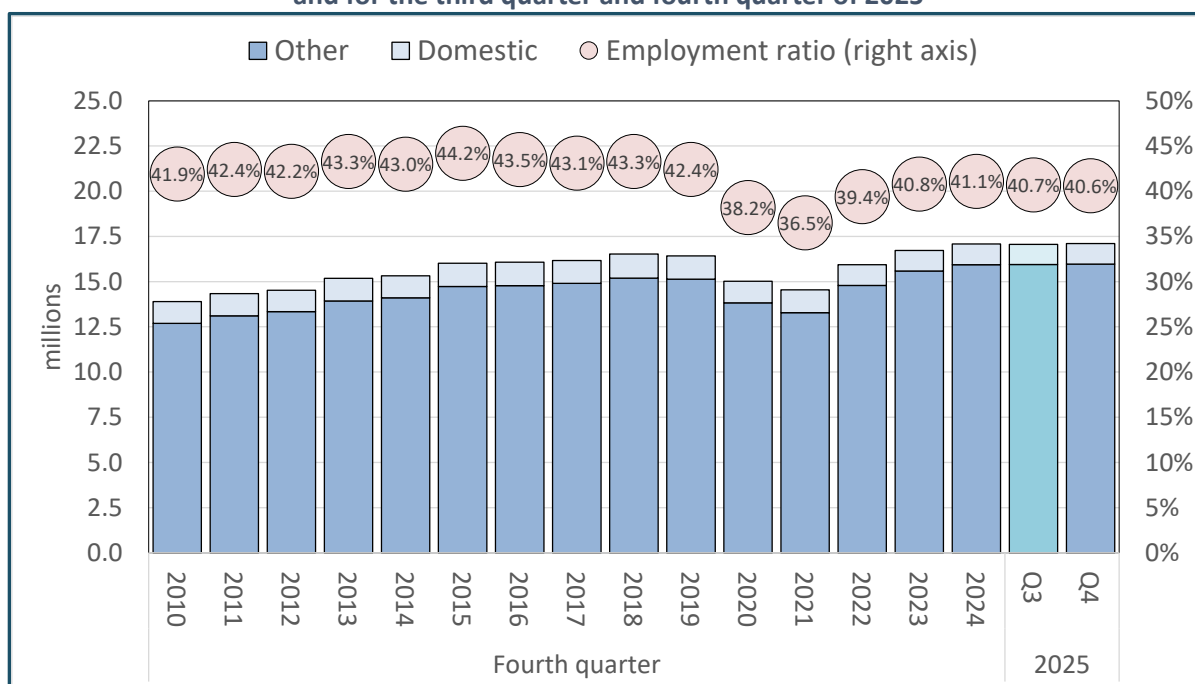


Employment

In the year to the fourth quarter of 2025, total employment was reported as stagnant, growing much slower than the GDP. As a result, the share of adults with employment declined year on year, reversing the slow recovery since the pandemic downturn in 2020.

Employment expanded by around 100 000 jobs in the year to the fourth quarter of 2025, for a marginal 0.1% expansion. (Employment data are not seasonally adjusted, so quarterly trends are not reliable.) The share of all adults with employment fell from 41.1% in the fourth quarter of 2024 to 40.6% at the end of 2025. That cut short the gradual recovery from the extraordinary job losses during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. (Graph 6). Just before the pandemic, in the fourth quarter of 2019, 42.4% of adults were employed, down from the 2015 peak at 44%. In 1994, the figure was 39%, reflecting the structural joblessness entrenched by under apartheid. Internationally the share of working-aged adults with employment hovers around 60%.

Graph 6. Employment numbers and the employment ratio (a), fourth quarter 2010 to 2024 and for the third quarter and fourth quarter of 2025



