

Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) Q3:2025

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stats sa

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH DATA ECOSYSTEMS



We follow International Labour Organisation Standards and Guidelines



Stats SA is Responsive to labour market changes

Changes within the labour market dynamics both locally and internationally require revisions to existing surveys.

In line with international best practice, Stats SA adopted the resolutions of the **International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS)**.

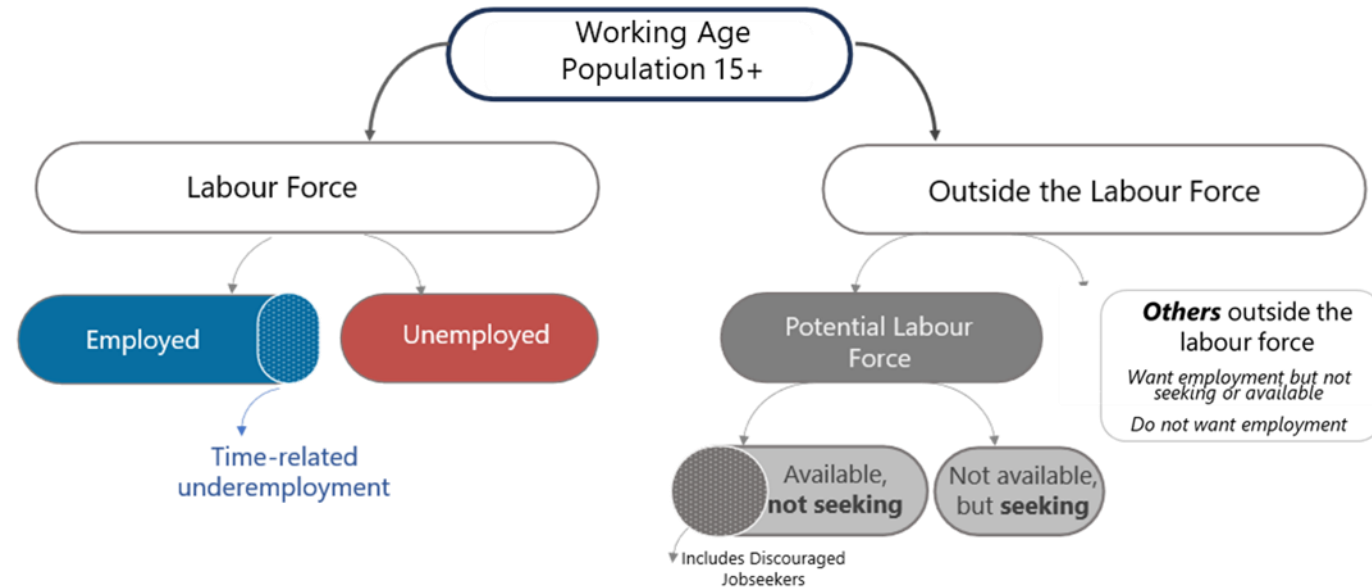
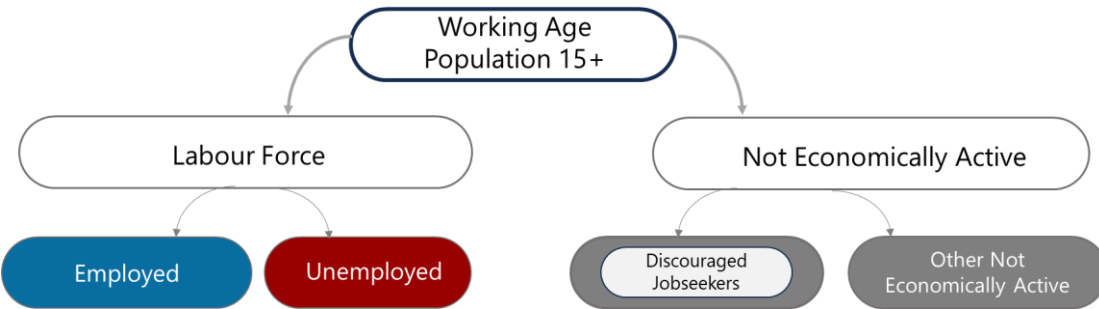
The methodologies and standards in this QLFS have been adapted to comply with recent international best practices in the fields of:

- Statistics on **work, employment and labour underutilisation** (19th ICLS in 2013)
- Statistics on **work relationships** (20th ICLS in 2018)
- Statistics on **informal economy** (21st ICLS in 2023)

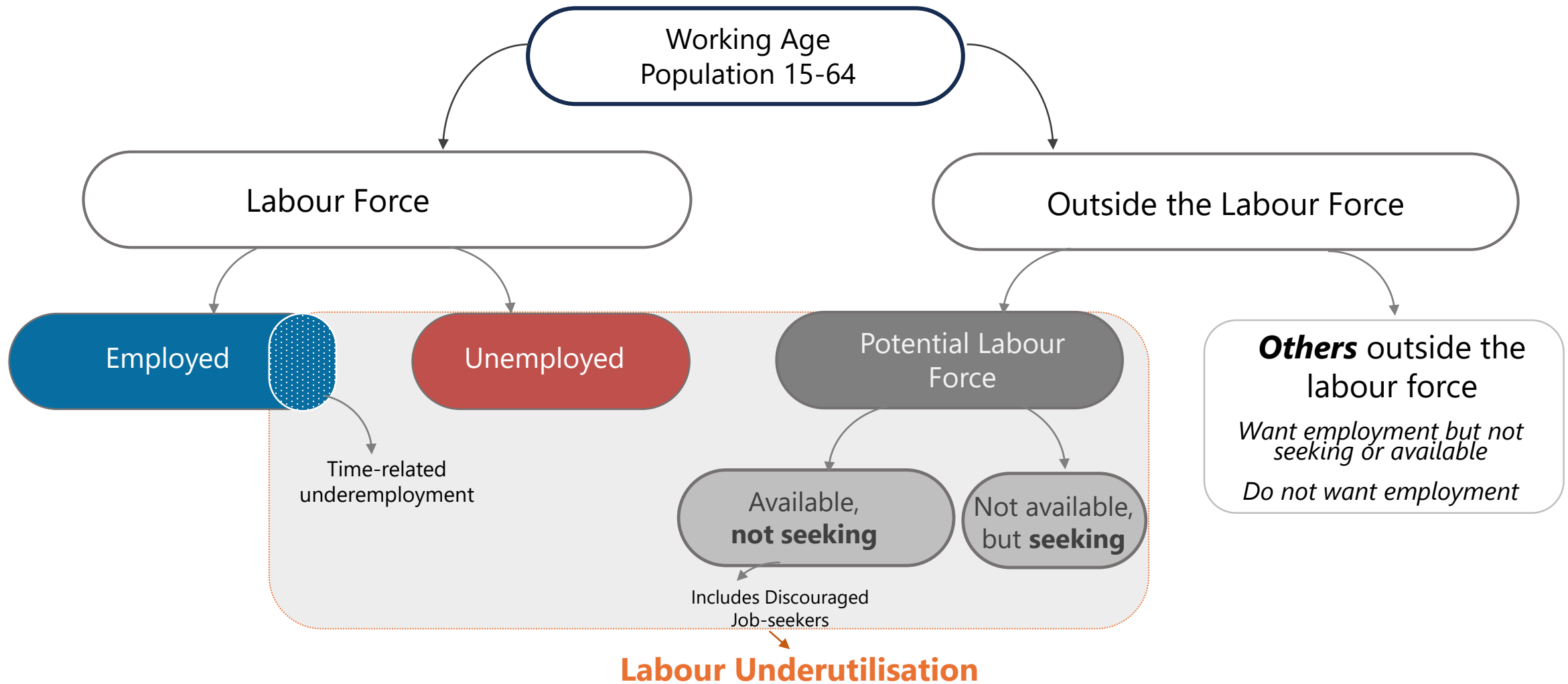
Stats SA adopting more recent ICLS resolutions for reporting

