

# **FACT SHEET ON “NEETS”**

**(Persons who are not in employment, education or training)**



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## 1. BACKGROUND

Expanding access, improving quality and increasing the diversity of education and training provision is one of the main policy objectives of the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (PSET, 2013). However, meeting this objective continues to face headwinds from the growing number of people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) within the South African population. For the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) system, this indicates a need to expand access to post-school opportunities far beyond what is currently available, in order to accommodate the growing number of people who are NEET. This requires the PSET institutions to offer a diversity of programmes not only to take account of the needs of the youth who completed schooling, but also for those who did not complete their schooling. It is equally important in order to cater for the needs of older people, including those who never attended school, as well as those who require education and training opportunities in order to live complete and more productive lives as both workers and citizens.

Consequently, the monitoring of NEET trends is important, as it alerts policy makers on prevailing problems and hint at some of the causes of the problems. This Fact Sheet on NEETs serves as an information resource to guide improvements in the design and implementation of educational policies.

## 2. PURPOSE

This Fact Sheet provides a detailed profile and characteristics of people who are NEET, in order to ensure that interventions in the PSET system address the appropriate target groups. Information about NEETs assists the DHET to make informed decisions about PSET provisioning. In particular, NEET data provides us with evidence that we can use to undertake policy, develop strategies, undertake planning, set targets and undertake more effective budgeting.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

The statistics used in this publication are drawn from the Quarterly Labour Force Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa. More specifically, this Fact Sheet uses annual figures



calculated by Stats SA using the average of the four quarters of the year. This Fact Sheet provides NEET data for the past six years, namely 2013 to 2018. Internationally, many countries use young people aged 15 to 24 years as the unit of analysis for understanding NEETs, however, this Fact Sheet provides NEET data for a broader age range of people, since the Department of Higher Education and Training’s mandate includes adult learners, and not only young people.

## **4. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

### **4.1 Tertiary education**

Tertiary education refers to the following qualifications:

- an undergraduate degree
- a post-graduate degree
- a diploma
- a Higher Certificate (upon completion of matric)
- an advanced Diploma or advanced Certificate

### **4.2 NEET rate**

The NEET rate has been calculated by dividing the number of persons in a given age group who are NEET, e.g. persons aged 15-24 years, by the total population of the same age group in a country, e.g. 15-24-year-old population.

### **4.3 Youth**

Youth in this publication refers to persons aged 15-34 years. The benefit of looking at this broad age range is that it includes the growing share of individuals who remain in education for longer and only enter the labour market in their late 20s. Where findings refer to a different age range or a subset of youth (e.g. only the 15-24 year-olds) this is explicitly noted.

### **4.4 Inactive NEET**

Youth who are neither in employment, education or training nor seeking work.



#### 4.5 Unemployed Youth

Youth who are neither in employment, education or training but seeking work.

### 5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This section presents the results from a detailed profile of persons who are NEET in South Africa, by describing their personal characteristics. The tables and figures of the findings are presented in section 6. The principal findings are as follows:

- Between 2013 and 2018 the number of people aged between 15-60 years old who were NEET increased by about 1.2 million (from around 13.1 million to 14.3 million). However, over the past six years, the proportion of people who are NEET remained approximately stable at around 39% (see Table 1 below).
- More than half of all NEETs are younger than 35 years and account for about 55.6% of all NEETs. The number of youth aged between 15-34 years old who are NEET increased by about 543 000 (7.3%) between 2013 and 2018, whilst adults aged between 35-60 years increased by 685 000 (12.1%) (see Table 2 and 3 below).
- A breakdown of the NEET population by age shows that the majority of NEETs who are youth are aged between 25-34 years with an average NEET rate of 45.6% for all the years under review (see Table 3 below).
- The number of young people in the 15-24 years age group who are NEET remained fairly constant at 3.2 million from 2013 to 2018 (see Table 2 below). This is 31.6% of all young people in this age group (see Table 3 below).
- While the South African NEET rate for the persons aged 15-24 years old has decreased from 2012 to 2016, it is significantly above its BRICS counterparts and peer countries such as Malaysia (see Figure 1 below).
- A breakdown of NEETs into unemployed and inactive shows that the majority of NEETs are not looking for work. In 2018, more than half (58.2%) of all South African NEETs were inactive



meaning they are not even looking for work as compared to the unemployed NEET (41.8%) (see Table 4 below).

