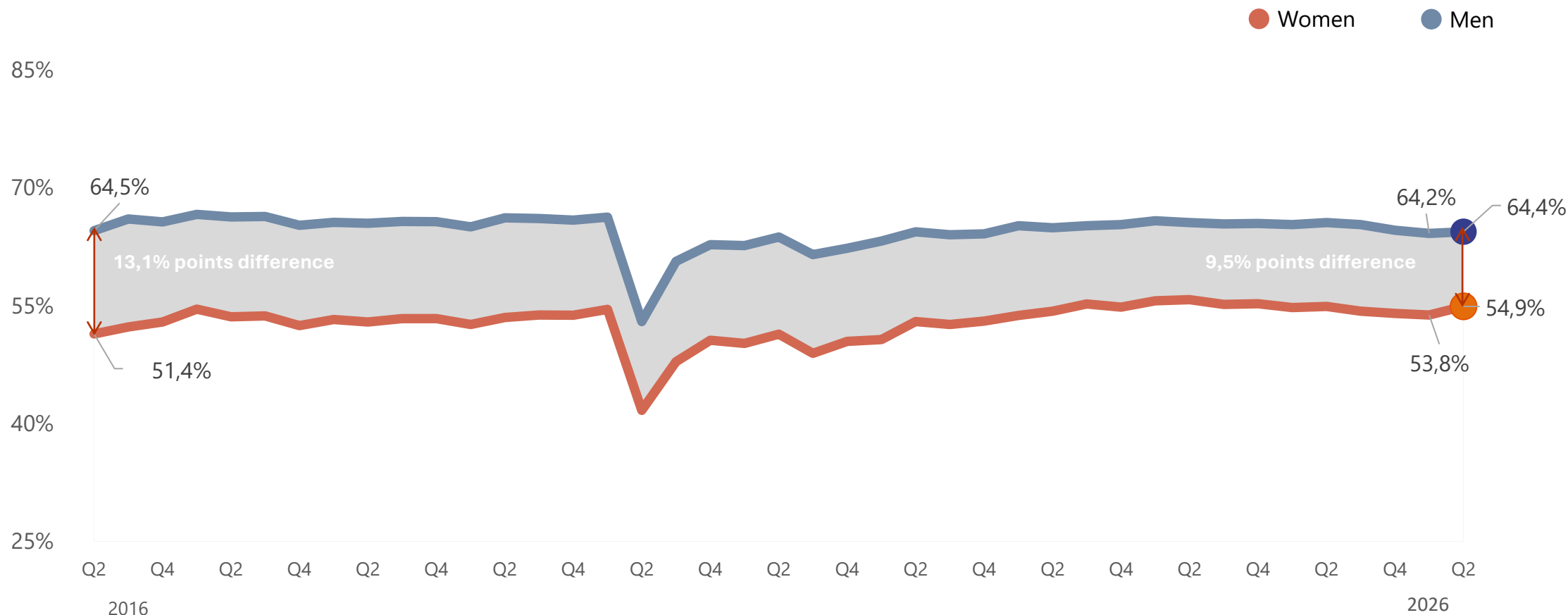
The **labour force participation rate** for women increased from 51,4% to 54,9% over a ten-year period, while the **absorption rate** decreased from 36,4% to 34,3% over the same period.