◀ Before

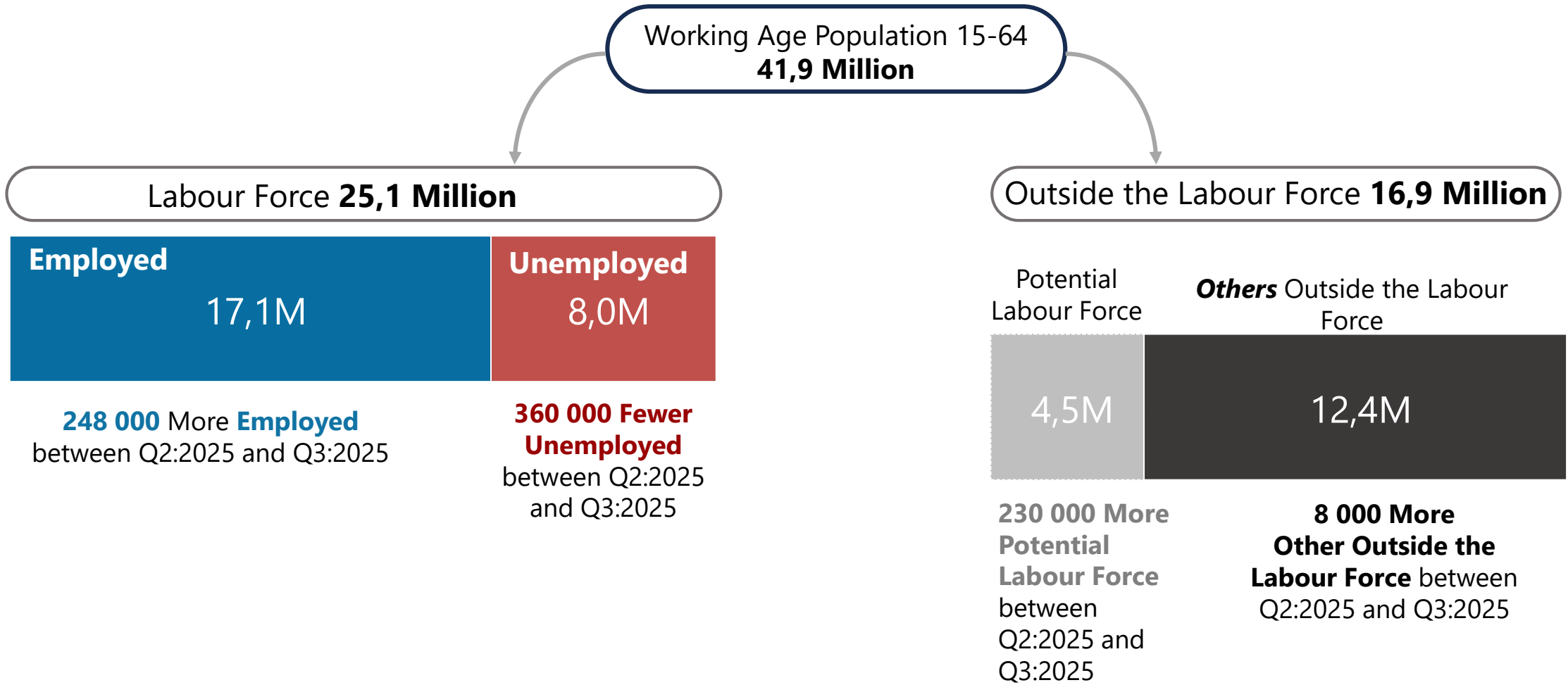
▶ Now



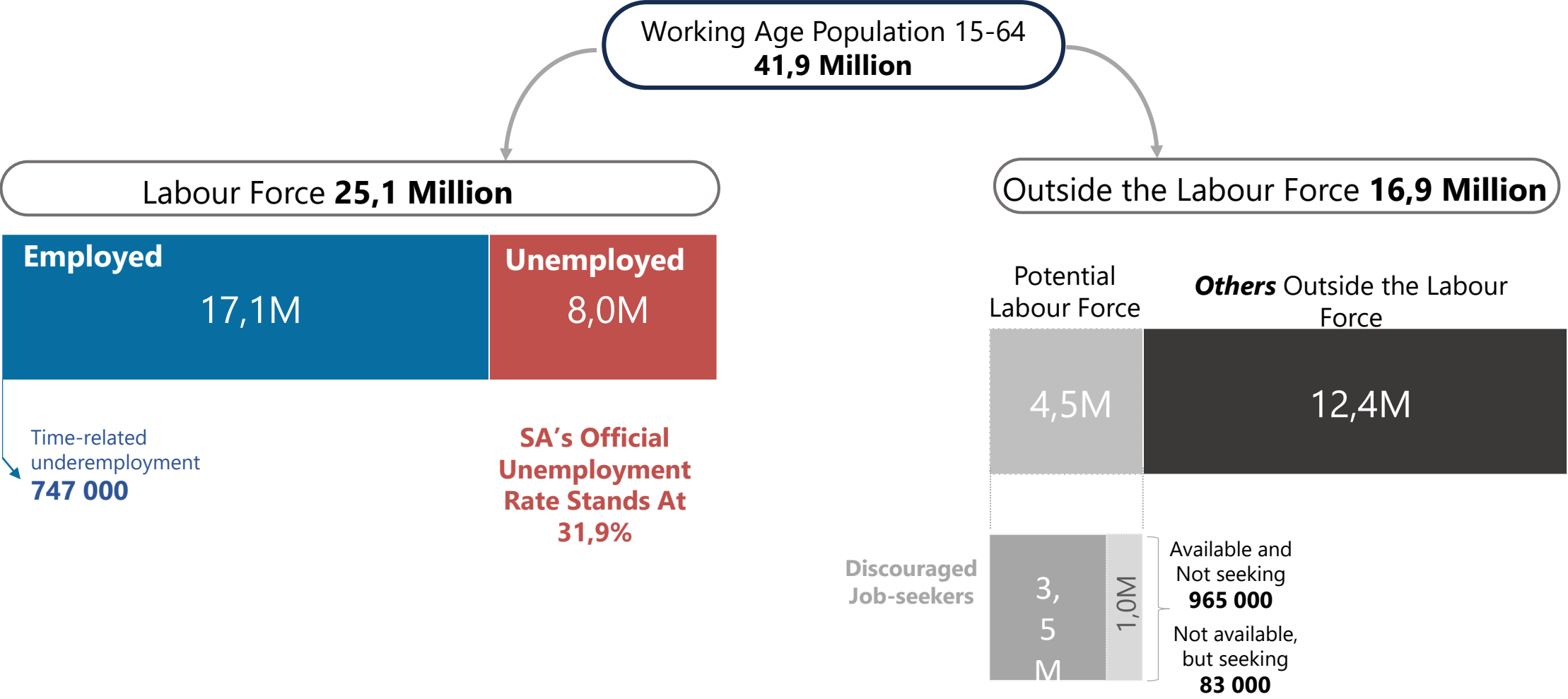
Labour Statistics now report on a greater variety of labour indicators



There were **360 thousand fewer people unemployed** in Q3:2025 than in Q2:2025.



The official **unemployment rate decreased** by 1,3 percentage points to **31,9%** in Q3:2025 compared to Q2:2025.

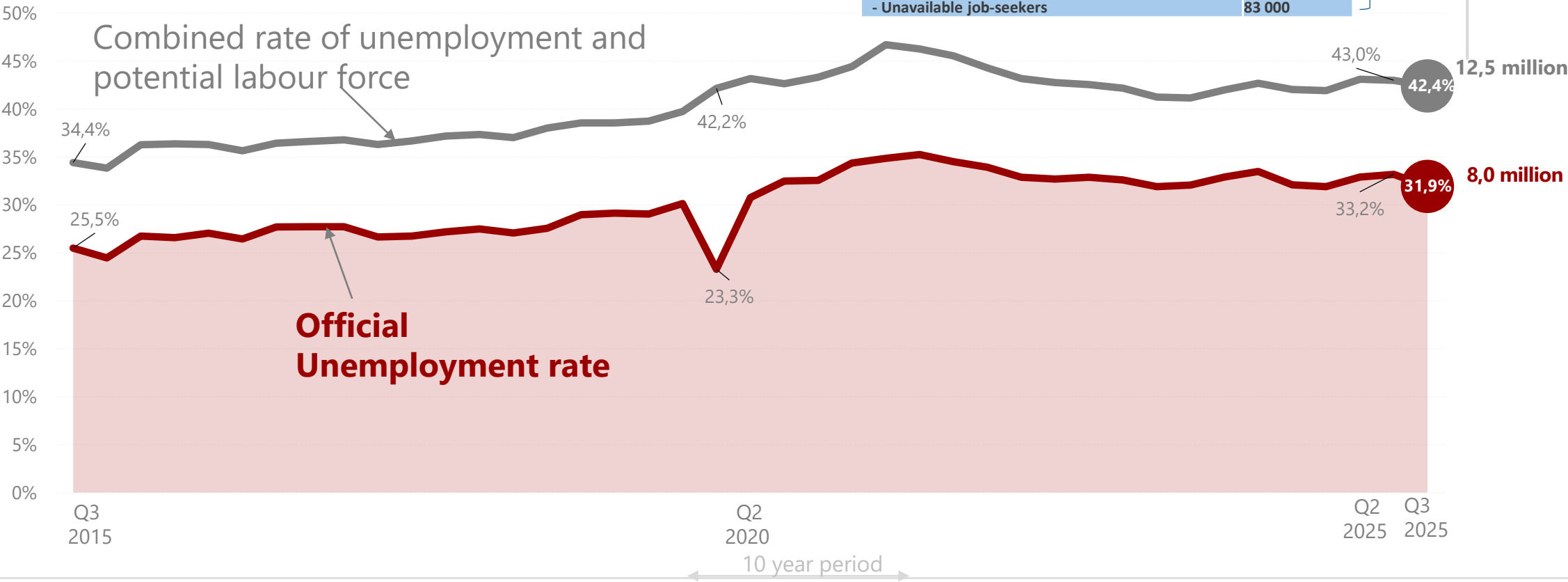


The combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (LU3) **decreased by 0,6 of a percentage point** to **42,4%** in Q3:2025 compared to Q2:2025.

Official UR vs combined rate of unemployment and potential LF (LU3): Q3:2015-Q3:2025

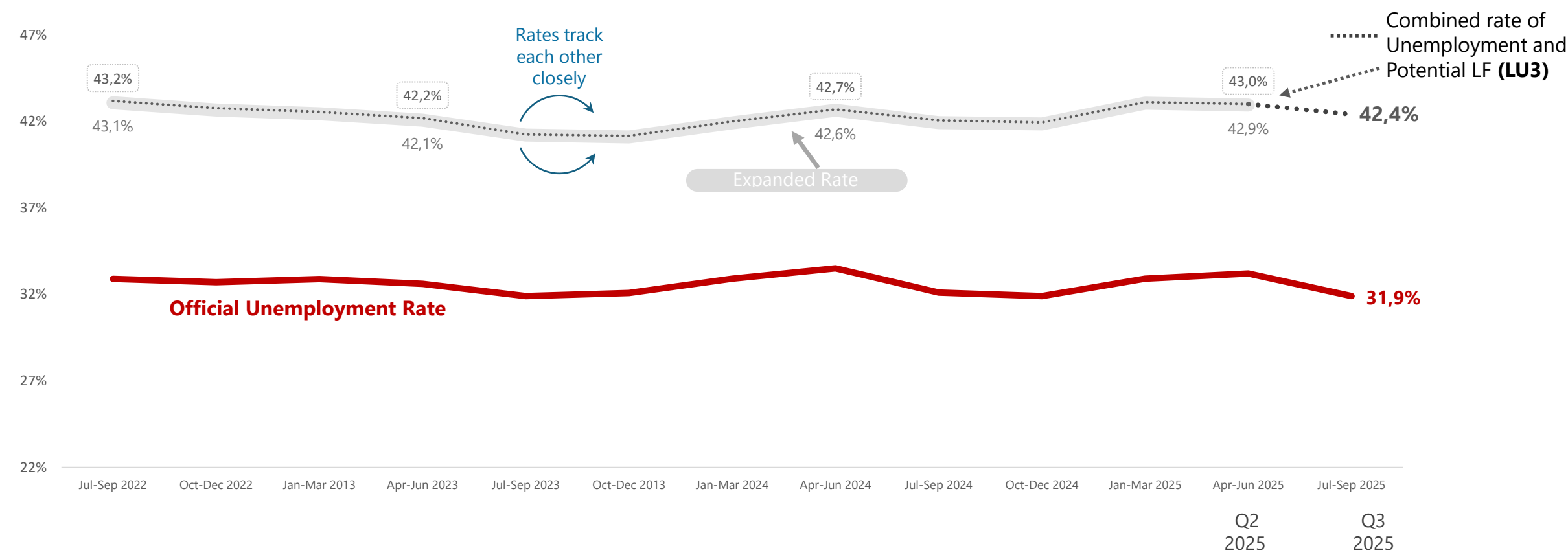
Combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force includes the following:	
- Official unemployment (searched and available)	8,0 M
- Available to work but are/or	
• Discouraged job-seekers	3,5 M
• Have other reasons for not searching	965 000
- Unavailable job-seekers	83 000