- However, from 2016 to 2018 the increase in the number of NEETs for persons aged between 25-34 years old is primarily driven by an increase in the number of unemployed NEETs which is higher than the number of inactive NEETs (see Table 4 below).
- The total number of NEETs differ strongly by gender, being typically much higher for women than for men. The difference is largest for the persons aged 35-60 year olds, followed by the youth aged 25-34 year olds (see Table 5 below).
- The number of persons who are NEET are systematically higher for the Black African population as compared to the other population groups. This is evident across all age group categories throughout the six-year period under review.
- Enrolment in PSET institutions is increasing year-on-year, but the increase is not sufficient enough to curb the high numbers of people who are NEET in the country. In 2017, only 2.3 million students of all age groups are enrolled in PSET institutions, yet 3.2 million youth aged between 15-24 years old are in the NEET category (see Figure 2 below).
- The NEET status is strongly related to low educational attainment and young people with low levels of education are especially at risk. In all of the age categories, more than 90% of all NEETs have no tertiary education across the six-year period under review. The majority of persons who are NEET have upper secondary less than Grade 12 as the highest level of education attainment. (See Table 7 below).
- The young age and low educational attainment of NEETs suggests that they may have few employment possibilities and a low earnings potential when seeking employment.
- Persons with tertiary education have less of a risk of being NEET. In 2018, the share of NEETs aged between 25-34 years old with tertiary education decreased by 0.5 percentage points from 7.6% in 2017 to 7.1% in 2018 (see Table 7 below).
- At the provincial level, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape had the highest number of NEETs recorded in all the age groups over the 6-year period under review (see Table 8 below).
- There are many reasons why people are NEET in South Africa and these differ between youth (15-34 years) and adults (35-60 years). In 2018, the majority of youth (15-34 years) who



were NEET were new entrants into the labour market (about 2.0 million), followed by those who are discouraged job seekers (about 1.7 million) and those who were homemakers (about 1.1 million). The youth numbers (about 3.7 million) could possibly mean that majority of this age group are willing and able to work but cannot find any work opportunities (see Table 9 below).

- Among adults (35-60 years), the majority of NEETs were homemakers (about 1.3 million) in 2018, followed by those who had health reasons (about 1.1 million) and then those who were discouraged job seekers (about 1 million) (see Table 9 below).

## 6. TABLES AND FIGURES

This section presents the tables and figures containing the main results from a detailed profile of persons who are NEET in South Africa.

**Table 1: Total number and percentage of persons aged 15-60 who are NEET, 2013 to 2018**

Period	Total number of persons aged 15-60 years, in thousands	Number of persons aged 15-60 years who are NEET, in thousands	NEET rate (%)	Year-on-year % Δ of persons who are NEET
2013	33 702	↑ 13 053	38.7%	
2014	34 278	↑ 13 242	38.6%	1.5%
2015	34 884	↓ 13 239	38.0%	0.0%
2016	35 449	↑ 13 721	38.7%	3.6%
2017	36 023	↑ 13 934	38.9%	1.6%
2018	36 603	↑ 14 281	39.0%	2.5%

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to total

↑ - Increase in the number of people who are NEET. ↓ - Decline in the number of people who are NEET.

**Table 2: Total number of NEETs by age group, 2013 to 2018**

NEET	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
15-24	3 261	3 212	3 139	3 219	3 213	3 254
25-34	4 133	4 235	4 203	4 384	4 551	4 683
35-60	5 659	5 796	5 897	6 118	6 169	6 344
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 053</b>	<b>13 242</b>	<b>13 239</b>	<b>13 721</b>	<b>13 934</b>	<b>14 281</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals

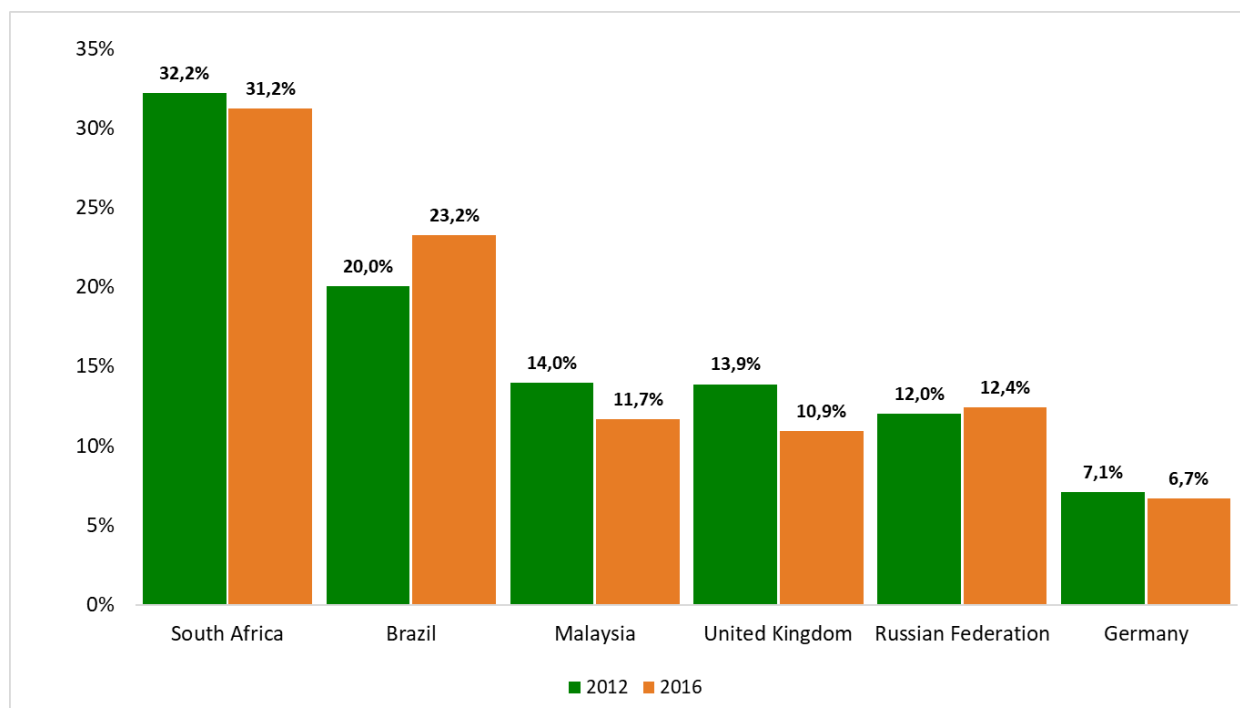


**Table 3: NEET rates by age group, 2013 to 2018**

NEET	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>15-24</b>	32.0%	31.3%	30.5%	31.2%	31.2%	31.6%
<b>25-34</b>	45.1%	45.4%	44.3%	45.4%	46.4%	47.1%
<b>35-60</b>	39.5%	39.4%	39.0%	39.5%	38.8%	38.8%
<b>Overall %</b>	<b>38.7%</b>	<b>38.6%</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>38.7%</b>	<b>38.7%</b>	<b>39.0%</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

**Figure 1: NEET rates for the persons aged 15-24 by country, 2012 and 2016**



Source: International Labour Organisation  
 Data downloaded from ILOSTAT. Last update on 03 June 2019.





**Table 4: A breakdown of NEETs into unemployed and inactive, 2013 to 2018**

Reason	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	000'					
<b>15-24 years</b>	<b>3 261</b>	<b>3 212</b>	<b>3 139</b>	<b>3 219</b>	<b>3 213</b>	<b>3 254</b>
Unemployed	1 298	1 278	1 308	1 394	1 420	1 341
Inactive	1 963	1 934	1 831	1 825	1 794	1 913
<b>25-34</b>	<b>4 133</b>	<b>4 235</b>	<b>4 203</b>	<b>4 384</b>	<b>4 551</b>	<b>4 683</b>
Unemployed	1 909	2 016	2 090	2 232	2 373	2 417
Inactive	2 224	2 219	2 114	2 151	2 178	2 266
<b>35-60</b>	<b>5 659</b>	<b>5 796</b>	<b>5 897</b>	<b>6 118</b>	<b>6 169</b>	<b>6 344</b>
Unemployed	1 570	1 674	1 804	2 001	2 200	2 218
Inactive	4 089	4 122	4 093	4 117	3 969	4 126
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 053</b>	<b>13 242</b>	<b>13 239</b>	<b>13 721</b>	<b>13 934</b>	<b>14 281</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals

**Table 5: Total number of NEETs by gender and age group, 2013 to 2018**

Gender	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	000'					
<b>15-24 years</b>	<b>3 261</b>	<b>3 212</b>	<b>3 139</b>	<b>3 219</b>	<b>3 213</b>	<b>3 254</b>
Male	1 500	1 482	1 444	1 479	1 478	1 498
Female	1 761	1 730	1 695	1 740	1 736	1 756
<b>25-34 years</b>	<b>4 133</b>	<b>4 235</b>	<b>4 203</b>	<b>4 384</b>	<b>4 551</b>	<b>4 683</b>
Male	1 759	1 818	1 802	1 874	2 011	2 084
Female	2 374	2 417	2 401	2 510	2 540	2 599
<b>35-60 years</b>	<b>5 659</b>	<b>5 796</b>	<b>5 897</b>	<b>6 118</b>	<b>6 169</b>	<b>6 344</b>
Male	2 131	2 192	2 248	2 375	2 403	2 473
Female	3 528	3 604	3 649	3 743	3 766	3 871
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 053</b>	<b>13 242</b>	<b>13 239</b>	<b>13 721</b>	<b>13 934</b>	<b>14 281</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals



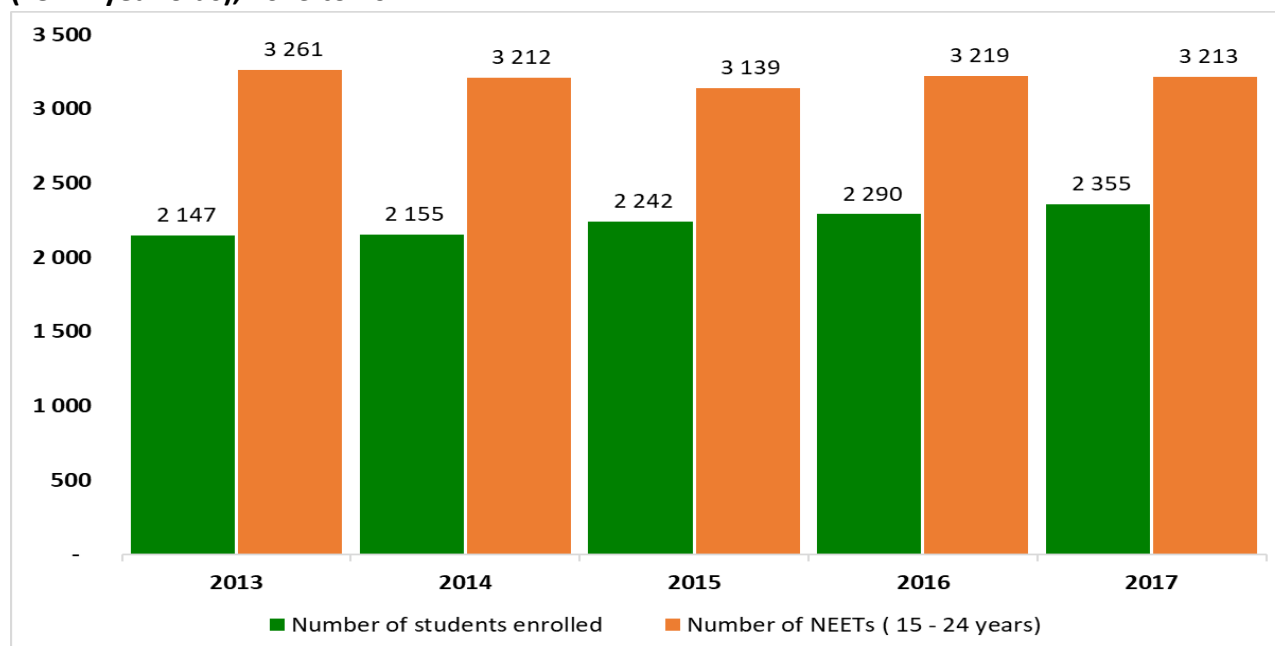
**Table 6: Number of NEETs by population group and age group, 2013 to 2018**