Labour force participation and absorption rates Q2:2016-Q2:2026



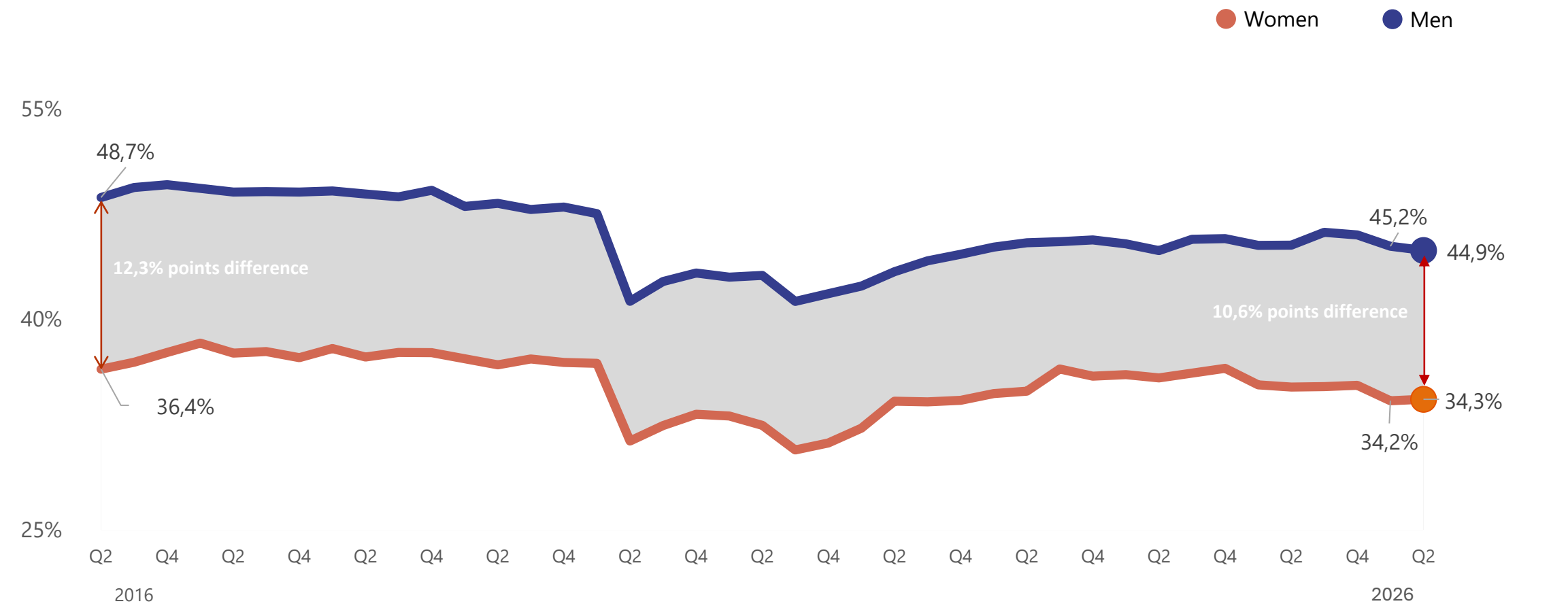
Although **women's** labour force participation rate has increased over time, **men's** participation in the labour force is higher than that of women.