Potential LF



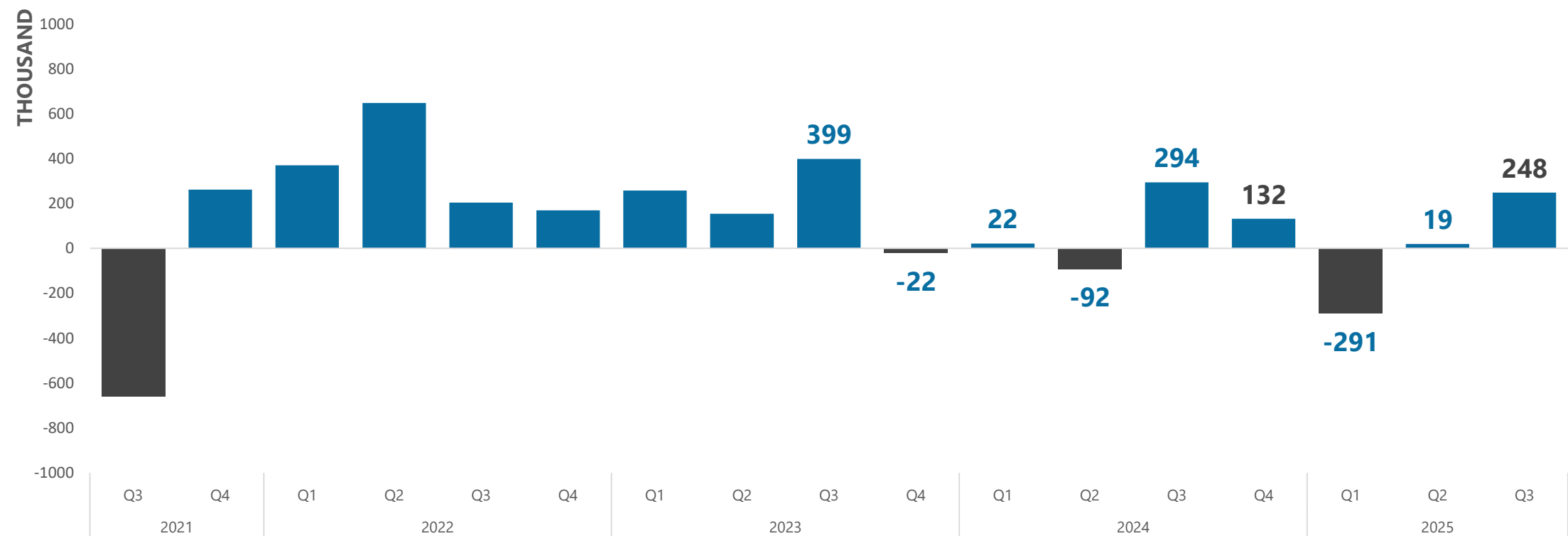
Stats SA provided **Expanded UR** until Q2 now **from Q3 we report Combined Rate (LU3)** but the rates are almost the same.

Official UR and Expanded UR vs Combined rate of Unemployment and Potential LF (LU3): Q3:2022-Q3:2025



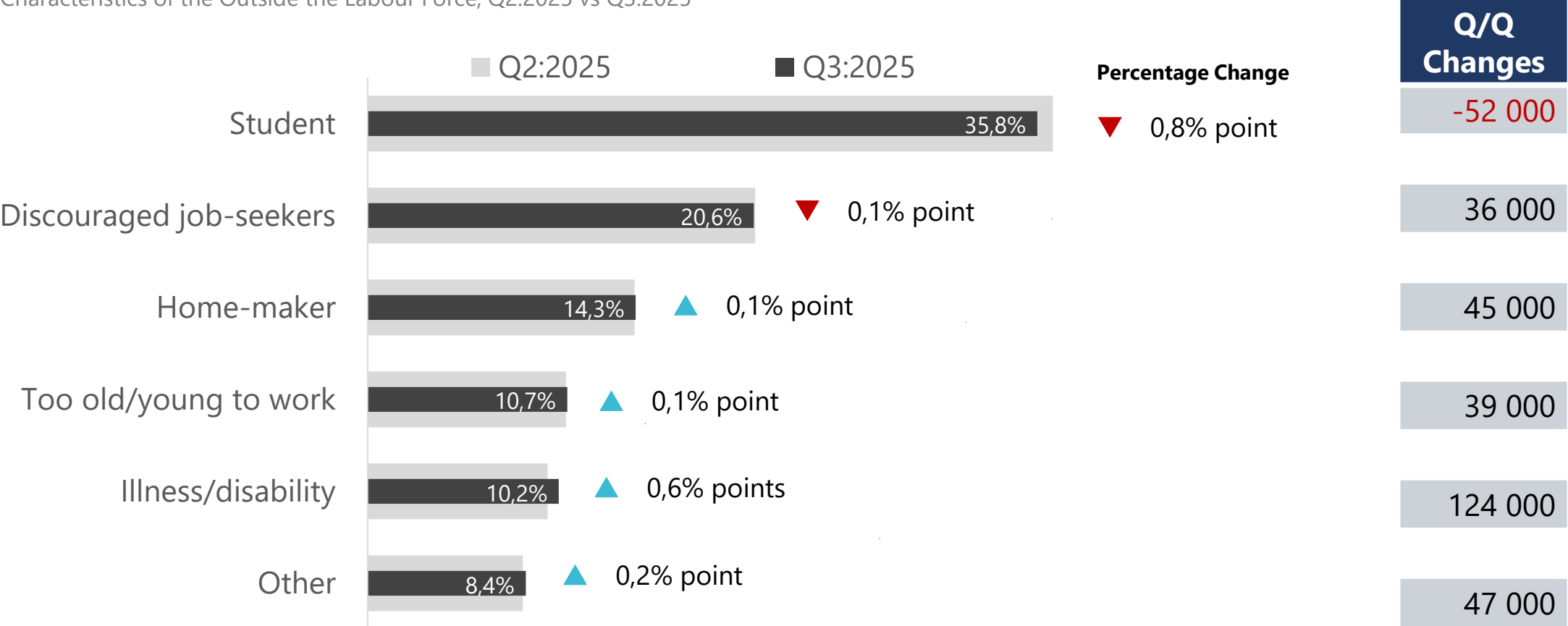
Employment increased by 248 000 in the third quarter of 2025, following an increase of **19 000** in the second quarter of 2025.

Employment changes: Q3:2021-Q3:2025 (Quarter-on-quarter)



The number of persons **Outside the Labour Force** increased by **239 000** in Q3:2025 compared to Q2:2025.

Characteristics of the Outside the Labour Force, Q2:2025 vs Q3:2025

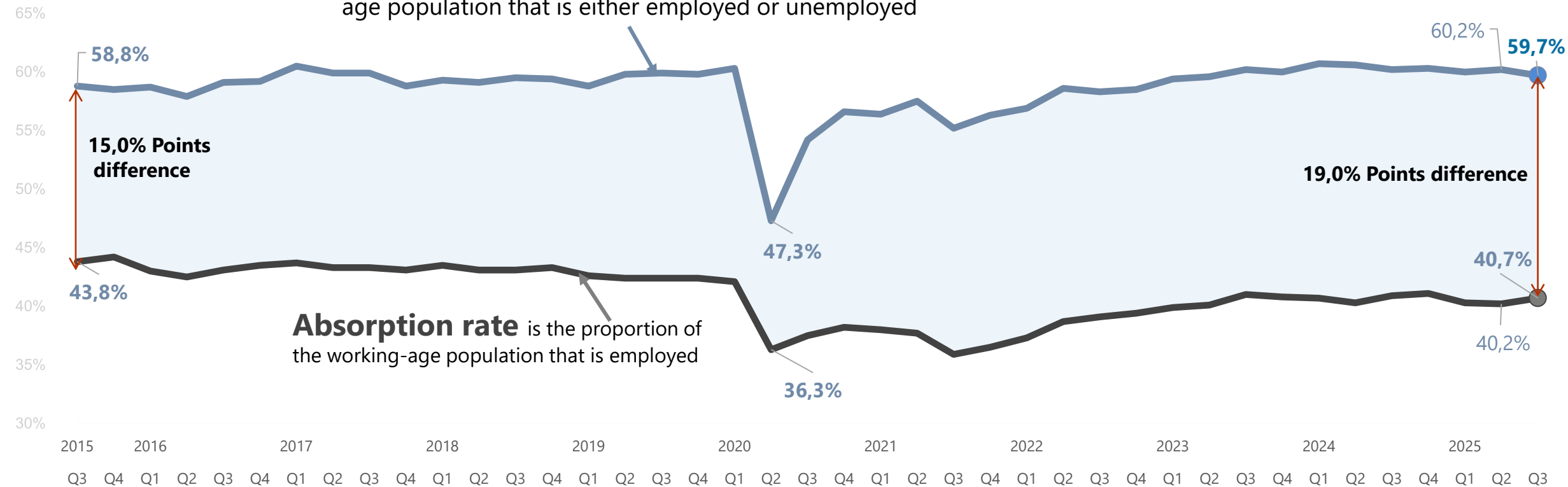


Due to rounding numbers may not add up

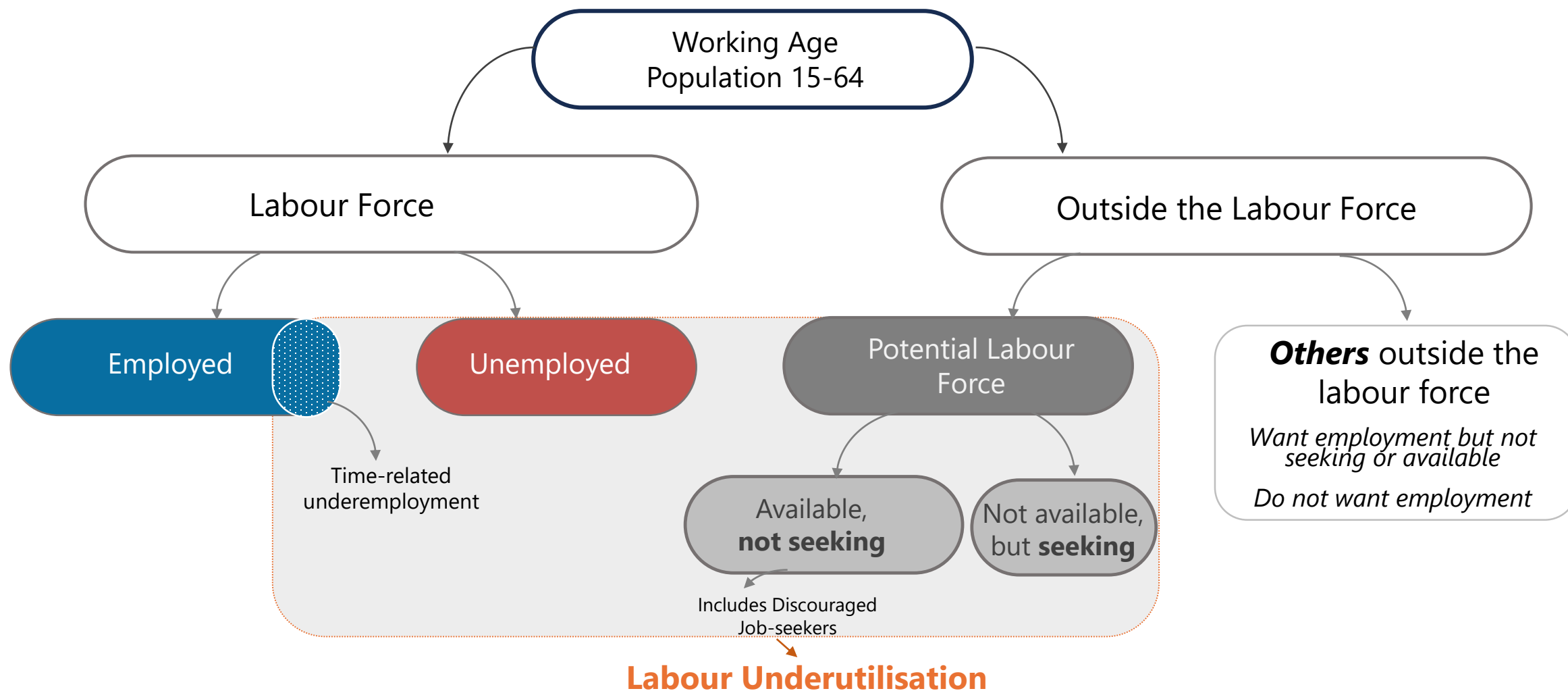
The **labour force participation rate** decreased by 0,5 of a percentage point to **59,7%** in Q3:2025 compared to Q2:2025.