Population group	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	000'					
<b>15-24 years</b>	<b>3 261</b>	<b>3 212</b>	<b>3 139</b>	<b>3 219</b>	<b>3 213</b>	<b>3 254</b>
Black African	2 835	2 764	2 719	2 817	2 801	2 826
Coloured	294	309	283	286	302	287
Indian/Asian	41	53	52	43	44	47
White	92	87	84	73	66	93
<b>25-34 years</b>	<b>4 133</b>	<b>4 235</b>	<b>4 203</b>	<b>4 384</b>	<b>4 551</b>	<b>4 683</b>
Black African	3 676	3 765	3 756	3 924	4 087	4 198
Coloured	292	287	290	284	297	290
Indian/Asian	67	66	70	76	68	81
White	98	116	88	100	99	114
<b>35-60 years</b>	<b>5 659</b>	<b>5 796</b>	<b>5 897</b>	<b>6 118</b>	<b>6 169</b>	<b>6 344</b>
Black African	4 475	4 596	4 673	4 897	4 951	5 130
Coloured	586	582	610	633	644	637
Indian/Asian	175	188	193	188	188	181
White	424	430	421	400	385	396
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 053</b>	<b>13 242</b>	<b>13 239</b>	<b>13 721</b>	<b>13 934</b>	<b>14 281</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals

**Figure 2: Total number of students (all age groups) attending a PSET institution and NEETs (15-24 year olds), 2013 to 2017.**



Sources: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Department of Higher Education and Training, Statistics on Post School Education and Training in South, 2017.



**Table 7: Share of NEETs by highest level of education attainment, 2013 to 2018**

Educational Level	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>%</b>						
<b>15-24 years</b>	<b>25,0</b>	<b>24,3</b>	<b>23,7</b>	<b>23,5</b>	<b>23,1</b>	<b>22,8</b>
No Schooling	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.4	1.3
Primary and less	11.2	10.7	11.4	11.4	10.3	9.8
Secondary less than grade 12	49.1	48.6	47.3	46.9	46.3	45.4
Grade 12	33.6	34.6	34.9	35.2	37.4	38.7
Tertiary	4.1	3.6	4.0	4.2	4.0	4.0
Other and unspecified	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.8
<b>25-34 years</b>	<b>31,7</b>	<b>32,0</b>	<b>31,7</b>	<b>32,0</b>	<b>32,7</b>	<b>32,8</b>
No Schooling	1.9	1.9	2.0	1.7	1.7	1.6
Primary and less	10.8	9.9	10.4	10.0	9.6	8.5
Secondary less than grade 12	51.4	50.5	50.4	51.6	49.8	49.5
Grade 12	29.5	30.2	29.7	29.3	30.6	32.5
Tertiary	5.7	6.9	6.7	6.7	7.6	7.1
Other and unspecified	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.7
<b>35-60 years</b>	<b>43,4</b>	<b>43,8</b>	<b>44,5</b>	<b>44,6</b>	<b>44,3</b>	<b>44,4</b>
No Schooling	9.0	8.3	8.0	7.4	6.6	6.4
Primary and less	27.1	26.1	25.2	24.2	22.9	21.9
Secondary less than grade 12	40.9	40.8	40.9	41.9	42.9	42.8
Grade 12	17.3	18.6	19.1	19.7	20.2	21.8
Tertiary	4.8	5.1	5.8	5.6	6.2	6.0
Other and unspecified	0.8	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)