Labour force participation by sex Q2:2016 - Q2:2026



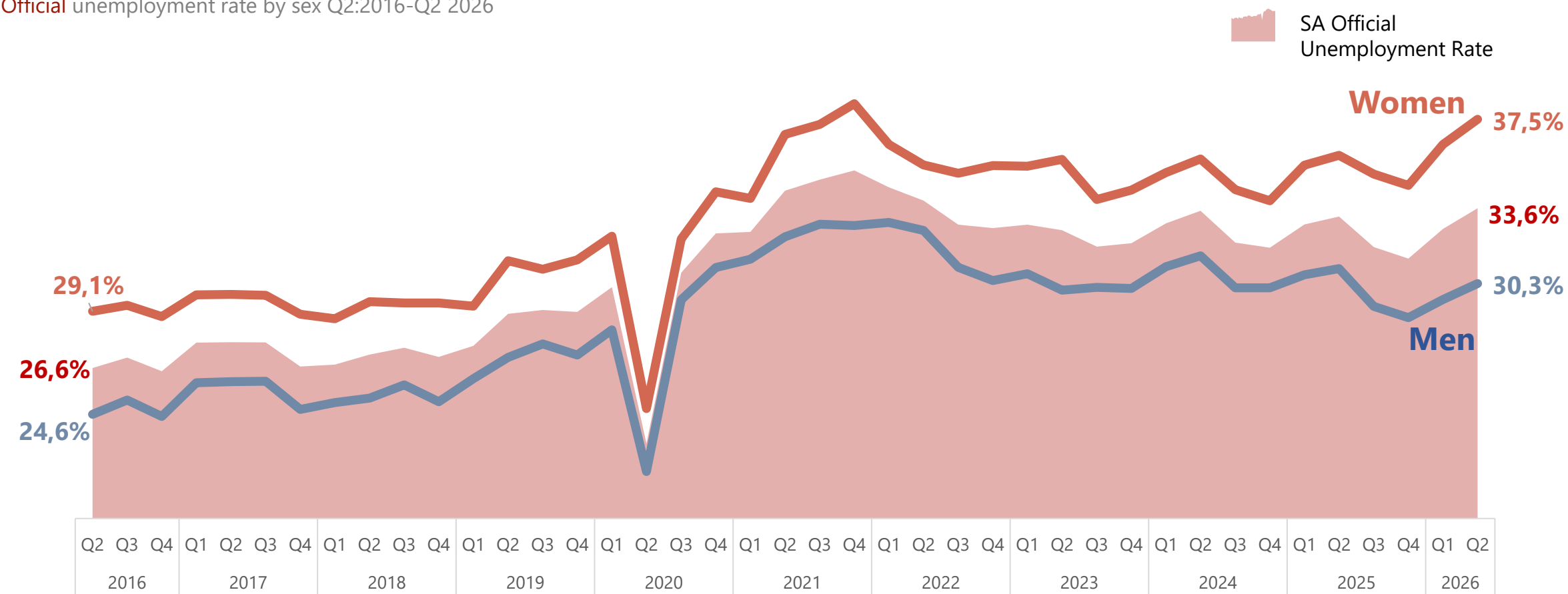
Women's **absorption rate** has been lower than that of men, with a 10,6 percentage points difference in Q2:2026.

Absorption rate by sex Q2:2016 - Q2:2026



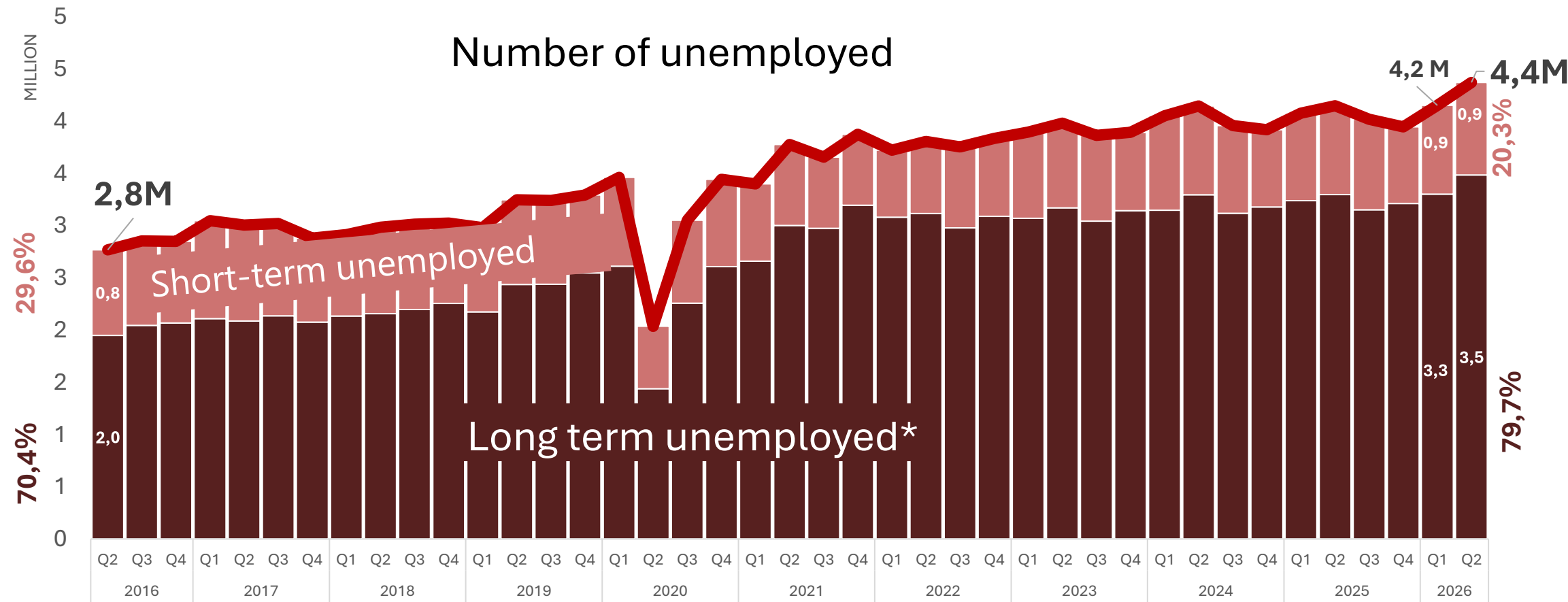
Since Q2:2016, the unemployment rate for women has consistently been higher than that of men. It increased from 29,1% in Q2:2016 to **37,5% in Q2:2026**.