Labour force participation and absorption rates Q3:2015-Q3:2025

Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the working-age population that is either employed or unemployed

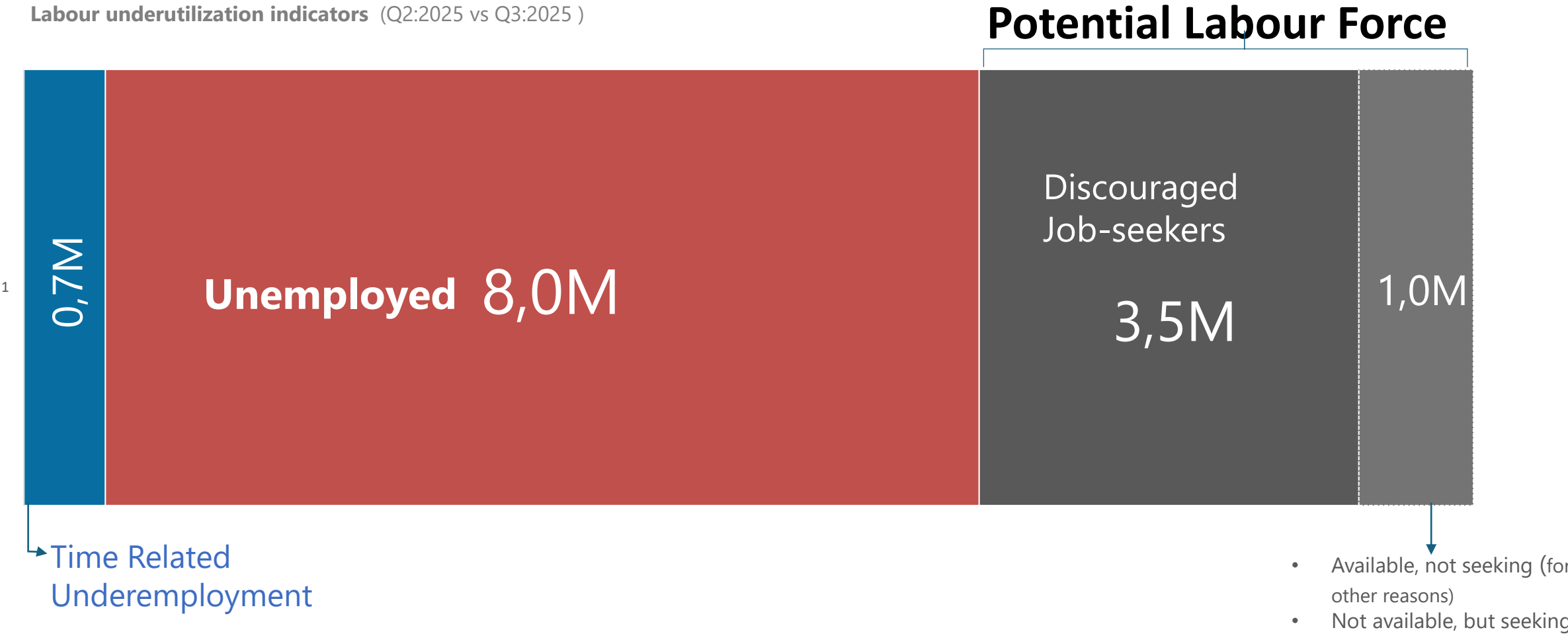


In addition to Unemployment, the 19th ICLS resolution introduces other measures of Labour Underutilisation



The **Discouraged job-seekers** dominate the **Potential Labour force**, accounting for 76,8% of the potential labour force.

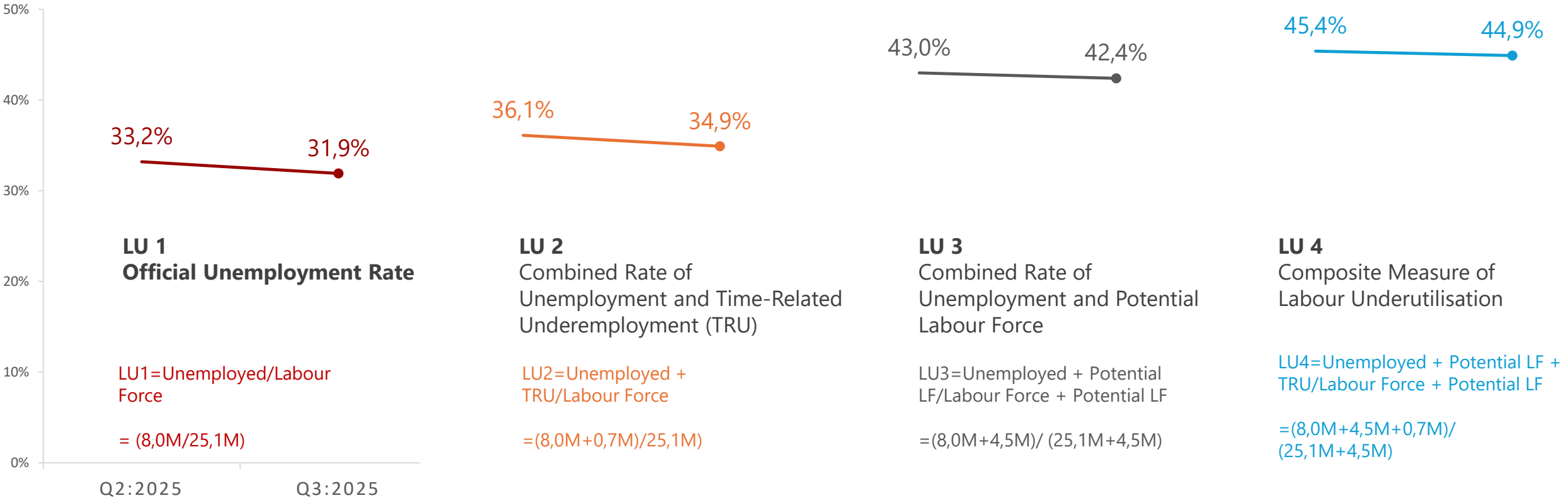
Labour underutilization indicators (Q2:2025 vs Q3:2025)



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'.

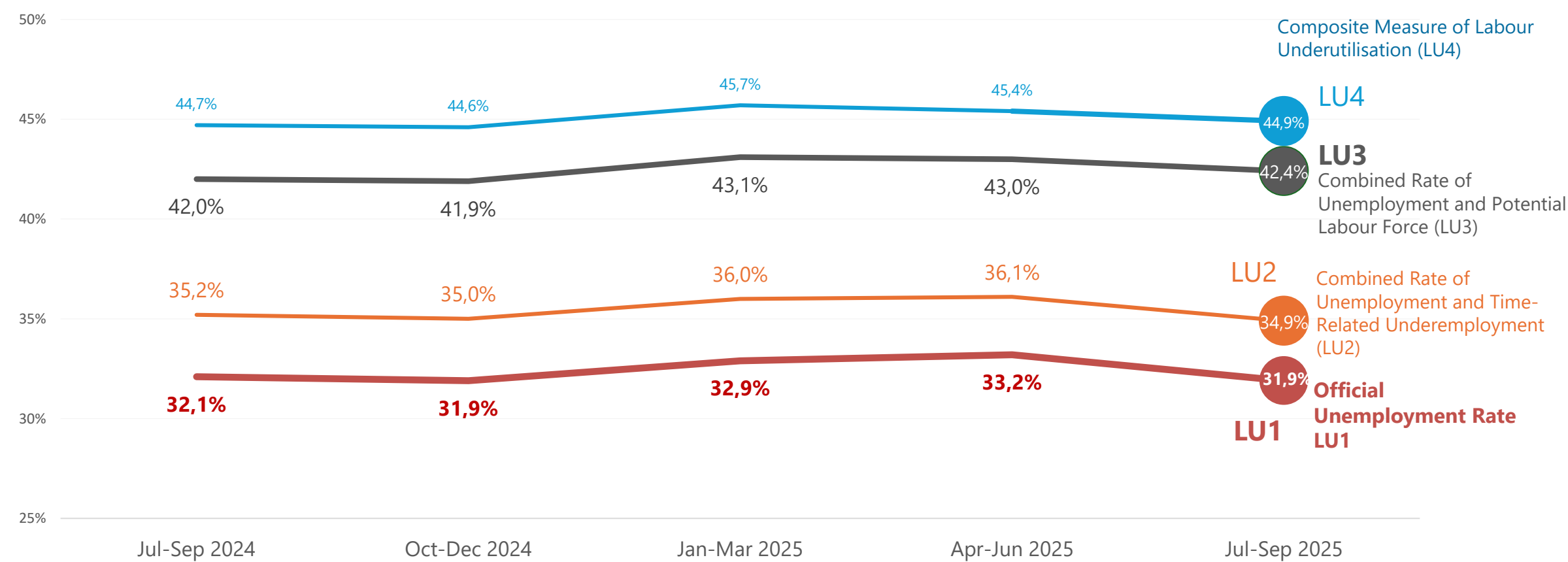
While the official unemployment rate sits at 31,9%, other measures of labour underutilisation are higher, ranging between 35% and 45%.

