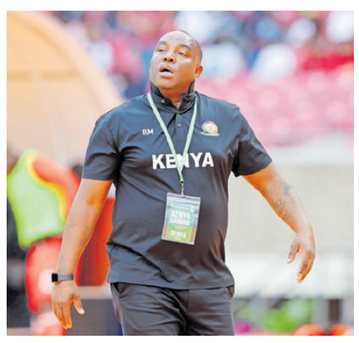
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Wednesday, November 11 2026

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LABOUR MARKET

Unemployment in SA climbs to 33.7%

Young citizens are most affected

ANITA NKONKI

MILLIONS of South Africans are struggling to find a foothold in the labour market, with the latest employment figures revealing a troubling combination of rising unemployment, growing discouragement among job-seekers and uneven job creation across industries.

Statistics South Africa's (Stats SA) Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the third quarter of 2026 shows that the number of unemployed people increased by 97 000 to 8.6 million compared with the previous quarter.

The number of employed people also increased by 101 000 to 16.8 million, but this was not enough to prevent the official unemployment rate from rising by 0.1 of a percentage point, from 33.6% to 33.7%.

The labour force expanded by 198 000, or 0.8%, during the same period.

One of the concerning findings was the increase in discouraged job-seekers, with 70 000 more people giving up the active search for employment, taking their total to 3.7 million.

These are people who want to work but have stopped actively looking for jobs, often because they believe suitable opportunities are unavailable or that their efforts will not be successful.

Dimakatso Maloka, Deputy Director of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, said finance, manufacturing and mining were the main industries contributing to employment growth.

"The main industries that contributed to the increase in employment were finance, manufacturing and mining," she said.

Finance recorded the largest increase, adding 111 000 jobs, followed by manufacturing with 33 000 and mining with 31 000. However, these gains were partly offset by losses in other industries. Private households shed 68 000 jobs, agriculture lost 34 000, and construction recorded a decline of 8 000.

The formal sector recorded an increase of 268 000 jobs to 12.3 million. In contrast, the informal sector shed 98 000 jobs, while the household sector lost 68 000.

While manufacturing contributed additional jobs during the quarter, production figures point to contrasting conditions in the industry.

Nicolai Claassen, Director of Industry Statistics at Stats SA, said seasonally adjusted manufacturing activity increased by 0.9% in the third quarter compared with the second quarter.

"Five of the ten manufacturing divisions reported higher production levels over this period, with food and beverages the most significant positive contributor," Claassen said.

Other divisions recording stronger production included textiles and clothing, glass and non-metallic mineral products, metals and machinery, and electrical machinery.

However, the wood, paper and publishing division recorded its first consecutive quarter of decline.

Looking specifically at September, manufacturing activity declined by 3.5% year on year, with six of the ten manufacturing divisions recording weaker production.

"The automotive and wood, paper and publishing divisions were the largest negative contributors to growth," Claassen said.

On a month-on-month basis, seasonally adjusted manufacturing production remained flat in September.

Stats SA also revealed that employment growth was uneven across the country.

The Western Cape recorded the largest increase, adding 48 000 jobs, followed by North West with 45 000, the Eastern Cape with 36 000 and Gauteng with 25 000. However, the Free State shed 34 000 jobs, while Mpumalanga recorded a decline of 30 000.

Young people continued to face considerable barriers to finding work. The number of unemployed people aged between 15 and 34 declined by 23 000 to five million, while youth employment decreased by 5 000 to 5.5 million.

As a result, the youth unemployment rate edged down by 0.1 percentage point to 47.3%. The broader labour market figures remain concerning.

For people trying to enter the labour market, securing an interview can also present challenges, particularly in entry-level recruitment where large numbers of applicants compete for relatively few positions.

> "Communication looks different from one role to the next ... If a candidate can do what the role asks, the reading level of a test shouldn't decide whether they get an interview.
>
> **ASHLEIGH NEL**
> **Inndustrial psychologist and Head of Research and Development at JOBJACK**

Ashleigh Nel, a registered industrial psychologist and head of research and development at JOBJACK, said language barriers and the design of recruitment assessments could disadvantage candidates applying for entry-level jobs.