Official unemployment rate by sex Q2:2016-Q2 2026



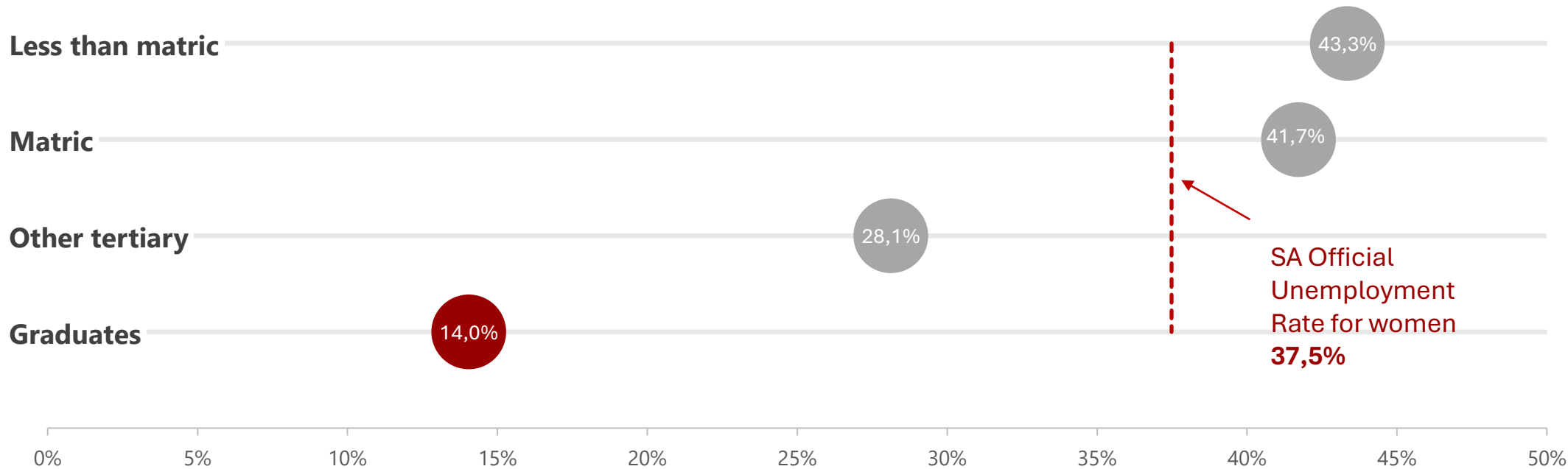
Between Q2:2016 and Q2:2026, the **number of unemployed** women in South Africa **increased from 2,8 million to 4,4 million**, with the proportion of those in long-term unemployment increasing from 70,4% to 79,7% over the same period.