Labour underutilisation indicators (Q2:2025 vs Q3:2025)



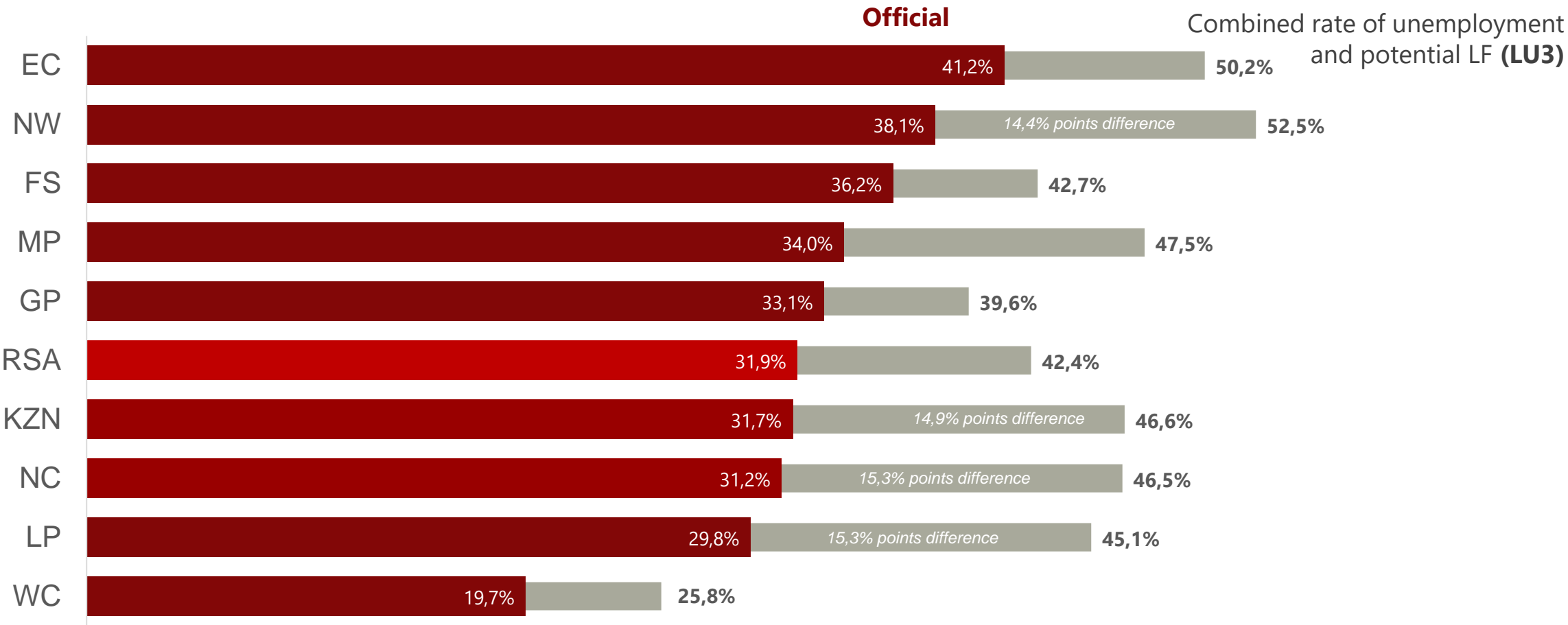
The labour underutilisation rate (i.e. composite measure of labour underutilisation (LU4)) stood at **44,9%** in the third quarter of 2025 compared to 44,7% in the same quarter of 2024.

There is a considerable gap (10,5 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 enough steps to look for work or are not available for work.



NW (52,5%) recorded the **highest combined rate of unemployment and potential LF** in Q3:2025, followed by **EC** (50,2%). **LP, NC, KZN and NW** recorded more than 14 percentage points difference between the combined rate of unemployment and potential LF and official unemployment rates.

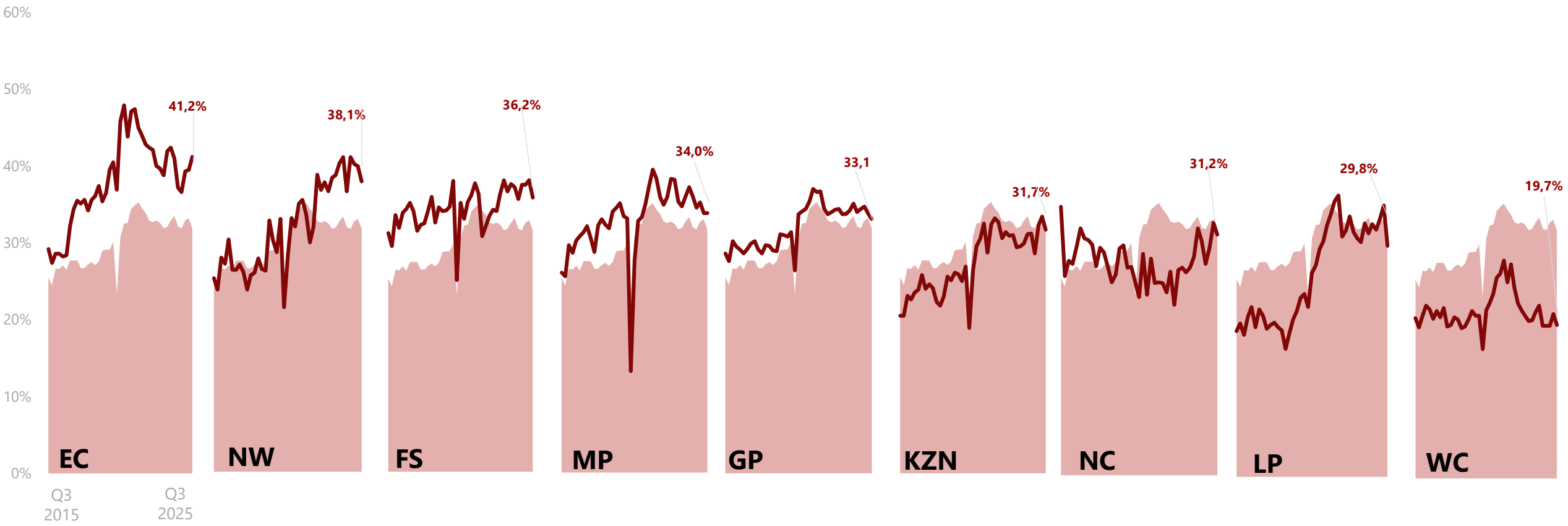
Provincial unemployment rates: **Official Unemployment rate** vs **Combined rate of unemployment and potential labour force (LU3)** Q3:2025



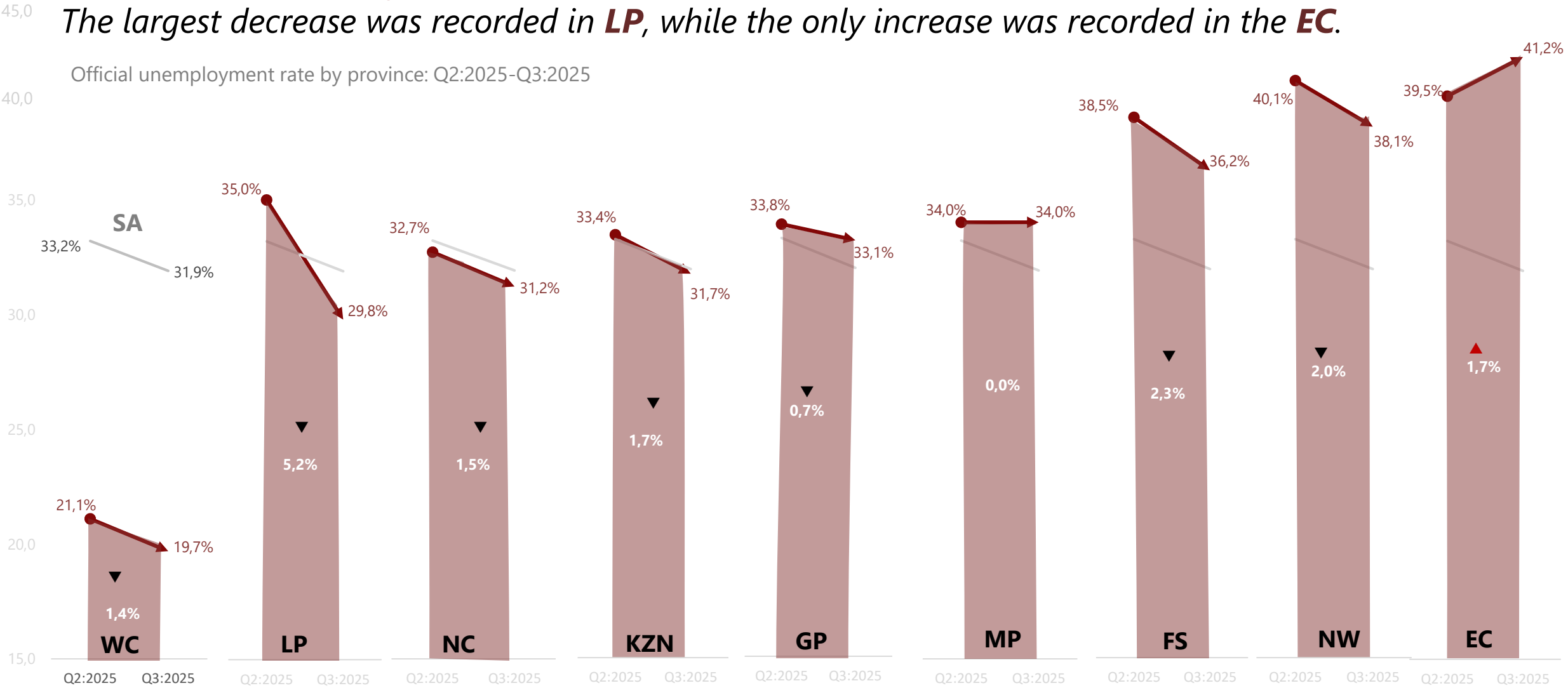
Over the past ten years, the unemployment rate in the **WC** has consistently remained below South Africa's national average, while the **EC** has consistently recorded unemployment rates above the national level.

Official Unemployment rate by province, Q3:2015-Q3:2025

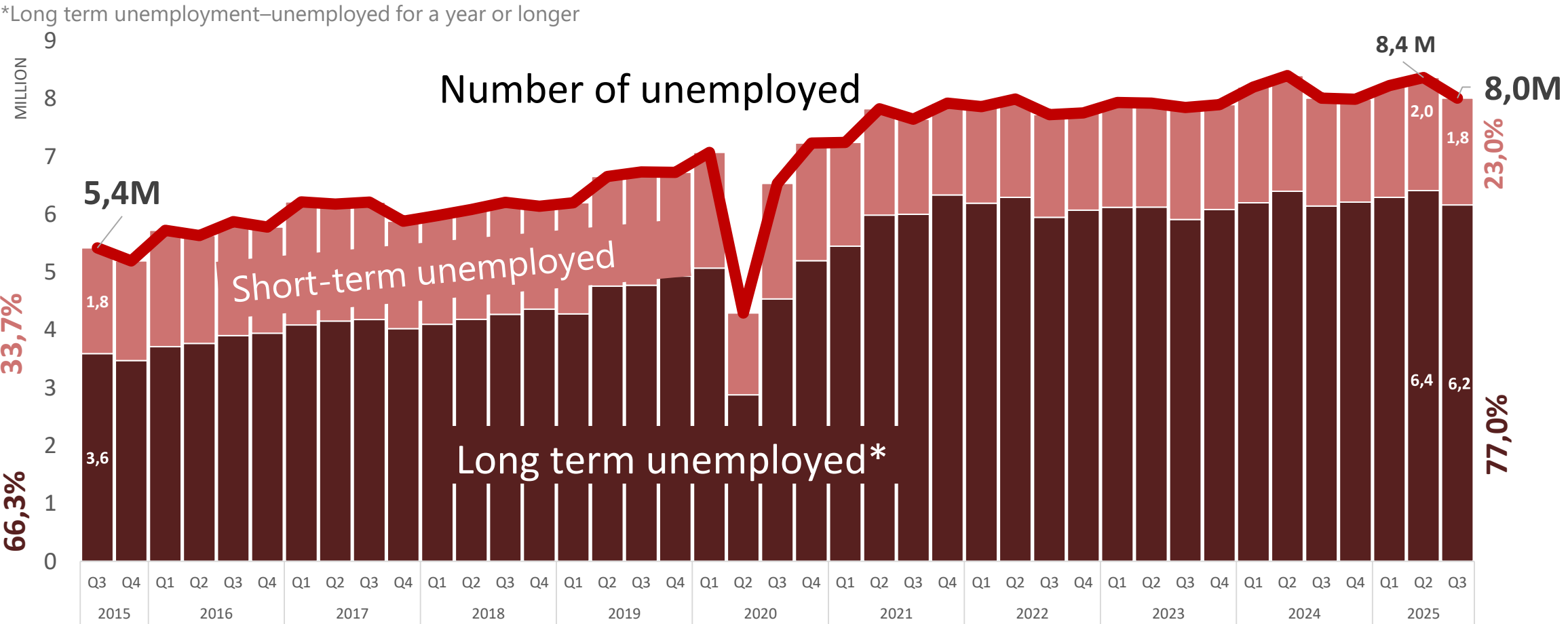
SA Unemployment Rate Provincial Unemployment Rate



The **official unemployment rate** decreased in seven provinces between Q2:2025 and Q3:2025. *The largest decrease was recorded in **LP**, while the only increase was recorded in the **EC**.*



Between Q3:2015 and Q3:2025, the **number of unemployed persons** in South Africa **increased from 5,4 million to 8,0 million**, with the proportion of those in long-term unemployment increasing from 66,3% to 77,0% over the same period.