"Even I struggled with the language going into some of them. Many of the people applying for store-level work speak English as their second, third or fourth language. A test pitched at a graduate isn't a fair measure of whether someone will do well on a till or in a kitchen," she said.

Between January and October 2026, the hiring platform received 13.5 million applications for 22 518 store-level vacancies, amounting to nearly 600 applications per job. Candidates completed more than four million assessments.

Nel said communication remained important in customer-facing and other entry-level roles, but employers needed to distinguish between workplace communication abilities and the ability to understand complex assessment questions.

"Communication looks different from one role to the next. A waiter has to hold a conversation with a customer. A kitchen hand has to understand an instruction in the middle of a rush. If a candidate can do what the role asks, the reading level of a test shouldn't decide whether they get an interview."

SECURITY PATROL



AN ARMY convoy on patrol in Durban's CBD yesterday. President Cyril Ramaphosa authorised the deployment of 510 SANDF soldiers to KwaZulu-Natal under Operation Prosper to support the South African Police Service (SAPS) in maintaining law and order. | DOCTOR NGCOBO ANA STUDIO

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Coalition negotiations face test of fixing failing municipal governance

ANITA NKONKI

AS PARTIES begin negotiating coalition agreements, the future of local government rests on whether incoming councils can move beyond political bargaining to confront failing services and weak municipal accountability.

The election results, announced by the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) on Sunday left 127 of the country's 213 municipalities with hung councils, forcing parties to negotiate governing arrangements in municipalities where no single party secured an outright majority.

The outcome has once again placed coalition politics under scrutiny, with questions over whether parties can overcome political differences to establish administrations capable of governing effectively.

Governance and political analyst Hlumelo Xaba said the growing prevalence of coalition governments over the past decade meant political parties needed to approach negotiations with a clearer understanding of the communities they intended to govern.

"What the past two election cycles, or rather the past 10 years, have shown us is that coalitions are now a norm in South Africa's political landscape," Xaba said.

"You would remember that in 2016, four out of the eight metros in the country did not have an outright winner. So that trend has now actually persisted into these local government elections."

Xaba said parties needed to move away from negotiating arrangements primarily around political positions and instead establish agreements informed by the specific needs and circumstances of municipalities.

He said such assessments would help parties identify common priorities and develop agreements capable of surviving political disagreements.

Coalition governments have faced repeated instability in several municipalities, with leadership changes, political infighting and disagreements between coalition partners frequently disrupting municipal administration.

Xaba warned that tensions between parties at national and provincial level should not be allowed to undermine local government, where political decisions have immediate consequences for residents.



ACTIONSA met with the EFF to kickoff coalitions talks on Monday. | X/@ME_Beaumont

"I think that there needs to be a level of maturity from political parties to ensure that whatever it is that happens at a national and provincial level does not cascade down to a local level, because when we speak about the local level, we are speaking about bread and butter issues," he said.

He argued that parties did not need to abandon their ideological differences to co-operate on practical governance matters, saying the needs of residents should provide the common ground for negotiations.

The concerns have also been reflected in calls from government and organised local government for incoming councillors to prioritise accountability and the effective functioning of municipal institutions.

Deputy Government Spokesperson William Baloyi said the participation of more than 540 political parties and nearly 137 000 candidates demonstrated the strength of South Africa's democratic participation, but stressed that elected representatives had responsibilities beyond the ballot box.

"Government has called on incoming councillors to be transparent, accountable and responsive to the needs of the communities they serve," Baloyi said.

The South African Local Government Association (Salga) has similarly called for parties to shift their attention from electoral competition to the responsibility of governing.

With municipal councils required to be constituted within the prescribed 14-day period, Salga urged parties negotiating in hung councils to ensure coalition agreements strengthened municipal administration rather than created further political uncertainty.