*Long term unemployment–unemployed for a year or longer



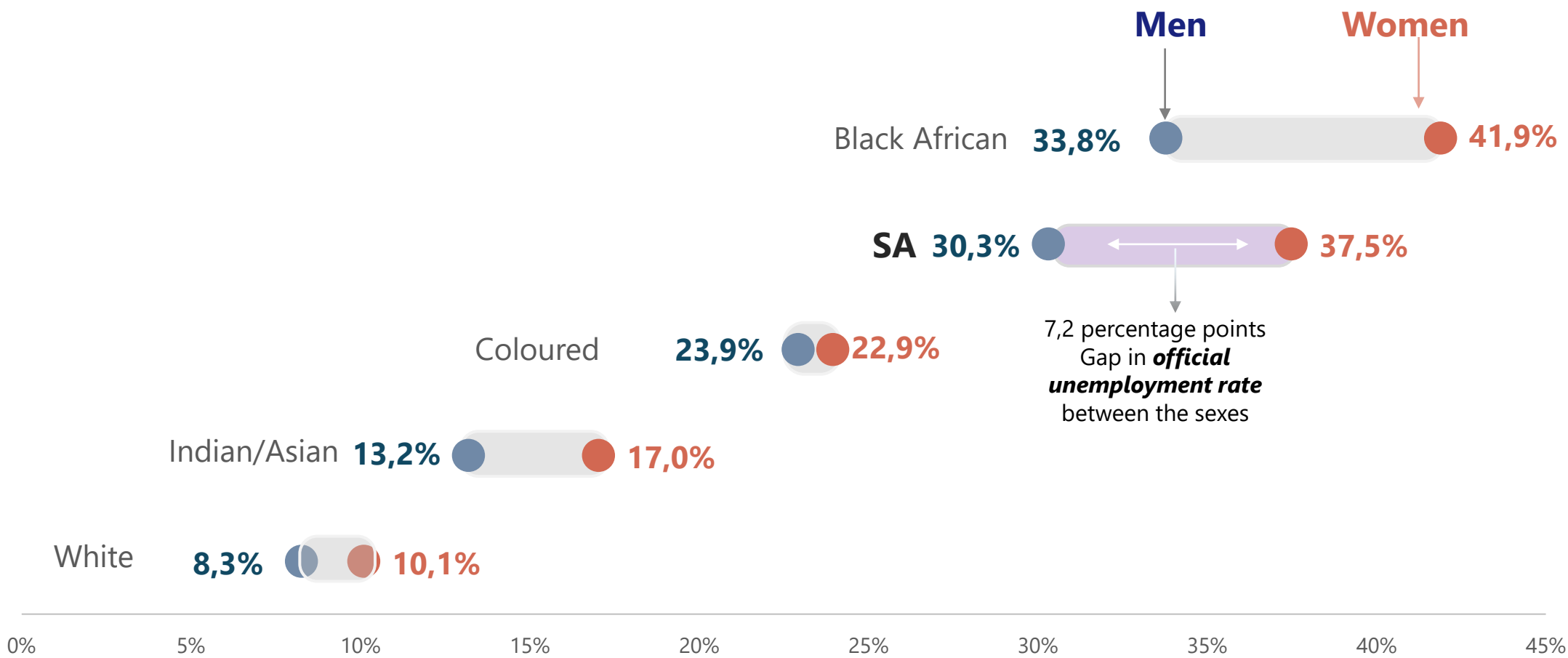
Graduate unemployment rate for women decreased by 0,1 of a percentage point from 14,1% in Q1:2026 to **14,0%** in Q2:2026. Those with **matric** and **less than matric** remain vulnerable with unemployment rates of 41,7% and 43,3%, respectively.