**Table 8: Total number of NEETs by province and age group, 2013 to 2018**

Province	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>15-24 years</b>	<b>3 261</b>	<b>3 212</b>	<b>3 139</b>	<b>3 219</b>	<b>3 213</b>	<b>3 254</b>
Eastern Cape	471	469	441	429	462	461
Free State	166	164	160	166	162	147
Gauteng	664	624	652	672	653	658
KwaZulu-Natal	655	670	658	701	721	739
Limpopo	379	346	345	339	307	323
Mpumalanga	282	273	283	282	270	289
North West	264	253	222	250	249	259
Northern Cape	72	80	83	80	86	79
Western Cape	310	333	296	300	303	300
<b>25-34</b>	<b>4 133</b>	<b>4 235</b>	<b>4 203</b>	<b>4 384</b>	<b>4 551</b>	<b>4 683</b>
Eastern Cape	579	580	575	587	610	656
Free State	246	247	236	241	235	238
Gauteng	909	908	971	1 021	1 062	1 129
KwaZulu-Natal	836	884	866	935	968	993
Limpopo	466	479	471	460	497	503
Mpumalanga	339	382	328	354	380	380
North West	305	295	317	338	322	314
Northern Cape	89	93	93	93	104	104
Western Cape	363	365	347	354	373	367
<b>35-60</b>	<b>5 659</b>	<b>5 796</b>	<b>5 897</b>	<b>6 118</b>	<b>6 169</b>	<b>6 344</b>
Eastern Cape	730	722	723	733	758	812
Free State	320	323	310	327	321	325
Gauteng	1 357	1 446	1 493	1 563	1 604	1 671
KwaZulu-Natal	1 068	1 095	1 131	1 174	1 184	1 166
Limpopo	535	546	520	538	547	560
Mpumalanga	382	391	405	429	426	440
North West	468	464	480	491	479	512
Northern Cape	140	144	158	162	162	163
Western Cape	660	664	677	701	689	695
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 053</b>	<b>13 242</b>	<b>13 239</b>	<b>13 721</b>	<b>13 934</b>	<b>14 281</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals



**Table 9: Total number of NEETs by reason and age group, 2013 to 2018**

Reason	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	000'					
<b>15 – 24 years</b>	<b>3 261</b>	<b>3 212</b>	<b>3 139</b>	<b>3 219</b>	<b>3 213</b>	<b>3 254</b>
Job losers	244	271	270	273	284	265
New entrants	937	891	918	1 002	1 017	974
Re-entrants	47	44	45	46	47	40
Other unemployed <sup>1</sup>	69	71	75	74	73	62
Home maker	491	486	433	468	430	416
Health reasons	134	133	140	131	136	128
Too young/old/retired	40	53	55	53	62	78
Discouraged job-seeker	669	662	608	634	622	723
other not economically active <sup>2</sup>	629	599	594	539	544	567
<b>25-34 years</b>	<b>4 133</b>	<b>4 235</b>	<b>4 203</b>	<b>4 384</b>	<b>4 551</b>	<b>4 683</b>
Job losers	646	703	781	771	823	806
New entrants	787	797	793	907	957	1 043
Re-entrants	95	113	102	124	124	114
Other unemployed	379	402	414	430	469	454
Home maker	810	804	718	753	745	714
Health reasons	302	280	271	265	272	270
Too young/old/retired	2	3	4	4	4	4
Discouraged job-seeker	825	862	849	872	886	1023
other not economically active	284	270	273	258	271	256
<b>35-60 years</b>	<b>5 659</b>	<b>5 796</b>	<b>5 897</b>	<b>6 118</b>	<b>6 169</b>	<b>6 344</b>
Job losers	616	648	709	751	842	825
New entrants	228	205	280	295	312	340
Re-entrants	64	92	87	119	122	102
Other unemployed	662	729	727	836	924	950
Home maker	1458	1473	1380	1401	1344	1333
Health reasons	1196	1147	1184	1175	1103	1080
Too young/old/retired	439	429	488	484	472	485
Discouraged job-seeker	770	825	808	811	823	990
other not economically active	225	247	233	245	227	238
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 053</b>	<b>13 242</b>	<b>13 239</b>	<b>13 721</b>	<b>13 934</b>	<b>14 281</b>

Source: Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q4, 2018 (Calculations by DHET)

Note: Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to totals

<sup>1</sup> Other Unemployed includes job leavers and other last worked > 5 years ago