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Department:
Statistics South Africa
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For Immediate Release

Quarterly Employment Statistics (QES) – Q1:2026

Total employment decreased by 80 000 or -0,8% quarter-on-quarter, from 10 548 000 in December 2025 to 10 468 000 in March 2026. This was due to decreases in community services (-53 000 or -1,9%), trade (-40 000 or -1,7%), transport (-3 000 or -0,6%), and electricity (-1 000 or -1,5%). However, there were increases reported by the following industries: manufacturing (7 000 or 0,6%), business services (7 000 or 0,3%), mining (2 000 or 0,4%) and construction (1 000 or 0,2%).

Total employment decreased by 121 000 or -1,1% year-on-year between March 2025 and March 2026.

Full-time employment decreased by 24 000 or -0,3% quarter-on-quarter, from 9 433 000 in December 2025 to 9 409 000 in March 2026. This was due to decreases in the following industries: trade (-27 000 or -1,3%), community services (-3 000 or -0,1%), transport (-2 000 or -0,4%), and construction (-1 000 or -0,2%), manufacturing (-1 000 or -0,1%), while electricity remained unchanged. However, there were increases reported by the following industries: business services (8 000 or 0,4%), and mining (2 000 or 0,4%).

Full-time employment decreased by 48 000 or -0,5% year-on-year between March 2025 and March 2026.

Part-time employment decreased by 56 000 or -5,0% quarter-on-quarter, from 1 115 000 in December 2025 to 1 059 000 in March 2026. This was due to decreases in the following industries: community services (-50 000 or -10,5%), trade (-13 000 or -4,8%), business services (-1 000 or -0,5%), transport (-1 000 or -5,9%), electricity (-1 000 or -50,0%). However, there were increases reported by the following industries: manufacturing (8 000 or 10,5%), and construction (2 000 or 3,4%).

Part-time employment decreased by 73 000 or -6,4% year-on-year between March 2025 and March 2026.

Gross earnings paid to employees decreased by R43,4 billion or -4,0% from R1,08 trillion in December 2025 to R1,04 trillion in March 2026. This was due to decreases in the following industries: manufacturing, community services, trade, construction, electricity and transport. However, business services and mining reported increases.

Year-on-year gross earnings increased by R51,4 billion or 5,2% between March 2025 and March 2026.

Basic salary/wages paid to employees decreased by R6,9 billion or -0,7% from R928,4 billion in December 2025 to R921,5 billion in March 2026. This was due to decreases in the following industries: manufacturing, construction, business services, community services, transport, and trade. However, mining, and electricity showed an increase.

Year-on-year basic salary/wages increased by R40,4 billion or 4,6% between March 2025 and March 2026.

Bonuses paid to employees decreased by R35,8 billion or -29,5% from R121,0 billion in December 2025 to R85,3 billion in March 2026. This was due to decreases in the following industries: community services, trade, manufacturing, construction, electricity, and transport. However, business services reported an increase.

Year-on-year bonus payments increased by R9,4 billion or 12,4% between March 2025 and March 2026.

Overtime paid to employees decreased by R700 million or -2,3% from R29,9 billion in December 2025 to R29,2 billion in March 2026. This was due to decreases in the following industries: manufacturing, construction, community services, electricity and business services. However, there were increases reported by transport and trade industries.

Year-on-year overtime payments increased by R1,5 billion or 5,6% between March 2025 and March 2026.

Average monthly earnings paid to employees increased by 0,9% from R29 738 in November 2025 to R29 997 in February 2026.

Year-on-year average monthly earnings paid to employees increased by 5,9% between February 2025 and February 2026.

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