President Cyril Ramaphosa also used his address at the IEC Results Operations Centre in Midrand on Sunday to caution parties against turning coalition negotiations into contests over political power.

"Negotiations over the formation of municipal governments must not become contests over positions, privileges or the distribution of power. They must be guided by what will best serve the people," Ramaphosa said.

"The stability of our municipalities cannot be sacrificed to narrow political interests. The delivery of essential services cannot be held hostage by political disagreements."

Ramaphosa urged parties to negotiate in good faith, elect office-bearers without unnecessary delays and ensure municipal budgets were passed on time.

He said residents wanted practical improvements in their daily lives, including reliable water and electricity, regular refuse collection, maintained public spaces and safer streets.

"They want water to come out of the tap and electricity that works. They want their refuse collected, their parks maintained and their streets safe," he said.

"The people have spoken. Their verdict must be respected. Their concerns must be heard. And their expectations must now be met."

MADLANGA COMMISSION

Cat Matlala claims R550 000 payments to Sibiya

KAREN SINGH

BUSINESSMAN Vusimuzi "Cat" Matlala admitted paying former deputy national police commissioner Shadrack Sibiya R550 000, while alleging that Sibiya also asked him to buy a plot, but he refused because the "extortion" would not end.

Testifying before the Madlanga Commission in Pretoria yesterday, Matlala confirmed giving Sibiya R500 000 towards his child's wedding and another R50 000 for travel costs associated with the SAPS Excellence Awards in Durban.

Matlala denied an alleged R500 000 cash payment linked to a SAPS health risk management tender, a separate allegation from the wedding contribution he acknowledged yesterday.

Questioned by evidence leader Advocate Thabang Pooe, Matlala said the wedding payment was his first to Sibiya, disputing its description as a further payment in his signed Section 204 statement.

Commission investigator Bongani Dlamini's notes of a March consultation, however, referred to R400 000 for the wedding. Commissioners also queried the way the figure appeared in Matlala's statement, but he orally confirmed R500 000.

Asked why he would contribute so much towards a police general's family wedding, Matlala declined to explain publicly, citing fears for his safety and that of his family.

He said he would explain the payments privately. Commission chairperson Justice Mbuyiseli Madlanga cautioned that any application for an in-camera hearing would be public, potentially revealing that Matlala intended to discuss sensitive matters.

Matlala maintained the two amounts were his only payments to Sibiya, although he acknowledged other requests for money. Sibiya has previously denied receiving money or other benefits from Matlala.

Pooe confronted him with his testimony before Parliament's ad hoc committee, where EFF leader Julius Malema had asked: "So you never gave Sibiya money?"

"No, never," Matlala had replied.

Asked to explain the contradiction, he said: "This is why I said I do not want to incriminate myself."

Matlala was also challenged over his attendance at Sibiya's son's engagement party. He told the commission that he had been invited through police sergeant Fannie Nkosi and had stayed for more than an hour.

Sibiya previously testified that Matlala had only come to collect his wife after she drank alcohol at the gathering. Matlala rejected that account.

Confronted with his earlier parliamentary testimony denying that he had been invited, Matlala accepted that his version to Parliament was false, but said he wanted to explain why in a confidential forum.

Questioning turned to 20 impalas delivered in March 2024, months before the cash payments.

Matlala said his farm manager arranged their transport through Nkosi, and he paid the costs. He maintained that he initially did not know the animals were destined for Sibiya.

He said he was giving away surplus game and expected nothing in return. When confronted with Sibiya's denial that Matlala had gifted him impalas, he replied: "It was not truthful because they were delivered."

On the plot, Matlala confirmed that Sibiya had asked him to buy it and that they had met a seller in Midrand. He denied agreeing to pay.

Madlanga said the dispute would be considered later through affidavits. Questioning could continue, but relevant exchanges would be expunged if the commission ultimately upheld the objection.

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'UNLESS SOMEONE LIKE YOU CARES A WHOLE AWFUL LOT, NOTHING IS GOING TO GET BETTER. IT'S NOT.' | DR. SEUSS