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MINERALS COUNCIL
SOUTH AFRICA

Mining resilient as it adds 3,000 jobs in 2025

In 2025 total employment in the mining sector increased by 0.6% **year-on-year** (y-o-y) to 472,000 jobs, representing an increase of 3,000 jobs from 2024 (Figure 1). On a quarterly basis, mining employment contracted slightly in Q4 2025, losing 3,000 jobs compared to Q3 2025. The quarterly trend reflects cost-cutting measures adopted by some industries, especially diamonds. The sector accounted for 4.5% of total economy employment of 10,551,000. Of this total, the number of full-time employees in 2025 was 9,434,000. The only other sector to have added jobs in 2025 calendar year was the utilities (electricity) sector, which added a total of 1,000 jobs to its total workforce of 65,000.

Focusing on the **mining sector's job** performance, it is important to note that once again, the sector continued to prove its potential in creating and retaining jobs. It is also the third highest paying sector per worker in terms of monthly average nominal earnings (see Table 1). In the review period, a strong showing by the platinum group metals (PGMs), chrome, manganese and iron ore industries mainly contributed to the bump in employment. Having experienced historically elevated prices, the gold industry recorded modest increase in employment, boosting the total increase in employment of the sector.

The total economy lost 102,000 jobs (y-o-y) with sectors such as manufacturing (-25,000), construction (-20,000), business services (-21,000) and community services (-19,000) all contributing to jobs losses (Figure 2). Reasons for the y-o-y employment changes are presented below:

- **Total employment (-102,000)**: Broad economic pressures, including slower growth, and weak consumer demand, weighed across most sectors.
- **Manufacturing (-25,000)**: Global demand uncertainty and reduced export competitiveness partly contributed to job losses in this sector.
- **Finance (-21,000)**: With sectors such as construction and a general weak performing economy, it is not surprising that the finance sector lost so many jobs.
- **Construction (-20,000)**: Explaining the poor performance of the construction sector was the weaker infrastructure investment which has been ongoing since 2016.
- **Community services (-19,000)**: Fiscal constraints limited public sector hiring. In an attempt to cut the wage bill government extended early retirement packages to public sector workers.
- **Trade (-12,000)**: With the total economy losing over 100,000 jobs there is reason to believe that consumer spending weakened. The other reason is the growth of e-commerce which reduced traditional retail employment.

- **Transport (-9,000)**: Two factors likely explain the reduction in employment numbers. First, logistics demand softened as trade volumes slowed mainly on account of US tariffs. Second, efficiency gains and technology adoption reduced labour intensity.
- **Electricity (+1,000)**: The increase in employment is likely as result of increased investment in energy infrastructure and renewable projects which created new opportunities. Efforts to stabilise electricity supply supported modest job growth.

Figure 1: Changes in employment in 2025 (y-o-y)

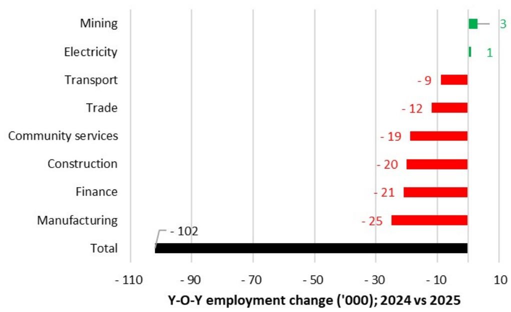
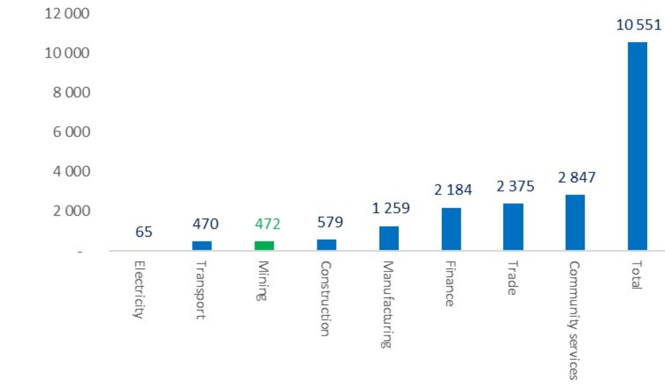


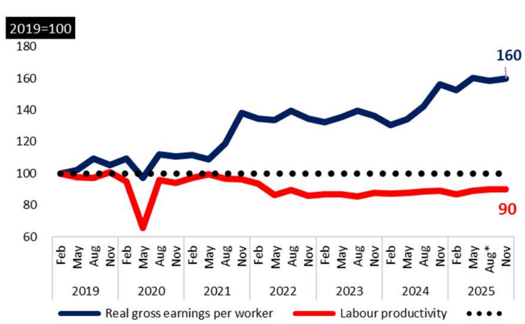
Figure 2: Sectoral employment in 2025 ('000)



Source: Statistics SA

Figure 3 shows that **real gross earnings per worker** rose steadily from 2019 (pre-COVID) to 2025. Despite some dips (notably May 2020 during pandemic disruptions), the overall trajectory shows strong wage growth. On the other hand, **labour productivity** has trended below 2019 levels. The data presented in Figure 3 highlights a widening gap between real earnings and productivity. Workers are better paid in real terms, but efficiency has not kept pace. This imbalance can pressure competitiveness and sustainability if productivity does not improve.

Figure 3: Mining: Productivity and real gross earnings



Source: Statistics SA, Minerals Council

Table 1: Remuneration per worker across sectors

Sector	Average monthly earnings (R, nominal)		
	2024	2025	% change (y-o-y)
Utilities	53 615	57 863	7,9
Community	32 886	35 918	9,2
Mining	34 220	35 420	3,5
Transport	31 630	33 005	4,3
Finance	31 868	32 833	3,0
Total economy	27 721	29 266	5,6
Construction	23 371	24 736	5,8
Manufacturing	23 694	24 733	4,4
Retail	17 729	18 639	5,1

Table 1 indicates that average monthly wages rose across all sectors between 2024 and 2025, with the overall economy recording a 5.6% increase. For context, average consumer price index (CPI) inflation in 2025 was 3.2%. As it relates to the various sectors the following could be observed:

- **Utilities** remained the highest paying sector, climbing 7.9% to R57,863 per worker per month, while **community services** saw the strongest growth at 9.2%, reflecting public sector wage adjustments.
- **Mining** and **finance** posted relatively modest gains of 3.5% and 3.0% respectively, suggesting slower wage momentum in these industries.
- **Transport** and **manufacturing** recorded moderate increases of 4.3% and 4.4%.
- **Construction** and **retail** grew by 5.8% and 5.1%, respectively, though they remain among the lowest paying sectors on average remuneration per worker.

Overall, wage growth was uneven, with stronger increases in service-oriented sectors compared to resource and finance industries, highlighting structural differences in bargaining power and sectoral dynamics.

Looking ahead: While most sectors contracted due to macroeconomic headwinds, electricity and mining bucked the trend, reflecting structural investment and global resource demand. Looking ahead, volatility continues to plaque the global economy. Given that the mining sector is a price taker in global markets, cost pressures arising from the elevated crude oil prices will inevitably squeeze margins and impact on employment in the short to medium term.

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