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# The Eastern Cape labour market at a glance: 2015 (Quarter 4) Fact Sheet

## Key Terms

**Official unemployment:** the unemployed are defined as working-age individuals who wanted work and looked for employment. Those that wanted work but did not take any steps to look for employment (sometimes referred to as 'discouraged workers') are classified as economically inactive according to this definition.

**Official unemployment rate** =  $\frac{\text{searching unemployed}}{\text{employed} + \text{searching unemployed}}$

**Expanded unemployment:** the unemployed under the expanded definition includes all of the officially unemployed as well as those who wanted work but did not look for it. This is the preferred measure of unemployment given the available evidence that the non-searching unemployed are likely to be involuntarily unemployed.

**Expanded unemployment rate** =  $\frac{\text{searching unemployed} + \text{nonsearching unemployed}}{\text{employed} + \text{searching unemployed} + \text{nonsearching unemployed}}$

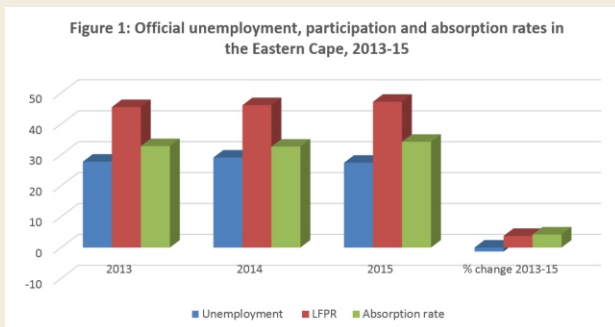
**Labour force participation rate:** the percentage of the total working age population (or the specified age group) that is economically active (i.e. employed or unemployed).

**Absorption rate:** the percentage of the total working age population (or the specified age group) that is employed.

**QLFSs:** Quarterly Labour Force Surveys undertaken every three months by Statistics South Africa

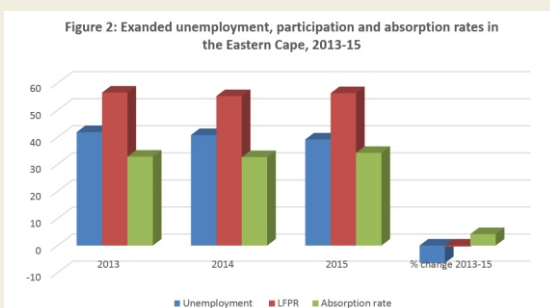
## Trends in unemployment, labour force participation and employment

Between the 4th quarter of 2013 and the 4th quarter of 2015, the official unemployment rate in the province decreased (very marginally) from 27.8% to 27.4% (Figure 1). In other words, unemployment remained unchanged over this short period. At the same time, the percentage of the province's total working age population that was employed (the absorption rate) increased by about 4%. Overall, however, the growth (3.8%) in the percentage of the working age population that was economically active (i.e. either working or looking for work) grew at almost the same rate.



Source: QLFS 2013(4), QLFS 2014(4), QLFS 2015(4)

Perhaps a more appropriate way to assess the labour market is through the expanded definition of unemployment, which also includes those who wanted work but didn't necessarily look for a job. As highlighted in past NALSU Fact Sheets there is not necessarily a clear distinction between the searching and non-searching unemployed in South Africa and the non-searching unemployed are likely to be involuntarily unemployed. The use of the expanded unemployment rate (Figure 2) suggests a higher level of unemployment for the province. Under the broader definition of the labour force, unemployment decreased from 42% to 39% between 2013 and 2015. Part of the stability in the broad unemployment rate is explained by the increase in the absorption rate which occurred at the same time that the percentage of the working age population that was broadly active remained unchanged.



Source: QLFS 2013(4), QLFS 2014(4), QLFS 2015(4)

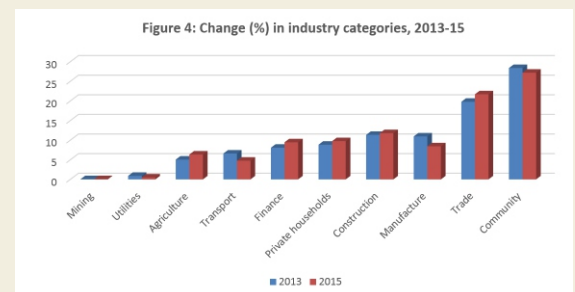
Unemployment among the youth (defined here as those aged 19 to 24, inclusive) is far higher than for the labour force as a whole. Among this group, many of whom are likely looking for employment for the first time, 65% are unemployed according to the expanded definition (2015- Quarter 4). Despite these very high levels of unemployment among young people in the province, the data for the most recent period show that youth unemployment decreased over the period (by about 1.4%). There was also about an 8% decrease in the percentage of youth in the province who are employed. The data highlight that in 2015, 16% of the Eastern Cape's youth were employed compared to 17% in 2013.



Source: QLFS 2013(3), QLFS 2014(3), QLFS 2015(3)

## Sectoral trends in employment

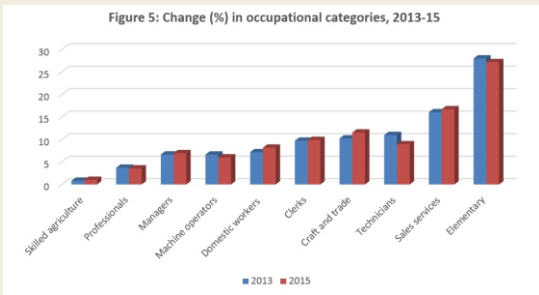
In addition to very small changes in overall rates of unemployment in the province, there has been a slight drop in the percentage of the workforce in manufacturing and community and social services (Figure 4). Nevertheless, the community and social services sector continues to be the largest employer in the province (27%). Overall, however, comparisons between the sectoral compositions of the workforce in the fourth quarter of each year suggest that there have been only very small changes. The structure of the workforce is, therefore, largely unchanged over the period.



Source: QLFS 2013(4), QLFS 2015(4)

Those who were employed were, therefore, more likely to be working either in the public sector or in relatively low paying sectors with limited job security or social protection. This is confirmed by the findings in Figure 5 which show that the provincial workforce was, once again, concentrated in elementary

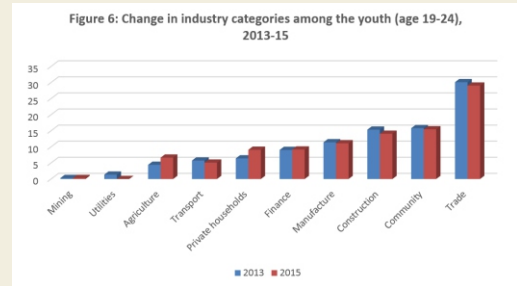
occupations at the same time there were very small increases in the percentage of the work force engaged in sales or employed as clerks.



Source: QLFS 2013(4), QLFS 2015(4)

In examining the provincial youth workforce, Figure 6 shows that young people were, once again, largely employed in wholesale and retail trade. Although this sector employs the highest number of young workers, the data show a slight decrease in the number of

young people employed in these two sectors. In 2013, 30% of youth were employed in the wholesale and retail trade sector, this decreased to 29% in 2015. At the same time, the community and social services sector also experienced a very small reduction in its share of the 19-24 year old workforce between the 4th quarter of 2013 and the 4th quarter of 2015 (from 16 per cent to 15 per cent).



Source: QLFS 2013(4), QLFS 2015(4)



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