Official Unemployment rate by level of education, Q2:2026



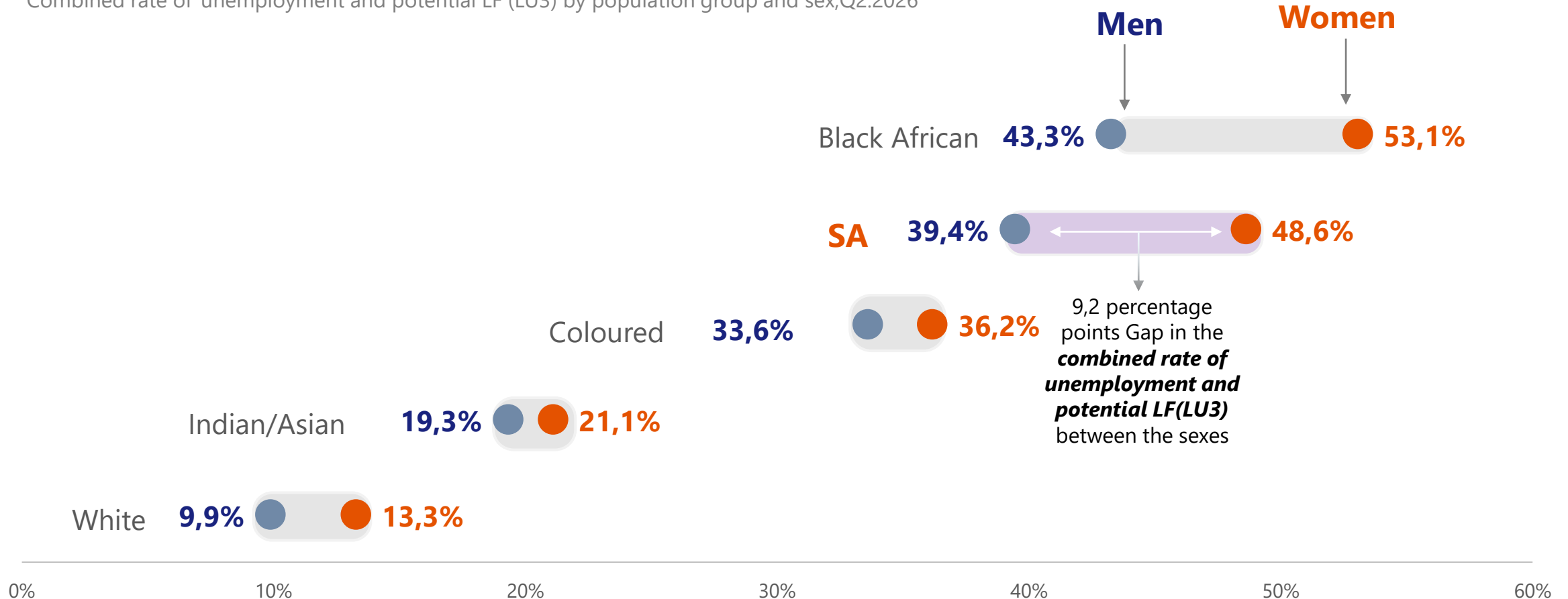
Black African women continue to be the most vulnerable with an unemployment rate of **41,9%** in Q2:2026. *This is 4,4 percentage points higher than the national average for women at 37,5%.*