21st ICLS resolution on statistics on informal economy



Stats SA is Responsive to labour market changes

The main changes should be noted in the definition of **informal sector and informal employment** and *therefore the results from Q3:2025 are not comparable with the previously produced estimates.*

Informal sector – Registration is the key criterion

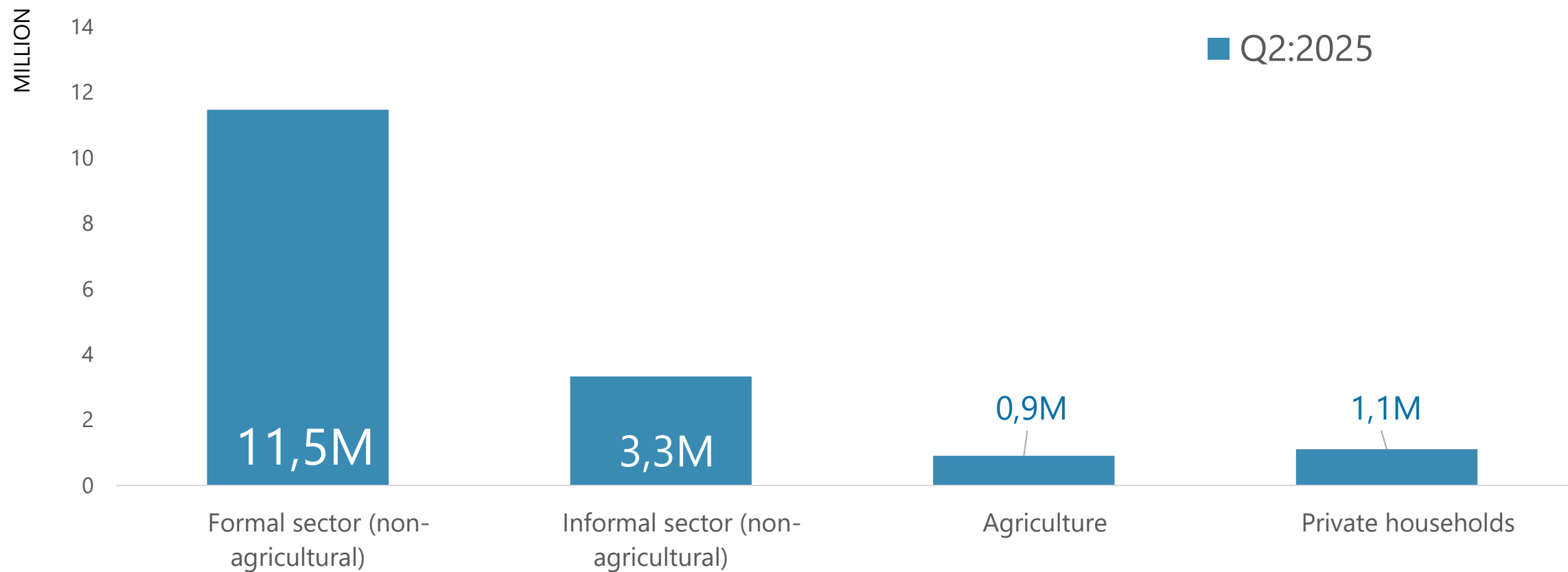
- Size of the establishment is **no longer** a recognised main criterion to use.

Informal employment - Social insurance (i.e. pension) is to be considered a key criterion

- or Access to paid annual leave and paid sick leave (*in case of insufficient information on social insurance*)

Previous classification of sector, with **Agriculture treated as a sector** *as well as an industry*

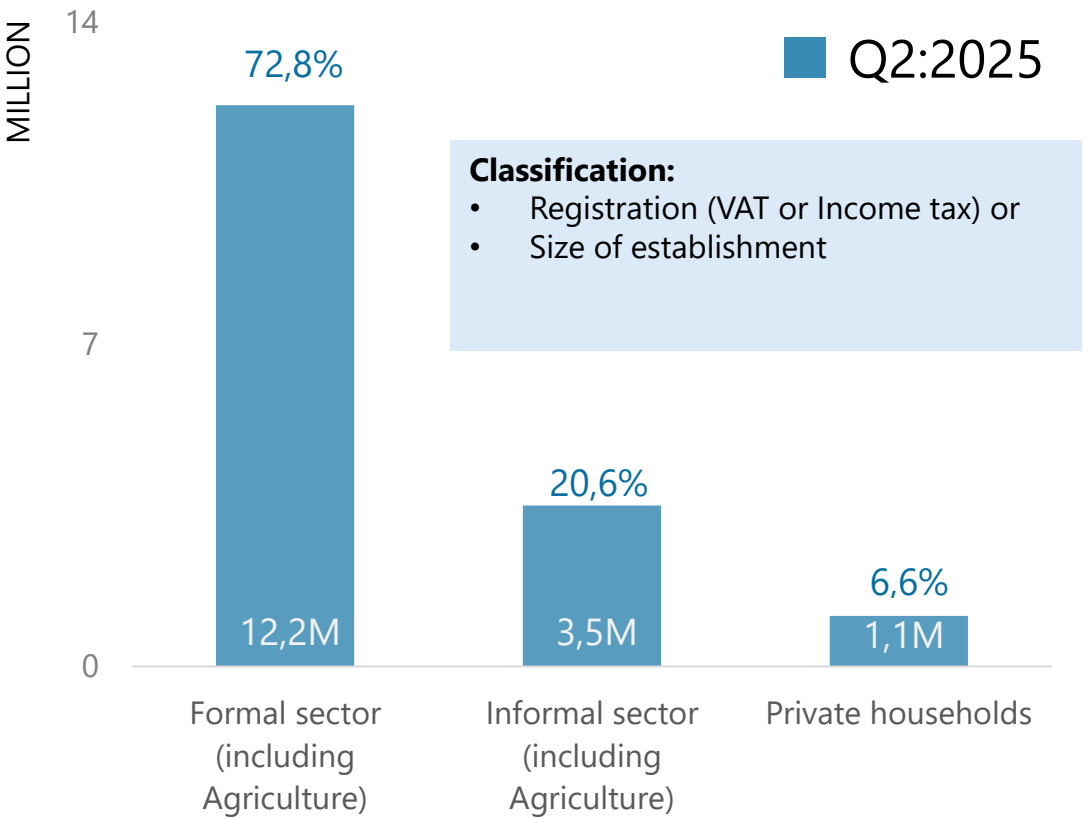
Employment by sector, (Old standard)



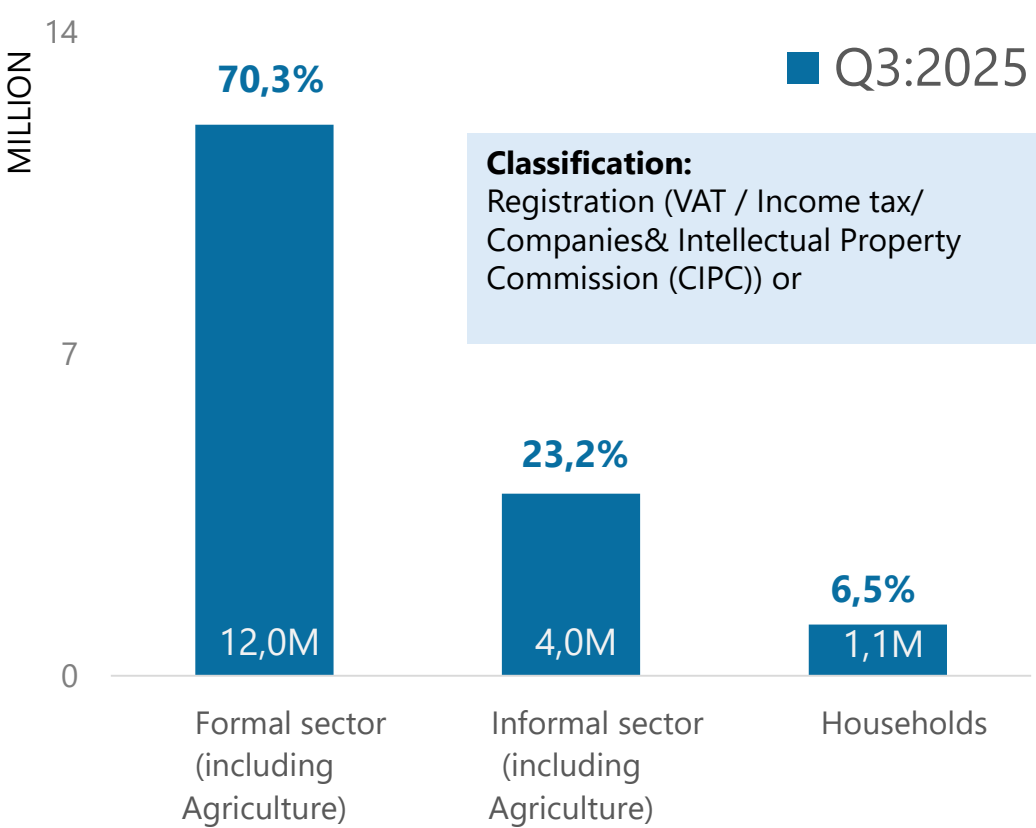
Previously Agriculture was treated as a sector (as well as industry); however, the **new standard recommends only three sectors** (i.e. *formal, informal and household sectors*).

The formal sector continues to account for the largest share (70,3%) of total employment using the new standard in the third quarter of 2025.