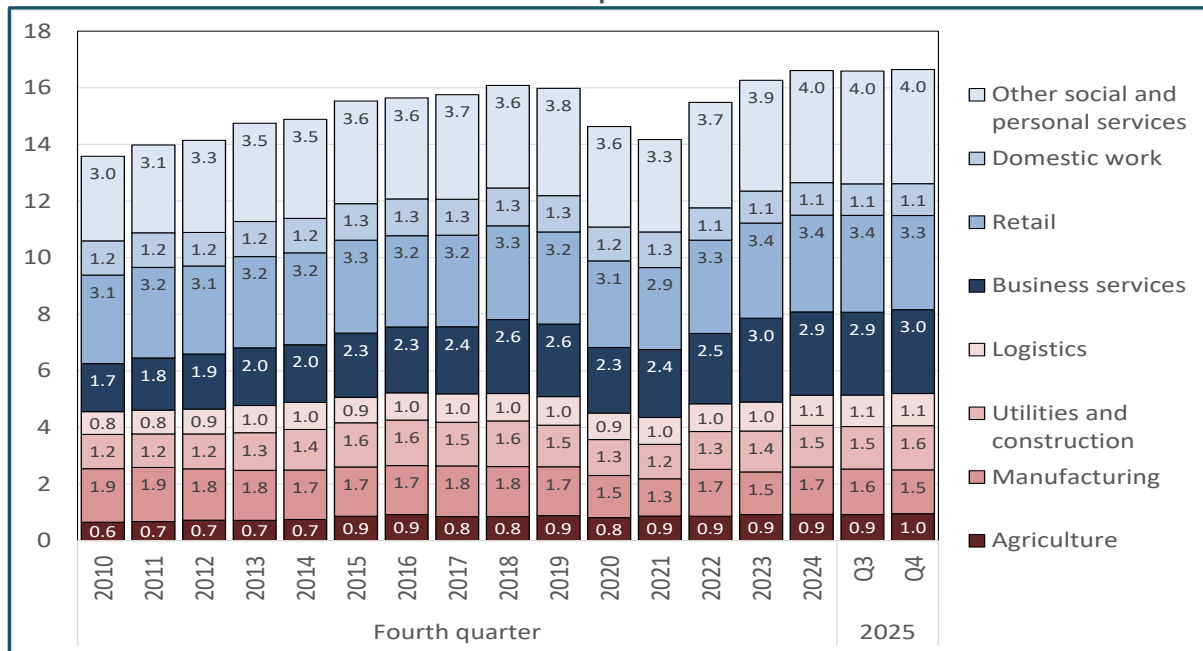
Note: (a) The employment ratio equals the number employed as a percentage of the total working-age population. Source: Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS). QLFS Trends 2008-2025 Q4. Excel spreadsheet. Downloaded from www.statssa.gov.za in February 2026.

In mid-2025, Statistics South Africa changed its definition of informal employment to align with the International Labour Organization. The changing definition makes it impossible to analyse trends in informal employment over the past year. The new definition effectively defines formal employment largely in terms of access to standard European employment benefits, including a private pension and medical aid, rather than the level of income or the technologies used. In the dataset for the fourth quarter of 2025, all employers and self-employed people are categorised as informal workers.

In the year to fourth quarter of 2025, manufacturing reported the loss of just over 125 000 jobs, or 7% of the total. (Graph 7) Retail shed around 95 000 jobs in the year to December 2025, and domestic work lost another 17 000. The rest of the economy excluding mining gained 200 000 jobs. Almost half came from construction and utilities, despite their economic downturn.

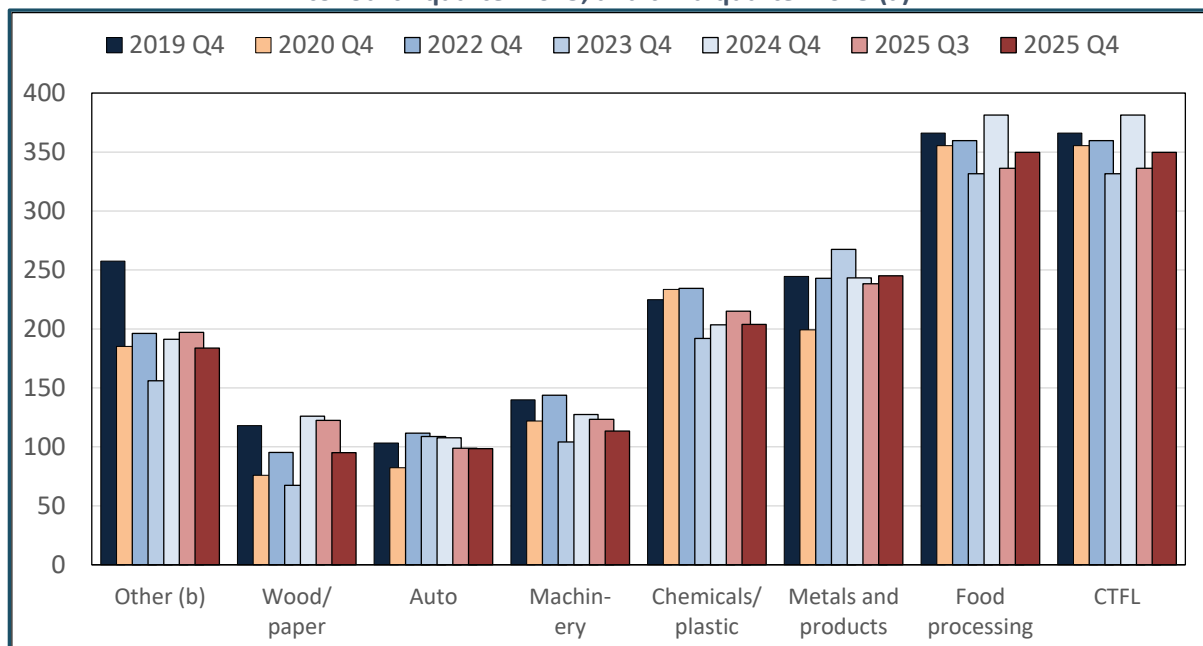
Three quarters of the decline in manufacturing came from food processing, clothing and textiles, and wood and paper. Each of these industries lost over 30 000 positions. Machinery and auto together shed another 20 000. Chemicals and plastics were basically unchanged, as were metals and metal products. (Graph 8)