Official unemployment rate by population group and sex, Q2:2026



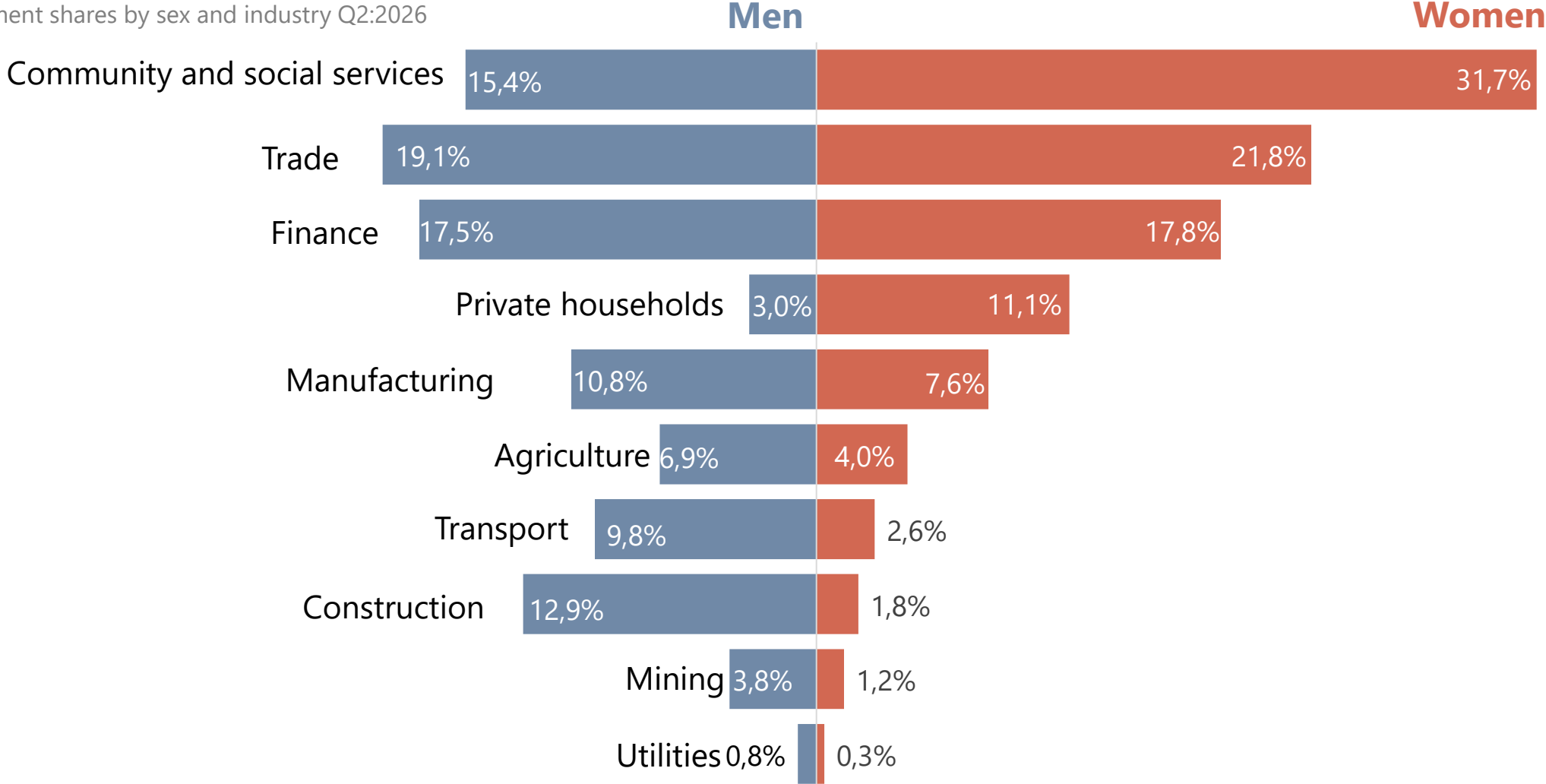
Using the combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (LU3) definition, **Gender disparity** persists throughout all population groups.

Combined rate of unemployment and potential LF (LU3) by population group and sex, Q2:2026