Employment by sector, *(Old standard)*

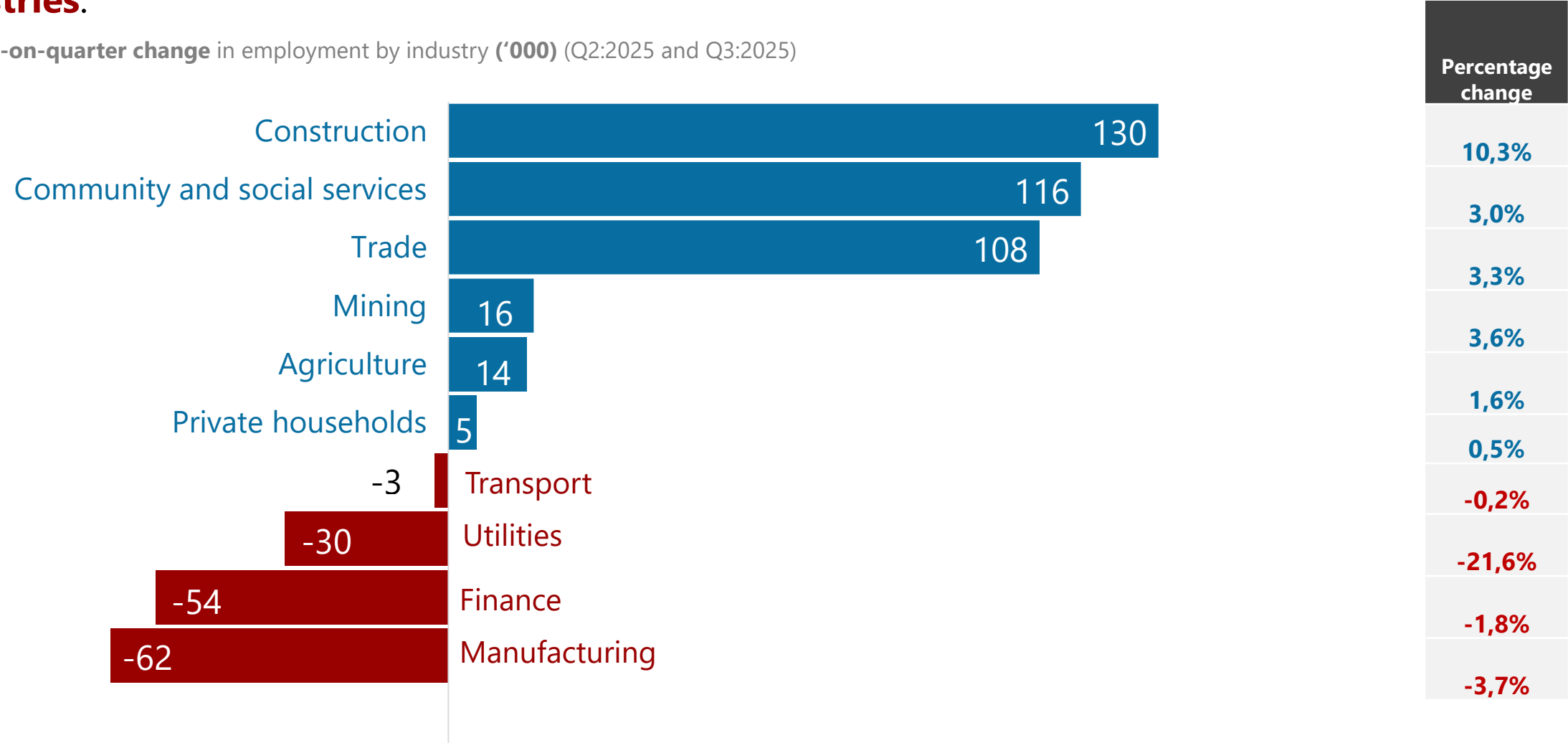


Employment by sector, *(New standard)*



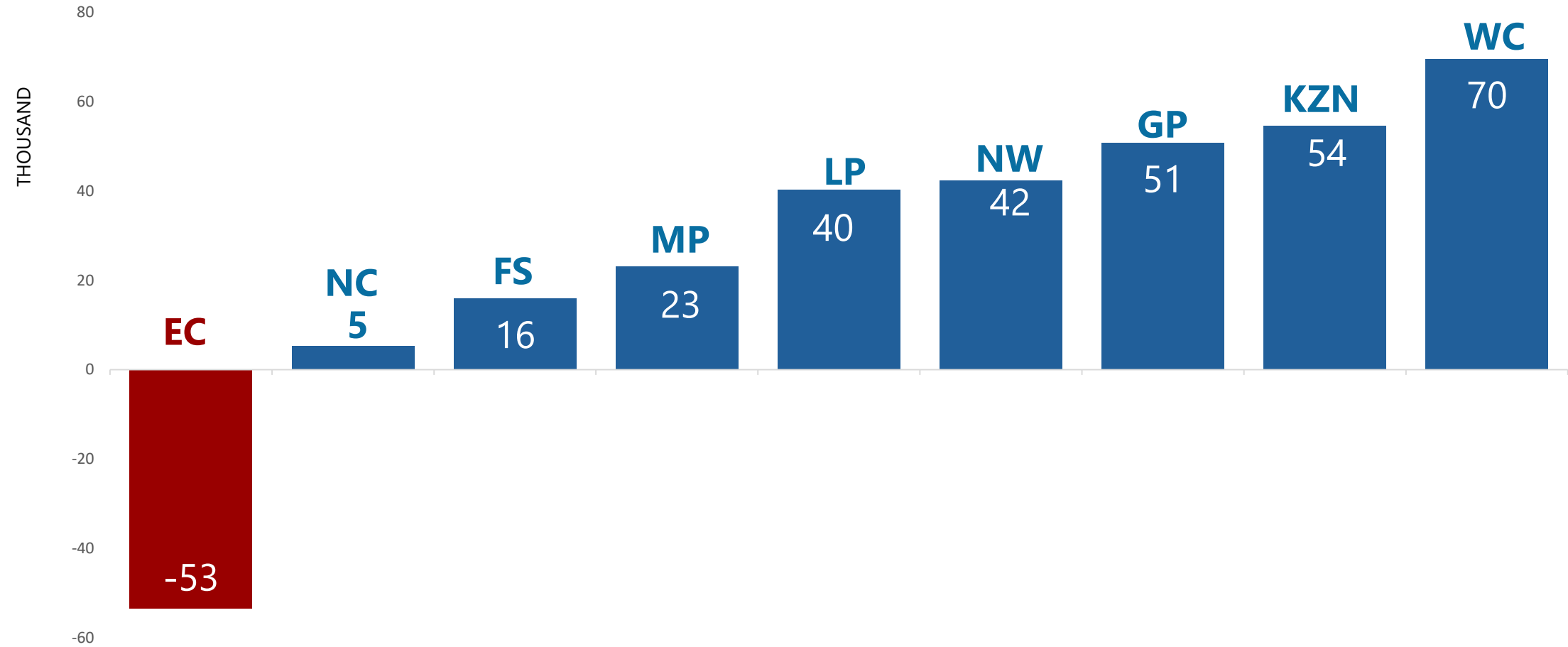
Employment increases were mainly in the **Construction, Services and Trade industries**. However, the largest **decreases in employment** were recorded in the **Manufacturing, Finance and Utilities industries**.

Quarter-on-quarter change in employment by industry ('000) (Q2:2025 and Q3:2025)



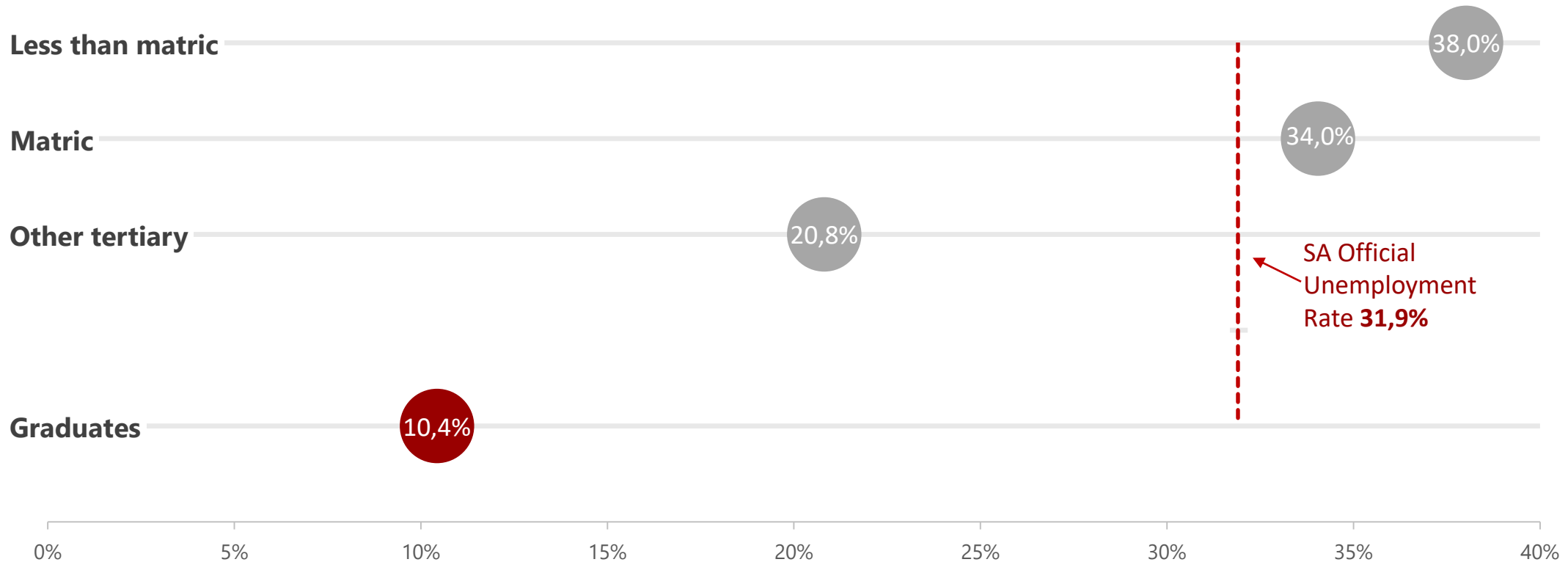
WC and KZN recorded the largest increases in employment in Q3:2025, while the only decrease was recorded in the **EC**.

