

Unemployment climbs to 32.9% in 2025 Q1

South Africa's unemployment rate increased to 32.9% in the first quarter of 2025 from 31.9% in the final quarter of last year, data from Statistics South Africa showed today, 13 May.



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According to the QLFS Q1: 2025 results, there was a decrease of 291,000 in the number of employed persons to 16.8 million from 17.1 million in Q4: 2024, while there was an increase of 237,000 in the number of unemployed persons to 8.2 million. This resulted in a decrease of 54,000 (down by 0.2%) in the labour force during the same period.

Discouraged work-seekers increased by 7,000 (up by 0.2%), and the number of persons who were not economically active for reasons other than discouragement increased by 177,000 (up by 1.4%) between the fourth quarter of 2024 and the first quarter of 2025. This led to an increase of 184,000 in the number of the not economically active population, to 16.7 million.

The above changes in employment and unemployment resulted in the official unemployment rate increasing by 1.0 percentage point from 31.9% in the fourth quarter of 2024 to 32.9% in the first quarter of 2025. The expanded unemployment rate in the first quarter of 2025 increased by 1.2 percentage points to 43.1% when compared with the fourth quarter of 2024, which was 41.9%.



HR & MANAGEMENT

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Sector changes

The number of persons employed in the formal sector decreased by 245,000 in Q1: 2025, and the informal sector employment increased by 17,000 over the same period.

The largest industry increases in employment were recorded in Transport (67,000); Finance (60,000); and Utilities (35,000).

Decreases in employment were recorded in Trade (194,000); Construction (119,000); Private households (68,000); Community and Social services (45,000); and Mining (35,000).

Provincial stats

The results also indicate that increases in employment were observed in Western Cape (49,000), Gauteng (9,000) and Free State (4,000), while decreases were observed in KwaZulu-Natal (104,000), Eastern Cape (83,000), North West (57,000), Limpopo (55,000), Mpumalanga (43,000) and Northern Cape (12,000).

The youth (15–34 years) remain vulnerable in the labour market. The results for the first quarter of 2025 show that the total number of unemployed youth increased by 151,000 to 4.8 million, while employed youth recorded a decrease of 153,000 to 5.7 million. As a result, the youth unemployment rate increased from 44.6% in the fourth quarter of 2024 to 46.1% in the first quarter of 2025.

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