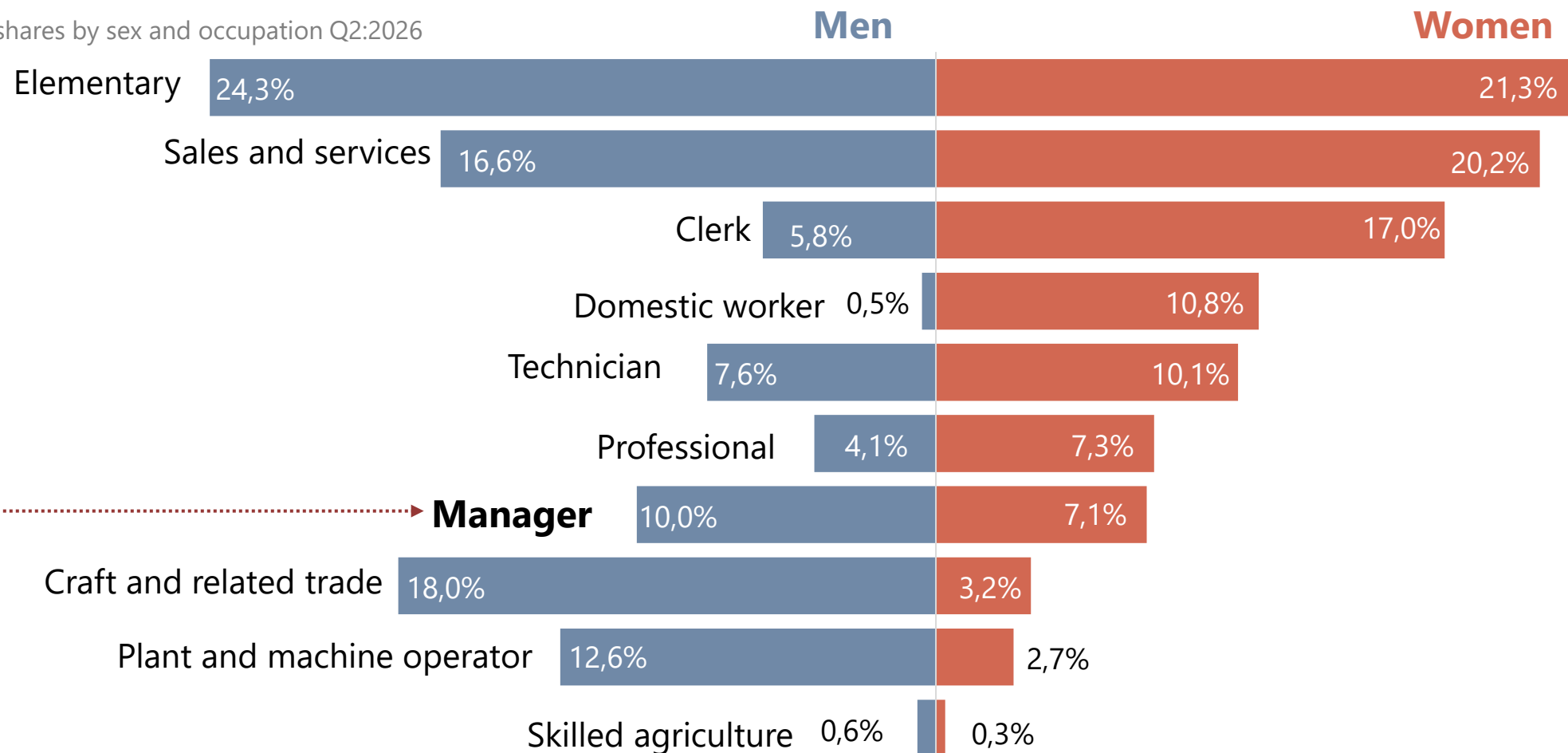
Women were more likely to be employed in **Community and social services, Trade, Finance and Private households** compared to men.

Employment shares by sex and industry Q2:2026



- **Women** occupying managerial positions account for **7,1%** compared to **10,0%** for men. *Women were more likely to be employed in sales and services, clerical work, domestic work, technical and professional occupations compared to men.*

Employment shares by sex and occupation Q2:2026



RECAP (QLFS, Q2:2026)

- ❖ The unemployment rate **increased** by 0,9 of a percentage point to 33,6% in Q2:2026.
- ❖ There is a considerable gap of 10,2 percentage points between the official unemployment rate **LU1 (33,6%)** and the combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force **(LU3) (43,8%)**, indicating that there is an unmet need for employment among the working-age population.
- ❖ The absorption rate **decreased** by 0,1 of a percentage point, while the labour force participation rate **increased** by 0,6 of a percentage point in Q2:2026 compared to Q1:2026.
- ❖ The number of unemployed persons **increased** by 345 000 in Q2:2026 compared to Q1:2026, while the number of employed persons **decreased** by 16 000 over the same period.
- ❖ The largest **employment losses** were recorded in the Community and social services (57 000), Mining (26 000), Agriculture and Manufacturing (15 000 each) industries. **Employment gains** were recorded in Trade (70 000), Construction (39 000) and Finance (11 000) industries.
- ❖ Women are more likely to be employed in **Community and social services, Trade and Finance** industries, as well as in Sales and services, Clerical work, domestic work and technical occupations .



NOW IN THE FIELD

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION



General Household Survey (January-December)



Governance, Public Safety and Justice Survey (April 2026-March 2027)



Quarterly Labour Force Survey (Collected quarterly)



Domestic Tourism Survey (January-December)



Consumer Price Index (Collected monthly)



Quarterly Labour Force Survey Parallel.



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Ndzi hela kwala!



statssa.gov.za



twitter.com/StatsSA



facebook.com/StatsSA



stats sa

Department:
Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

