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MEDIA RELEASE

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Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) – Q2:2021

The official unemployment rate was 34,4% in the second quarter of 2021.

The results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the second quarter of 2021 show that the number of employed persons decreased by 54 000 in the second quarter of 2021 to 14,9 million. The number of unemployed persons increased by 584 000 to 7,8 million compared to the first quarter of 2021. The number of discouraged work-seekers increased by 186 000 (5,9%) and the number of people who were not economically active for reasons other than discouragement decreased by 571 000 (4.5%) between the two quarters resulting in a net decrease of 386 000 in the not economically active population.

These changes resulted in the official unemployment rate increasing by 1,8 percentage points from 32,6% in the first quarter of 2021 to 34,4% in the second quarter of 2021 - the highest since the start of the QLFS in 2008. The unemployment rate according to the expanded definition of unemployment increased by 1,2 percentage points to 44,4% in quarter 2 2021 compared to quarter 1 2021.

The results indicate that the South African labour market is more favourable to men than it is to women. Men are more likely to be in paid employment than women regardless of race. The proportion of men in employment is higher than that of women; more men than women are participating in the labour market as the labour force participation rate of men is higher than that of women; and the unemployment rate among men is lower than amongst women. The rate of unemployment among women was 36,8% in the second quarter of 2021 compared to 32,4% amongst men according to the official definition of unemployment. The unemployment rate among black African women was 41,0% during this period compared to 8,2% among white women, 22,4% among Indian/Asian women and 29,9% among coloured women.

Formal sector employment decreased by 375 000 while the other sectors experienced increases in employment in quarter 2 2021. Informal sector employment increased by 184 000 (7,4%); Private households by 67 000 (6,0%), and employment in Agriculture increased by 69 000 (8,7%).

Some industries created jobs while others lost jobs between quarter 1 2021 and quarter 2 2021, resulting in a net decline of 54 000 in total employment. Employment mainly increased in Construction (up by 143 000) and other industries that had job gains include Trade (108 000), Agriculture (69 000), Private households (67 000) and Transport (66 000). Job losses were observed in Finance (278 000), Community and Social Services (166 000) and Manufacturing (83 000).

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