Quarter-on-quarter change in employment by province (Q2:2025 and Q3:2025)

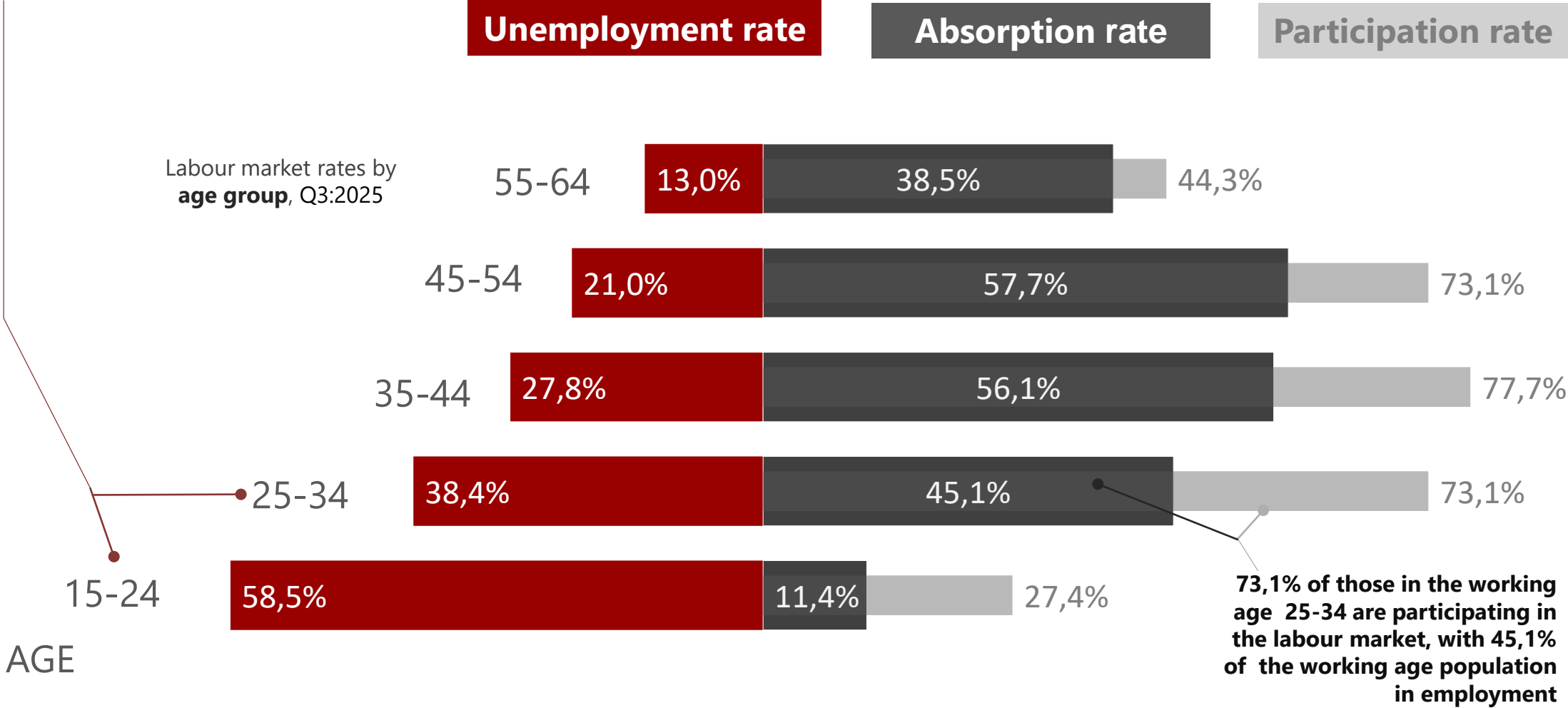


The Graduate unemployment rate decreased by 1,8 percentage points from 12,2% in Q2:2025 to **10,4%** in Q3:2025. Those with **matric** and **less than matric** remain vulnerable with unemployment rates of 34,0% and 38,0%, respectively.

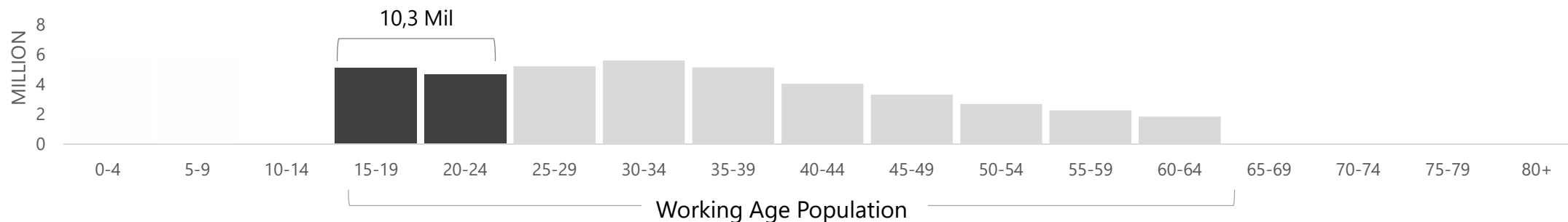
Official Unemployment rate by level of education, Q3:2025



Youth aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years continue to have the highest unemployment rates at **58,5%** and **38,4%**, respectively.



Approximately **3,5 million out of 10,3 million (or 33,9%)** young people aged 15-24 years were not in employment, education or training (NEET).



Number of NEET for ages 15-24
Q3:2025

**3,5 Million
NEET**

6,8 Million

**Employed or in
Education or Training**

Due to rounding numbers may not add up

The overall NEET rate (15 – 24 years) decreased by 0,3 of a percentage point between Q3:2024 and Q3:2025.

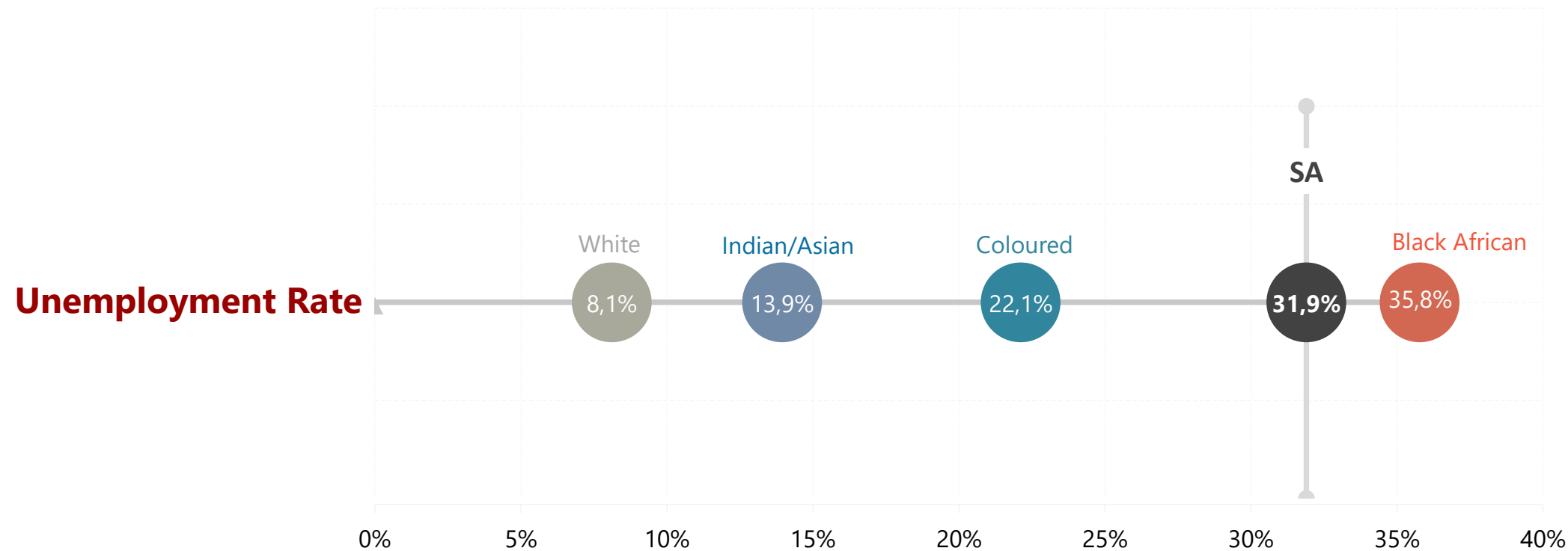
Q3:2021-Q3:2025 NEET rate for ages 15-24 & 15-34 year old



Due to rounding numbers may not add up

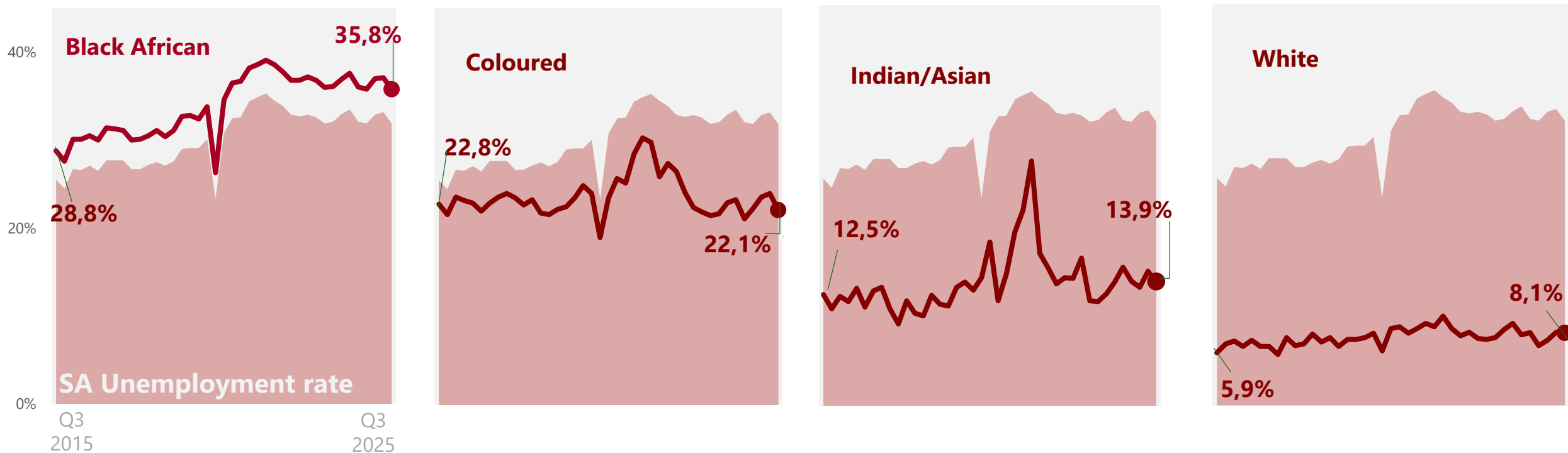
The unemployment rate among the **Black African (35,8%)** population group remains higher than the national average and other population groups.

OFFICIAL unemployment rate by population group, Q3:2025



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,
Q3:2015-Q3:2025



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RECAP (QLFS, Q3:2025)

- ❖ The unemployment rate **decreased** by 1,3 percentage points to 31,9% in Q3:2025.
- ❖ There is a considerable gap of 10,5 percentage points between **LU1 (31,9%)** and **LU3 (42,4%)** indicating that there is an unmet need for employment among the working-age population.
- ❖ The absorption rate **increased** by 0,5 of a percentage point, while the labour force participation rate **decreased** by 0,5 of a percentage point in Q3:2025 compared to Q2:2025.
- ❖ The number of unemployed **decreased** by 360 000 persons in Q3:2025 compared to Q2:2025. While the number of employed persons **increased** by 248 000 over the same period.
- ❖ The largest **employment gains** were recorded in Construction (130 000), Services (116 000) and Trade (108 000) industries. The largest **employment losses** were recorded in Manufacturing (62 000), Finance (54 000) and Utilities (30 000) industries.





Geospatial
Information
Frame



Governance,
Public Safety and
Justice Survey
(April 2025-
March 2026)



Quarterly Labour
Force
Survey(Collected
quarterly)



General
Household
Survey (January-
December)



Domestic
Tourism Survey
(January-
December)



Consumer Price
Index (Collected
monthly)

QLFS
Q3:2025

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