Graph 7. Employment by sector (excluding mining), in millions, fourth quarter 2010 to 2025, and third quarter 2025



Source: Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Labour Force Survey. QLFS Trends 2008-2025 Q4. Excel spreadsheet. Downloaded from www.statssa.gov.za in February 2026.

Graph 8. Employment by manufacturing industry, in thousands, fourth quarter 2019 to fourth quarter 2025, and third quarter 2025 (a)

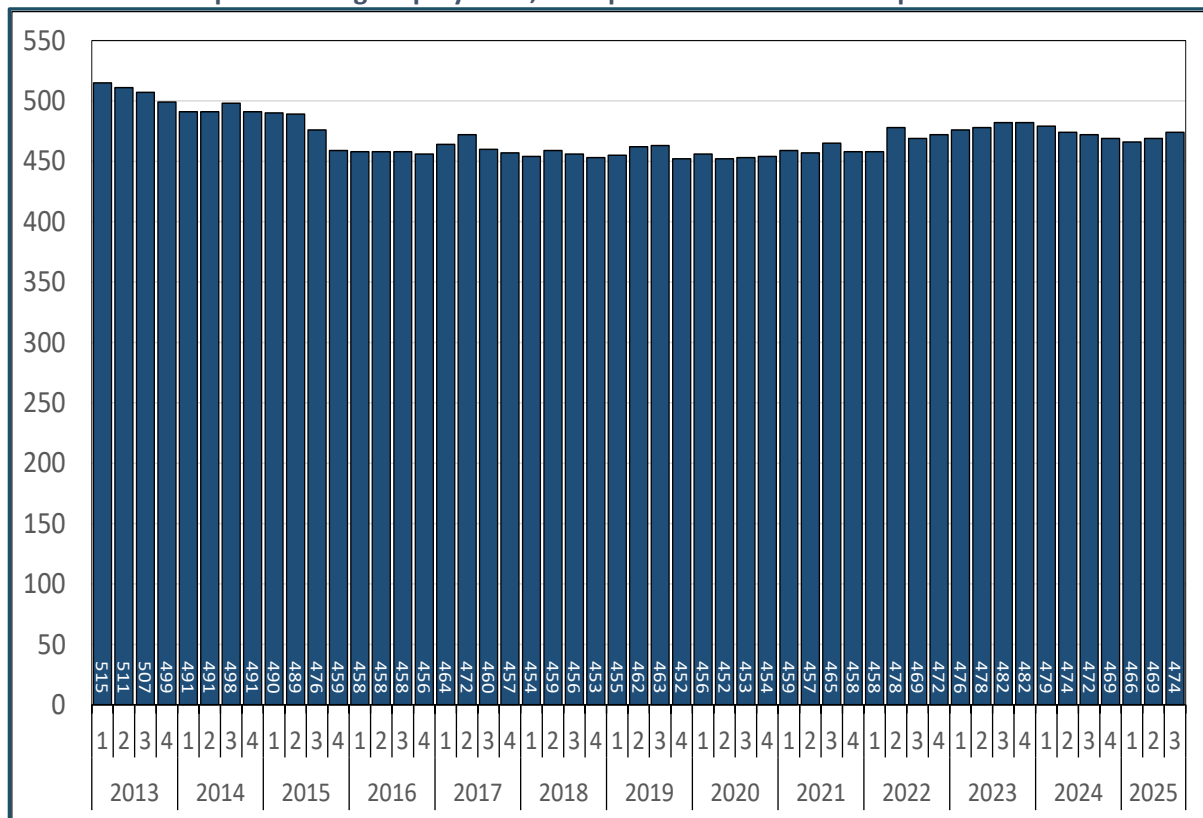


Note: (a) Excludes 2021 because of the very low response rate in the fourth quarter of that year. (b) Includes publishing and printing; glass and non-metallic minerals; furniture; and other. Source: Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Q4 2019 to Q4 2025. Electronic dataset. Downloaded from www.isibaloweb.statssa.gov.za in February 2026.

For data on mining employment, Statistics South Africa recommends the survey of formal businesses, the Quarterly Employment Survey (QES), rather than the QLFS, which samples households.

The QES is published a quarter behind the QLFS. According to the QES, mining employment edged up slightly in the year to the third quarter of 2025, adding 2 000 jobs (less than 1%). Still, the mines gained jobs through the second and third quarter of 2025, reversing the 2024 decline. However, these are well below the peak in 2012, at the end of the international commodity price boom of the 2010s.

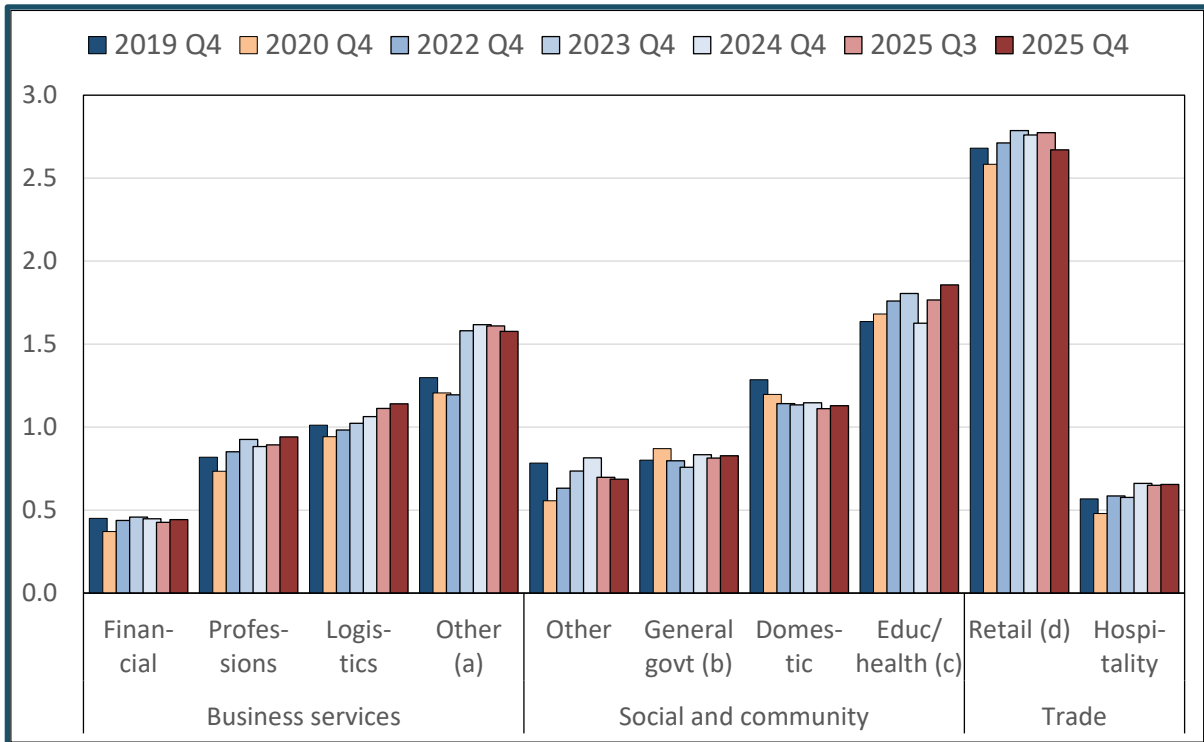
Graph 9. Mining employment, first quarter 2010 to second quarter 2025



Source: Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Employment Statistics. Detailed breakdown. Third Quarter 2025. Excel spreadsheet. Downloaded from www.statssa.gov.za in February 2026.

In the tertiary sector, business services gained 90 000 positions in the year to the fourth quarter of 2005, with net gains in the professions and logistics. Social and community services added 80 000 positions, almost exclusively in education. Retail and hospitality shed almost 100 000 positions, however. (Graph 10)

Graph 10. Employment in services industries, in thousands, fourth quarter 2019 to 2025, and third quarter 2025



Notes: (a) Mostly cleaning and private security. (b) includes public security services. (c) The reported figures do not match administrative sources on numbers employed. (d) Includes motor services. *Source:* Statistics South Africa. Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Q4 2019 to Q4 2025. Electronic dataset. Downloaded from www.isibaloweb.statssa.gov.za in February 2026.